

Distancing as Infinite Entanglement

Healing, Intersectionality and Interstices in
the Languages, Literatures and Cultures of the
Greater Caribbean and Beyond

Edited by
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Elisabeth Echteld
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Frances'Lee González Rosado
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Jacqueline Jiang-Chieu



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Volume 2

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Introduction and acknowledgements

The two publications: *Masking as Quintessential Authenticity: Healing, Intersectionality and Interstices in the Languages, Literatures and Cultures of the Dutch Caribbean and Beyond* together with *Distancing as Infinite Entanglement: Healing, Intersectionality and Interstices in the Languages, Literatures and Cultures of the Greater Caribbean and Beyond*, contain a collection of articles that present a critical perspective on the languages, literatures, and cultures of the Greater Caribbean and the Caribbean diaspora. The contributing authors include a wide range of voices old and new from the Caribbean and beyond.

This book forms part of a two-volume set, with this volume focusing on the Greater Caribbean in general, and the other volume focusing on the ABC-islands (Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao) and other parts of the (former) Dutch Caribbean in particular. Together, these volumes provide a platform for researchers and other cultural workers whose work treats the islands, topics, and/or perspectives that traditionally receive less scholarly attention than others at professional conferences and in academic publications. Special emphasis is placed on ensuring that new voices with fresh points of view find a place in these volumes, alongside contributions by more well-established scholars.

The online versions of these volumes and the other 25 volumes in this series can be found on the Caribbean Languages and Culture Platform in the Partner Collections of the Dutch Caribbean Digital Platform of the Library of the University of Curaçao at <http://dcdp.uoc.cw/icarplat>.

This publication received generous support from the University of Curaçao.

The Editors

**DISTANCINGS, ENTANGLEMENTS,
INTERSECTIONALITIES AND
INDIGENEITIES IN THE CARIBBEAN**

HOW GARIFUNA DRUMMING MADE ME A FEMINIST: THE STORY BEHIND THE TEDx TALK

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Abstract

On 30 September 2017, Garifuna drummer Joshua Arana made a TEDx presentation in which the drum was personified and the parts of the drum and their roles were explained. The *segunda* drum was determined to be feminine and the drummer a feminist. This article analyzes three main themes of that talk: the performing of Garifuna, gendered roles in Garifuna art and the voice of the Garifuna cultural bearer. Performing of Garifuna focuses on satisfying the audience's expectation to be entertained with very little focus on Garifuna heritage and its transmission as was intended in traditional Garifuna life. The Garifuna female role is traditionally that of one who brings things to life, from babies to plants; however, as men have abandoned roles traditionally ascribed to them, women have taken on other roles such as that of preserving Garifuna culture. Usually, there is a separation of responsibilities for persons who can perform cultural roles and those who can explain their significance, making Joshua Arana an exception. Not only is he able to play the drums and call songs but he has now accepted the role of being an expert in explaining the technical aspects of drumming and also the metaphorical significance of the drum.

Key terms: Garifuna drums, gender, TEDx, Belmopan, Belize

Introduction by Peitra Arana

Garifuna is the Arawak language that is spoken by a hybrid people who resulted from a biological and cultural mixture between the indigenous Kallinago and Arawaks of the Caribbean and people of African origin on the island of St. Vincent. The Garinagu (plural form of Garifuna) are the indigenous group of the insular Caribbean that most successfully resisted the colonial usurpation of their lands, keeping the European

powers at bay until in 1797, when they were forcefully relocated to Honduras in Central America. Today, substantial numbers of Garinagu live in Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, Belize and the United States. However, all Garinagu affirm the both the extreme challenges as well as the notable accomplishments that have marked their tumultuous past, and consider themselves to be a unified nation. Theirs is a narrative that connects them to the ancestral homeland in St. Vincent and the Grenadines (*Yurumein* in Garifuna), explains why they were forced to adopt new homes in Central America, and helps to form their Garifuna identity in the Diaspora.

Formerly known as ‘Black Caribs,’ the Garinagu have tried to extricate themselves from negative stereotypes associated with the misnomer ‘Carib’ by insisting on the use of their proper group name. As with other indigenous peoples, Garifuna cultural traditions are grounded in a world view that places the individual as part of a community and focuses on the interconnections among people, objects and the environment. The individual is a continuation of the past and relies on land for sustenance. The basic idea is that there is a spiritual aspect to all animate and inanimate objects; that people are meant to live in harmony with their physical, social and spiritual worlds; that the individual derives identity from its community, the land and the past; and that the ancestors dwell in a past which is contiguous with the present and, at the same time, connected to the future. Garinagu embrace a philosophy of reciprocity embodied in the statement: *Aü bun amürü nun* translated as “I for you and you for me,” it underscores a need to establish and maintain harmony in the social, spiritual and physical environments (all translations are by the authors, unless specified otherwise). While the social environment refers to people and their relationships and the physical environment includes the land and sea, the spiritual relationship is with the ancestors and those who are yet to come (Cayetano, 2017).

Like other indigenous groups, Garinagu learn of and connect with their cosmology through music, dance, songs and oral traditions central to all of which are the language, songs and the music that is used to transport the songs. Music and song are ever present in Garifuna life. They accompany work, especially that requiring community effort, as in the case of *leremuna egi* (cassava grating song) or the construction of traditional homes. Music and song are used to heal in ceremonies like *arair-aguduni* (consultations with the spiritual world) or in ceremonies performed in communal spiritual spaces like the *dabuyaba*. While the act of making music and song can be described as their being performed, Garifuna music and song, in the traditional context are not a performance. For example, the sacred music and song of the *mali* are primarily done in the *dabuyaba* as part of the healing ceremony, the *diügü*. Even though members of the community may be seen outside the *dabuyaba* witnessing the *mali* ceremony, the participants are not conducting a ‘performance’ for that audience. The purpose for the *mali* is to cleanse the spirit of the ancestor. As such, it is not a

performance. This distinction is important as Garifuna music and song are generally confused as being staged for the benefit of an audience and viewed as a performance. While three genres of Garifuna songs, including work songs, are considered *a cappella*, all others are accompanied by musical instruments. For Garifuna music the first image that may come to mind is that of cylindrical hardwood drums, closed on one end by cured leather, laced tightly, and secured along the cylindrical plane by straps of twine twisted to tighten their hold on the membrane and to tune the sound resonating from its innards. For secular events, the pair usually consists of a large *segunda* or bass drum and a smaller *primera* or percussion drum; a third and larger “heart” drum, the *lanigi garawoun*, is accompanied by two *segunda* drums during sacred ceremonies (Sidney Mejia, interview December 1, 2010). A Garifuna drum, however, cannot create music entirely on its own. That task is assigned to the skillful hand motions of the *daiñbria*, drummer.

When speaking of drummers in Dangriga, two names are often mentioned: ‘Isabel’ Flores and ‘Machete’ ‘Chete’ Hernandez. Implied in the names are a mastery of their art and the difference in styles that can informally be considered as ‘schools.’ Drummers coming from Isawel’s school were taught to ‘play,’ not ‘beat’ drums. Isawel graduates are known to coax the drum to life while gently touching the surface but still eliciting the familiar sounds of Garifuna drumming. Machete students, on the other hand, drum at a more frenetic pace, improvising and inserting their own styles between traditional drumbeats. While Joshua Arana, may not have been a direct student of Isawel or Machete, he would have been exposed to their influential styles as a young drummer growing up in Dangriga in the early 1980s.

The TEDx Talk by Joshua Arana (2018)

Añategu. They are coming.

O chülühaña. They have arrived.

I started playing drums at the tender age of 5 years old. I grew up in a very culturally renowned part of town known as, ‘Baka Town’. Everybody knows Baka Town right? Drums were played so often that it was very easy for me to pick up the rhythms. I played so much that I got in trouble many times. You can ask my mom and my teachers. I played everywhere and on everything. This was practice for me. By the age of 13, I was recruited to few performance groups but only became a member of two: *Igeri* (‘light’) and *Ilagulaii* (‘roots’).

Despite the fact that at 5 years old I knew how to play some rhythms, my first real cultural performance was not as a drummer, but as a *wanaragua* dancer during the Christmas season. Eventually, because I used to tap on everything, I got my first introduction to the drums at the Baha’i church to which my family belonged. This was

where I found out that while I could create sounds on the wall, steps, table, buckets or whatever else was available at home or at school, I could not seem to replicate those sounds on the drums. The techniques and hand positioning used with a drum were just different and this frustrated me for a while, until I figured it out about a year later.

Growing up in a strict household I was only allowed to be a member of the *Igemeri* performance group because my older sister was already a member, and the rehearsals, led by Mrs. Ann Marin, took place a block from our house. I was a member of the *Ilagulaii* performance group, because Mr. Roysus Bregal, who was the leader, was well respected and trusted in the world of culture and was a friend of my parents.

While I loved my drums and playing them, I was ashamed of everything else Garifuna. Garifuna was not popular and I wanted to be identified with what I like to call the 'Nike Culture,' that is, the American culture of the 1980s, whose latest designs and models were what every young person wanted to be identified with. It was what the television was promoting and what family members were sending back home to their loved ones. It was also the underlying message of the education system, where education was oriented more toward an outward view, rather than that an inward view. Everything out there is better, but is it really? As such, you would never find me riding my bike or walking around the streets of Dangriga where I grew up in my *manini*, that is, the male cultural wear, which we refer to now as *dashiki*. It was while doing my research for this talk that I found out for the first time that that Garifuna male and female upper body cultural wear was called *manini* up until the 1970s and 1980s, when we adopted the West African (Hausa/Yoruba) word *dashiki* for male cultural wear.

Arite. So this mentality changed though, when I started high school and realized that there were many people who were just like me. People who I believe grew up in a more cultural home than I did were also ashamed of who they were. This was my wake-up call to no longer be ashamed of who I am or where I came from, I was proud to be Garifuna.

I do not know for sure if at the time that I was a member of these groups that I can say I loved my drum, maybe it was something I did because people saw this talent in me and something I was recognized for more than me putting myself out there to learn more about it. Given that everything Garifuna was stigmatized in my generation, we all wanted what we saw on the television because in our mind it was better. I could clearly remember stealing my cousin Hilary's tube sox with the 3 stripes on top and how I would not keep my pants leg down because I wanted people to see that I was in style, so to speak.

What I consider as the Nike Culture is not necessary only associated with the Nike brand, but also with the flashy Western culture that we all as young people wanted to be identified with. "Everything out there is better, but is it really?" We had to learn the English language because in our view success in society is about how educated one is,

and all of the major exams that determine how far you make it in the education system are written in English. All of this over time contributes to the loss of our Garifuna language and identity.

We used to hear things as a child “Go to school so you do not have to end up working hard like me.” Not knowing at the time that it was important for a people deeply rooted in traditions to work hard because “When work is hard life is easy, and when work is easy life is hard.” Hard work forces us to build and maintain our social infrastructure because we understand that difficult tasks cannot be accomplished alone, and as a result of working together, there is a reduction in conflicts.

Then in 1993 I started Ecumenical High School and saw people who at that time I believed were ‘poorer’ than me. By ‘poor’ I mean they grew up in Garifuna households where people were also ashamed of who they were. In contrast, I came in to the school with my Garifuna drumming talent, and so I was sought out for cultural activities. This made me realize that Garifuna music and culture was something to be proud of, and as a result I started to look at myself more seriously from a cultural perspective.

What the Garifuna drums represent in relation to Garifuna culture

Right, so with this I started looking at my drumming and started exploring a little bit. This is what I came up with. I looked at the different drums that were a part of my set of drums as well as each part of each drum, and found a way to describe each part as it related to the wider context of Garifuna culture. The drum is made from three living things: trees, vines and skin. So, the drum carries three spirits, because everything that is alive carries its own spirit.

First, the tree from which the body of the drum was cut carries its spirit and is one of the spirits that the drum comes with. The shell of the drum represents the core of who we are as a people. At our core is the concept *Nuguyaun*, *buguyan*, the way a Garifuna woman would say “I for you and you for me” and *Aü bun amürü nun*, the way a Garifuna man would say “I for you and you for me”. This is the social spiritual concept upon which the Garifuna culture was built. We are a selfless people at our core. *Lügubu* the body of the drum represents who we are as a people. The first letters of the words *Aü bun amürü nun* spell *aban*, which means ‘one’ in Garifuna.

Second, the vine which is woven around the drum also carries a spirit, which represents the connectivity that binds the Garifuna and our culture to the world in a wider circle of life. We are not isolated in this world when you peel back all the layers, social class, culture, education, we are all people. As a matter of fact, the Garifuna people had their own concept of the cross even before we knew about Christianity. While the Christian cross represents the Holy Trinity, the Garifuna cross represents unity. If one was to draw a line from extreme north to extreme south and another line from extreme east to extreme west, it forms a cross. We all meet or are connected in the middle.

Third, the skin represents communication, including verbal communication, communication through painting, communication through music and every other form of communication there might be. The animal from which the skin came to give the drum voice carries its own spirit. The skin also represents the spirit of our ancestors.

The rope on the drum is the glue that takes all the different parts and brings them together to make a whole. It represents all aspects of Garifuna culture spirituality, dance, music, ritual, food, that come together for there to be a culture. The rope plays the role of the glue, bringing all these parts together to make a whole: different aspects, one culture; many parts, one drum.

The pins or the tuners on the drum represent Garifuna and non-Garifuna people, including all of you who are here listening online and those that will be listening to this talk later on; as well as Garifuna and non-Garifuna organizations who work to ensure, the revival and survival of Garifuna culture. Every day somewhere in the world there is a presentation, forum, investigation, performance in or about or for Garifuna culture carried out or hosted by Garifuna and non-Garifuna people and organizations, geared towards the advancement of the Garifuna culture. The tuners fine-tune the sound of the drum and these people and organizations are also playing a part in fine tuning Garifuna culture in its different aspects.

And then we come to the snares, which give resonance when I play my drum and which are the reasoning voice that tells the world that we are Garifuna people, and we are here to stay. The snares are that which still resonates in one's mind after a presentation, forum, investigation or performance. The snares make you never forget, because our culture is so deep.

Hagaña? Añaha. Where are they? They are here!

Hagaña? Añaha. Where are they? They are here!

In the Ted Talk, I began playing a *punta* rhythm, which is a celebratory rhythm because I was moving into the half on the presentation that celebrates women. Additionally, I looked at my drum, and I said I would stop calling this base drum '*segundo*' but instead that I would start calling it '*segunda*' or 'big drum' depending on which term comes out first. This drum is a *segunda* drum, and this is my explanation. If the foundation of our culture is our mothers, and the foundation of every rhythm we play in our culture is set by this drum, doesn't it make sense then to give it a feminine gender? This is the heartbeat or the pulse of every rhythm; even though in the Garifuna culture drums are masculine, this drum plays a more feminine role.

Who goes to sleep thinking about what will take place for the following day? Our mothers. Who ensures there's clean clothes? Who ensures that homework is being done? Our mothers. You guys are the heartbeat or the pulse of every rhythm. The smaller drum plays a more masculine role; this drum is the *primero*. There is a home

beat that this drum plays for example I'll give you a *paranda*. This is a home beat, but this beat is dictated by the pace of the *segunda*. OK, so when your fathers are at home they play a certain role, dictated by the job, but that job depends on the foundation set by our mothers. So this is a *paranda*, this drum also improvises, so because our fathers go out and do different chores, when they go to the farm they improvise, if they go fishing, the improvisation will be different because of the tools that they will use. If they go to hang out with friends the improvisation will be different. But every time they get back home again that beat is dictated by our mothers' drum.

When playing the Garifuna drums the *segunda* keeps timing by playing a steady rhythm and even if some of us as drummers are skilled enough to play different variations of that rhythm on our *segunda* the variations are not that much different, because that steady rhythm has to be there. Our *primero* on the other hand does most of the variations and improvisations, with drummers improvising based on emotion, how we interpret the song, movement of dancers etc. It is very boastful, but never plays outside the timing of the *segunda*. They complement each other.

The foundation set by our mothers is embedded in all facets of our Garifuna culture. For example when we speak of *dügü* at our ritual *dabuyaba* (temple) there are no *primeros*. There are no father drums, because those drums don't set a foundation. Only the *segunda* can do this. The *segunda* drum on the left represents those that have gone before us, our ancestors. The *segunda* drum on the right represents those that have not yet been born. The *lanigi* drum in the middle is us. The *lanigi* is the heart drum that sets pace. All three drums together represent all life. And there's a mutual obligation among the three, where we look to our ancestors for guidance and knowledge. They expect that we will never forget them through our rituals. They also expect that we will nurture the culture and pass it on, we will leave it as intact as possible, and in some cases even build on it before passing it on to the future generations. Our future generations will be expected to do the same, and will also look up to us for guidance. These *segunda* drums represent the coming together of three worlds. The world of our ancestors from whom we inherit this culture, the very active world of the present, and the world of the future of those for whom we work so hard to ensure that the lessons and values of our ancestors are passed on.

The foundation of Garifuna culture is its spirituality, the foundation of our families and societies are our mothers, the foundation of every rhythm the we play is set by the *segunda* drum, so naturally because they all set the foundation, they fit together. A *primero* does not set a foundation, so it is not played during the *dügü* ceremony. Throughout time and space, we are but one. Again the foundation set by our mothers. I believe that at the pinnacle of spirituality are our women. It is in them that we find love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, and faithfulness. A mother never forsakes her child and in the traditional sense every single child is every mother's child.

In the *dabuyaba*, when somebody experiences *owenhani* and the spirit of the ancestors takes over their body, there is a specific song that continues to make reference to ‘grandmother,’ even if the spirit that takes over the living body is a male. It goes like this, *Agutu nagutu bamalihouna* ‘My grandmother you are being appeased,’ even if it’s a male spirit that takes over the body of the living. Like when scientists cannot seem to come up with an explanation for something, they put it in the religion category, in Garifuna, anything that is abstract, that cannot be seen or touched goes in the feminine category. Because spirit cannot be seen or touched, every single spirit is feminine, even if it was a male in the human form. We can say that the Garifuna culture is a matriarchal culture.

Ichahowaruguti is a long word right? *Ichahowaruguti* means ‘to give.’ In our culture there have been no song writers or composers, instead songs have been given from one generation to the next, mainly through women. *Abeimahani*, which is a female gestural dance done without musical accompaniment, is alive and well in our communities, and is performed by women in rituals that involve the ancestors. *Arumahani* the male version, however, is quickly fading. As a matter of fact, now when *arumahani* needs to be performed, it is mostly performed by women here in Belize. If you want culture to survive, teach the women.

We as Garinagu believe that skills, on the whole, do not originate with those who acquire them. Instead any particular skill has been passed down to an individual by an ancestor because even though that ancestor is no longer here with us in body, the ancestor still wants to be able to express themselves through someone that is here. The ancestors acquired their skills, nurtured them, in some cases built upon them and then passed them on. So when someone who is a painter, for example, paints, they bring to life the spirit of the ancestors who have passed on their painting skills. As a result of this there have been no so song writers or composers in Garifuna culture. Songs have been passed on by the ancestors so all songs belong to the community and only the songs that have been shared have survived, given that we had an oral culture. So, as a people, we have issues with intellectual property rights, because traditionally our songs belong to no one person.

Cassava bread making is a job over which our women take charge, and it’s a two-day process to make cassava bread. A people who can feed itself is not poor. We were always as a people able to feed ourselves, and the cassava is our staple food. Cassava bread making is done by our women and it is mainly a communal activity. “When work is hard, life is easy; when work is easy, life is hard.”

When we speak of anything huge in Garifuna culture it is always the grandmother. The Pacific for example, being the world’s largest ocean is the mother of all oceans. In Garifuna, everything that is huge the likes of which you have never seen before, it is the grandmother, even if by gender the object is masculine. A skyscraper would be the grandmother of houses. The guanacaste tree is the grandmother of trees.

When we speak of the earth, we never say father earth, what do we say? We say mother earth. When making reference to earth and nature we say mother earth and mother nature because they both give life and nurture, like our mothers do. When a man fails in his obligation to his family, the woman does not hesitate in compensating for his absence. We now often find many single parent homes, and in most cases, it's the women who take on the burden of rearing the children, and they do not shy away from the task of making it work. In my view only those with *abi*, with the instinct of nurturing, have the ability to set foundations. Only those who nurture can set foundations. Women lay the foundations for society, while men only construct them. The foundations of civilizations have been laid out by women, who were the ones who started the domestication of plants and animals to ensure the security and wellbeing of their families.

In preparation for this talk, one of the questions on the application form was 'What is your favorite Ted Talk?' I had never heard of Ted Talks before so I had to search and looked at the different topics and found one titled "We Should all be Feminists" by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Her talk was very interesting to me, given that my ideas were aligned with the stories she told. So this was the first Ted Talk I listened to and I continue to echo Chima's words. I am feminist! I do not believe that saying this is popular among men, but I say it again: I am feminist!

I would like to leave you with this: the concept God in Garifuna culture not masculine, it's feminine. Everything that you cannot see or touch in the Garifuna culture is feminine, and God gives life and nurtures like mother nature and mother earth do. It is important for women to lay that solid foundation upon which the family and society depend. There is nothing that can stand without a solid foundation, and I believe that women are foundation layers. If you want to build a strong society the women within that society have to be empowered. How empowered was Barauda Joseph Chatoyer's wife to have been able to challenge Chatoyer to give her his pants and sword, so she might go off to battle against the British, because he did not want to go?

A call to action for our Women.

Hagaña?Añaha. Where are they? They are here!

Hagaña?Añaha. Where are they? They are here!

Our women are here. Our women are here. Thank you.

Ñeintumutiwachülürü Garinagu wagía. Wherever we go, we are Garinagu.

Aye Garinagu wagía. Yes, we are Garinagu.

There is a song to express that I am who I am, we are who we are. And Garifuna is what I am and Garinagu is who we are.

Analysis by Peitra Arana

Much can be gleaned from Joshua Arana's TEDx Talk presentation "How Garifuna Drumming Made me a Feminist." However, this analysis will focus on three areas: 1) the nuances of performing in Garifuna; 2) gendered roles in Garifuna artistry; and 3) the cultural bearer versus the expert. Though the Garifuna ancestors left no written archives that can be presented to counter the musings of an academic world that has converted them into passive objects of study, they wrapped their voices into a gift box of memories, tied with strings of songs that have been passed from generation to generation. Consequently, Garifuna descendants inherited a narrative of resistance and resilience, which has served as a source of pride over the course of the two hundred years that have transpired since forced exile to the shores of Central America. Garifuna songs and stories allow for the transgenerational passage of ideas, thoughts, values and messages of collective importance. Their passage depends on shared intergenerational spaces and on the interest of younger generations to receive these precious intangible gifts from older generations. As the demands and competing priorities of the modern world continue to limit interactions between older culture bearers and younger Garinagu, the threat of their gradual drifting away from Garifuna cultural moorings becomes more apparent and imminent.

Joshua Arana grew up at a time when his neighbourhood was saturated with expressions of cultural heritage; his childhood allowed him to subconsciously become marinated in what it means to be Garifuna, that is, *Garifunadüaü*. Growing up in what is dubbed the 'culture capital of Belize,' specifically in a lively part of Dangriga Town known as 'Baka Town' or 'Back-a-town,' he would have been indirectly influenced by drummers like Bernardo 'Machete' Hernandez, Isabel 'Isawel' Flores, *lanigi garawoun* (heart drum) player 'Bubusun'/'Yaü Bubu' Castillo and Honduran adoptee, Juan 'Moncho' Dionicio. Joshua would have grown up witnessing countless all night drumming sessions, including but not limited to *ayarahani* practice sessions in preparation for the celebration of Garifuna Settlement Day on 19 November, *asederehani* house-to-house drumming and singing around the Christmas holidays, *wanaragua* house-to-house masked dancing also performed during the Christmas holidays, spiritual ceremonies like *dügü* and *chügü* and post mortuary vigils like *beluria* and *nove-nas*. Central to all of these celebratory events are the Garifuna drumming and singing that have deeply impacted Joshua, awakening within the deepest recesses of his being the recognition that he is a Garifuna drummer.

Even though Joshua would have started as a traditional drummer and, at an early age and he would have integrated into two of the many Garifuna performing groups at that time, he would embark on a path less traveled by previous drummers. His popularity would outgrow Back-a-town and eclipse his native Dangriga, eventually attracting international attention from people like Joe Yost who recruited both Joshua Arana and Allen 'Chinny' Flores for an instructional DVD called "Garifuna Drum Methods." Ultimately Joshua would travel with the Garifuna Collective Band, as lead percussion-

ist accompanying the celebrated Womex awardee, Andy Vivian Palacio, on tour to the US and Europe. Whether he was aware of it or not, this trajectory, which was built on traditional Garifuna skills, enhanced his range as a drummer and world stage performer. Finally, Joshua would recognize the need to complete his formal education, enrolling in the University of Galen and benefiting from its enabling environment. While at school, he taught Garifuna drumming to students and learnt to observe and analyze the art to which he had dedicated his life. The union of this preparation and a chance opportunity lead to the TEDx Belmopan presentation at Jaguar Auditorium of the University of Belize on 30 September 2017.

Garifuna spirituality serves as a powerful uniting force in times of physical, mental and emotional stress. In Arana's case he was nervous, about to make his first formal presentation using the TEDx platform. To compound matters, the drums that usually speak for him when he is on stage were relegated to a secondary role and instead, his voice was expected to take the lead. Moreover, he was a person gendered as male about to claim a part of the feminist space that is generally attributed to people gendered as female. Even as Arana stood on a stage where he had previously delivered countless performances, he recognized that this was not one of those performances, but something quite different. Like so many before him, Joshua found himself trying to maintain a delicate balance, straddling the Garifuna world that allows him to remain true to tradition, while navigating the 'modern' world in which he must formally survive. There he stood in a secular setting speaking through a sacred existence, in the presence of an audience to whom many of the nuances were lost.

A lifetime of being grounded in *Garifunadüaü*, the traditional Garifuna way of being, however, had taught him to honor the Garifuna philosophy of reciprocity, embodied in the statement, *Aü bun amürü nu* "I for you and you for me." As he was about to present a novel idea to a primarily non-Garifuna audience, he started by calling for support from his ancestors. At the same time the call was being emitted, Arana believed that the ancestors would hear and that they would stand with him. From backstage, his booming voice interrupted the silence of an expectant crowd, declaring and affirming: *Añategu*. They are coming. *O chülühaña*. They have arrived.

Through Garifuna spirituality, Garinagu remember a harmonious relationship between the living and the spirit of the ancestor or *ahari*. Through expressions of Garifuna spirituality, the living are grounded and supported in their daily interactions with the world. When a Garifuna is in need, the *ahari* provides, guides and protects. When the *ahari* needs help along his or her continuum to *seiri* (the afterworld recognized as "heaven" by some religions), the descendants respond with prayers, food, baths, etc. These mutual commitments are fulfilled through expressions of Garifuna spirituality. Though this philosophy may not have been understood by the audience that day, the effects were felt. During the lunch break, people would approach Joshua, commenting about the sensation of goose bumps as he broke into song, not recognizing the

connection with the energy of the ancestors who had been summoned to support his presentation.

Assured of their presence, Joshua then requests healing. His posture changes from upright to bent slightly forward over the drums, a sign of reverence, acknowledging the arrival of the ancestors. Though he used a *primera* drum on stage for a role that would have normally been assigned to a *lanigi garawoun* drum in the sacred setting of the Garifuna *dabuyaba* spiritual house, his words would have held the same weight: He extols the ancestors; essentially, Joshua was saying: "Ancestors, use your healing tools to prepare me for this important task I am about to undertake." Unexpressed, but understood by these words is a request for permission, equivalent to asking: "Please allow me to speak on your behalf, to explain a part of our culture to this audience."

The meaning of these words and actions was lost to the audience, as is often the case in Garifuna performance. Audiences are often less ready to hear an explanation, and more ready to observe or participate in the show. For example, during Joshua's TEDx presentation, the audience clapped in the rhythm they had expected. However, because Joshua was using a hugulendu drumbeat, rarely used in secular setting, the clapping did not harmonize with the drum rhythm. s Lacking an understanding of the lyrics in Garifuna songs, the audience tends to ascribe any significance to the more attractive rhythm, rather than to the sobering words. As a result, people tend to become more fixated on bodily movements. More often than not, Garifuna performance is a commodification of the culture, presented to showcase talent with little regard for the customs that underpin it. In performing Garifuna, the traditions that have been conducted for the purpose of dispelling grief, such as the post-mortuary celebrations, or for the objective of forging unity, such as the *asederehani* or *wanaragua*, are stripped of meaning; and the once important goal of ensuring continuity from a more knowledgeable, often times older, generation to the younger ones is no longer prioritized. However, in TEDx Belmopan, Arana married three objectives. He honored the Garifuna tradition on which his career has been built, staged a performance for an audience that clearly expected one and explained a concept nobody had ever articulated before.

At a superficial level, Joshua's claim to be a feminist may be interpreted as patronizing. For example, he states that women are not bothered at having to assume responsibility for single parent homes. However, when taken in context of his lived Garifuna experience, the meaning of his statement can be understood from a different perspective.

Historical observers who lived among Garinagu after European contact report that women alone were farmers. While men would clear the land in preparation for planting, women - it was and still is accepted - bring things to life; through their capable hands, crops and children blossom and grow. These observers further noted that women, who were returning from farms carried their babies in addition to the day's

harvest alone, even when accompanied by men. It would seem that Garifuna women have been socialized to sustain heavy loads like husbands, the swollen bellies of unborn children, the strain of the ones already born and challenging lives without complaint. In fact, in a 2014 session of the knowledge mobilization program, Project Ounababa, where elders used to sit with and teach the younger generations about Garifuna songs, it was shared that *buguruani*, meaning ‘your cross’ in Garifuna, is synonymous with ‘your husband.’ These gendered roles extend beyond the home and into daily Garifuna life and practices. Women also bear other responsibilities, including ensuring the transmission and continuity of Garifuna speech, song, food, dance, rituals and oral history. Garifuna women, for example, share a special relationship with music and song: Women have not only been tasked with serving as the recipients through which songs are *ichahowa*, or inspired, but have also accepted responsibility for remembering songs. Female composers set rhythms to poetic lyrics, sit down with small groups of friends to teach and subsequently release them without laying claim to intellectual property.

Joshua's paternal grandmother, Rosa Arana, was a composer of traditional punta songs. Although he may not be aware of his grandmother's influence on his musical career, it is noteworthy that Joshua Arana excels, not only as a master Garifuna drummer, but also as a lead Garifuna vocalist or ‘caller.’ Anyone who has seen him walk into the circle of singers and dancers at an all-night *beluria* vigil recognizes his presence as commanding. Participants, who form the outer circle, will part to allow him entry into the center where the drummers and *gayusa*, chorus of singers, usually take their places. Once Joshua has entered, *primera* drummers and lead *gayusa* singers willingly and willfully yield their spaces to him. While the role of calling songs has now been assumed by women, Garifuna elders still remember a time when this was part of the drummer's job description. Joshua, Ronald ‘Ronnie’ MacDonald and Tyson ‘Tat’ Johnson are but a few Garifuna drummers who continue the vocation of this traditional role. As such, Joshua puts into manifest a dying tradition of skillfully extricating rhythms from the drums while dictating the pace of drumming and the genre by calling songs. As men have faltered in continuing this tradition, female lead *gayusa* singers have added it to their job descriptions. Perhaps it is the recognition of the woman's nurturing role, not only in the home, but also the contributions to cultural preservation that lead Joshua to appreciate and celebrate the Garifuna feminist spirit in the TEDx talk.

Since the arrival of European usurpers to the island Garinagu call their homeland, the Garifuna story has been punctuated by violence, loss, suffering, poverty and trauma. Not fully understanding the power and intentions of the enemy it faced in the 1600s, the Garinagu of St. Vincent (*Yurumein*) confronted a group of Europeans intent on taking possession of the two things Garinagu most valued: freedom and land. Over two hundred years of sporadic physical skirmishes and superficial treaty resolutions

ended with a final battle in 1795, forced migration to Central America in 1797 and survival of a culture. Perhaps because of this resilience, there has been a fascination with the Garinagu, as evidenced by the almost 1000 publications that have subjected them to the scrutiny of priests, travelers, historians, linguists, anthropologists and other academics. Many interpretations of Garifuna traditions are framed by biases that erroneously characterize the Garinagu. These distortions end up being cited, published, debated, accepted, repeated and consequently taught in schools.

What is often absent in these discourses is the interpretation of the Garifuna experience from knowledgeable sources. One reason for this is that scholars enter Garifuna communities not truly understanding Garifuna life. Garifuna traditions exist for and can be practiced by all Garinagu; however, it is uncommon for persons to sit and ponder the significance of these practices. Unknown to academics is that a select group of Garifuna practitioners possess the distinct ability to explain cultural phenomena; they are considered experts. For healing, for example, the cultural bearer is the *sinabui* or the *buyei*. For song, the cultural bearer is the composer, the person whose body serves as a vessel to receive *ichahówarüüti*, the inspirational process through which songs are birthed. The cultural bearer for disseminating the song is the lead vocalist or the caller in the *gayusa*, who is usually distinguished by an ability to learn quickly, possesses strong vocal chords, owns a unique musical voice discernible above all others and demonstrates a vast memory capacity for storing, retrieving and teaching songs. The assumption made by scholars seems to be that the cultural bearer can also provide explanations about the craft he/she has mastered. This, however, is almost never the case.

Roy Cayetano, one of the most prominent experts on the Garifuna, often refers to the experience of acquiring traditional skills after studying anthropology in the 1970s. Though he may not be as proficient as a drummer as others might be, for example, he has deep insights into rhythms and patterns of drumbeats, though he does not lay claim to the title of *daünbria* or drummer. Joshua is an undisputed master Garifuna drummer who has moved beyond drumming techniques and has learnt to question, observe and analyze his craft. However, this analytic process did not come naturally for him. For this reason, he acknowledges Roy Cayetano, Theodore Aranda, Audrey Ariola, and Kelvin Sabal, the persons with whom he consulted in order to gain a better understanding of his art. This process allowed him to personify the drum in his presentation. The phenomenon of cultural bearer and expert is one of many interdependences that can be explained by the Garifuna world view *Aü bu amürü nu*, “I for you and you for me.”

Garifuna, that hybrid Amerindian-African bond forged in the Caribbean in the 1600s, is what Joshua Arana was gifted at birth. The gift basket contained a language, food, clothing, beliefs, world view, music, dance, songs and other traditions. The simplest of perspectives is that one born in a Garifuna home automatically becomes Garifuna.

The truth, as usual, is much more complex. While he was immersed in an environment that continues to be recognized as a Garifuna cultural oasis, Joshua entered adolescence when his country, Belize, had recently gained independence, and the odor of colonialism was still freshly suspended in the air. The call for nationalism by the newly elected government was cemented during independence, threatening to erase ethnic diversity in such a way that the uniqueness of the Garifuna culture would be subsumed by the ill-conceived notion that there are no differences between Belizeans. The momentum of this discourse was threatening to silence longstanding Garifuna narratives of survival and resilience, wrapping the Belizean Garinagu instead in a flag that separated them from the nationhood they shared with other Garinagu in Honduras, Guatemala and Nicaragua.

Joshua's teenage formation was influenced by this confluence of ideologies that were starting to transform the communal expressions of Garifuna culture, but his childhood had already anchored him in traditional Garifuna life. These differences in perspectives continue to shape his life today. For example, he acknowledges his *Gari-funadüaü* and, at every opportunity where he may be called upon to represent that heritage, he uses traditional wear. It's not a uniform, as some have erroneously perceived it to be, but instead an outward representation of the inner world he embraces. His outfits encapsulate an understanding of the world into which he was born, while at the same time being one of the simplest and most direct ways of manifesting, declaring and defining his identity.

In every Garifuna community, there are elders who are knowledgeable about traditional Garifuna life. At first there seemed to have been an interest to share Garifuna culture with the world. Furthermore, in alignment with the Garifuna world view of *Aü bun amürü nu*, the collaboration with the academic world was seen as a means of representation, a way to present Garifuna perspectives to a world that did not understand it. However, as Garinagu have accessed academic writings, some elders have expressed concerns about the wrong interpretations of Garifuna traditions. Furthermore, persons outside of the community are seen as 'the Garifuna experts' after having spent weeks in Garifuna communities. The idea of reducing and forcing real Garifuna lives into abstract theoretical frameworks as though they only exist on paper has made Garifuna experts wary about engaging with scholars. Lastly, the impressions created by the misinterpretations of academics influences the impressions that are formed by persons who have never stepped foot in a Garifuna community. This situation has given birth to two phenomena: 1) Garifuna experts have lost interest in engaging with academics and 2) Garifuna experts have recognized an urgency to disseminate their knowledge to a younger generation and to document their own ethno-cultural legacy without relying on the academic world.

Joshua's presentation at TEDx Belmopan was a convergence of all these factors: he is a master Garifuna drummer who is rooted in traditions but navigates a non-traditional

world. With the help of Garifuna experts, he has learnt to analyze his Garifuna world and craft and can now explain it from an emic perspective and in a way that had never been done before, as a personification of his lived Garifuna experience. His perspectives are shaped by the gender of a biologically male body which he inhabits but he empathizes with and openly admires the Garifuna women who nurture children and their culture and have assumed responsibility of its continuity and preservation. Though he is seen as a drummer, a title he openly claims, he is also a caller, a lead *gayusa* singer. Even though he uses the platform of a stage, speaks to an audience, plays the drum and sings songs for them, his presentation cannot be conceived as just a performance for the sole objective of entertainment. Passing unperceived by his audience, he starts by invoking his ancestors and honors their presence, requesting authorization to speak. At the deepest level, he offered a prayer and a nineteen-minute response flowed from his lips, ending with a standing ovation.

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AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL REFLECTIONS ON GARIFUNA OUTMIGRATION AND THE LIVING LEGACY OF THOMAS VINCENT RAMOS

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Abstract

In this article, I undertake an autobiographical exploration of Garifuna outmigration from Dangriga, Belize to the US from the 1960s onward. In the process, I highlight the living legacy of Honduras-born Belizean Garifuna social activist Thomas Vincent Ramos, whose efforts in the 20th century to promote Garifuna language, culture and heritage live on today in the work of activists in Garifuna communities throughout Central America, as well as in Garifuna communities in the US and elsewhere in the diaspora.

Key terms: Garifuna diaspora, Thomas Vincent Ramos, outmigration, Dangriga, Belize

Introduction

I was born in Dangriga Town, a major population and cultural center of the afro-indigenous Garifuna in Belize, on August 9, 1958. I have a clear memory of October 31, 1961 day, when Hurricane Hattie swept across the Caribbean and came ashore in Belize City, hitting all the local towns including Dangriga Town. I was only three years old, but I remember that dreadful day because I almost died. The rain was pouring down, and everything was flying in the air. My sister and I were alone in the kitchen of our house on top of our kitchen table because the water was coming up very fast. By the time the water overtook us, I saw my grandfather come through the kitchen window. He quickly snatched me and my sister threw us on his back and swam out of the kitchen windows to safety. If I've never thanked him before, I will thank my grandfather now, for saving my life.

Another clear recollection that I have from my childhood in Belize is that of my

grandmother, who we referred to as 'Mama,' taking me and my sisters to our family farm located two miles from the entrance to Dangriga Town. Without fail, every morning my grandmother would wake up all five of her granddaughters and take us all walking barefoot to the farm where we assisted in the heavy work of cleaning and clearing the land, until it was time for us to return home and get ready for school. On Saturdays, we stayed and worked on the farm all day. Ever since, I have never particularly liked yard work because of my childhood experiences in Dangriga.

Most of the cassava that was harvested from our family farm went directly for processing at the Dangriga Starch Cooperative Factory while the rest was made into cassava bread that was also sold at the factory, which was located near our home, right on Dangriga Main Street at a location now called 'Mr. Flabbs.' My grandmother was the only mother that I knew at that time, and she took us everywhere she went. Every time she went to the factory, we were there with her.

I remember there was always music playing at the Factory, but it wasn't the kind of music I was accustomed to. In a 25 x 34 square foot room, there were three to four women sitting around a huge silver tin, which was filled with starch. The women's job was to fill up sandwich sized plastic bags with casava starch and then to seal them. My sisters and I were responsible for taking the sealed starch bags and putting them neatly in a pile while keeping count of each one that we put on the stack. Music filled the room, and I clearly remember that the type of music being played repeatedly in the background was music that we refer to today as 'freedom songs,' 'patriotic songs' and 'folk songs.' I found out later that this was the music of Honduras-born Belizean Garifuna social activist Thomas Vincent Ramos. This is how I came to know the lyrics and meaning of every song written and sung by T.V. Ramos.

During the decades before my birth, people like Ramos had fought and won an end to centuries of oppressive labor conditions in Belize, where workers were often tied to particular estates by unbreakable contracts. My childhood years in Belize, where Garifuna communities constitute one of the main ethnic groups, were characterized by people on the move, both around the country and outside of the country (Palacio, 1995). In most cases, people were moving to seek a better life. Part of these general movements of people was a mass exodus of Garifuna from Dangriga, which included myself. In this article I will discuss aspects of this process of outmigration and how it has affected ancestral Garifuna cultural and linguistic repertoires.

Garifuna outmigration

According to Garifuna social scientist Myrtle Palacio (2002) in her article titled Dangriga BZ or USA?: Out-Migration Experiences of a Garifuna Community in Post-Independent Belize:

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, there was tremendous ease of movement between Garifuna people of Dangriga, Livingston in Guatemala and Trujillo in

Honduras. The primary reason was to search out wage earning and trading prospects; but also for reasons of culture-to participate in burials, births and the ancestral *dugu* ceremony [...] This was facilitated by the skilled boatmanship of the men, as well as the accessibility to the types of crafts necessary to cross the channels. In the early 1900s, large numbers of Garifuna men moved to Puerto Barrios, Guatemala, for brief periods to find employment in the banana industry, using their knowledge of English to secure clerical jobs. Later some went further away as merchant marines, as contract labor to Panama, Great Britain, and as stowaways to the United States. This was the prelude to further outward movement of the Garifuna people. (1)

M. Palacio's study of the outmigration of Garifuna people from Dangriga during the latter half of the 20th century is one of the few studies available on this topic. In her study, she utilizes data from census reports and immigration files, but as she explains, these types of data can be less than reliable, leading her to conclude that "it is difficult to quantify the out-migration of Garifuna people from Dangriga." (M. Palacio, 2002: 7). That said, in general there has been a steep rise in Garifuna outmigration to the US from Dangriga and elsewhere in Belize and the rest of Central America, that shows no sign of abating. M. Palacio also points out that Garifuna migration to the US from the 1960s onward differs from earlier waves in that the proportion of Garifuna outmigrants who have decided to settle permanently in the diaspora has been greater than was previously the case, when the great majority eventually returned to live closer to their ancestral communities.

Prior to the accelerated outmigration period from the 1960s onward, Garifuna people lived in Dangriga as a community with a deep sense of pride in their similar heritage and shared linguistic, cultural, and ethnic repertoires, with most speaking Garifuna as their main home/ first language. At that time, those who left the community to work elsewhere normally returned to Dangriga eventually, to settle and 'build' (M. Palacio, 1980: 1). Garifuna anthropologist Dr. Joseph Palacio (1976, 1992, 1993) has cited the outmigration of Garifuna people, particularly that of Garifuna leaders from Dangriga, as a causal factor giving rise to the increasing challenges faced by those who strive for the maintenance of Garifuna cultural and linguistic heritage. Many Garifuna from Dangriga agree with him that the outmigration of the Garifuna people from Dangriga has resulted in "erosion of the traditional culture [...] and [...] lack of pride in the Garifuna culture" (J. Palacio, 1992: 24).

According to Joseph Palacio (1993):

In approximately 300 years of development as a people, the Garifuna have journeyed from being Carib Indians in South America to Black Caribs in St. Vincent in the eastern Caribbean; survived expulsion to Honduras, Central America; traversed the channels to British Honduras, now Belize, and self-identified as Garifuna; and presently [...] [a substantial number] live in the United States. (25)

J. Palacio also lists some of the effects of Garifuna outmigration to the US on communities back in Belize: “While the November 19th [Garifuna Settlement Day, a national holiday in Belize] celebration serves as a rallying point of sorts, ethnicity is more symbolic and invoked at will [...and] the underlying meanings of rituals are lost” (1993: 25).

In his study of the Garifuna in Los Angeles, one of the largest Garifuna diasporic communities in the US, Joseph Palacio (1992) finds that “The Garifuna have transferred some symbols of the culture and successfully formed their own colonies within America [...] They see the U.S. as providing better opportunities, for reasons such as improvement of living standards, to expand one’s horizons, opportunities for self-improvement” (26). But in another study, he observes that “Symbols attached to ‘things’ American are more valued, which has made it easier to assimilate and identify as Americans [...] In so doing, Garifuna have lost the ‘difference’ that gave previous generations respect in America.” (J. Palacio, 1993: 25).

An autobiographical case study of outmigration from Dangriga to the US

I came to live in the US when I was ten years old in the late 1960s. Home for my parent in the US at that time was Brooklyn, New York. I remember it clearly. This was a time in Dangriga when children my age were being raised by our grandparents, because our parents had migrated, mainly to the US, to seek a better life. Grandmothers, like mine, and some grandfathers as well, had taken on the task of full-time child rearing in addition to farming, fishing or hunting. They were therefore just as deeply impacted by the process of Garifuna outmigration as were the migrants themselves. I know that this was the case for my grandparents, who only had one daughter, and that daughter was in America.

My parents and several of their peers were actually recruited as consultants in the studies (some of which are cited above) of the outmigration of Garifuna people from Dangriga conducted by Myrtle Palacio and Joseph Palacio. I believe most Garifuna people my age would agree that it was our parents’ generation that initiated the massive and permanent movement of Garifuna from Dangriga to the US. The United States immigration office was located in Belize City, 36 miles from the shores of Dangriga, and they were always crowded. It might be fair to say that most of the passengers on the boat that normally transported people from Dangriga to Belize City at that time had an appointment with the United States Immigration Department. Some were of my parents’ generation and were making their original move to the US. Others were the children, and sometimes even the parents, who would be making the journey to be reunited with those, like my mother, who had already settled in the US. Some grandparents who were delivering their grandchildren to their parents in America at this time took advantage of the opportunity to emigrate from Dangriga to the US. My grandmother was one of them.

On that warm and clear Monday evening on that 4th day of May in 1968, I don't seem to remember having any sentimental feelings or reflections on my departure from Dangriga. Perhaps it was because I was only ten years old at the time. I do, however, remember the experience of the plane ride. It was the very first time that I had ever been on an airplane and I was fascinated. It was night time when the plane started descending over New York City, and I was amazed and in awe at the sight of the tremendous number of lights glaring at me from down below. The sight from the airplane was unbelievable, not only because I had never seen that many lights in my life, but also because these were electric lights, instead of the candles, kerosene lamps and burning firewood that lit up the night in Dangriga.

My family and I arrived at Kennedy Airport late that evening and drove to the tiny three-bedroom Bedford Stuyvesant brownstone apartment in Brooklyn that became our new home. Upon our arrival, we were immediately confronted by the racially saturated realities of US society, and we were thrust headlong into a racialized American crisis, since it was exactly one month to the day that the civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King had been shot dead in Memphis. We witnessed the ensuing riots on the television, a medium that was also new to me, as the numbers of people who were losing their lives in the African American Civil Rights Movement for social justice continued to mount. I learned that many others had lost their lives before my arrival in protests against public school segregation, in the Montgomery bus boycotts, and in thousands of demonstrations throughout the South and elsewhere against persisting racial discrimination. Their lives had not been lost in vain, however, since it was their actions that had led to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, as well as to the formation and consolidation of a number of organizations in the civil rights coalition which included the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the National Urban League (NUL), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

I was in the fifth grade when I started school in America, and by then my parents had moved the family from Bedford Stuyvesant in Brooklyn to St. Albans in Queens. Considered by my classmates to be the little 'alien' girl from the Island (most Americans think Belize is an Island, until you tell them it is not), I was excited about America, and ready to embrace the new culture. However, in my 5th grade elementary school class, I quickly found out that African American children, although they looked like me, chose to treat me differently, and I believe this was because of my strong non-American accent. I didn't want to be treated differently, so I tried very hard to fit in.

It was difficult for me to get my friends to ignore the fact that I was different from them. I did all that I could to meet their expectations, hoping our obvious differences would not work against me. It was still a challenge, not only because of my strong accent, but also because I didn't dress like an American and I certainly didn't act like an American.

Yet still, I made an honest effort to be an American, like them. I hated the times when my friends would come to my house, because my father would speak Garifuna to me, out loud, and I would cringe. I did all that I could to make sure that my parents, especially my father, was never around when my friends visited. I had a lot of friends in high school because of my quest for acceptance. Nevertheless, by the time I completed high school, most of my closest friends knew that I was from Belize, and I spoke a foreign language, Garifuna.

I was ten years old when I met my parents for the first time, since my siblings and I had been raised by my mother's mother. I need to acknowledge the role that both my grandmother and my parents, particularly my father, played in promoting the Garifuna language at home. My grandmother, who raised me until I was ten, spoke only Garifuna to me and my siblings. She insisted that we speak only Garifuna back to her, and not to speak Belizean English lexifier Creole to her. Creoles are another major ethnic group in Belize, with a unique and fascinating set of linguistic and cultural repertoires all their own. My grandmother banned me and my siblings from speaking the Creole language, because, as she would say, "We are not Creole." We therefore only spoke Creole with our Creole friends and with our Garifuna friends outside of the house.

Belize has always been plurilingual and pluricultural. In Dangriga, I grew up with Creole, Mayan, Mestizo and Chinese people. I think it's safe to say that all of us from Dangriga have Creole friends, and all of them proudly speak their Creole language. For me, what's fascinating about this is the fact that a great number of Garifuna people seem to be highly influenced by Creole people to the point where many Garifuna prefer to speak the Creole language, which has been promoted as the national unifying language of Belize, instead of the Garifuna language. What's even more fascinating, is that many of the Garifuna people from Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua seem to prefer to speak the Spanish language instead of the Garifuna language. From the time when I met my parents in the US, my father made sure that my siblings and I only spoke Garifuna in our home, and he also banned us from speaking the Creole language. Both by grandmother and my father were strong advocates for the Garifuna language, and I believe that they are the reason why I turned out to be an advocate for Garifuna language, culture and heritage, just like them.

New York Technical College (formally known as New York City Community College) on Jay Street in Brooklyn is the place that I hold responsible for bringing me into tune with myself, especially in the areas of social and cultural awareness. It all started with a sociology class that I took with an African American professor, who was brilliant! He made the class very interesting as we focused on social justice issues, not only those of the African Americans in the US, but also those of all different types of people of color all over the world. By this time, most of the people raced as Black who I was reading and learning about resembled me, except they were not Garifuna; they were from the US and other places.

I was one of those students who had to find the funds to help pay for my college expenses because my parents could not afford it. I was lucky enough to obtain federal and state financial aid grants, which provided me the opportunity to attend and graduate from New York City Technical College with an Associate degree. I was not so lucky, however, when I decided to pursue a bachelor's degree at Syracuse University. The federal financial aid grant that I received was not enough to cover the state tuition. In addition to the small federal grant, I needed a student loan, and I had to participate in the federal work study program in order to pay the expenses. I have only just recently completed paying off that federal student loan, many years after graduating.

At Syracuse University, I bombarded myself with readings on the histories of African American, African and Caribbean people. It was at this time that I read and learned about the indigenous peoples of the Caribbean, especially the indigenous peoples who once inhabited the Caribbean islands of St. Vincent and the Grenadines who are actually my ancestors. At Syracuse I began taking a deep and serious interest in finding out more about who I am, as a Garifuna. By the time I had to declare a major, I decided to pursue my interest in the Arts, and I graduated from Syracuse University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Visual and Performing Arts, and a minor in Communications. As if I was answering a spiritual calling, immediately after graduation I moved back to Brooklyn to see what role I might play in putting my education to work to help meet some of the needs of the Garifuna community in New York City. Because I love children, I was able to assess that there was a need for a program to promote Garifuna language and culture among young people. From then on, I felt compelled, and I feel that it is my responsibility to myself, to God and to my ancestors to preserve, protect, promote, uphold and safeguard my Garifuna heritage, culture and language.

A few years later, the *Ilagulei* ('Roots') (all translations in this article are by the author, unless specified otherwise) Garifuna Performing Arts Company was created. In 1993 Dorina Castillo, James Lovell and I came together and started promoting the Garifuna performing arts. I utilized my skills, talents and my love for our Garifuna music, to teach and train children, youth and young adults in Garifuna dance, song and drama. What was nice and unique about *Ilagulei*, is that we added American flavor to our Garifuna art. For example, we translated Garifuna songs, poems and drama into English and did our performances in both Garifuna and in English, thus helping our audiences to understand and interpret what they were seeing and hearing.

Songs sung in Garifuna and English became a trademark of *Ilagulei*. The organization also provided Garifuna seminars and workshops in universities, colleges, and in public and private schools. As the Executive and Artistic Director of the organization, one of my major responsibilities was to keep the organization solvent. For a grassroots organization, that meant doing everything. I did a lot in *Ilagulei*: I taught and trained the children, I put together programs from scratch, I negotiated and booked performances, I selected the venues for events and performances, and I solicited funds for the

organization, which included writing grant proposals. I served as the focal point and the spokesperson for *Ilagulei* for almost fifteen years, after which time I became burned out!

Since my resignation from *Ilagulei*, and I have gone back to school to pursue and obtain a Graduate degree in Liberal Studies and a second Master's degree in Public Affairs and Administration. I decided to study Public Affairs and Administration because I strongly believe that this will help me to recommit myself to public service as the Executive and Artistic Director of a new organization (C.A.M.E. International, Inc.) dedicated to the promotion of Garifuna heritage, language and culture.

The living legacy of Thomas Vincent Ramos

Thomas Vincent Ramos was born September 17, 1887, in Puerto Cortez, Honduras. Like his contemporary Marcus Garvey, T.V. Ramos was both a human and civil rights activist as well as a strong advocate for Garifuna heritage, language, culture, especially among the younger generations. He played a key role in establishing November 19th, Garifuna Settlement Day, as a national holiday in Belize, even before the nation was declared independent. Ramos represented the Garifuna people locally, nationally and internationally and was deeply involved in guaranteeing Garifuna access to formal education. Many Garifuna consider T.V. Ramos to be responsible for 'waking up' the Garifuna people, allowing them to recognize and realize their worth, their capability and to never forget their strength and resilience. Ramos made it clear that he wanted Garifuna people to stay united, work together and do the hard work required to develop, maintain and safeguard the Garifuna nation. Ramos wanted Garifuna people to thrive, not only in Dangriga, but also no matter where they lived. The legacy of Thomas Vincent Ramos, and his work for the advancement, preservation, maintenance, and safeguarding of Garifuna heritage, culture and language would later spread to Garifuna communities in the rest of Belize, in Honduras, in Guatemala, in Nicaragua and eventually to the Garifuna communities in the United States.

T. V. Ramos did not live to witness the generations of Garifuna that have stopped going to the farm, stopped fishing, and have become teachers, nurses and store clerks instead. He did not live to witness the generation of Garifuna people who are 'educated' but have stopped speaking Garifuna and have made Creole and Spanish their 'own' language. He did not live to witness the first generation of Garifuna that outmigrated from Dangriga for a so-called better life and left their children in the care of the grandmothers and grandfathers. He did not live to witness the mass exodus of Garifuna who voluntarily, or non-voluntarily, migrated to the US, made a home abroad, and now send funds back to Dangriga, sometimes promoting a dynamic of dependency. He did not live to see that while there are fewer and fewer Garifuna in Dangriga who still speak Garifuna, there are also a tremendous number of books, articles and now blogs being written about the Garifuna people.

On the other hand, Thomas Vincent Ramos would be happy to know that in 1992 the Garifuna applied for membership in the Ottawa-based World Council for Indigenous Peoples, and were accepted. This acceptance was a political victory for the Garifuna, given the prevailing ambivalence toward people raced as Black who claim Indigenous origins in the Americas, who often are obliged to present a detailed case for inclusion, while those raced as White who claim Indigenous ancestry are more readily accepted. Most of us would agree that T.V. Ramos would be very disappointed to see that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has declared the Garifuna language to be endangered. On the other hand, Ramos would be very proud to see, thanks to the efforts of the National Garifuna Council, that Garifuna heritage and culture have been proclaimed by UNESCO as Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, and are now recognized worldwide as such. I believe that Thomas Vincent Ramos would be just as proud to witness the countless and ceaseless efforts by the National Garifuna Council of Belize and other Garifuna people from Dangriga and elsewhere who are still among the living to keep Garifuna heritage, culture and language alive.

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THE PRESENCE OF ‘LA LLORONA’ IN PUERTO RICO AND BEYOND

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Abstract

The figure of La Llorona is not monolithic, and different iterations of her haunting presence exist. While the most well-known versions of La Llorona hail from Mexican and Chicano lore, as these have been the ones most often referenced in media renditions of her, Puerto Rico has Lloronas as well. From ancient Taíno legends to morality tales issued as warnings for blossoming young women (as well as philandering men), La Llorona is everywhere. Found in stretches of road known as *la curva de La Llorona* to a bridge referred to as *el Puente de La Llorona*, Puerto Rico has its own unique history with this spectral figure. In this article, I present several traditional narratives regarding La Llorona in Puerto Rico, and I attempt to trace some of their possible origins on the island. I also share some contemporary iterations of her spirit in Puerto Rico in articulations ranging from oral tradition to social media.

Key terms: La Llorona, folklore, oral tradition

Betrayed by her partner, a woman kills her children by drowning them in a river or killing them on the river bank. After she realizes what she has done, she kills herself. Instead of finding peace, she eternally roams around the river, trying to find her children. Sometimes, she tries to find the man who wronged her. If all of this sounds a bit familiar, then you have heard about La Llorona before. A story emblematic of the monstrous feminine, La Llorona is a spectral mother who wanders, weeping and wailing, throughout Latin America.

La Llorona forms part of the cultural landscapes of Mexico, Guatemala, Panamá, Colombia, and other parts of the Greater Caribbean and beyond. Mainstream media mostly centers on Mexican and Chicano variants of the story. Numerous adaptations of La Llorona have been created for film, television, advertising, and even theme park

attractions. On television, La Llorona has been used as a “story of the week” narrative device in shows such as *Supernatural* and *Grimm*. In film, she is featured in various cinematic works, including the relatively recent Hollywood production *The Curse of La Llorona* and the Guatemalan production *La Llorona*, which was shortlisted for an Oscar nomination. There are a number of films centered around Llorona-like figures as well, such as *Mama*. In advertising, there are the *Got Milk?* and Verizon campaigns that used La Llorona as a comedic device to push their products, which have very little to do with her traditional rendering.

The use of La Llorona as part of a theme park attraction is therefore not at all unexpected, first without naming her specifically, as in references to the ‘woman in white,’ in haunted houses, and later more explicitly when La Llorona became a featured attraction for the Universal Studios Hollywood “Halloween Horror Nights” in 2011, as Mexican actor Diego Luna was brought on board to create *La Llorona: Villa de Almas Perdidas* as part of the seasonal repertoire. As reported in the Chicago Tribune, the attraction recreated a small Mexican town in the form of a labyrinth in which the story of La Llorona was told, or at least the version of La Llorona that Diego Luna knows (Calle, 2011). The attraction was such a success that La Llorona returned several times, even as a part of the “Icons” edition of “Halloween Horror Nights.”

Mediatic and folkloric descriptions of La Llorona usually describe her as an apparently beautiful woman in white, but once one approaches her, her horrific countenance is revealed. She is either covered in blood or likened to a ghoul. Other variants of the tale are even more terror-inspiring: “Some say that when La Llorona turns, she has the face of a horse, or that she has the face of a skull. Sometimes she has no face at all” (Loya, 1997: 32).

Caribbean iterations of the spirit are no different, with entities similar to La Llorona dotting the islands. In the Caribbean territories colonized by the Spanish, there is, for example, the tale of La Ciguapa from Cuba and the Dominican Republic, which describes a beautiful, but “savage” woman who lives in the forests or mountains and whose hair so long that it acts as clothing. She descends from her hiding place to look for food... and men. It is said that she bewitches men in order to annihilate them, and that one can tell that she is nearby, because she makes a loud keening sound. It is also said that she has monstrous legs or backward facing feet.

In the Caribbean territories colonized by the French, the Llorona-like figure of La Diablesse can be found in Trinidad and Tobago, St. Lucia, Martinique, and Guadeloupe. Sharing some of La Ciguapa’s features and impossibly beautiful, La Diablesse is portrayed as a woman obsessed with her looks and the concept of eternal youth, so much so that she strikes a deal with the devil so that she can be young and gorgeous forever. The price that she pays in return is to have one of her feet transformed into a cloven hoof. Bissessarsingh (2013) echoes the frequent description of her as a “beautiful woman in the Martiniquan dress – voluminous skirts, head-tie, hat perched jauntily on

her head.” Like the Ciguapa, she seemingly has a thirst for men; with Bissessarsingh (2013) adding that she “waits along the lonely paths for heedless menfolk who would digress from their courses to accommodate a pretty face.”

In the Caribbean territories colonized by the British, there is also Mami Wata, who is described as a half-woman, half-fish entity that can assume either form entirely. Mami Wata is considered to be a powerful being who can grant wishes. She is often said to be a great beauty, like La Diabliesse, with long flowing hair and the ability to bewitch, which she shares with La Ciguapa. While the story of Mami Wata is common in the Greater Caribbean, her origins can be traced back to West Africa. According to Elizabeth Ofosu Johnson (2018), Mami Wata:

is a deity that has existed in Africa for as long as African history and culture can recollect [She] traces back to the earliest of African societies as recorded by the griots and keepers of history. The Dogon’s creation myth tells the stories of Mami Wata and traces records of her existence to more than 4000 years ago.

Enslaved Africans brought their beliefs and traditions to the Caribbean, and Mami Wata was among them. Venerated and feared, Mami Wata is perhaps the most powerful of the female spirits in the Caribbean. There are versions of the deity’s story which indicate that she is a powerful ally, but dangerous enemy, bestowing wealth upon the condition of receiving absolute fidelity from her male suitors, but with great tragedy befalling the men who betray her (Hablemos de Mitologías, 2019). Like La Ciguapa, La Diabliesse, and La Llorona, Mami Wata has no qualms about destroying a man who has wronged her.

Puerto Rico has no lack of stories of female spirits. In fact, there are tales of Mami Wata in parts of the island, usually connected with spiritual practices associated with Afro-Caribbean religious figures such as Yemayá or Santa Marta la Dominadora. However, there are other stories of a specter specifically known as La Llorona or La Llorosa. Similar to Mexican and Chicano versions of La Llorona, Puerto Rican accounts of her describe a humanoid female, weeping by a body of water. Frequently, the spirit is spotted near a bridge or by the side of the road.

Unlike the Mexican and Chicano variants, in Puerto Rico the La Llorona figure rarely kills her children herself. More often than not, the children die as a result of a tragic circumstance or unfortunate accident. which is the case of La Llorosa in the municipality of Aibonito. Local lore says that her spirit still roams around a bridge on the PR-14 highway, where she allegedly lost her child. The origin story of La Llorosa tells of a young woman who, despite warnings, began a romantic relationship with a philanderer, who left shortly after the birth of their first child. Already facing economic difficulties and now with a child, the woman would often work herself to exhaustion while shouldering the baby. It was on her way back to Aibonito that she paused to rest and feed the child. She placed the baby on the ground, by the side of the bridge, while

she prepared some food. When she turned around to feed the child, she realized that the baby had fallen over the bridge. The story goes on to add that the young woman subsequently lost her mind in grief and began to roam constantly around the bridge in tears until she was taken to an asylum or passed away. Despite her death, you can still hear her cries by the bridge. Sometimes, one can even hear her child crying as well.

La Llorosa of Aibonito is a perfect example of the variant of the La Llorona story where La Llorona herself fades into the background, with her chilling effect being limited to the sound of her weeping. In this tradition, it is her child who becomes the more terrifying figure. While La Llorosa's cries can often be heard, what is usually sighted is a baby, screaming for food. The child tends to manifest only when men are around, and it is said that when a man tries to feed it, the baby will say, "*No la mastiques que yo tengo dientes*" meaning "Don't (pre-)chew the food, I have teeth". Upon uttering those words, the baby is transformed into a demonic entity. This Llorosa and child spirit are haunting the bridge in search of the man who led them to their sorry fate.

Other Puerto Rican iterations of La Llorona take on elements of ghost stories such as "The Vanishing Hitchhiker" and "The Lady in White." This seems to be the case with the La Llorona of the municipality of Lajas. In October 2005:

a tormented and wailing female specter was alleged to have materialized after midnight [...] A *celaje blanco*, a white figure that would throw itself on the floor and call out in a feminine voice for '*mamá, papá, Carlos y Pablo*'. (Ramírez Rodríguez, 2010: 2)

The rumored origin of the spirit was a woman who perished in an accident along with her family, and who was haunting the area in hopes of finding their spirits and being reunited with them. Instead of being terrified, the community actually appeared to embrace the spirit. They would gather at the site by the hundreds to try to see her. They brought floodlights to the location in order to provide proper lighting for a sighting. Community members even wanted to "grant her soul some peace," and to this end brought a priest to bless the area and help her transition from the earthly plane.

While this 2005 La Llorona incident was later confirmed as a hoax, other La Llorona stories continued to surface in Lajas thereafter. Likewise, Llorona tales have emerged all over Puerto Rico, and municipalities such as Aguas Buenas, Arecibo, Cabo Rojo, and Quebradillas, among others, have their own versions of the tale. Some La Llorona stories have been forgotten over time, but memories of La Llorona live on in locations named for her. Many municipalities have "*curvas de la Llorona*" that designate particularly dangerous stretches of road, as well as "*puentes de la Llorona*" that refer to bridges where unsettling events have occurred. Municipalities such as Barranquitas and San Sebastián have waterfalls, or "*saltos de La Llorona*." There is also a mountain bike trail, Algarrobo MTB, that has a segment of the course called "La Llorona Loop."

Beyond traditional folklore and toponyms, there are more contemporary manifestations of La Llorona in Puerto Rico. As a pedagogical tool, the Puerto Rico Department of Education used la Llorona as part of a prompt for “writing a modern legend” in a teaching module for tenth grade secondary school students (Departamento de Educación de Puerto Rico, 2020: 59). References to La Llorona have been made on creepypasta/short text platforms such as AminoApp, with a community member sharing a story on “La Llorona de Aguas Buenas, Puerto Rico.” La Llorona has also been used in Puerto Rican memes, with an image equating the former mayor of San Juan, Carmen Yulín Cruz, with the Puerto Rican Llorona and comparing the former mayor to a Mexican version of the mythical figure.

Puerto Rican versions of her story mostly depict La Llorona as a victim of circumstance, and if her offspring had died, it was through no fault of her own. The way the story is presented is meant to elicit compassion, even pity, but at the same the story has taken on a didactic function, and La Llorona has become a cultural device meant to scare men, women, and children into conformity with social norms. La Llorona is often used by parents to threaten children into obedience. As has been the case for many Mexican and Chicano children, young Puerto Ricans have grown up listening to stories of how La Llorona, El Cuco, or El Hombre del Saco take away bad children when they disobey their mothers. While adults love telling Llorona tales and may be a bit more skeptical when listening to the stories, La Llorona has moral lessons to teach them as well. La Llorona’s fate could be shared by any woman who has a romantic liaison with somebody who is frowned upon by the community, especially if it leads to a pregnancy. La Llorona and her child’s spirit provide a warning to men who abandon women that philanderers will pay for their transgressions.

La Llorona’s origins are the subject of much discussion and debate, especially regarding whether she is of local origin, or instead an importation that arrived from abroad during the colonial era. In fact, she probably has a variety of sources, some more local than others. There are versions of her story such as that of La Llorona del Túnel de Guajataca, often conflated with the spirit at El Túnel Negro de Quebradillas, that explicitly mention a foreign woman, who after moving to Puerto Rico and establishing a family, tragically loses them near a tunnel which she haunts weepingly forever after. There are also several indigenous legends that have elements similar to present-day stories of La Llorona, such as “*El lamento de la india Guarema*.” In the area of the municipality of Corozal, legends exist of forest monsters, as well as of enchanted maidens or witches that can only be seen at certain times of the year (Rodríguez Fráiz, 1968: 298).

Then there is the legend of Guanina: a Taíno princess who falls in love with a Spanish colonizer, Don Cristóbal de Sotomayor. Their relationship is forbidden, and she knows that her lover will soon be put to death. There are versions of the story wherein she kills herself; others that say that her brother, Agüeybaná, killed her by accident

while attempting to murder Sotomayor (*Guanina y Sotomayor: Leyenda Taina*, 2013). While some liken their story to that of some perennially famous star-crossed lovers, Guanina and Sotomayor's story reiterates at least one of the core moral lessons of La Llorona's story: unacceptable sexual affairs have deadly consequences.

There is another semi-historical, semi-legendary biography that can be related to the La Llorona story in Puerto Rico. While it is difficult to find outside oral tradition, it involves a key figure in Puerto Rican history, namely, Pedro Albizu Campos. The child of Juliana Campos Camos and Alejandro Albizu Romero, Albizu Campos would go on to become a renowned figure in Puerto Rican politics, and a leader in the island's independence movement. Born Pedro Campos, he would later add the Albizu surname when his father belatedly recognized him in 1914. Juliana and Alejandro's relationship was complicated. While she was single, he was married to another woman, but that was not the most delicate aspect of their union. Juliana was the daughter of enslaved individuals, while Alejandro came from a family that benefited from the system of enslavement. Their relationship led to the birth of two children, both named Pedro Campos. While the first child passed away shortly after his birth, Pedro Albizu Campos survived and lived with his mother and her family. Apparently Albizu Romero had nothing to do with his children by Juliana until much later.

After Albizu Campos' birth, Juliana attempted to commit suicide several times, and she was actually called "La Llorona" by the surrounding community (Vázquez Maldonado, 2013). During one of these suicidal events, she attempted to drown herself and a young Albizu Campos in the Río Bucaná, a river in Ponce. Relatives managed to stop Juliana, and both her and Albizu Campos were saved. Sadly, Juliana would eventually succeed in drowning herself, and Albizu Campos was thereafter raised by his aunt, Doña Rosa. The family was impoverished and belonged to the marginalized classes (Rosado, 2003, as cited in Vázquez Maldonado, 2013).

While at times she is used jokingly and even as fodder for memes, there is still much to discover regarding La Llorona in Puerto Rico. Many of her stories belong to highly localized oral traditions that are yet to be transcribed. Instances of written works and historical references are few and far between or out of print. Books that mention indigenous legends are also not numerous, and are usually decades old and largely unavailable to the general public. Often, sources are also limited in scope, as they make only superficial and brief mention of the tale or are narrated from a seemingly pro-colonizer point of view. It is possible that additional La Llorona stories are yet to be discovered, and other ancestral tales may point to more ancient versions of female spirits similar to La Llorona. Learning more about La Llorona and other aspects of our island's spiritual and supernatural legacies can not only help Puerto Ricans to connect to our past, it can also help us to connect with other communities throughout the Caribbean with whom we share so much, despite the balkanization that has shattered our region into Spanish, French, British, Dutch and US colonial/ neo-colonial enclaves.

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DISPLACED: A SHORT STORY

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Abstract

Set in Vieques, Puerto Rico, “Displaced” tells the story of a young woman’s journey through the past to her destiny. In a dreamlike trance, Ana Elba encounters her ancestors who entrust her with purpose, powers, and a mission. She becomes a hero after Hurricane María. Through a magic medallion Ana Elba wields the spirit of Taíno god of nature Boniyael. “Displaced” is a celebration of Puerto Rican’ resilience and Taíno heritage and influence in our culture.

Key Terms: Taíno, Boniyael, Guabacex, Guanina, Hurricane Maria

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It has been a year since Guabancex¹ unleashed her strongest and fiercest storm in centuries. The news called it Hurricane Maria, which is funny knowing how many Doña Marías with a temper there are in our island. It is like they all banded together to give us all a massive *pela*. However, I don’t think they meant for this to happen. There isn’t a place on Vieques that wasn’t ruined after the storm. The mainland also took a hit. Some of us still don’t have power. We lost a lot of people in the aftermath of María. Family members, neighbors, friends we buried in unmarked graves because the government took too long to rescue us, and the smell was unbearable. Our community is mainly older people whose children moved to the mainland and forgot them. They sought quality of life and yet they left the vulnerable behind.

You see, our island is a paradise. People come here to relax, to explore, and to unplug; so, they pay little mind to our struggles and our cries. We have begged for decent medical care, reliable transportation to and from the mainland and no one cares.

Mi Abuela says that the Taíno gods will unleash their wrath if we continue to hurt the land and its people. She says that there is magic in our island and that Atabey,² the

¹ Taíno goddess of wind

² Taíno goddess of earth, water and fertility

Goddess mother, will choose someone in our community to guide us in our journey. She thinks that the island's magic has to be centered in the Ceiba Tree Park near our house. That's what her mother told her when she was little, and she's been saying it to me ever since.

Papi doesn't like her telling me Taíno stories. It's not like he's not proud of our heritage, he just doesn't want me to be to be like Abuela Iris. Tied to nature and stuck believing ancient fairytales of our land, as he calls them.

"Too late" I said.

Two months before the storm came, he left Vieques with my family, I stayed with Abuela because I didn't want her to be alone like so many *viejitos aquí*.

After María came, Abuela and other *doñas* from our community started taking care of the Ceiba trees near our home. They taught me the ways. They took special care of the ancient Ceiba tree. This tree is sacred for our people. Mi Abuela says that taking care of the tree has been a duty in our family for generations. She says that we are descendants of Guanina and Sotomayor³ whose love created the tree.

Mi Abuela says that Guanina fled her brother's yucayeque⁴ one night and met Sotomayor near the place where they were later buried. They sang, they danced, and they made love under the night sky. She says that Atabey recognized their love as pure and true; so, she blessed Guanina with maternity. Sotomayor kept Guanina safe and hidden throughout her pregnancy, until one day, Guarionex,⁵ in a jealous rage, took her from Sotomayor by force. Agueybaná,⁶ Guanina's brother, forced her to give birth to her daughter whom she called Ana, which means 'flower'. The baby was given to the tribe to raise separated from her parents.

According to Abuela, our family comes from Guanina's daughter, Ana. That's the story of my name too. She made my parents call me Ana Elba, which means "exiled flower".

During our days taking care of the Ceiba trees, I stayed behind and enjoyed the little shade the beaten tree could give. I was thinking about Ana, and her story. Abuela says that she had a difficult life because the Taíno people who survived blamed her for everything. That had to make her feel lonely. And displaced, as if she was exiled in her own land and by her own people. Ana was killed by both Taínos and Maroons, both believed that her parents' love disrespected the gods and that her sacrifice would save them from colonization.

I cried for her. I cried for myself too. I also felt displaced. Torn between who Papi wanted me to be, who Abuela thinks I am, and whoever I'm supposed to be.

³ Reference to a Puerto Rican legend in which the sister of Cacique Agueybaná fell in love with Cristobal Sotomayor, a Spaniard.

⁴ The encampment of a cacique, a Taíno leader.

⁵ According to the legend, a Taíno in love with Guanina

⁶ The most powerful cacique of the Taíno people

My mind was taking me places I didn't want to be. The weariness of the thought made me fall asleep right there, underneath the Sacred Tree.

Soon after, I felt as light as a feather. I was floating. I was out of my body. I could see it, lifeless and defenseless. I could also see the tree, but it was different. The Sacred Tree looked beautiful. As if the storm never happened, and it was back to its former glory, with its sugary blossoms everywhere. There were these beautiful rays of light surrounding the Sacred Tree. They were in perfect unison, almost ceremonial. I wanted to join them but was forced to just gaze at their magnificent ritual. I noticed that my heart filled with admiration, love, and every beautiful feeling previously unknown to me coursed through my body. I felt I was one of them. Their energy fueled me. Images were flooding my mind: memories of a past life. I saw them in life, happy, in love, I was her and him. I was both. I recognized them; I've heard their story a million times growing up, Guanina and Sotomayor.

Their spirits floated towards me. I could see their faces. They stood beside me, one on each side. They smiled at me. I belonged here, with them. I felt it so.

They held hands, fused together, and focused their energy on the Sacred Tree. Then, as they faded, a flower grew. It was made of light and spirit. From the flower, a woman emerged.

As the woman floated towards me, her sun-kissed skin told the story of our people and her ebony hair sang our tribe songs. She reached her hand out to me. "Ana Elba" she called out my name as we held hands.

Once more, images flooded my mind. This time, I saw my community. I saw our people's pain. I could hear her voice in my mind. She wanted me to imagine a life without oppression. A life dictated by us and for us. She said that the Taíno gods would keep us safe.

"We are one" she said. "Atabey's power is for all her people" she continued. The woman explained that colonization was a horrific sin and a crime towards our people, and it displaced us and our power.

I could feel my mind sorting through memories I couldn't recall as mine, but I felt them as such.

I was running through woods I half recognized, I was scared and trapped. I could hear a multitude of people chasing after me. My body was exhausted. It couldn't sustain me anymore. Suddenly, I felt a piercing pain in my back. I fell. Total darkness clouded my mind.

When I came to, I was tied. I could see my captors, my people, I loved them. I am them. I felt their hatred as my entire body succumbed to their hate, each blow ripped through my soul. As I laid dying, I saw my opia⁷ split in three. One fragment pierced through me, and I came to.

⁷ Taíno word meaning the soul of the dead.

I was back with the woman, she was Ana, the woman that gave meaning to my name. I saw her death. She showed me images of two other girls I didn't recognize. She said that we were all chosen.

"We are one" she repeated.

"Remember the ways of our people. Find them" she ordered.

She handed me a flower from the Sacred Tree. She kissed my forehead. And I felt my body fall.

When I woke up, from my eventful slumber, I half expected to see a flower in my hand.

"¡Qué viaje!" I thought.

For an entire week, I dreamt of the girls Ana showed me. I felt connected to them. The curly haired one loved to dance, and she was a skilled communicator. In the dreams I had of her, she was a fierce leader, and she took care of the people around her. Like me, people looked up to her.

The light skinned girl was amiable, people around her trusted her. She helped sustain her family. In my dreams, I'd see her tutor young kids around her. I also noticed she was deaf. I cannot understand how I could interpret her signs in my dreams. As if language wasn't a limitation to our connection. Or rather the connection my mind made up. "¡Que sé yo!" I can't really explain it.

"Ana Elba, Ana Elba, *despierta hija*" Abuela Iris said as she desperately entered my room.

"The tree blossomed...the Sacred Tree blossomed it has a beautiful flower. Come, you should see it."

I got up and we both went to see the blossoming tree. I have to admit, it filled me with joy to see Abuela's face. I know how much time she and the other *doñas* dedicated to the tree. They said it was their responsibility.

When everyone left, I stayed behind and inspected the flower. It was truly magical. I noticed a light coming out of it. Then I heard it.

"Ana Elba" it called out my name.

I stood there thinking I was going *loca*. But I heard it again.

"Ana Elba"

I reached into the flower and found a gold medallion. I put it in my pocket and went home to show it to Abuela.

Abuela explained it was a guanín⁸ used by caciques and leaders of the Taíno tribes.

"Atabey must have chosen you to guide our people" Abuela proudly expressed.

⁸ A cacique's medallion and a symbol of authority.

I shared the dreams I've been having about the girls and the dream where I saw Guanina and Sotomayor. I told her that Ana, their daughter, had shared with me her death and how her opia had split into three.

"One for each girl" Abuela replied. "That's why she ordered you to find them. Together you can wield Atabey's power." Abuela theorized.

"How will I find them Abuela?" "It's not like she gave me a map to follow." I replied.

"When she gave you the flower, did she say anything else?"

"Remember the ways of our people. Find them...that's exactly what she said."

Abuela jumped from her chair and went to the kitchen. She looked through the produce.

"*Aja*," she exclaimed "found it!"

Triumphant, she held seeds in her hands. "Our people used to inhale these to communicate with their gods. Let's see if they'll help you." She said as she crushed them.

"Go back to the tree. Lay underneath its shade, inhale these and let sleep overtake you"

Abuela suggested as she placed the guanín around my neck.

There I was again, underneath the Sacred Tree, about to follow Abuela Iris' suggestion, and partake in an ancient Taíno ritual.

I followed Abuelita's instructions, and soon enough I felt my mind and my body separate. I saw myself leave my body. I was floating again.

Like last time, I saw the lights and I recognized them as old friends. They greeted me before conjuring their offspring, Ana.

This time she emerged, in a whirlwind of flowers, leaves and wind. It was a beautiful sight. She reached for the guanín. From her body sprang a beam of emerald energy which the guanín absorbed.

"You carry the essence of Boinayel,⁹ the spirit of nature. Wield this and manipulate the element of earth. Use it to heal our land."

"The others. How do I find them?"

"The guanín will tell you where to go and when" she finished.

Once more, she kissed my forehead, and I fell.

When I came to, Abuela was waiting for me. She recognized the spirit that my guanín held.

"Boinayel" she exclaimed.

I closed my eyes and felt its power through my body. I summoned every beautiful memory, every good feeling, and every powerful emotion my body is capable of. As I healed the land. I healed myself.

⁹ Taíno spirit of nature

I felt my eyes go dark.

I left my body again. I was somewhere else, somewhere familiar. Then, I saw her, Zora, the curly haired girl. I knew where to find her.

I felt grounded again. I was home again.

My island was healed from the devastation. Vieques was back to its traditional paradise status. Only my community knows the truth. Today, I leave my home, my grandma, and everyone I love to follow my destiny. To unite the opias and save our lands.

**DISTANCINGS, ENTANGLEMENTS,
INTERSECTIONALITIES, AND
GENDER IN THE CARIBBEAN**

EL SEXISMO EN EL LENGUAJE Y PROPUESTAS PARA UN LENGUAJE INCLUSIVO

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Resumen

Según la RAE el lenguaje es la facultad del ser humano de expresarse y comunicarse con los demás a través del sonido articulado o de otros sistemas de signos. El movimiento feminista alrededor del mundo ha comprobado que además de servir para comunicar, el lenguaje es de suma importancia para que cada individuo pueda identificarse desde sus identidades (Butler, 2001; Acuña, 2015). Desde las últimas décadas, tanto el movimiento feminista como la comunidad LGBTTQIA+ han insistido en la necesidad de la representación de las diversas identidades de género en el lenguaje. En el español, el género gramatical es marcado por el binomio femenino o masculino; se identifican con el sufijo -a para el femenino y -o para el masculino, este último también funciona como género neutro. Por esto, han surgido varias propuestas para convertir el lenguaje en uno inclusivo, sustituyendo la binariedad por morfemas como -@, -e y -x. El estudio del género en el lenguaje adquirió auge entre los años 60 y 70 siendo Robin Lakoff pionera en dichos estudios. Lakoff logró identificar que las mujeres tienen una manera de hablar particular que es establecida por cómo la sociedad espera que las mujeres hablen y se comporten. Desde ese punto de vista, comenzó a ser más evidente el sexismo—es decir, la imposición del hombre como figura de poder— dentro del lenguaje. Esto es una práctica social que permea en el discurso hablado y escrito, no obstante, es una construcción sociocultural y no propia del lenguaje. A través de este trabajo se exponen algunas de las posturas sobre el debate de sexo vs. género, el sexismo en el lenguaje y las propuestas del lenguaje inclusivo.

Términos clave: lenguaje, sexismo, inclusivo, género

Introducción

No es secreto que vivimos en un mundo dominado por hombres cisgénero (Guterres, 2020 y Viqueira García, 2016) y, en ese sentido, todo aquello que no forma parte de ese arquetipo pasa a un segundo plano. Es decir, las mujeres y los miembros de la comunidad LGBTTTQIA + (LGBTQ)¹, entre otros, son reprimidos por una cultura patriarcal. Esto no solo ocurre de manera física o visible, sino también se ha perpetuado en el lenguaje, muchas veces de manera discreta. Es por eso que el debate del sexismo en el lenguaje o sexismo lingüístico, según los movimientos feministas, sigue tomando fuerzas en estos tiempos, ya que cada vez más personas se integran a la discusión con la intención de derrocar el androcentrismo. Los movimientos a favor del lenguaje inclusivo y de la erradicación del sexismo en el lenguaje no buscan otra cosa que la representación igualitaria de hombres, mujeres y *otres*².

El sexismo no es otra cosa que discriminación hacia una persona por diferencias referentes a su sexo biológico y/o a su identificación en términos de género (Martín Rojo, 1996; Viqueira García, 2016). Este se manifiesta de manera social en situaciones, como la desigualdad salarial, la violencia doméstica, el acoso sexual, la accesibilidad a oportunidades profesionales, la publicidad (la mujer es sexualizada para consumo material), y la adjudicación de paternalidades por parte de los hombres (Butler, 2001; Lakoff, 1975). El sexismo en el lenguaje se representa de varias formas. La más común es utilizar el género gramatical masculino como el género por defecto o genérico, es decir, generalizar a través del género masculino como si fuera universal y neutro. En otras palabras, se neutraliza o se invisibiliza a la mujer y al otre, de modo que no existe una posibilidad de construir un mundo desde su perspectiva femenina o diversa. Además, se mantiene el sexismo en el lenguaje que se utiliza culturalmente en el habla como los refranes, piropos y chistes sexistas (Viqueira García, 2016). Según Viqueira García (2016), la solución a corto y largo plazo para eliminar el sexismo en el lenguaje es la educación en la escuela, con la familia y a través de los medios de comunicación. A estos ella les llama agentes de socialización. Los seres humanos perciben la realidad de acuerdo con la sociedad en que viven, y estos agentes son la representación diaria de dicha sociedad.

Como se mencionó anteriormente, la mujer no es la única que sufre de ser minoría o de no estar representada en el lenguaje. Esto sucede también con la diversidad de géneros

¹ LGBTTTQIA+: acrónimo usado para referirse a lesbianas, gays, bisexuales, transgénero, transexuales, queers, intersexuales y asexuales. El símbolo de + busca incluir a aquellas personas o comunidades que no se identifican con alguno de los términos mencionados, sin embargo, son: no conformes con un género, se identifican como no binario o se adaptan a alguna otra identidad de género (ni masculina ni femenina).

² Por *otres* me referiré a todo aquel ser humano que no se identifique con el binomio masculino/femenino. Todo aquel que comprenda la otredad -la diversidad de identidades de género-. En el resto del escrito no haré uso de una marca de género inclusiva porque, aunque es algo que favorezco, todavía no tiene la aceptación normativa.

dentro de la comunidad LGBTQ, compuesta, entre otras³, por personas con género fluido⁴, no binario o neutral⁵, genderqueer⁶, bi-género⁷ y a-género⁸. El movimiento feminista ha sido propulsor en la defensa del lenguaje inclusivo; según Rolón (2014) “la llamada lingüística feminista en los años 1970 inició la experimentación con otros modos de marcar la existencia de las otras en el hasta entonces, exclusivo y excluyente, uno”. Por lo tanto, resulta importante examinar y exponer los nuevos cambios lingüísticos que surgen socialmente, en particular, cuando estos cambios intentan promover la inclusión de todas las identidades de género (Butler, 2006); es decir, que el lenguaje está cambiando en la misma dirección que la sociedad en cuanto a la búsqueda de la equidad de género. Es importante destacar que, aunque estos cambios van a la par, Lakoff (1975) asegura que es el cambio social el que influye en el cambio lingüístico, y nunca viceversa.

No fue hasta 1960 que el estudio del género adquirió importancia en la lingüística, el estudio de la relación que existe entre el género natural y el lenguaje (Holguín Mendoza, 2016). Según esta última investigadora, un estudio de McElhinny (2008) revela varias suposiciones teóricas sobre el concepto del género; entre ellas, que el género está muy ligado al sexo biológico, y es por ello que los estudios del género en el lenguaje están atados a las conductas binarias establecidas por la sociedad. Esta postura mantiene la creencia de que el género de las personas existe basado en su sexo biológico, es decir, hombre o mujer, excluyendo así a otras fuera de esas expresiones de género. Otra de sus teorías es que el género es un atributo, por lo que cada ser humano se encuentra aislado de su contexto histórico y social. Sobre el debate acerca de los términos sexo y género se ampliará más adelante. Sin embargo, como motivación de este trabajo parto de la siguiente cita: “La construcción del *yo* implica la construcción del conocimiento de la propia identidad... En la adquisición de la conciencia de sí, el lenguaje juega un importantísimo papel. El lenguaje, en efecto, es el estímulo vicario de innumerables cosas” (Daros, 2009). En otras palabras, si el lenguaje es una de las partes más importantes para la construcción individual de cada ser humano, es evidente que cada uno debe sentirse representado en él. Por tanto, existe la necesidad de expandir la binariedad,

³ Estas definiciones fueron obtenidas de *The Teaching Transgender Toolkit* de Eli R. Green y Luca Maurer <http://www.teachingtransgender.org/table-of-contents>

⁴ Se refiere a una persona cuya identidad o expresión de género cambia entre masculino y femenino, o cae en algún punto dentro de este espectro.

⁵ Identidades y expresiones de género basadas en el rechazo a la asunción binaria de género como una opción excluyente de manera estricta entre macho/hombre/masculino o hembra/mujer/femenino, con base en el sexo asignado al nacer.

⁶ Sujeto cuya identidad de género no es de hombre ni mujer, sino que está en medio o más allá de los géneros, o es alguna combinación de ambos.

⁷ Es la idea de que el género es una opción estricta entre macho/hombre/masculino o hembra/mujer/femenino, con base en el sexo asignado al nacer, en vez de un espectro de identidades y expresiones de género.

⁸ Describe a una persona que no se identifica como hombre o mujer, o que se considera carente de una identidad de género.

de incluir todas las identidades de género dentro del lenguaje para que cada ser humano pueda identificarse y construirse desde su peculiaridad. Esta es la idea principal que se defiende en este trabajo, la libertad de cada persona de poder elegir cómo identificarse desde el idioma.

A partir de los 1970, Lakoff, quien es pionera del estudio de género dentro de la lingüística, investigó las marcas gramaticales que muestran la diferencia de roles entre los hombres y las mujeres. Acuña Ferreira (2015:4) resume el argumento principal de Lakoff de la siguiente manera:

las mujeres son discriminadas lingüísticamente por el modo en que aparecen representadas en la estructura de las lenguas (en el léxico y en el sistema gramatical), pero también por el modo en que la sociedad espera que hablen y se expresen.

De tal modo, según Lakoff, el llamado lenguaje femenino corresponde a la cortesía lingüística que está atada de manera intrínseca a la mujer; dilucida sobre el tema con una opinión negativa, ya que se sigue perpetuando la superioridad del hombre. Las marcas lingüísticas que sobresalen en el lenguaje femenino según Lakoff, son traducidas al español por Carranza y Rivas (2006) como:

- uso frecuente de preguntas cortas
- expresiones como “creo que”, “bien”, “sabes”
- entonación de interrogación cuando se espera afirmación
 - *Juan está aquí, ¿cierto? en lugar de ¿Aquí está Juan?⁹
- uso de adjetivos vacíos de significado
 - *adorable, encantador, dulce, divino
- vocabulario específico referido a la costura, matización de colores, entre otros temas
 - *Esa pared es color lavanda.
- uso frecuente de intensificadores (i.e., “so” *tan*)
- gramática excesivamente correcta y formal

El trabajo de Lakoff ha sido criticado por ser un estudio basado en la introspección y el análisis de su propia manera de hablar; sin embargo, no se descarta del todo que existen estas y otras singularidades propias de la manera de hablar femenina que se han impuesto socialmente (Acuña Ferreira, 2015; Carranza & Rivas, 2006). Según Acuña Ferreira (2015), en estudios empíricos más recientes, la cortesía lingüística relacionada con el lenguaje femenino tiene un valor positivo, ya que demuestra sensibilidad hacia el interlocutor, es decir, es una habilidad comunicativa. De igual forma, cita que en estas investigaciones:

se resalta además que las conversaciones entre mujeres se basan a menudo en el intercambio de confidencias y problemas personales, lo que se interpreta como

⁹ Los ejemplos con * son traducciones de los ejemplos que ofrece Lakoff (1975).

señal de la importancia que éstas conceden a la expresión de apoyo, emociones, empatía y solidaridad a través de la comunicación (Jones, 1980; Coates, 1988, 1996, 1997a, 1997b; Günthner, 1997 como se citan en Acuña Ferreira, 2015: 5). No cabe duda de que el estudio de Lakoff impulsó el interés entre los lingüistas y académicos de la lengua por las investigaciones en torno al sexismo lingüístico y el estudio del género en el lenguaje (Bucholtz, 2004). Aunque esta distinción de marcas lingüísticas es necesaria, décadas después se sigue arrastrando el discurso sobre el sexismo en el lenguaje como si fuese un tema que pertenece únicamente al binario de géneros reconocidos por la sociedad.

No es hasta septiembre del 2018 que el diccionario en línea *Merriam-Webster* publicó la adición de 840 palabras nuevas; entre ellas *Latinx*. Este término se comenzó a utilizar a principios de los años 2000, y la definición otorgada es “of, relating to, or marked by Latin American heritage—used as a gender-neutral alternative to *Latino* or *Latina*” (Merriam-Webster, 2020a. La Real Academia Española (RAE) 2018; 2019; 2020)—institución que tiene como misión principal velar por que los cambios que experimente dicha lengua, en su constante adaptación a las necesidades de sus hablantes, no quiebren la esencial unidad que mantiene en todo el ámbito hispánico, según establecido en el artículo primero de sus estatutos—se ha expresado en contra de cualquier otra expresión de género que altere la binariedad; esto se puede ver con detalle en el informe de Bosque (2012) *Sexismo lingüístico y visibilidad de la mujer*. En un comentario emitido el 3 de agosto de 2017 desde la cuenta de la RAE en Twitter sobre el término *Latinx*, escriben: “#RAEconsultas La letra «x» no forma parte de los morfemas de género del sistema lingüístico del español”. Podemos dar por sentado que en la RAE no están dispuestos a integrar otros morfemas de expresión de género al español. Sin embargo, tan reciente como en octubre del presente año, la RAE añadió al Observatorio de Palabras¹⁰ el término *elle* que definen como: «pronombre de uso no generalizado creado para aludir a quienes puedan no sentirse identificados con ninguno de los dos géneros tradicionalmente existentes». Dicho término solo duró días en el Observatorio puesto que, según la RAE: “había generado mucha confusión”. Además de las propuestas de los morfemas -x y -e, se han sugerido otras alternativas para convertir el lenguaje en uno más inclusivo; por ejemplo: la -u, el uso de la -a (femenino absoluto); otra de las manifestaciones más comunes ha sido el uso de la -@ en el discurso escrito.

Referente a estas y otras propuestas del lenguaje inclusivo—o de cómo eliminar el sexismo en el lenguaje—se abundará en la próxima sección. En la siguiente sección del artículo, además, se analizarán los términos *sexo*, *género* y lo que implica el sexismo lingüístico. Finalmente, la última sección pretende concluir el tema a la luz de los estudios analizados.

¹⁰ El observatorio de palabras es un nuevo recurso de la RAE donde se pretende recolectar los nuevos términos que no han sido incluidos en el diccionario, pero que son utilizados por los hispanohablantes.

Sexo versus género

Como había mencionado anteriormente, existe un debate sobre la diferencia entre los términos sexo y género. En ese sentido resulta importante definir ambos términos: Según la RAE (2018), *sexo* se define como: “condición orgánica de un ser vivo por la cual es masculino o femenino”. Es decir, este se refiere a las diferencias biológicas y anatómicas que distinguen a los hombres de las mujeres (Lemus, 2001; Viqueira García, 2016). La RAE (2018) define *género* como: “en gramática, propiedad de los sustantivos y de algunos pronombres por la cual se clasifican en masculinos, femeninos y, en algunas lenguas, también en neutros”¹¹. Este, como establece Lemus (2001), es un parámetro lingüístico que diferencia a los idiomas entre sí. Greenberg, (1999 citado en Lemus, 2001) presenta tres tipos de idiomas: a) los que marcan el género, b) los que tienen género semántico o natural que únicamente distinguen género neutro (para todas las cosas), y c) los que tienen género gramatical o anómalo que le asignan género a todas las cosas, ya sean animadas, inanimadas, humanas o no (Cobertt, 2010). Dávila (2017) asegura que: “el género gramatical fue construido originalmente por el ser humano como una de las herramientas para ordenar el conocimiento y no como expresión máxima del engreimiento antropocéntrico”. Además del género gramatical, existe el género social que es el que hace referencia a los aspectos sociales adscritos a los hombres y las mujeres, o las expectativas que tiene la sociedad de cada uno de ellos (Lemus, 2001; Viqueira García, 2016).

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Viqueira García (2016) también presenta otros términos de importancia cuando se refiere al género social: 1) *identidad de género*: el desarrollo del autoconcepto que implica la diferencia entre las personas como hombres o mujeres, y añade otras; 2) *estereotipos* de género: las imágenes prefijadas y simplificadas que homogenizan a las personas atribuyéndoles características o comportamientos que se espera que presenten dependiendo de su categoría; 3) *rol de género*: se define como el conjunto de conductas y actitudes que una sociedad concreta; 4) *perspectiva de género*: surge al final del Siglo XX, en el ámbito de las ciencias sociales, y fue impulsada por la necesidad de un cambio, a su vez fue la respuesta a la necesidad de abordar multidisciplinariamente las relaciones entre el binomio hombre/mujer. Esta perspectiva intenta analizar la jerarquización de las relaciones de género y los roles impuestos por la sociedad a cada uno de ellos para romper con esto y eliminar la desigualdad de géneros en todos los ámbitos.

¹¹ Hacen la salvedad de que: “NO - se debe - CONFUNDIR CON sexo (‘condición orgánica de un ser vivo por la cual es masculino o femenino’): género de una persona. No obstante, en el ámbito sociológico, se utiliza esta voz para referirse a una categoría sociocultural que implica diferencias o desigualdades de índole social, económica, política, laboral, etc., por lo que son válidas expresiones como estudios de género, discriminación de género, violencia de género. Para estas últimas, existen alternativas como discriminación o violencia por razón de sexo, discriminación o violencia contra las mujeres o similares.

La visión constructivista o performativa (Butler, 2001) tiene como idea principal que son los seres humanos quienes crean sus identidades de género. Es decir, es algo que se produce desde la individualidad y la sociedad, y por tanto se realiza mayormente desde el discurso, no es algo fijo de las características impuestas (Acuña Ferreira, 2015). Holguín Mendoza (2016) añade que “la construcción del género no solamente ocurre a nivel personal o familiar, sino que también es parte de la organización de las instituciones sociales y por tanto se construye sobre la sociedad”. Por tanto, es importante no confundir el género gramatical, el género social (o como constructo sociocultural) y el sexo biológico (Naciones Unidas, 2018), porque cada cual tiene un referente distinto.

Es por esas diferencias entre los hombres y las mujeres que se ha mantenido la idea de que cada uno tiene una forma particular de hablar. No obstante, Acuña Ferreira (2015) propone que:

sí partimos de la noción de que la identidad de género es una creación individual activa y dinámica, que varía según el contexto y otros aspectos sociales como la edad, la clase social y la orientación sexual, entonces se podría pensar que las investigaciones sobre el tema no deberían buscar las diferencias entre el binomio, sino analizar las múltiples versiones de la masculinidad y la feminidad que se realizan en el discurso. De esa manera, se pudiese identificar los contextos en los que el género adquiere relevancia como constructo social. (7)

Por estas diferencias que se establecen socialmente sobre la idea de lo que es ser y hablar como hombre o mujer, y partiendo desde la idea de que vivimos en una sociedad patriarcal, es que se ha identificado que hay ocasiones en las que se incurre en el sexismo dentro del discurso.

Sexismo en el lenguaje

El movimiento feminista ha irrumpido la historia. Además de denunciar la invisibilidad de la mujer en la sociedad, ha propuesto y promovido cambios reales para cambiar esa realidad (Viqueira García, 2016). El hombre se ha impuesto en base a la fuerza, invalidando así que estos puedan mostrarse débiles en cualquier aspecto social, pues es a ellos a quienes se les han asignado los roles de protección, provisión a la familia, autoridad, etc. (Viqueira García, 2016). Estas funciones han creado la sociedad patriarcal en la que vivimos; por tanto, es el hombre quien permea como figura principal, también, en el discurso. Afirma Dávila (2017) que esta lucha por el reconocimiento de la mujer en el lenguaje es un asunto relevante de nuestros tiempos. Sin embargo, reconoce que, en la lucha por la equidad y la perspectiva de género, las personas a favor de estos cambios se enfrentan a quienes insisten en preservar “un orden que consideran ancestral”.

Empecemos por establecer que el lenguaje no es machista (Dávila, 2017; Lemus, 2001; Martín Rojo, 1996; Viqueira García, 2016), sino que históricamente se han impuesto manipulaciones sociales que sostienen la opresión de la mujer (Dávila, 2017). Martín Rojo (1996) presenta los fenómenos que ocurren entre los hablantes y en los que los

lingüistas han encontrado manifestaciones sexistas (consultar a Bernis et al., 1991 y García Meseguer, 1991 citados en Martín Rojo, 1996

- 1) el desequilibrio en *las formas de tratamiento*, que sostienen la falta de independencia de la mujer, además de las marcas del estatus de estas en la sociedad. Términos como *señora* para referirse a una mujer casada o *señorita* para la mujer soltera, mientras que llamar a un hombre *señor* no insinúa nada sobre el estado civil de este, en cierto sentido le ofrece un estatus social distintivo, de autoridad. También para referirse a la mujer es más común el uso de su nombre de pila mientras que para el hombre se utiliza el apellido como muestra de respeto o de alguna posición social. Un ejemplo claro de esto se vio durante los debates de los candidatos a la gobernación de Puerto Rico. De los 6 candidatos a la gobernación, 5 eran hombres, entre ellos y los moderadores de los debates les llamaban por su apellido, a la única candidata mujer la llamaban por su nombre de pila Alexandra.
- 2) fenómenos que imponen a la mujer una imagen descalificadora como:
 - a. *duales aparentes*: Barrachina (2019) presenta el ejemplo de la palabra *zorro/a*. Según el DRAE¹² el masculino de esta palabra hace referencia a una persona muy taimada, astuta y solapada, sin embargo, su femenino *zorra* significa prostituta.
 - b. *asociaciones estereotipadas*: decir mujeres listas o histéricas de manera peyorativa, mientras que el hombre es inteligente o estrenado.
 - c. *vacíos léxicos*: para referirse a ciertas cualidades y actividades para las que no existe un par similar para referirse a la mujer, como, por ejemplo: hombre de estado; caballerosidad. El contrario de esto sería, por ejemplo, el uso común de palabras con connotaciones negativas que hagan referencia a la mujer, y que no tengan un equivalente masculino. En Puerto Rico se utiliza la palabra *crical* para referirse a un reguero, el DRAE define *crica* como: partes pudendas de la mujer. Por su parte, la definición de pudendo/a es: torpe, feo, que debe causar vergüenza.
 - d. *insultos*: estos atribuyen el universo de lo positivo al género masculino: “ser cojonudo” no es igual a “ser un coñazo”. La primera hace referencia a la genitalia del hombre y, socialmente, es lo mismo que decir “ser fuerte, atrevido, etc”. Por otra parte, la segunda frase hace referencia a la genitalia de la mujer y es un insulto que se les dirige a los hombres débiles.

¹² Véase el diccionario de la Real Academia Española y Asociación de Academias de la Lengua Española (2009); el libro de estilo de la lengua española (Real Academia Española, 2018); y el Informe sobre el lenguaje inclusivo (Real Academia Española, 2020).

- e. *refranes sexistas*: “ya estás hecha una señorita” para referirse a una mujer que ha tenido su menstruación. No obstante, socialmente, se intenciona el hecho de que el cuerpo de una niña está cambiando físicamente; de esta manera, se comienzan a crear estereotipos de mujeres ideales.
- 3) fenómenos que ponen de manifiesto el arraigo de una visión masculina de la sociedad y de los actores sociales:
 - f. *vocablos androcéntricos*: sobre el léxico de la sexualidad, que emite una visión violenta del acto sexual, como forma de sometimiento del otro, mientras que lo que se refiere al gozo y al placer se reduce a lo que experimenta el género masculino (véase Calero, 1991 y García Meseguer, 1988 citados en Martín Rojo, 1996).
 - g. *ausencia de formas femeninas en el léxico de referencia a oficios y profesiones*: por ejemplo: mercader, capataz, yóquey.
 - h. *saltos semánticos*: la ambigüedad que crean los masculinos extensivos que incluyen ambos géneros.

Estos son algunos de los fenómenos de manifestaciones sexistas que se encuentran comúnmente en el español. La marca del género en el español, como en el portugués o el francés, se puede identificar fácilmente ya que estos le añaden el sufijo referente al masculino/femenino. Se podría asumir que en los idiomas donde no existe marca de género, o se usa un género neutro no exista o no sea tan evidente el sexismo en el lenguaje; como el farsi dónde se usa u (و) para decir “ella” o “él” y se utilizan los mismos sustantivos, adjetivos y pronombres para masculino y femenino; el húngaro dónde se debe decir explícitamente que se habla de una mujer o un hombre en tercera persona, o el quechua, dónde utiliza sufijos pero no para determinar género. La marca de género gramatical es común, pero no hay un patrón universal pues hay idiomas que hacen la distinción a través de sonidos, de ítems léxicos, o alguna construcción gramatical (Martín Rojo, 1996).

Según Lemus (2001), “los giros antropocéntricos¹³ presentes en el lenguaje no son más que un reflejo de los roles asignados a hombres y mujeres en la sociedad”, esto deja fuera de contexto a todas aquellas personas que no se identifican con esos roles asignados. Sin embargo, este asegura que el sexismo dentro del lenguaje no es un asunto lingüístico, sino sociocultural, y resalta que dicho problema es resultado de la desproporción de poder entre hombre y mujer. La RAE (2020) se expresó sobre el sexismo en el lenguaje, aclarando que:

como institución arraigada en la cultura humanística, se declara totalmente contraria a cualquier tipo de sexismo, ya sea de mujeres o de miembros del colectivo

¹³ Visión del mundo y de las relaciones sociales centrada en el punto de vista masculino.

LGTBI. Nuestra Institución se halla en un proceso de renovación, lenta pero irreversible, en el que la mujer asumirá cuantitativa y cualitativamente un papel más relevante (32).

Una muestra de ese proceso de renovación se detalla en la próxima sección con el ejemplo del pronombre *elles*.

Si bien se puede demostrar que existe sexismo dentro del lenguaje, con estos ejemplos y algunos otros que deben faltar, podemos entender que el lenguaje en sí no es sexista; algunos seres humanos quienes hacen uso del lenguaje sí lo son y, por eso, manipulan el mismo perpetuando el sexismo. Es necesario cuestionar el sistema social—el patriarcado—en el que vivimos y su estructura, y sobre ello tratar de erradicar las desigualdades que existan en él (Viqueira García, 2016). El lenguaje es nuestro modo de comunicación principal, por ende, debería transformarse junto con nuestra perspectiva en búsqueda de una sociedad más equitativa; por ello, se han pronunciado varias propuestas para crear un lenguaje inclusivo más allá de la binariedad, que se explicarán en la próxima sección.

Propuestas para un lenguaje inclusivo

El lenguaje inclusivo pretende ser un sistema comunicativo en el cual se elimina la necesidad de marcar un género -particularmente femenino y masculino. Es el intento de erradicar del lenguaje todas aquellas manifestaciones que promueven prejuicios o discriminación hacia una persona o un grupo de personas (Fuentes et. al, 2009; Román, 2019).

Varias instituciones gubernamentales y organizaciones sociales en países como España han publicado guías que promueven el uso del lenguaje inclusivo o del lenguaje no sexista, por ejemplo: *Guía de lenguaje no sexista* de la Universidad de Granada, *Guía de lenguaje no sexista* de la Oficina de Igualdad, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (véase Bosque, 2012). Muchas de ellas se enfocan en una serie de propuestas que han sido las más populares entre los hispanohablantes; Viqueira García (2016) las resume en la siguiente lista:

- 1) el desdoblamiento
 - *Estimados compañeros y estimadas compañeras* presentes el día de hoy.
 - *Los niños y las niñas* deben presentarse puntualmente al plantel escolar.
- 2) la utilización de las barras oblicuas o paréntesis
 - *Queridos/as compañeros/as*, a partir de enero del próximo año habrá un aumento de salario.
 - Queridos (as) compañeros (as), a partir de enero del próximo año habrá un aumento de salario.
 - *Queridos/queridas compañeros/compañeras*, a partir de enero del próximo año habrá un aumento de salario.

- Queridos compañeros (queridas compañeras), a partir de enero del próximo año habrá un aumento de salario.
- 3) sustantivos genéricos¹⁴
 - *La víctima* fatal del accidente tenía apenas 17 años.
- 4) sustantivos colectivos¹⁵
 - No creo que toda *la juventud* este perdida.
- 5) sustantivos abstractos¹⁶
 - *La dirección* de la Junta de Cooperativas no estuvo de acuerdo con las decisiones.
- 6) perífrasis¹⁷
 - *La parte demandada* no compareció a su cita en el tribunal.
- 7) introducción de aposiciones explicativas¹⁸
 - *Los atletas, hombres y mujeres*, recibirán el mismo reconocimiento.

La RAE (2018) enfatiza el rechazo al uso del desdoblamiento porque se establece que el masculino, al ser un género no marcado, cumple con la función de inclusión. No obstante, aceptan el desdoblamiento como saludo al principio de cartas o correos electrónicos (de manera escrita), por ejemplo, *Estimados y estimadas colegas*. También mencionan que se puede hacer uso del desdoblamiento siempre que el masculino neutro cree ambigüedad entre qué personas de un sexo o el otro están incluidas, por ejemplo: *Estuvieron presentes los hijos y las hijas*. Sin embargo, optan por el uso de las barras oblicuas o los paréntesis si el desdoblamiento es indispensable, aunque hacen la salvedad de que el abuso de este puede convertir el texto en uno confuso y de poca fluidez.

Por su parte, en el sitio web de las Naciones Unidas (2018) publicaron recursos para que el personal de dicha organización pudiera emplear el lenguaje inclusivo referente al género en los seis idiomas principales que se utilizan allí. Según esta organización interpretan “el lenguaje inclusivo en cuanto al género” como:

...la manera de expresarse oralmente y por escrito sin discriminar a un sexo, género social o identidad de género en particular y sin perpetuar estereotipos de género. Dado que el lenguaje es uno de los factores clave que determinan las actitudes culturales y sociales, emplear un lenguaje inclusivo en cuanto al género es una forma sumamente importante de promover la igualdad de género y combatir los prejuicios de género.

Las propuestas sugeridas en estos recursos y orientaciones de las Naciones Unidas concuerdan con las siete mencionadas anteriormente, además, incluyen otras cinco:

¹⁴ Términos que, independientemente de su género gramatical, se refieren a hombres y mujeres.

¹⁵ Términos que designan en singular conjuntos de entidades.

¹⁶ Términos que se utilizan para eludir una profesión, oficio, etc.

¹⁷ Se utilizan en aquellos casos en los cuales no se dispone de los términos anteriores.

¹⁸ Nombrar ambos géneros que clarifiquen que el masculino está utilizado como genérico, impidiendo así otra interpretación.

- 8) Usar la palabra persona
 - Ocho de cada 40 *personas*, residentes de Colorado, se han contagiado por el novel virus Covid 19.
- 9) Usar el pronombre relativo “quien(es)”, los pronombres indefinidos “alguien”, “nadie” y “cualquiera” y el adjetivo indefinido “cada” seguido de sustantivo común en cuanto al género
 - Tendremos en observación a *quienes* presenten síntomas severos.
- 10) Emplear construcciones con “se” impersonal (“se recomienda”), de pasiva refleja (“se debatirá”) o de pasiva perifrástica (“se va a elegir”)
 - *Se dará* prioridad a personas mayores de edad.
- 11) Omitir el agente
 - Habrá una presentación. (en lugar de “Los concursantes presentarán sus proyectos.”)
- 12) Usar el infinitivo y el gerundio
 - ¿Quién podría ocupar el puesto? (en lugar de “¿Quién puede ser gerente?”)

Además de estas propuestas, los movimientos feministas han sido propulsores del uso del lenguaje inclusivo y en ese intento han propuesto varias formas. Toril Moi (1985), ¿en su tratado feminista *What is a Woman?*, proponía la “a”, mejor conocida como el femenino absoluto o universal. Esta propuesta comienza a tener auge en el español, siendo una contrapropuesta al masculino como marcador de género neutro. Acerca de esta propuesta Bengoechea (2015) argumenta que:

este uso arrebató textualmente a los varones la legitimación para hablar desde sí sobre la humanidad y quebranta la continua invitación a los varones, por parte de la lengua, a manifestarse como representantes únicos y universales de la especie humana en cada acto individual y singular (6).

Esta marca del femenino universal se utiliza frecuentemente entre el movimiento feminista en Puerto Rico, es común escucharlas referirse a *la cuerpa* en lugar del cuerpo. Asimismo, la comunidad LGBTQ en la isla hace referencia al rostro como *la rostra*. Sin duda alguna el utilizar ambos términos (cuerpo y rostro) como femeninos les empodera a los hablantes, pues estas hablan con más seguridad de que estas partes de sí mismas les pertenecen como mujeres.

La Tabla 1 enumera algunos ejemplos del femenino absoluto (universal).

Tabla 1 Algunos ejemplos del femenino absoluto

Oración original (masculino como neutro)	Femenino absoluto (universal)
Nosotros hemos puesto cuerpo y alma en esa majestuosa ilustración.	<i>Nosotras</i> hemos puesto <i>cuerpa</i> y alma en esa majestuosa ilustración.
Los presidentes y los jefes de las agencias gubernamentales están planificando una nueva orden ejecutiva.	<i>Las presidentas y las jefas</i> de las agencias gubernamentales están planificando una nueva orden ejecutiva.
No hay excusa para tratar de esa manera a un ser humano.	No hay excusa para tratar de esa manera a <i>una</i> .

En el último enunciado de la Tabla 1 se identifica el pronombre *una*, que se ha ido desplazando al centro del discurso de manera llamativa ya que pretende integrar tanto lo femenino como lo masculino (Bengoechea, 2015). Aunque la intención de esta, y otras, propuestas es hacer visibles otros géneros, es evidente que, al restringirse en la binariedad, solo sustituyendo el masculino por el femenino, no todos los seres humanos que se identifican con otro género se sentirán identificados en ella. Asegura Bertolotti (2020) que estas propuestas feministas de los años 90 se formularon para crear políticas de no discriminación contra las mujeres. Argumenta que las nuevas identidades de género se han experimentado recientemente, sin embargo, estos intentos abrieron caminos para otras formas de inclusión en el lenguaje que se reproducirían más tarde.

Entre las propuestas han surgido y tenido auge, particularmente en las redes sociales entre la juventud, las siguientes: la -@, la -e y la -x. Con respecto a estas, la RAE (2018) sostiene que: “No se considera válido el uso de la arroba (@), la -e o la -x para hacer referencia a los dos sexos: l@s niñ@s, les niñes, lxs niñxs. Estos recursos contravienen las reglas gráficas y morfológicas del español”. Además de que el símbolo @ no es un fonema del español, es impronunciable, y sigue siendo un símbolo que se limita a la binariedad de hombre/mujer (Lomotey, 2011; Rolón, 2014). Por ejemplo: *Estimad@s compañer@s: bienvenid@s a la noche de logros*. Si bien propone una inclusión la estructura de la -@ propone la unión de la -a y la -o por lo que se estaría diciendo: *Estimados/as compañeros/as: bienvenidos/as a la noche de logros*. En esencia se sigue manteniendo la binariedad con la cual intentan romper.

En el trabajo de Bosque (2012), se cita la guía *Comisiones obreras* donde se explica (CCOO-65: nota 24) “que la arroba es un signo que no es reconocido en este uso no sexista por los dispositivos lectores que emplean las personas con discapacidad visual”. A pesar de ello, constituye “un recurso posible y efectivo cuando no se quiere marcar el género”. Por lo tanto, no es solo imposible de leer de las personas alfabetas, sino que es un impedimento más para aquellos con discapacidades visuales, ya que la tecnología que les ayuda no es capaz de reconocer dicho símbolo como una marca de género.

Por su parte, la -x nace en el español y el portugués como una marca de género entre la comunidad intersex; más adelante la comunidad LGBTQ lo adopta como la cancelación de género (Bengoechea, 2015). El uso de esta marca se emplea de la manera siguiente: *Lxs profesorxs vendrán siempre que cumplan con el protocolo establecido*. Esta propuesta no es la excepción a la oposición de la RAE, pues en varios tweets publicados en su cuenta #RAEInforma (2018, 2019) establece que: No es permitido el uso de la -x como marca de género inclusivo porque el masculino funciona como marcador genérico en el español, se utiliza para referirse a colectivos mixtos. Además, es impronunciable, y, por lo tanto, es una práctica difícil de sostener.

En búsqueda de una marca de género inclusivo que podría ser pronunciable, surge la sustitución del binomio femenino/masculino, por la -e. Siendo este sonido parte de nuestro lenguaje, ha sido una de las propuestas que mejor se ha acogido entre los hispanoparlantes. En un artículo del *Washington Post* titulado “A Language for All”, se detalla la popularidad que ha tenido entre los jóvenes de Argentina el uso de la -e. Schmidt (2019) resalta que en Buenos Aires: “En reuniones, aulas y conversaciones cotidianas, los jóvenes están cambiando su forma de hablar y escribir, sustituyendo las vocales “o” masculina y “a” femenina por la “e” neutra para romper con lo que consideran una profunda cultura machista”¹⁹. Asimismo, se ha documentado que, dentro de los grupos feministas, las personas de edad avanzada han comenzado a utilizar dicha marca. Tanto así que varios departamentos de cinco universidades argentinas han aceptado el uso de la -e como neutro en los salones de clases y en los trabajos de los estudiantes.

Esto no solo está ocurriendo en el español; en inglés, por ejemplo, el diccionario *Merriam-Webster* agregó una nueva acepción para el pronombre *they* (Merriam-Webster, 2020b). Este es un pronombre personal que se traduce a “ellos”, refiriéndose a un colectivo de personas, no obstante, según el diccionario ahora también se aceptará si se usa: “[...] to refer to a single person whose gender identity is nonbinary”²⁰. El pronombre reflexivo que le corresponde a este pronombre es “*themselves*”.

Finalmente, no basta con hacer uso del lenguaje inclusivo para eliminar el sexismo en el lenguaje; se recomienda también evitar expresiones discriminatorias. Deben referirse a las personas con el título de cortesía, el pronombre personal y los adjetivos que concuerden con su género. Además, es imperativo que según se menciona a los hombres por sus títulos, nombres y apellidos, hacer lo propio con las mujeres. Para ello se propone:

- 13) Emplear las formas de tratamiento adecuadas, por ejemplo: nombrar a cada persona por su profesión y apellido.

¹⁹ Traducción de María Sánchez Díez del artículo original “A Language for All” del *Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2019/12/05/los-jvenes-en-argentina-estn-librando-una-batalla-lingstica-para-eliminar-el-gnero-del-espaol/?arc404=true>

²⁰ Merriam-Webster define el término *nonbinary* como: “relating to or being a person who identifies with or expresses a gender identity that is neither entirely male nor entirely female”. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nonbinary>

- El abogado Carrión y la licenciada Pérez participarán de la inauguración. (en lugar de “El abogado Carrión y Wanda participarán de la inauguración.”)
- 14) Evitar expresiones con connotaciones negativas como:
- Los hombres no lloran.
 - Se comporta como una señorita. (refiriéndose a un hombre con actitudes establecidas socialmente del género femenino)
- 15) Evitar expresiones que perpetúan estereotipos de género
- Cada coronel vendrá a la actividad acompañado por una persona. (en lugar de “Cada coronel vendrá a la actividad acompañado por su esposa o su pareja.”)

Además de estas expresiones que se deben evadir para que el lenguaje no sea sexista, Viqueira García (2016) añade las siguientes:

- 16) La impersonalización masculina, omitiendo la referencia directa al sujeto sin que ello pueda afectar el mensaje que se desea transmitir
- 17) Soslayar la preferencia en el orden de presentación consistente en anteponer por norma y sin justificación gramatical, el término masculino al femenino
- 18) Prevenir los duales aparentes, es decir, aquellos pares de palabras que según se apliquen a hombres o a mujeres cambian de significado. Está evidenciado que el uso del lenguaje inclusivo tiene que ir de la mano de la eliminación de expresiones y construcciones sociales que hasta el momento no hacen otra cosa que propagar el sexismo en el lenguaje oral y escrito.

Lenguaje inclusivo en Puerto Rico

En Puerto Rico, particularmente entre la juventud, la utilización de las marcas de género inclusivas ha ido en aumento los últimos años. Esto se puede apreciar a grandes rasgos en las redes sociales, en la cuenta de Instagram de Loverbar Puerto Rico—un espacio pensado y hecho para la comunidad LGBTTQIA+ y cuir puertorriqueña. Todas esas publicaciones cuentan particularmente con el uso de la marca -x; en frases como: *nuestrx familia, protegidxs del virus, nuestrx comunidad es tan bellx*. Por su parte en el Instagram y el Facebook de La Colectiva Feminista en Construcción—proyecto político feminista—se pueden leer frases como: *algunx de nosotrxs, compañerxs, muchxs*, entre otras. Además, quienes solemos participar de actividades dentro de ambos colectivos, podemos asegurar que en el discurso oral muchos de los organizadores hacen uso de la marca de género inclusiva -e mayormente la utilización de todes y elles.

En el 2017, los estudiantes del recinto de Río Piedras de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, en una asamblea determinaron que era imperativo solicitar a la administración que los baños fueran para todxs. Esto principalmente para que las personas trans pudieran tener la libertad de entrar a cualquier baño sin temor a tener algún percance. La administración universitaria aceptó la recomendación de los estudiantes, sin embargo, no hicieron

letreros que identificaran los baños como inclusivos, de modo que los estudiantes se dieron la tarea de ir por los baños identificándolos como *baños para todxs*.

Aunque esto es un gran avance, todavía hay mucho camino educativo por recorrer. Por eso, y a modo de erradicar el sexismo social, las organizaciones feministas en Puerto Rico han pedido a varios gobiernos que se establezca una educación con perspectiva de género en las escuelas del país. Parecería que esta es la solución más eficiente a largo plazo, no obstante, ha sido fuertemente criticada por el sector conservador del país. De modo que aun seguimos escuchando tratamientos sexistas y vagos intentos como el de Carmen Yulín, alcaldesa de la capital de Puerto Rico, que nombró un parque como *Parque de los niños y niñas también*. Hay una intención de inclusividad, pareciera que la alcaldesa, como muchos se esfuerzan demasiado para poder apalabrar lo que debería ser natural: la equidad.

Conclusión

Basado en la discusión previa podemos concluir que en efecto el problema del sexismo en el lenguaje es propio de este sino sociocultural (Dávila, 2017; Lemus, 2001; Martín Rojo, 1996; Viqueira García, 2016). Actualmente, en el siglo 21, ya no hablamos solo de incluir o hacer visible a la mujer en el lenguaje, sino también de considerar a otros, por ejemplo, a la comunidad LGTTBQIA+, pues son quienes han desestabilizado la idea de lo binario.

El lenguaje es parte fundamental de la creación de las identidades de los seres humanos. La identidad es un constructo emergente, en el momento en el que alguien se pronuncia con un 'YO' se identifica a sí en relación con los demás (Bengoechea, 2015; Edwards, 2009). También, Bengoechea (2015, quien cita a Omoniyi & White, 2006) asegura que lo que emerge son las múltiples identidades; esto es una de las ideas principales del posestructuralismo, que nadie posee una identidad única, fija y estática. Por tanto, somos seres fluyentes en cuanto a nuestra identidad como persona, nunca somos la misma persona, pues estamos en constantes cambios que no son intrínsecos al género. Explica Dávila (2007):

La palabra “soy” no tiene género. Cuando digo “Yo soy” afirmo mucho sobre mi propio ser, tanto que se podría escribir todo un tratado sobre el tema. Pero algo que no digo es si soy masculino o femenino. De manera sencilla y a la vez radical, es imposible afirmar mi ser con esa fórmula básica haciendo referencia al aspecto del género propio. Es como si en ese nivel del fondo de la conciencia de sí mismo, el ser humano no se hubiera nombrado en tanto varón o mujer (44).

Por tanto, podemos cambiar de identidad no solo en el desarrollo de nuestras vidas, si no que podemos cambiar de identidad según el contexto del momento que estemos viviendo y cómo queramos ser percibidos en ese particular.

Es decir, la lucha por el lenguaje inclusivo no se trata principalmente de poder nombrar nuevas identidades de género. El intento por la inclusividad es que cada persona se pueda nombrar desde el lenguaje tal cual se identifique a sí mismo, cuando afirmo que ‘yo soy’ soy muchas cosas, mucho más que un género gramatical, uno social o una persona con un sexo que se haya impuesto a mi cuerpo biológicamente.

Cambiar el lenguaje es entonces un trabajo de la sociedad y, así, de los hablantes de la lengua. Ya sea que se erradique por completo el sexismo (o el machismo) en la sociedad, o que se adapte cualquier propuesta del lenguaje inclusivo, les toca a las personas adueñarse de estas prácticas y ponerlas en acción para el cambio futuro.

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RACIALIZED (DIS)PLEASURE: THE ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF QUEERNESS IN CARIBBEAN CINEMA

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Abstract

This article addresses the economic dimensions of queerness in Caribbean cinema. I focus on three films representing three different islands: Cuba, represented by *Viva* (Breathnach & O'Halloran, 2016); Trinidad, represented by *Play the devil* (Govan & Hadeed, 2016), and the Dominican Republic, represented by *Dólares de arena* (Guzmán & Cárdenas, 2014). Other works are also referenced such as the Haitian documentary *Of men and gods* (Lescot & Magloire, 2002) and the Puerto Rican documentary *Mala mala* (Sickles & Santini, 2014). Emphasis is on sex work, escort-like relationships, and age-money disparities between individuals. I begin with a general overview of queerness in the Caribbean region in order to construct a sociocultural framework for my analysis, which is followed by close readings of the films.

Key terms: queer, Caribbean, cinema, economics

Overview: queerness in the Caribbean

In Jamaica a so-called buggery law is still on the books, its language unchanged since the nineteenth century. This statute not only criminalizes anal sex, but it also punishes the mere attempt to engage in the act (Gaskins, 2013: 432). Though the law is not enforced, it does provide a judicial framework for discrimination. Moreover, it establishes an atmosphere of second-class consciousness among queer Jamaicans. In 1974, Trinidad and Tobago amended their Immigration Act to include homosexuals, along with prostitutes, as a prohibited class of people. As in Jamaica, this statute is unenforced; however, it continues the paradigm of legal inferiority.

According to Gaskins (2013) "Trinidad's world-renowned carnival is becoming 'increasingly coded as a gay and lesbian affair, especially by the gay and lesbian tourist industry'" (435). Carnival becomes a space to actualize queerness and resist the lethal

consciousness disseminated by the law. This is similar to the space created by voodoo in Haiti, where homosexuals who are otherwise socially derided achieve prestige and empowerment in their status as *houngan*, or vodoun priests. Both carnival and vodoun subvert the heteronormative order.

Other Caribbean islands that challenge the moral and legal status of queer folks include the Bahamas. This nation state has been virulent toward sexual diversity due to its right-wing and extremist Christian ideology. Quoting Beckford and Richardson, Gaskins (2013: 440) posits that Bahamian politics puts so-called ‘social problems’ like homosexuals at the mercy of evangelicals, a scapegoating tactic made possible partly because of demographic factors; as Gaskins points out, the Bahamas does not have a religiously diversified population such as that of Trinidad and Tobago. Consequently, Bahamian politicians defer to these fundamentalists, resulting in discrimination against LGBTQIA+ communities. The feature film *Children of God* (Mortimer, Willis & LeMay, 2010) explores the extremism of Bahamian Christianity, as well as the deforming nature of the closet on its characters. Though the movie succumbs somewhat to the mainstream spectacle of gay tragedy, it does illustrate effectively the reality of homophobic violence in the region.

Countries like Saint Lucia, a predominantly Catholic nation, also submit their queer populations to violence; however, when this violence intersects with the bodies of tourists, the state immediately redresses the situation. Wahab (2018) comments on how St. Lucia managed a specific event that made international news:

To avoid damage to its respectability on the international scene, the small island state constructed the three white gay American men not only as the ‘real’ victims of homophobic violence, but as benevolent subjects undeserving of such violence. In addition, the Saint Lucian police informed the public that some of the perpetrators were arrested and the stolen items recovered – a move which contrasts sharply with the state’s silence around violence against Saint Lucian LGBT persons. (138)

In other words, the St. Lucian government—due to the island’s size and economic interests—cannot afford violence against the bodies of tourists; therefore, *these* queer lives (mostly white, foreign, and privileged) are protected by the state, as opposed to LGBTQIA+ St. Lucian citizens, further nuancing the broader theme of queer second-class status in the region.

Sex work, in many ways, has defined queer experiences in the Caribbean, as my film analyses demonstrate. I now shift my focus to Spanish-speaking islands of the region, specifically the Dominican Republic and Cuba:

In the Dominican Republic, for instance, Mark Padilla has shown how queer tourists establish long-term relationships with male sex workers, many of whom perform heterosexual identities in their everyday lives. Whereas Dominican sex workers go to great lengths to conceal their work from their families

[...] in Cuba it is typical for male sex workers to introduce foreign clients to their families, who in turn incorporate tourists into kin imaginaries. (Stout, 2015: 667)

In one country, the kinship that results from same-sex bonding is open and in the other it is a secret. In either case, the recourse to sex work is an economic phenomenon worth considering in the light of the tourist gaze yearning for an island paradise. It is also worth noting here that the situation portrayed in the Cuban film *Viva* (Breathnach & O'Halloran, 2016), which will be discussed in detail below, is more akin to the Dominican model of sex work, so that in this particular case, there seems to be a reversal in cinema to what has been documented in the real world.

Documentaries also reveal the status of queerness in the Caribbean. The Haitian film *Of men and gods* (Lescot & Magloire, 2002), as previously mentioned, illustrates how the practice of vodoun provides queer folk with a space for social empowerment, including economic stability. There is a thematic unity in the agency ascribed to LGBTQIA+ people in vodoun, despite the differences among queer Haitians. This is not the case in the Puerto Rican documentary *Mala mala* (Sickles & Santini, 2014) where there is disunity in both theme and the featured participants. *Mala mala* showcases the plurality of queer voices in Puerto Rico, ranging from a drag performer who frowns upon transwomen engaging in sex work, to divisions within the trans community itself, tellingly demarcated by generation. In the film, there is a chorus of divergent voices clashing in a presentation that is more a visual college of the LGBTQIA+ community than a cohesive minority portrait. This disunity is part and parcel of contemporary queer theory. It accentuates the instability, fluidity, and ambiguity of queer lives in the Caribbean and globally.

Expressing a view similar to my own, Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes (2018), a gay Puerto Rican scholar, states:

Mala Mala is a film that focuses on a limited number of people that the directors were able to film during their five trips to Puerto Rico in 2012-13 and that represent different aspects of the drag and transgender Puerto Rican experience. The representation is complex, diverse, and multifaceted, and presents an interesting cultural and political scene, full of nuances. The film invites spectators to search for more information, for example reading Soraya's memoirs. (22)

Mala mala highlights the tension between queer theory and activism and traditional gay activism, the latter often manifested through assimilationist values or monolithic discourses of equality before the law. In the words of Meg-John Barker (2016): “queer activism is a form of sexuality/gender activism that opposes assimilationist agendas of trying to show how ‘normal’ LG(BT) people are. Instead it celebrates difference and diversity, and challenges things like the commercialism of the gay scene” (15).

Although LGBTQIA+ experiences are quite varied and complex in the region, there

are some commonalities, including legal and institutional discrimination, vulnerability at the hands of religious extremists, and an awareness of their own second-class status vis-à-vis the queer tourist. That said, there are brighter spots, such as the empowering spaces of carnival and vodoun, the reparative possibilities of kinship found in sex work, and the multiplex spectrum of queer thoughts and acts, often grating against homogenizing narratives. This provides a socio-historical background to the film analyses that I undertake in this article, which might be construed as the superstructure to the economic foundation explored below.

Viva

Viva (Breathnach & O'Halloran, 2016) is the story of Jesús, a young man living on his own in Cuba who gets by via hairdressing jobs. Jesús begins to participate in drag performances, partly for economic reasons and partly for his own self-realization. During one show, his hitherto absent father, Ángel, appears during a performance that goes awry. Ángel forbids Jesús from performing and commandeers Jesús's apartment. Jesús ends up in sex work to pay for their necessities, unbeknownst to Ángel. The father eventually receives a fatal medical diagnosis and dies, but not before accepting Jesús fully, as a gay man and drag performer.

The opening of the film has Jesús wearing a teal shirt, which alternates with a cream shirt throughout almost the entire film, as do a pair of grey pants and a pair of black pants. He stares longingly at a drag performance. He lives in an apartment of his own, though it is, in reality, the property of his absent father. Early in the film, Jesús meets an acquaintance on benches used for prostitution. When asked if he is seeking 'Yuma'—a Cuban term for American or foreigner—Jesús denies it, his facial expression indicating an unwillingness to engage in sex work. This, of course, would change. The impetus for Jesús's first act of sex work is Ángel's midlife tantrum, in which he hurls to the ground the humble food that Jesús had obtained for his father, along with the vinyl musical recordings that belonged to his dead wife. This occurs against a backdrop where Jesús has been prohibited from performing in drag shows and cannot make ends meet merely via his sporadic hairdressing gigs. The horror in Jesús' face during his father's outburst (44:55-45:03) reveals the emotional climax needed to address the root issue of economic helplessness that his father's presence brings to bear. The immediate scene that follows has Jesús fidgeting at the oceanfront *Malecón*, a hotspot for sex work, where his first sexual transaction occurs off-screen. Right before the first on-screen sex scene, the viewer is given a brief glimpse of Jesús looking at an empty coffee can, coffee being a beverage frequently consumed by his father. This helps to link sex work with his father's presence, not only in terms of Ángel's prohibition of drag performances, but in Jesús' love for him. After the coffee shot, the next scene has Jesús sitting on the benches where sex work is regularly solicited. The camera zooms to his face, we see his eyes narrow, identifying a customer; immediately,

the shot shifts to Jesús's hands seizing the handles of a bed, his face strained under the weight of a foreign tourist atop his body. There's a shift in frame, and although the tourist's behind is blurred, its indelible movements are clear: the thrusts are emphasized and Jesús's searching hand rubs against the wall. The scene's spatial choices privilege the tourist's dominance over Jesús in an arrangement of bodies that make clear how Jesús has been (re)written in a bodily palimpsest where sex work accents his economic desperation.

After sex, the viewer is granted a glimpse of Jesús's bare buttocks before he covers them up with his unglamorous underwear (56:17-57:07), as if to punctuate the ills of poverty, or as if to promote the irrefutable worth of beauty amidst the even the most abject desolation. Then Jesús asks for a little more money. When the tourist—not elderly, but certainly older—says that the agreed price was “fair” Jesús seizes on an opportunity to “steal” more money from the foreigner's unguarded wallet. It is clear that Jesús is being cheated on a structural level and that the act of ‘stealing’ could be construed as an action of restitution. Therefore, I do not see the act as unethical, since it is already bound in a web of unethical actions outside the law, and the law itself is invariably heterosexual and makes its presence known early on in *Viva* when policemen pester gay sex workers on their turf (7:01-7:05). Survival demands a new ethics, such as Jesús' action of restitution.

During Ángel's terminal illness, Jesús continues to rent his body. In one scene Jesús is back at the benches (1:19:41) looking more fragile. It is the first time on-screen that he is seeking Yuma after his father's diagnosis. Immediately after the shot, there's a scene where Jesús gives his father, who is dying of pneumonia, some much desired cigarettes. It is an act of love, paid for by his body, so that Ángel can enjoy his last days as he might wish to. This devotion to his father is in evidence when we see Jesús at the benches earlier on (1:01:02) and then the scene cuts to Ángel and him eating. Jesús, who is responsible for making ends meet in the apartment, wants to continue drag performances, partly to avoid sex work and partly for his own self-realization. Ángel, even when he knows that he is terminally ill, will not allow it. The look on Jesús face is one of disappointed and resigned understanding (1:17:28-1:17:30).

A series of film shots follow Jesús at night in Habana. The setting is one of nightlife, chill colors steeped in urban sensibility, and the kind of devil-may-care attitude that often accompanies the exploration of an uncharted city. The shots have Jesús impatiently—or anxiously—waiting for a customer. The scene shifts quickly to Jesús on a bed, his hair yanked by a white and older tourist, the sound of Jesús's moans—of shocked pain rather than pleasure—mingle with the recognizable sound of testicles flapping against flesh. The *mise-en-scène* is revealing: a bare room, darkened, a bed lacking its trappings, with the disciplinary feel of the prison pervading the atmosphere (1:17:48-1:18:04). Moreover, the movements are brutal, violent, and the grinning tourist blurs as the focus moves toward Jesús's strained countenance. It makes the specta-

tor wonder whether what they are witnessing is a rape in progress or not.

Despite the negative tone thus far of my account of *Viva*, especially the economic and social challenges faced by Jesús, the film is ultimately a positive narrative. Drag for Jesús is economic and personal empowerment. Drag is agency. Toward the end of the film, after his father embraces Jesús' drag shows, Jesús performs once again. The music to "El Amor" begins as the viewer sees Jesús in drag: the wig arranged stylishly, white dress and elbow-length gloves, but more than the clothing, there is a visual fire, a spirit unleashed on the audience. As Jesús mimics the words to "El Amor"—an imperishable song in Latin America and the Caribbean—the depths of his pain are rendered visible, audible, and palpable. His body movements capture the pain of prostitution, the pain of his father's choices, the pain of gay life in Cuba, only to experience a metamorphosis—very much like Jesús' body—into a burst of love, a love for the body, a love for the father, a love for the queer self and maybe a love for Cuba itself.

The credits include a scene where Cecilia, a childhood friend, and Jesús are in the apartment. Jesús holds her baby, honoring Ángel's wish that he should take care of them. Jesús has not only assumed the weight of economic responsibility for his friend and her child, but he has also embraced a kind of fatherly role that was missing in his own life. Effectively, Jesús has created a queer other-family outside the imaginary nuclear one, linking money and relationships in a new way, beyond the paradigm of sex work.

Play the devil

Play the devil (Govan & Hadeed, 2016) is about a young student in Trinidad named Gregory working hard to earn a scholarship in order to study medicine. He meets a wealthy businessman, James, who gradually ingratiates himself into the adolescent's life. Their relationship is structured by a power imbalance, due to economic and age differences. Sex between them leads Gregory into an emotional spiral, and James insistence on continuing the relationship ultimately results in his death during carnival.

In their first meeting, James invites the young protagonist to an after theater gathering and Gregory declines because he has no transportation. James nonchalantly dismisses this, and agrees to drive him back home, effectively learning Gregory's address, something he would exploit later on. This first encounter also foreshadows the economic element that comes to dominate their relationship (0:03:27-0:04:00). On the ride back, Gregory takes a liking to James' car and inquires about his line of work. Furthermore, Gregory shares that he has a passion for photography but only uses his phone, lacking a camera. His eyes are watery by this point (0:06:28). Later, James lends his own camera to Gregory (0:15:46). After they have sex for the first time, Gregory rejects the camera when offered again, aware of the power disparity between them (0:39:47). When confronting James about his intentions, Gregory specifically cites the fact that he is poor as a problematic factor (0:44:00).

Later, James arrives at Gregory's home uninvited, and he speaks to Gregory's grandmother, offering to fix their leaking roof. James specifically wants to see his former lover's room, a small space. The space could be contrasted with the beach house James owned, and the large room they had sex in. Space, therefore, becomes a visual means of measuring the economic inequalities between the businessman and the adolescent. The intrusion, the largesse, propels Gregory to ask his grandmother to deny James' assistance. This backfires, since she pays James back for the repairs with money saved up for Gregory's education. The desolation experienced by Gregory is captured in a scene where he is weeping in bed, bawling like a baby (1:06:17-1:06:36). To make things worse, Gregory's brother is arrested on marijuana charges. James, the businessman, is so well connected that he arranges for the brother's release (1:08:03). Money, for James, is a source of power. He exerts this power over Gregory by aiding his family. Besides, James is known as a philanthropist who has financed community and cultural activities in Trinidad. These economic activities have provided him with a veneer of heteronormativity on a social scale, whereas on a personal level they equip James with tools that he can use to manipulate Gregory. So, it should not surprise the audience that when Gregory accidentally kills James, the latter's corpse is placed in his stylish car and the vehicle is allowed to go over a cliff. The destroyed car symbolizes the release of James' material and spiritual hold over Gregory's life.

Dólares de arena

Dólares de Arena (Guzmán & Cárdenas, 2014) is a Dominican film, the first film highlighted in this article that explores a lesbian relationship, namely, that between a young Dominican named Noelí and an elderly French woman called Anne. They have been together for three years. Noelí, however, has a boyfriend that Anne does not know about. When Anne discovers this, their relationship temporally ends. They decide to go to France, but Noelí chooses to remain in the Dominican Republic after her boyfriend asks her to stay. This love triangle, from beginning to end, is deeply rooted in economic inequalities.

The first scene Noelí appears in has her walking hand-in-hand with a male French tourist. He is leaving the Dominican Republic, and she tellingly requests money as a parting gift. She gets a chain. The scene frames the film, establishing the economic framework for the whole narrative (0:03:50-0:04:34). An early, intimate scene has Noelí and Anne naked in bed. Anne asks how much Noelí's body is worth, in a playful manner, and Noelí responds somewhat dryly: "1625" (00:12:08). It is as though Anne's unconscious speaks, making explicit the economic core of the relationship, while she consciously labels it love. There are moments in this scene where Anne seems to become aware of the dichotomy. For example, Noelí casually lies about a fictional brother's motorbike accident and asks for money. Anne's silence, her hesitancy and withdrawn quality, are intertwined with Noelí's nonchalant gratitude over a

new phone Anne purchased for her. The phone symbolizes a material mediation to their relationship, a token of the partnership's underlying foundation. Another instance where Noeli directly and confidently solicits money is in a beach scene, where instead of using an elaborated lie such as a brother's accident, she merely states that she needs money for "her things" (0:31:40-0:31:50).

Money also structures Noeli's actual relationship with her Dominican boyfriend. She uses Anne's funds to support him. When they have a discussion about Noeli's possible trip to Paris, the boyfriend says that Noeli still has to keep sending him money from abroad (0:20:13). This makes clear that Noeli's relationships, both the real and false one, are linked inextricably to money. When Anne discovers Noeli arguing with her boyfriend at a party, she decides to leave. Noeli tries to get her to stay. She then lets slip recklessly that the bill needs to be paid at the bar. Anne promptly slaps her (0:35:16). The scene illustrates how economic calculations are always on Noeli's mind, and how Anne wrestles between her illusions about her relationship with Noeli and its material basis.

Just before Noeli is supposed to leave with Anne for Paris, the boyfriend asks her to stay. Noeli sneaks out in the early hours, stealing Anne's money and even a credit card. She kisses Anne and caresses her hair. It is a parting gesture, proving that despite the economic nature of their relationship, there is also affection (1:16:03-1:16:34). Nevertheless, her love for her actual partner overrides her feelings for Anne. I would argue that, in *Dólares de arena*, money structures Noeli's relationships, but it does not fully condition the relationships. Noeli's feelings for Anne are rich and complex, safeguarded even from her boyfriend. Similarly, Anne does not know about Noeli's true love for him.

Conclusions

In all three films, race plays a crucial intersectional role with economics. In *Viva*, Jesús' clients are invariably men raced as White. Similarly, in *Dólares de arena*, Noeli's Black racial assignment and predicament are contrasted with Anne's acquisitive values engendered and supported by the privilege that she derives from being raced as White. And, although *Play the devil* does not feature a European-descended figure as the authoritative buyer of pleasure, the ethnocentric racializing model is replicated in a way through the South Asian-African binary that seems to structure Trinidadian society and collective unconscious. James represents the economically better off 'Rich' South Asian-descended male while Gregory embodies the economically marginalized 'Poor' African-descended male, symbolically speaking, at least, since both characters are brown Indo-Trinidadians.

Viva addresses issues of identity and acceptance in a father-son relationship in light of the economic imperatives and the consequences both of Jesús' desire to perform in drag as well as his less enthusiastic involvement in sex work. *Play the devil* is about

Gregory's struggles with his sexuality as he wards off James' advances, under pressure from both the economic and age asymmetries between them. *Dólares de arena* unpacks the transactional structure of romantic relationships, both queer and heterosexual. These three works illustrate the economic dimensions of queerness in Caribbean cinema and they help us understand how sex work, escort-like relationships, and age/ money disparities often frame how queerness is experienced in the region.

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TUMBA COCO: UN POEMARIO DE CONJUROS PUERTORRIQUEÑOS

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Abstract

Tumba Coco came to be while taking a poetry course with Dr. Mayra Santos Febres. It is an eight poem *poemario* that explores sexuality, queerness, fatness, and trauma. Using Caribbean fauna imagery, it explores different stages of finding oneself after having lost self-identity and re-exploring what it means to be a sexual being. The trauma of understanding a fat queer Caribbean body is traversed while conjuring the magic and knowledge of ancestors. Working with incantations to heal the body and the mind, Puerto Rican magic manifests itself through these short creative poems.

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Key terms: poemario, conjuros, incantations, queerness, Caribbean body

Hormiguero

Abrí los ojos y no sé dónde estoy
No se cómo llegue, pero sé que fue gateando
Estoy en el tercer piso
En la sala que conecta los cuartos
Veo la lavadora, secadora y los ganchos de pared en pared
Me huele a caoba
Sigo gateando y me encuentro en el cuarto
Oscuro e iluminado
Las paredes son closets de caoba con olor a tabaco
Me escondo
Soy como un zapato
Escucho el clack como canicas
Me asomo por los rotos y veo patas largas finitas
Marrones color cobre brillan y son peluas

Cuando miro son hormigas
Miden diez pies y me comen
Pero me escondo
No me ven cierro los ojos
Abrí los ojos y sé dónde estoy
No sé cómo llegué, pero sé que fue gateando
Estoy en el tercer piso
En la sala que conecta los cuartos

Polilla

La veo más grande de lo que me acordaba
Huela a rosa, humedad y polvo de vieja
Los bloques expuestos decoran lo muerto
Sonrío al ver que sigue de pie
El árbol de toronja es lo único vivo
ha crecido
Me asomo a la casa y veo los cuadros rococós de Marshall pagaos todavía
Sigo caminando y el piso está roto, pero fuerte
La arenilla de polilla cubre mis pies

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Cierro los ojos y me huele a caoba
Abro los ojos y me huele a cerveza

Miro pa abajo y no hay fondo
Miro a mi lado y no me encuentro
Miro para arriba y no hay techo

La piscina esta verde culebra
Y el pasto largo como las pausas del gobe

Corro y solo veo el flamboyán
Me grita rojo y lo abrazo verde

Miro pa abajo y no me encuentro
Miro a mi lado y no hay techo
Miro hacia arriba y no hay fondo

Lagartijo

Me enchulé de ti como aguacero de mayo
Sentí como tus miradas me torcían la garganta

Tu lengua me sofocaba los pulmones
Tus manos me daban cosquillas en el pelo
Tus piernas me ahorcaban el costado
Tu voz lambía mis oídos
Y tu olor me gritaba azucenas

Eres un dulce sueño de lo que pudimos haber sido
Eres mi más dulce deseo
y mi favorito tal vez

Me respirabas como café mañanero
Me leías como periódico de domingo
Me tocas y me revueltas como cola de lagartijo

Mosca

Hablabas y hablabas y no decías nada
Tu silencio tan agudo como el zumbido de una mosca
Sentí como tu presencia me estrangula
Y tu mirada me corta

En un segundo cambiaste a gusano
Penetrando mi piel hasta llegar a mi ser
comiendo toda alegría y convirtiéndola en descaro

Nuestra amistad se convirtió en un chiste
Y mi presencia un estorbo

Ahora cargo con anti tu
Por si las moscas

Rana

Sana sana colita de rana
Si no me vengo hoy me vendré mañana

Es sobre un pendejo que no quiere esta chocha
Sí no la mía, será la de otra

Gracias a su novia que me salvó de un papelón
Ahora me siento y miro to'a la acción

Su novia no quita que, él me siga buscando
Hasta cuando me mira, me mira chichando

Aunque él dice que no me quiere
La hierba mala nunca muere

Sana sana colita de rana
Si no te vas hoy
Yo me iré mañana

Cien pies

Te arrastras con tus
patas
por lodo de cerveza

Terco y torpe
te escondes en flamboyanes

Picas picas picas
porque te vienes y suspiras

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No te enrolles

No te escondas

No corras

Al final siempre terminarás siendo
Alcolao

Gallina

Tu pasado lo usas de excusa
Escondes tu miedo detrás de huevos
Tu hambre te tiene glotona por atención
Lo quieres todo
Quieres a todos
No te quieres a ti
Deja de desplumarte
Déjate crecer y no pongas huevos

Recuerda que la gallina turuleca
siempre estará loca

Víbora

Eres una víbora cabrona
TUS curvas del cuerpo se ajustan a ti y a más
nadie
Tu hambre por ti
Tu sed por ti
Llenan los relieves de TU cuerpo
Te dicen gorda porque no saben cómo más herirte

Recuerda que cuando te miras en el espejo las estrías escriben historias
y las pecas cantan boleros
Los chichos crean agarres y la barriga crea vida

En un mundo de moscas, ranas y lagartijos
Devórate a ti misma

CARTA ABIERTA AL PATRIARCADO

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Resumen

Esta plena surge como parte de un proceso de sanación creativa en donde busco literalmente ‘cantárselas al patriarcado’, donde nombro los daños que ha causado en mi cuerpo y en mi identidad al haber sido criadx como una niña y mujer en Puerto Rico, identidades forzadas en mí. Las estrofas reflejan historias vividas en carne propia; realidades que aún atentan saquear nuestro espíritu y que en múltiples ocasiones se manifiestan como violencia mortal. La plena ofrece una estructura simple pero eficaz en crear un sonsonete que se te queda ‘pegao’ y esa es la idea, que se nos peguen ideologías que buscan afirmar la vida para internalizar nuestra libertad y exteriorizarla al ritmo de nuestra cultura. Aunque en Puerto Rico y el Caribe muchos crecemos con ideologías heteropatriarcales dañinas, también contamos con herramientas valiosas en nuestra cultura para sanar, imaginar y construir una munda libre. Para escuchar la canción, busque “Carta abierta al patriarcado” en Youtube o pulse: <https://youtu.be/-ZtuSuTfj9A>

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Términos clave: patriarcado, ideología, hegemonía, cuerpo, plena

Carta abierta al patriarcado

Padres abusadores, escondiéndose (x2)

Detrás de religiones, redimiéndose (x2)

Padres abusadores, inventándose (x2)

Doctrinas e instituciones, el mocho creyéndose (x2)

El mocho vendiéndome

El mocho vendiéndote

El mocho metiéndote

El mocho tragándose

Padres abusadores, escondiéndose (x2)
Detrás de religiones, redimiéndose
Detrás de instituciones, encubriéndose

Padres abusadores, autoproclamándose (x2)
Señores y salvadores, la vida saqueándome (x2)

Padres abusadores, escondiéndose (x2)
Detrás de religiones, redimiéndose (x2)

Padres abusadores, adoctrinándome (x2)
Tratando de controlarme, descontrolándose (x2)

Padres abusadores, escondiéndose (x2)
Detrás de religiones, redimiéndose
Detrás de instituciones, encubriéndose

Padres abusadores, objetificándome (x2)
Creyéndome un canto'e carne, equivocándose (x2)

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Padres abusadores, escondiéndose (x2)
Detrás de religiones, redimiéndose (x2)

Padres abusadores, salvaguardándose (x2)
Haciéndose el que lo no hizo, persignándose (x2)

Padres abusadores, escondiéndose (x2)
Detrás de religiones, redimiéndose
Detrás de instituciones, encubriéndose

Padres abusadores, robando mi autonomía (x2)
Creyéndose dueños míos. ¡Cabrón, esta cuerpa es mía! (x2)
¡Cabrón, este cuerpo es mío!
¡Cabrón, este cuerpe es mío!
¡Cabrón, estx cuerpa es mío!

Padres abusadores, escondiéndose (x2)
Detrás de religiones, redimiéndose (x2)

Nuestra naturaleza, trasciende la hegemonía (x2)

Rompamos con ideologías, que atentan con nuestra vida (x2)
Nuestra naturaleza, trasciende la hegemonía (x2)
Rompamos con ideologías, que atentan con nuestra vida (x2)

Rompe con esa vaina, con esas ilusiones (x2)
De padres redentores, disque padres salvadores (x2)

Rompe con esa historia, con esas ilusiones (x2)
La salvación ya es historia y la historia somos nosotres (x2)

Padres abusadores, escondiéndose (x2)
Detrás de religiones, redimiéndose (x2)
¡Já!

Padres abusadores, escondiéndose (x2)
Detrás de religiones, redimiéndose
Detrás de instituciones, encubriéndose.

**DISTANCINGS, ENTANGLEMENTS,
INTERSECTIONALITIES AND SOCIETIES
IN THE CARIBBEAN AND BEYOND**

LOVINDEER'S "WILD GILBERT", LOVE AND OIL: JAMAICA IN THE WAKE OF AN ICONIC HURRICANE

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Abstract

In 2018, Jamaica commemorated the thirtieth anniversary of Hurricane Gilbert, the most devastating hurricane in Jamaica's modern history. Gilbert wrecked the country, causing significant loss of life, infrastructure damage, and ravaged livelihoods, economies and communities. At the same time, it was a phenomenon that exposed Jamaica's critical vulnerabilities while reaffirming the resilience of its people. This paper opens a window into Jamaican life and living through the sociocultural critique of iconic Jamaican dancehall/reggae artiste Lloyd Lovindeer, whose popular post-hurricane song "Wild Gilbert" (Lovindeer, 1988d) took the nation by storm and provided a humorous way of dealing with the trauma of the event and its aftermath. "Wild Gilbert", the fastest selling dancehall song ever, is also credited with helping the dancehall genre cross classes by making it more acceptable to elites in Jamaica, who until then had rejected it as a low class, low status musical form. "Wild Gilbert", which writ large Jamaicans' anthropomorphising of the hurricane, was the first of a series of Lovindeer's Gilbert songs, which also include, "Hurricane love" (1988a), "One hell of a blow job" (1988c), "Gilbert baby" (1989a) and "Hurricane oil" (1988b). Lovindeer's Gilbert series provides a worthy platform to explore how Jamaican popular music fuses our tradition of storytelling as collective re-membering of history with important guidance on dealing with a future in which the impact of climate change is inevitable.

Key Terms: Lloyd Lovindeer, Wild Gilbert, hurricane Gilbert, resilience, Jamaica, Dancehall, Reggae

Introduction

[Wild Gilbert] was a feel-good song in the midst of disaster. After you go through that and survive, you want to celebrate. It's not 'woe, woe'...It was danceable and everybody could relate. It was fun for everybody. You find the man from uptown couldn't get ice either. The man from ghetto couldn't get no ice. Everybody was one at the time until the light come back and everybody go them separate ways. (Lovindeer, cited in Cooke, 2010)

She said/I am not a young girl no more/I have been blown before/but Gilbert you take the cake/Cause when you blow my whole body shake/Charlie and dem pass through/but they never blow like you/Gilbert you different from the rest/cause all they did was lif' up mi dress. (Lovindeer, 1988c, "One hell of a blow job")

"It was on the 12th of September 1988/ when Gilbert hit Jamaica and everything was standing straight" (Banana Man, 1988, "Gilbert attack us"). That is the line of a mournful yet humorous song that sampled the tune of "Teenager in love" (Dion and the Belmonts, 1959) and was sung by a dancehall artiste named Banana Man. Banana Man summarised the impact of Hurricane Gilbert, the seventh named storm of the 1988 hurricane season and perhaps the most devastating hurricane in Jamaica's modern history. After Gilbert hit Jamaica, little was left standing, straight or otherwise, and Jamaicans found themselves deploying the national habit of laughter to deal with trauma. Indeed, Gilbert, wrecked the country, causing significant loss of life, infrastructure damage, ravaged livelihoods and communities, and a devastated economy. At the same time, it was a phenomenon that exposed Jamaica's critical vulnerabilities while reaffirming the resilience of the people. Jamaicans 'commemorated' the thirtieth anniversary of Hurricane Gilbert, in 2018.

Of course, Banana Man was not the only artiste to tell the story of Gilbert with humour and pathos. The best known of the works in this genre is Lovindeer's "Wild Gilbert" (1988d). This paper opens a window into Jamaican life and living through the socio-cultural critique of iconic Jamaican dancehall/reggae artiste Lloyd Lovindeer ('Lovindeer'), whose popular post-hurricane song "Wild Gilbert" took the nation by storm and provided a humorous way of dealing with the trauma of the event and its aftermath. In 2010, in remembering Gilbert, journalist Mel Cooke commented:

There has been many a 'breeze blow' across Jamaica since Hurricane Gilbert on September 12, 1988, leaving in their wake many a tune spinning on the turntables. But 22 years after it was recorded, there has been no hurricane song like Lloyd Lovindeer's Wild Gilbert, a bouncy song which puts a side-splitting twist on the tempest and its aftermath. (Cooke, 2010)

It is not unusual for Jamaicans to "take bad things make joke" (*tek serias tings mek juok*) or, as the late Louise Bennett Coverley ('Miss Lou'), one of Jamaica's cultural

icons, is well known for saying, “*wi tek ‘kin tiit an kiba ‘artbon*”, that is, we tend to use a smile or jokes to cover pain/hurt. The value of this cultural coping mechanism is amply demonstrated in response to the devastation wrought by Gilbert and helped with healing in the face of such trauma. This cultural resilience will need to be drawn on time and again in the future, as we deal with the inevitability of climate change.

It can be argued that Jamaican popular music carries forward our tradition of storytelling, which is a collective re-membling of history. Dancehall and reggae artistes are, in that sense, the modern griots of the community, who present alternate readings of history that often challenge official renderings. In so doing, these artistes also shape and reshape our cultural attitudes (Perkins, 2018). Of course, musical artistes are not the only storytellers of the Gilbert saga. Our poets told their own stories in verse as did painter, art critic, poet and journalist Gloria Escoffery. Escoffery, for example, writes a poem in the form of a letter penned to her from Gilbert, apologising and explaining his destruction of her life. “Gilbert” pleads in part:

Forgive! Forgive!

I knew you’d go on working unless the roof blew off,
so I spared the roof.

It was the pimento tree, not I, that punctured the zinc sheets.

As one about to wind down to a quiet ending,

I salute you – Sister...Eye-of-the Hurricane. (Escoffery, 1999: 17)

A classic case of “it wasn’t me!” In the storytelling around Hurricane Gilbert, our painters, poets, artistes may in their retelling be providing us with important pointers on dealing with a future in which the impact of climate change is inevitable. Indeed, Sonya Posmentier describes the massive outpouring of topical music after Gilbert as something that “memorialized and recorded the experience of the hurricane and its relationship to social issues and national identity” (2017: 183). Such creative pieces “constitute an archive of the nation’s response to disaster” (Posmentier, 2017: 183). Arguably, hurricanes themselves “slice time differently to written history. For those who have experienced them [...] they operate as ‘key markers of time,’ more memorable and powerful than political events” (Brodber, 2013: 21, cited in McDougall, 2017: 12). Lovindeer, the lyrical genius, takes on an event that marks time differently while demonstrating in his peculiar way the impact of literacy on the predominantly oral art form of popular Jamaican music (Cooper, cited in Perkins, 2018: 65).

Hurricane Gilbert in brief

At 10:00 a.m. Monday September 12, 1988, category 3 Hurricane Gilbert hit the southeastern coast of Jamaica at Morant Point. At that time, it was the first hurricane to hit Jamaica in 37 years—the previous one being Hurricane Charlie in 1951. Gilbert’s ‘colossal’ 15 mile-wide eye travelled across the island in the course of the daylight hours packing wind speeds of up to 130 miles per hour with storm force winds extending 200

miles in all directions. This is the only hurricane in Jamaica's history to have travelled the entire length of the island. The eye passed over capital city Kingston and urban areas like Spanish Town during lunchtime affecting almost 1 million people. Gilbert finally exited the island at Negril Point (the western-most point of the island) around 6:00 p.m. that day, as a category 5 hurricane (the most severe category), to go on to destroy Grand Cayman, as reported in the Pan American Health Organisation's Disaster Report #5 (1988). It strengthened and, as a category 5 hurricane, it pulverized the northeastern coast of Mexico before weakening to category 2. Gilbert's official death tolls stand at: 45 in Jamaica; 202 in Mexico; 30 in Haiti; 12 in Guatemala; 12 in Honduras; five in the Dominican Republic; five in Venezuela; three in the US; two in Costa Rica; and two in Nicaragua. Such was the strength of Gilbert as it passed over Jamaica that Eyre (1998) computed that if the output had been harvested and harnessed it would have powered Jamaica for the next 1000 years. Such was the devastation caused by the hurricane that the name Gilbert has been retired and Gordon has replaced it. Almost 100 hurricane names have been retired since they started naming storms in 1950, including the infamous Gustav (2008), Sandy (2012) and Harvey, Irma, Maria and Nate (2017).

Jamaica experienced extensive flooding, with more than 32 inches of rain dumped on the island, although luckily most of the rainfall associated with the system actually fell in the sea. However, most of the rain fell between 1:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m., after the trees had been defoliated or uprooted, so surface wash and soil erosion were widespread, including along beaches (Pan American Health Organisation, 1988). Storm surges of up to 19 feet battered the eastern coastline. All sectors of the society and economy were devastated. The road network was extensively damaged and much agricultural land was lost. Protective groynes and bunds along riverbanks were destroyed and substantial siltation of riverbeds and gullies occurred.

My family lives right beside the Hope River so we witnessed and experienced this first hand. The driving bridge was completely destroyed and the riverbed silted up. Sadly, over the years, protective groynes had been destroyed to build houses, many of which were built in the riverbed. The impact of politics was evident with the lack of enforcement of building standards or sand mining protocols. At points, the Hope River changed course and even opened up a new channel.

The poultry industry, which provided the main protein for Jamaicans, was wiped out. So were the banana and coffee industries. There was a lack of preparation for the hurricane and many people were caught unawares. With little or no food stocks and an eye for opportunities, people looted extensively, especially food stores and supermarkets. Of course, this was before the age of the ubiquitous cell phone, but a few photos and videos exist of looting and stories are told of appliance and electronics stores also being robbed even in the middle of 'the raging storm'. One of the most popular stories about looting was that a Mercedes pulled up outside of a supermarket while looting was in progress. The obviously wealthy driver was reported to have rushed inside inquiring if

any John Walker Black was left among the pickings (Barker & Miller, 1990). Over \$JA 51.2 million worth of goods were stolen following Gilbert. Of this amount, police recovered an assortment of goods valued at some \$JA 2.5 million (National Library of Jamaica, n.d.: 8).

A dusk to dawn curfew was imposed to stem looting and the police shot dead at least three looters. Forty-five deaths have been directly attributed to the effects of the Hurricane in Jamaica, including children swept away by flood waters and people killed by flying glass and falling trees. One quarter of the buildings on the island were rendered unusable with a further 50% being severely damaged (Eyre, 1988). One fifth of all Jamaican households were left without a roof over their heads. Even months after, over 2000 persons remained homeless and it is said that some of the problems of homelessness experienced by Jamaicans today are a direct result of Gilbert. Water and electricity were cut off for months (some were without electricity for up to a year). The entire power grid had to be rebuilt from scratch (Eyre, 1998). Total damage was estimated to be US\$4 billion.

Inevitably, the hurricane impacted economic growth. After a decade of economic decline and stagnation, the economy was just starting to revive (Barker & Miller, 1990), but the disaster pulled the plug on that. The shortfall in local food production had to be met by high levels of imports, further deepening the import-dependent nature of the Jamaican economy. Food aid became an important element in feeding the population for months on end. Sadly, much of the public infrastructure—roads, schools, hospitals, and power and telephone lines—was uninsured, as were many private dwellings (Eyre 1988). Gilbert literally transformed the Jamaican landscape creating a new one in a matter of the few daylight hours that it took for the eye to pass over the island. As Barker and Miller (1990) describe:

The urban landscape had become a chaos of blocked roads, fallen trees, zinc sheeting, toppled utility poles and straggling transmission lines, wrecked buildings and an occasional crumpled satellite dish. Rural landscapes were seas of levelled trees and crops [...] trees and bushes had been totally defoliated, places seemed bare and empty and surprising new vistas and panoramas had appeared as if from nowhere. (112)

The Jamaican environment was already fragile and so the damaging effects of the hurricane was maximized and magnified.

Wild Gilbert, oil and love

Three weeks after Hurricane Gilbert hit Jamaica, Lloyd Lovindeer released his iconic hit song “Wild Gilbert” (1988d), the fastest selling dancehall song ever, is also credited with helping the dancehall genre cross classes by making it more acceptable to elites in Jamaica, who, until then had rejected it as a low class, low status musical form. In contemporary language, “Wild Gilbert” went viral, selling over 200,000 legal copies and

eventually winning 2 Jammy Awards for Lovindeer, as the artiste recalls in his song “Gilbert baby” (Lovindeer, 1989a). “Wild Gilbert’s” enormous appeal lay in its lyrics, which deliver an apt and witty social commentary on Gilbert’s rampage through the landscape and the lives of the Jamaican people. Interestingly, the focus of “Wild Gilbert” is the urban landscape, and Lovindeer does not refer to the agricultural or environmental damage caused by Gilbert (Posmentier, 2017:). He essentially depicts natural disaster as social disaster. Yet, this social disaster presented opportunities for community building and cooperation, told in stories of intra- and cross-community collaboration in saving lives, providing shelter, and rebuilding homes. A kind of neighbourliness was engendered across the classes.

Lovindeer, who evinces surprise at the popularity of the song, especially since other Gilbert songs had come out before his, recalls, “I was inside the house watching what was going on, on the outside, when the idea for the song hit me. My satellite dish was destroyed during the hurricane. It was an experience” (Lovindeer, cited in Jackson, 2013). In the song, he gives voice to the experiences of various Jamaicans, whom he met with in his visits to various communities in the hurricane’s aftermath (Cooke, 2010).

“Wild Gilbert” was released in two versions. The first and shorter version was a two-sided 45” record. The longer version was accompanied by a music video, which writ large Jamaicans’ anthropomorphising of the hurricane. Lovindeer put out an album entitled, *Gilbert yu gone* (1989b). Indeed, “Wild Gilbert” was the first of a series of Lovindeer’s “Gilbert songs”, which also includes, “Hurricane love” (1988a), “One hell of a blow job” (1988c), “Gilbert baby” (1989a), “Angry wind” (1988c) and “Hurricane oil” (1988b). Undeniably, Lovindeer’s Gilbert series, particularly “Wild Gilbert”, “Hurricane love” and “Hurricane oil” cover multiple perspectives of the impact of the fearsome hurricane on the lives of ordinary Jamaican people. In a sense, “Wild Gilbert” foreshadows and sets the stage for Lovindeer’s storytelling in other Gilbert Songs, as we hear the hurricane being described as a “bitch of a blow job” (all puns intended) and we are reminded of the fearsome monotony of eating only tinned goods like bully beef. He also sings about a huge increase in the sale of “Hurricane oils” to ward off such culinary catastrophes and other Gilbert-created problems.

In “Hurricane love” (1988a), Lovindeer compares the effect of Gilbert to a devastating love affair that leaves your heart and soul ravaged [...] and your neck covered by love bites (‘hickies’) like mosquito bites. For truly, Hurricane Gilbert “did mash up” a lot of people’s love lives as without transportation and phones; the all-island curfew meant many lovers could not see each other for up to a year. At the same time, without electricity, it is said that many people found recreation in lots of “Hurricane love” and some months later many a “Gilbert baby” was born. Other Gilbert babies were born during the time of the hurricane and are reputed to have temperaments that reflect the wildness of that storm (Gilchrist, 2018). Even so, some Jamaicans today will proudly tell you

they are “Gilbert babies” (Barker & Miller, 1990). Unsurprisingly, therefore, Lovindeer brings a collective into existence by the massive appeal of “Wild Gilbert” and his voicing of collective experience. He, therefore, ironically, renders Gilbert as ‘creatively generative’, especially with regard to the song’s own survival and its giving birth to numerous other artistic work.

Bad Bwai Kilbert

In a very short time, Hurricane Gilbert became a person and not simply an event in the psyche of almost every Jamaican. Barker and Miller (1990) note that this was one of the most unusual aspects of the disaster. Jamaicans are known for their habit of anthropomorphizing events and processes. With Gilbert, this was even easier to do as hurricanes are already assigned personal names. The practice of naming tropical cyclones began in the 1950s to help in the formulation of warning messages and the quick identification of storms, because names are considered easier to remember than numbers or technical terms. In the Atlantic and Eastern Pacific Oceans, tropical storms and hurricanes are named using an alphabetical list that rotates on a six-year cycle. Transforming Gilbert into a person helped the nation cope with this terrifying event. An “almost incomprehensible trauma was given a social context so that experiences and incidents associated with Gilbert could be invested with humour expressed in double entendre, a crucial psychological coping mechanism in dealing with personal disaster and misfortune” (Barker & Miller, 1990: 107).

So, Hurricane Gilbert quickly and spontaneously acquired a reputation of a rampaging bad man, aka “Kilbert”, “Rufus” and “Rambo”, in the way that notorious gunmen often carry aliases. Jamaica has had a series of bad men and dons/ gang leaders, who have earned their place in our history books, for example, Rhygin (celebrated in *The harder they come* starring Jimmy Cliff & directed by Perry Henzell, 1973) and Sandhokan, Christopher (“Dudus”) Coke, whose resistance in 2010 to being extradited to the US led to a state of emergency and 70 deaths. Several of these gunmen were the characters in Marlon James’s 2015 Man Booker prize-winning tome, *A brief history of seven killings*. The post-Gilbert devastation could be better comprehended by reducing its cause to a prosaic and simplistic one: Bad Bwai (Boy) Gilbert! The violence of the effect could only be the work of a bad bad man! Jamaicans know well what damage such dangerous men could do (and continue to do). Of course, this makes sense in light of Jamaica’s patriarchal culture, where male aggressiveness and posturing is valued. It may well be that the anthropomorphizing of Gilbert would not have been as rapid and as successful were the hurricane actually to have had a female name.

This may well be seen in the treatment of subsequent Hurricane Joan, the last hurricane of the season, which formed in the region on October 11, 1988. Hurricane Joan’s track took it south of Jamaica as it hugged the south of the Central American coastline.

This hurricane was unusual in meteorological history, as it eventually swept across Nicaragua into the Pacific and was thereupon renamed tropical storm Miriam. In Jamaica, Joan was billed as Gilbert's wife, who was lost searching for her husband. Lovindeer has Gilbert's paramour in "One hell of a blow job" hurry Gilbert away as "wife Helene is near" (Lovindeer, 1988c). Helene was a hurricane that formed after Gilbert, from 19 to 23 September, but she remained in the ocean (Hurricane Central, 1988). Nonetheless, Joan can only be made sense of in light of Gilbert! So not to be lost in the mix is the other allusion in calling Gilbert "wild". A "wild" man in Jamaican parlance is a man that has numerous women; such a man seems not be able to stop himself from cheating: "How you flirting so..?" (Lovindeer, 1988c, "One hell of a blow job"); he is both valorised and disdained for he is a master at sexual pleasuring: "I'm all wet can't you see" (Lovindeer, 1988c, "One hell of a blow job"). Lovindeer captures all of this with sexual allusions aplenty and tongue in cheek intertextual references rolled out in musical genre-crossing dancehall, reggae, and calypso beats.

Interestingly, "Wild Gilbert" (Lovindeer, 1988d) was also hugely popular in countries like Nicaragua, where Jamieson (2018) reports that, during fieldwork in 1992 and 1993, he heard recordings of it being played over and over on portable radios owned by *costeños*, i.e., residents along Nicaragua's east coast, as well as in restaurants, bars and nightclubs. Jamieson notes the continued popularity of the song amongst *costeños*, particularly speakers of Nicaraguan Afro-Caribbean English lexifier Creole (known locally as Creole). In his estimation:

What made Lovindeer's recording so popular was its significance for those who had experienced Hurricane Joan ["Juana" as she was called in the local parlance] which had caused so much destruction to Bluefields, El Bluff, Rama Cay, Kukra Hill, the Corn Islands and the communities of the Pearl Lagoon area in south-eastern Nicaragua on 22nd October 1988, only a month after Gilbert's devastation of Jamaica. (Jamieson, 2018: 88)

Joan wreaked havoc in Nicaragua and called into question the theodicies and cosmic order of the locals. Nicaraguans believed hurricanes could be stopped by magical means while many Jamaicans believed that they could be turned away by prayer—to no avail in 1988; Joan, like her husband, threatened "a cosmic order that ideally rewards the good and punishes the bad by wreaking havoc on good and bad alike" (Jamieson, 2018: 89).

Gilbert mocked and moralised

Even as Gilbert was valorised as the biggest bad man, the power of the storm is mocked. Evans notes the satirical edge to Lovindeer's song(s). The main voice of the song, which is a privileged one, laments the loss of his satellite dish, his spoiled freezer meat, lack of electricity, and being forced to eat canned goods like "bully beef". As Evans (2014) sees it:

His complaints reveal both his relative wealth and his self-absorption. The plight of the speaker is humorous because it is not desperate. While other islanders have lost their lives or their livelihood, the speaker only has to deal with the discomfort of a monotonous diet of canned meat in place of fresh meat and fish, and the inconvenience of not having access to American soaps. (110)

Indeed, the song “mocks the materialism and insularity of Kingston’s suburban communities” (Evans, 2014: 111) while laying bare the stark socio-economic inequalities that divide Jamaica. The current COVID pandemic is similarly laying bare the inequalities that plague Jamaican society (United Nations Development Programme, 2021). Natural disasters have an uneven impact on persons and communities across the island. They are much more devastating for poorer communities which already suffer from poor infrastructure and substandard living conditions. Notably though:

while on one level the song draws attention to the social inequalities foregrounded by the hurricane’s effects, on another it presents the hurricane as a kind of equalizer which generates social as well as physical upheaval [...] The storm provides a unique opportunity for the impoverished to gain access to goods which would normally be out of reach. (Evans, 2014: 110-111)

Furthermore, “Wild Gilbert” (Lovindeer, 1988d) presents a theodicy that in some way addresses the effects of the hurricane. While Gilbert exposed inequities and other imbalances which affected Jamaica, the moral universe had been significantly upended and needed explanation and perhaps restoration or redress: “Gilbert [...] punishes the wealthy (the Chinese business man), those with hubris (Oliver), the self-righteous (the Rastafarian Natty Dread), and the looters, and the rent in the sacred canopy is repaired and the moral order reaffirmed” (Jamieson, 2018: 90).

A primer for resilience

Numerous changes in Jamaican life and living have taken place since Hurricane Gilbert. In 1988, there was no significant risk management culture in Jamaica, either in the government or the private sector. Jamaicans are now generally more alert and willing to prepare by stocking up with food and other necessities and decamping to shelters once a hurricane warning is issued. Indeed, the singular indication of this is how supermarket shelves are immediately stripped bare as soon as a serious hurricane warning is issued—and this time, not by the looters of Gilbertian fame. The Office of Disaster Preparedness notes a significant improvement in the risk consciousness of the population, although it is far from ideal. More and more Jamaicans are seeking out disaster preparedness information. Roofing construction now includes hurricane straps to secure roofs and hurricane shutters, with home insurers now being subject to the average clause, of course. Various sectors of the economy such as tourism and agriculture are investing in approaches to increase resilience and making businesses more hurricane-ready. Jamaica’s

emergency management system has become more robust with long term investments in the work of the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM), which engages in ongoing training of emergency response teams and community engagement.

I wish I could say that Jamaica has remained an open, welcoming society where the barriers between the rich and poor, which Gilbert removed, have remained down. Gilbert removed physical barriers like fences and gates but not the inequalities, which allow some people to be disproportionately affected by natural disasters and less able to bounce back. Gilbert did not remove the ingrained class differences among Jamaicans. A generation has passed since Gilbert and perhaps with the regeneration of the denuded environment, has redrawn some of the physical barriers but not the social ones. There are many issues that still need to be addressed in order to truly build resilience and learn the lessons of Wild Gilbert.

One clear area that continues to need attention is the environment. According to Ronald Jackson, former executive director of ODPEM (now Head of the United Nations Development Programme, Disaster Risk Reduction & Recovery Team, Switzerland):

[A]n area I think we need to go back as a people to look at how we treat is the environment. The natural ecosystems play a significant role in terms of reducing the level of impact of these storms. What we have seen certainly in a number of context (sic) is damage to the coastal ecosystems, whether the mangroves or coral reefs, and that leaves the coastline very exposed to the ravages of the winds that come ashore and also the storm surges. (Dunkley, 2013)

Disasters are not simply a function of nature but also reflect social conditions that maintain divisions which destroy the environment. “Ecological disasters that occur in the wake [of hurricanes] expose hidden geographies of environmental crisis with clear transnational implications” (McDougall, 2017: 17). The impact of a hurricane or other natural disaster differs according to the socio-political arrangements which exist when it occurs, and those that come into being after it happens.

Another area that continues to need attention is infrastructure. Drains, coastal defences, and facilities used as emergency shelters need constant attention, maintenance and upgrading. Furthermore, communities that are more at risk in the face of hurricanes such as informal settlements and communities built in vulnerable areas along riverbanks and gully sides need to be relocated. There are roughly 947 communities in Jamaica. Of that number, 300 are considered highly vulnerable because of where they are located. In addition to vulnerable marginal locations, some buildings are not built to standard. Yet, building codes are not always enforced, especially in response to political expediency, explains Richard Thompson, Acting Director General of the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM) (Thompson, cited in Henry, 2020).

Importantly, by the time a Jamaican reaches her teenage years, she would have experienced at least one major hurricane. With the significant changes happening in weather

patterns and existing social and environmental vulnerabilities, it is likely that the frightening experience of a hurricane like Gilbert will no longer be as exceptional as in former years. In this regard, Barbara Carby, Director of the Disaster Risk Reduction Centre (DRRC) at The University of the West Indies, laments:

There is a part of our population that does not know anything about real hurricane activity because the last time we had anything significant [before Gilbert] was 2007 when we had Hurricane Dean. We need to remind people of what it (hurricane threat) really means, because it involves not only strong winds. It is also torrential rainfall; it's also lightning and thunder quite often; and it's also storm surge flooding. (cited in Henry, 2020)

Hurricanes lead to real suffering; they are environmentally and culturally definitive (McDougall, 2017) and as we work towards a more resilient future, Lovindeer's humorous "Wild Gilbert" (1988d) perhaps needs to give way to the assurance of "Angry wind" (1988c):

Blow you angry wind/ we will rise again/ with a little help from our friends/
rebuild, we're gonna rebuild/ little by little, brick by brick/ All for one and one
for all/ Unconquered people stand tall.

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LA IDENTIDAD PUERTORRIQUEÑA COMO MITO NACIONAL: UN ANÁLISIS SEMIOLÓGICO DEL DISCURSO DE DIVEDCO

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Resumen

En el 1949, bajo la gobernación de Luis Muñoz Marín, líder del Partido Popular Democrático (PPD), se creó la División de Educación para la Comunidad (DIVEDCO) con el objetivo de (re)educar a las poblaciones rurales puertorriqueñas e integrarlas en el plan económico que trajo consigo la fundación del Estado Libre Asociado (ELA). La DIVEDCO se ocuparía de unir el proyecto cultural con el proyecto político y económico del País. A través de la producción de material educativo como carteles, panfletos y libros, resaltando los Libros para el Pueblo, la DIVEDCO utilizó la imagen, a la par con el lenguaje como sistema lingüístico, como medio para transmitir valores relacionados a la democracia y al trabajo, necesarios para el despegue del desarrollo industrial planificado para la Isla. Los vínculos que se crearon entre estos valores y la realidad del campesino puertorriqueño forjaron un sentido de identidad nacional que se personificó en la figura del jíbaro. Las ilustraciones en la obra de DIVEDCO permitieron modificar el lenguaje social, que Gee (1999) denomina Discurso (“big D”) con “d” mayúscula, y crear un Discurso que promulgó el objetivo económico muñocista. Para crear este Discurso, el mito (Barthes, 1957), como uso del lenguaje, fue una herramienta útil y necesaria. El Discurso de DIVEDCO construyó el mito de la identidad nacional a través de la vinculación de imágenes o, en otras palabras, la creación de metáforas (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Empleando algunos mecanismos del mito (Barthes, 1957), como la naturalización o la privación de la historia, la DIVEDCO fue capaz de relacionar la cotidianidad y la idiosincrasia del puertorriqueño con la estampa de la sociedad taína, como un grupo pacífico, comunitario y familiar, dedicado a los trabajos manuales. Los valores que promovía la plataforma del PPD fueron justificados por los orígenes de la historia de la Isla, proveyéndole así legitimidad sobre el Discurso y otorgándole inherencia a la identidad puertorriqueña creada por este Discurso.

Términos clave: discurso, identidad, signo, mito, lenguaje metafórico

Introducción

A comienzos del siglo XX, la academia puertorriqueña se ofuscó en el estudio de la identidad nacional, en un intento obsesivo por definirla. La figura del jíbaro surgió como el arquetipo de la puertorriqueñidad; sin embargo, no fue hasta mediados de siglo, cuando Luis Muñoz Marín, miembro del Partido Popular Democrático (PPD), fue electo como gobernador en 1948, que esta imagen del hombre rural y trabajador se afianzó en el imaginario puertorriqueño como símbolo nacional de su identidad. La agencia de Muñoz Marín marcó un paso no solo importante, sino determinante, en la definición de esta identidad colectiva. En 1949, bajo la Ley Núm. 372, crearía la División de Educación a la Comunidad (DIVEDCO), un programa de educación populista que serviría para educar a las masas y afianzar su discurso de identidad nacional.

La creación del Estado Libre Asociado (ELA) en 1952 y el proyecto modernizador ligado a las políticas económicas de este nuevo estatus, requerían “redefinir lo que significaba ser puertorriqueño” (Vélez Rivera, 2016: 77). Para Muñoz “era necesario construir una nueva identidad, una en donde los puertorriqueños se sintieran parte del país que estaba naciendo. En este contexto, Muñoz y su gobierno, establecen la meta de articular ciertas instituciones y crear tradiciones para legitimar el nuevo estado” (Vélez Rivera, 2016: 75). De acuerdo con Vélez Rivera, esa nueva identidad se perfeccionaría con la creación del Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña (ICP), el museo de la Universidad de Puerto Rico (UPR), el Festival Casals, el Conservatorio de Música y otros proyectos que promovían la cultura del ELA.

Las políticas económicas, sociales y culturales implantadas por el gobierno de Muñoz representaron un panorama esperanzador para la población puertorriqueña más desventajada; sin embargo, el desarrollo del Nuevo País necesitaba la creación de un nuevo ciudadano. Era necesario que el puertorriqueño se insertara en la sociedad industrializada que proponía el Estado recién inaugurado. Para promover el nuevo proyecto económico, se desarrolla a la par el proyecto cultural de DIVEDCO. El discurso de DIVEDCO estaría basado en exaltar los valores democráticos que fomentarían las actitudes necesarias para el trabajo industrial. Gracias a este programa de educación, el discurso de la modernidad se apoderó del imaginario social puertorriqueño.

La DIVEDCO tomó como eje central de su discurso la figura del jíbaro. “El PPD llevaba tiempo trabajando este significado [de la nueva identidad] con la alusión directa al jíbaro como ícono de la puertorriqueñidad. La afirmación de esa nacionalidad e identidad se llevaría con la idealización del campesino; el jíbaro era el vínculo entre lo que se tenía y lo que se quería” (Vélez Rivera, 2016: 77). A partir de esta figura se desglosarían una serie de actitudes y buenos valores que Muñoz consideraba naturales en el puertorriqueño y esenciales para el desarrollo de la vida democrática que proponía el nuevo paradigma social y económico.

A través de su producción cultural, que incluía libros, carteles, panfletos y películas, la DIVEDCO promulgó la imagen del jíbaro, resaltando características cónsonas con los

valores democráticos que fomentaba Muñoz en sus discursos políticos. Estos valores, que le otorgaba Muñoz a sus compatriotas, estaban basados en la resolución de problemas en comunidad, en la colaboración con el gobierno, en la convivencia pacífica, en el espíritu trabajador y en la buena voluntad de los puertorriqueños. El jíbaro se constituyó como arquetipo de la puertorriqueñidad; la figura del hombre trabajador, sus manos fuertes y curtidas, sus instrumentos de trabajo, el paisaje rural y la casa de madera, se convirtieron en las representaciones simbólicas de la realidad campesina.

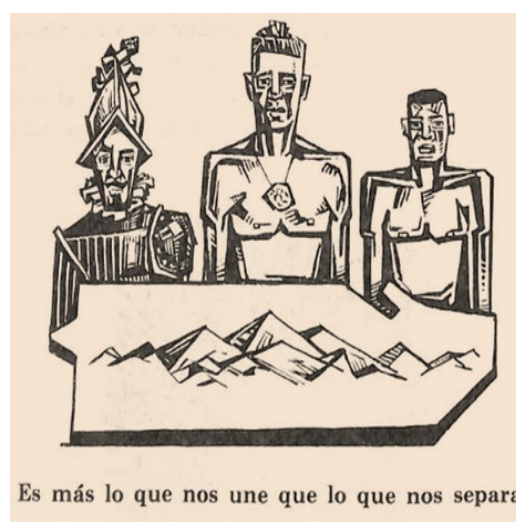
Estas representaciones simbólicas, que llenaron el discurso de la identidad nacional, eran elementos cotidianos de la vida rural. El puertorriqueño campesino podía sentirse identificado y desarrollar un sentido de pertenencia con la realidad plasmada en las ilustraciones de los libros y carteles de DIVEDCO. La producción cultural de DIVEDCO supuso, entonces, una herramienta clave en la construcción de la identidad nacional puertorriqueña; a partir de ese discurso, que recuperó la figura del jíbaro, los valores del campo y el trabajo, se creó un perfil de lo que debía ser un buen puertorriqueño, el ciudadano moderno sobre el que recaería la responsabilidad del éxito del Nuevo País.

La construcción del discurso de DIVEDCO se apoyó en las ilustraciones: el lenguaje empleado en los materiales culturales era respaldado por las imágenes que mostraban la realidad campesina. Las ilustraciones y los textos que las acompañaban y explicaban crearon nuevos *significados* sobre la puertorriqueñidad. Este proceso de creación de nuevos significados ocurrió a través de la mitificación (Barthes, 1957); es decir, el lenguaje y las imágenes atravesaron un proceso semiológico para construir un *mito*. El mito, como señala Barthes (1957), es un uso del discurso.

En esta investigación, se plantea que el discurso de DIVEDCO jugó un rol fundamental en el desarrollo de la identidad nacional puertorriqueña y que esta identidad nacional constituye un mito (Barthes, 1957). Para esto, se identifican los valores democráticos exaltados en los materiales de DIVEDCO, se describen los procesos lingüísticos y semióticos que caracterizan la formación del mito y se analiza la representación de estos valores en el discurso de DIVEDCO, refiriéndonos a los procesos de significación del lenguaje y la creación del mito.

De este modo, el presente estudio se estructura en una serie de secciones. En primer lugar, se discute el contexto histórico y político de la creación de DIVEDCO y se repasan puntos como la figura de Luis Muñoz Marín y el Partido Popular Democrático, la fundación del Estado Libre Asociado y el modelo económico de Manos a la Obra, la emergencia del nacionalismo cultural y la persecución contra el nacionalismo separatista. Luego, se presenta una revisión de los principales trabajos investigativos asociados a DIVEDCO y a la producción cultural del período muñocista como lo son la tesis de Colón Pizarro (2011) *Poetic Pragmatism: The Puerto Rican Division of Community Education (DIVEDCO) and the Politics of Cultural Production, 1949-1968*, el texto de Vélez Rivera (2016) *Las ilustraciones de los "Libros para el Pueblo" de la División de Educación de la Comunidad y la Modernización de Puerto Rico*, y la obra de Marsh

Kennerly (2009) *Negociaciones Culturales: los intelectuales y el proyecto pedagógico del estado muñocista*. A continuación, se plantea tanto la justificación del estudio y como las preguntas de investigación. De seguido, se presenta y discute la metodología enfocada en el Análisis Crítico del Discurso según Gee (1999); para luego pasar a la discusión de las teorías del mito de Roland Barthes en su obra *Mythologies* (1957) y al análisis del lenguaje como metáfora que presentan George Lakoff y Mark Johnson en su libro *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). Posteriormente, se analiza la muestra seleccionada de DIVEDCO y, finalmente, se presentan las conclusiones, las recomendaciones y los límites del estudio.



Imágenes de DIVEDCO (recopiladas en la obra de Vélez Rivera, 2016: 108, 108, 125, 229).

Revisión de literatura

La DIVEDCO formó parte de la Operación Serenidad, el programa cultural que instituía, en conjunto con la Operación Manos a la Obra y el Estado Libre Asociado (ELA),

el plan muñocista para llevar a Puerto Rico a la industrialización, a la modernización y a la democracia. Según Vélez Rivera:

La obra económica y social que había comenzado el PPD con el proceso de modernización, necesitó una obra cultural que fuera a la par con los demás progresos. El discurso necesitaba la parte educativa, cultural y espiritual que ayudara a regular las prácticas de los procesos económicos. (2016: 215)

Según plantea Cabrera Collazo:

para el gobierno muñocista era imperativo cambiar valores y costumbres en el puertorriqueño, con el propósito de que se entendiera que el progreso era necesario para salir del marasmo socioeconómico y cultural que había distinguido la vida insular hasta ese momento. (2007: 12)

Cabrera Collazo explica, para estos efectos, se crea este programa de educación popular.

Por medio de su agenda cultural, Muñoz intentó desarrollar las comunidades rurales y hacerlas participativas del nuevo orden político y social. Vélez Rivera (2016) cita a Muñoz y señala que era muy explícito sobre el dirigismo cultural: “si no tomamos comando deliberado del proceso cultural, a base de examinar cómo es y de examinarnos sobre cómo debiera ser, se puede malogar la personalidad puertorriqueña en inextricables burundangas sin pies ni cabeza” (Vélez Rivera, 2016: 223). De esta forma, Muñoz admite su intervención en el proceso de formación cultural.

La DIVEDCO construye una plataforma para promover una mentalidad colectiva acerca de la patria y la cultura puertorriqueña, y desarrolla “un discurso visual que va a tomar en consideración todos los aspectos de formación cultural y a organizar una iconografía de lo puertorriqueño y lo autóctono” (Vélez Rivera, 2016: 215). La administración de Muñoz buscó todas las vías para institucionalizar aspectos culturales, de valores, exaltando la idea de lo puertorriqueño (216). Su agenda cultural incluyó la creación del Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña (ICP) en 1955, organismo que se consideraría como el ente oficial encargado de definir la cultura nacional. La institucionalización de la cultura puertorriqueña fue un paso importante para afianzar el discurso de la modernidad; sin embargo, la creación de un programa de educación popular era necesario para llegar a las comunidades rurales y marginadas.

La DIVEDCO, a través de sus coloridos y atractivos carteles y panfletos, y sus filmes sencillos, llegó a las zonas del campo donde el puertorriqueño de a pie se preocupaba por su subsistencia más que por las tretas políticas de la ciudad. La Comisión de Parques y Recreo fue la precursora de la DIVEDCO, no solo en su estructura organizativa, sino también en su filosofía e inclusión del arte como medio de democratización. De acuerdo con Vélez Rivera (2016: 105), “...el estilo ilustrativo que desarrolló esta comisión... va a marcar la ruta del diseño en la ilustración de los folletos a partir de 1949”. A través de la DIVEDCO, artistas e intelectuales desarrollaron contenido fílmico, carteles, literatura

y otros materiales didácticos que fomentaban valores como el civismo, trabajo comunitario, salud, higiene y cultura; sin embargo, de acuerdo con Colón Pizarro:

DIVEDCO provided local artists and intellectuals a space for the elaboration of cultural artifacts that kept reiterating participation and civic commitment as genuine markers of citizenship and modernization. Even though this citizen formation process encouraged local art production, this was not its ultimate intention. What was at stake in this initiative was not necessarily the promotion of a national identity through artistic reflection, but rather the development of a state hegemony that required the elaboration of cultural contents in order to mobilize its constituency. (2011: 9)

La inclusión del jíbaro en los procesos de modernización y democracia del nuevo Estado permitió a los actores políticos de la década, Luis Muñoz Marín, el Partido Popular Democrático (PPD) y los Estados Unidos, legitimar "el nuevo modelo democrático" ante los ojos del mundo. La DIVEDCO jugó un rol importante en la configuración del nuevo orden en Puerto Rico, luego de la desestabilización política de los años 50 con las revueltas nacionalistas y tras concluir la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Tras la culminación de este conflicto bélico, Estados Unidos establece nuevas políticas, como las del Nuevo Trato, que van a tener un efecto directo en la vida económica, social y política de la Isla. La influencia novotratista en la DIVEDCO se asienta desde sus orígenes debido a la participación de los norteamericanos Edwin Rosskam, quien estuvo a cargo de administrar el proyecto en sus comienzos, y Jack e Irene Delano, encargados de las secciones de cine y gráfica, respectivamente. Tanto Rosskam como la pareja Delano, participaron en proyectos del Nuevo Trato en Estados Unidos que les permitieron formar su visión de cómo se debía trabajar un proyecto pedagógico-cultural a nivel nacional. Esta visión es la base en la formación de la DIVEDCO.

La creación de este programa cultural tuvo como objetivo educar al puertorriqueño para insertarlo en la nueva realidad económica y social que trajo la fundación del ELA en 1952 y el proyecto de desarrollo económico industrial Operación Manos a la Obra (1947). Marsh Kennerly (2009) cita una importante declaración de Muñoz respecto a la misión de la DIVEDCO:

¿Cómo es que vamos a nosotros a poder canalizar nuestra educación, de modo que, desarrollemos en nuestra cultura las maneras y cualidades típicas del industrialismo y tan necesarias para su funcionamiento, sin a la misma vez permitir que se borre, se pierda o se confundan otras cualidades tan profundamente enraizadas en nuestra cultura y que han jugado un papel muy importante y que, sepámoslo o no, han sido tan necesarias? Esta es la misión de nuestra educación; es la misión particularmente del Proyecto de Educación a la Comunidad que hemos establecido y que ya ha comenzado a trabajar con mi supervisión y cooperación. (38-39)

Muñoz admite la necesidad de crear un proyecto educativo que fomentara una conducta ciudadana acorde con los preceptos democráticos y que apoyara el camino de la industrialización y el anhelado progreso; no obstante, así como el proyecto político, el *Estado Libre Asociado*, presentaba contradicciones ideológicas, el proyecto cultural, la DIVEDCO, reflejaba estas contradicciones. En su libro *Negociaciones Culturales*, Marsh Kennerly (2009) nos ofrece el trasfondo de la creación de la DIVEDCO y la perspectiva interna del programa que desarrollaría la producción cultural. Además, se encarga de exponer las contradicciones ideológicas que sus integrantes presentaban desde sus inicios, desde su fundador principal, Luis Muñoz Marín, los primeros productores del contenido, Edwin Rosskam, Jack e Irene Delano, hasta los mismísimos autores puertorriqueños que laboraron en el proyecto, como René Marqués. Marsh Kennerly resalta la importancia de la figura de René Marqués en los elementos ideológicos de la producción cultural de la DIVEDCO y propone que los intelectuales estaban en constante negociación con el objetivo pedagógico-populista de Muñoz al crear la división de educación.

Dentro de estas contradicciones ideológicas, se refleja la tendencia nacionalista de algunos miembros del programa educativo como René Marqués; sin embargo, el objetivo político y económico del PPD se alejaba totalmente del nacionalismo separatista. Vélez Rivera (2016) señala que la DIVEDCO redefinió la puertorriqueñidad alejándose de los conceptos nacionalistas que presentaba la oposición política. “Lo puertorriqueño dentro del contexto muñocista es [más bien] una explicación folclórica de la identidad, donde se sobreponen los elementos tradicionales de la música, el origen étnico y la simbología adoptada por el nuevo estado” (Vélez Rivera, 2016: 217). Estos elementos se adoptan como íconos oficiales de la puertorriqueñidad dentro de la reformulación cultural de los cincuenta (Vélez Rivera, 2016).

Así mismo, Vélez Rivera declara:

Mientras el Partido Nacionalista y los grupos independentistas proponían la libertad política para Puerto Rico, el PPD hablaba de Pan, Tierra y Libertad. El discurso de esos tres elementos en una sola consigna tuvo mayor éxito porque el PPD identificó al pueblo jíbaro con el pan y la tierra y pospuso la libertad con vías a alcanzar el favor de la gente. (2016: 154)

Dentro de la reorganización cultural que suponía el reordenamiento mundial, el nacionalismo era visto como una postura intransigente (Vélez Rivera, 2016). Dicho de otra manera, el nacionalismo separatista interrumpía el proyecto económico necesario para ser parte de ese nuevo mundo.

Por su parte, el PPD reenfoca los discursos de la democracia: “moderniza las prácticas democráticas y las convierte en un espacio común para la gente” (Vélez Rivera, 2016: 154). Su discurso se vuelve a fin a la realidad inmediata del campesinado; el puertorriqueño común se va a identificar más con este discurso que con el nacionalista. Vélez Rivera (2016) considera que la reforma democrática de Muñoz legitima a los grupos

marginados y crea un vínculo fuerte y difícil de disolver entre esta clase social y el gobierno. Por otro lado, el PPD logra neutralizar los reclamos del nacionalismo separatista, transformar la pregunta nacional en una cuestión de identidad y dejar fuera la discusión de la soberanía política (Colón Pizarro, 2011). De esta forma, el PPD obtiene el apoyo del pueblo y se apodera del discurso nacional, uniéndolo de forma inseparable, hasta hoy día, la identidad puertorriqueña al proyecto político y económico del País. En su discurso, la DIVEDCO fomenta la cultura del trabajo; este valor va “a ser tan importante como la industrialización porque de ello dependía el éxito del proyecto” (Vélez Rivera, 2016: 156). Además:

La formación de la era industrializada en Puerto Rico contó con la DIVEDCO como fuente de promoción y enlace con los campesinos. La estrategia de mantener el balance entre el campo y la ciudad, la máquina y el hombre, la industria y la agricultura, fue acompañada de un discurso visual coherente y estratégico. (Vélez Rivera, 2016: 158-159)

Aquí recae la importancia del programa cultural de DIVEDCO para el PPD y sus aspiraciones políticas y económicas.

La cultura agrícola había creado una cultura de trabajo que estaba inmersa en la mentalidad colectiva del jíbaro: “El puertorriqueño era trabajador, ese era uno de los elementos que más había enfatizado el PPD en sus campañas...” (Vélez Rivera, 2016: 160). Por otro lado, “la expresión visual del discurso desarrollista contribuyó a idealizar la industrialización y a configurar una nueva identidad para los puertorriqueños como beneficiarios de la manufactura” (Villalonga, citado en Vélez Rivera, 2016: 163). En adición:

Las ilustraciones explicando el funcionamiento de las fábricas, o bien aquellas que anunciaban su creación, sirvieron de plataforma para el cambio que se quería proyectar, esto a su vez tiene un efecto en la simpatía del pueblo hacia el PPD y sus reformas. (Vélez Rivera, 2016: 163)

De esta manera, el discurso modernizador se afianzó en la cultura colectiva y definió la identidad del puertorriqueño en los años 50.

La DIVEDCO funcionó como un programa coordinado, ya que produjo unos 25 filmes y 17 libros. Los filmes, que describían sucesos cotidianos en la vida de la comunidad puertorriqueña, servirían de apoyo para el mensaje que se quería transmitir en los libros. Como explica Cabrera Collazo, “las películas creaban un sentido de identificación que ayudaba a que los presentes discutieran entre ellos el problema y la relación con su inmediatez” (2007: 13). El tono y “el dramatismo del filme apelaban a la emoción” y “servían como vehículo para lograr el cambio de actitudes” (Cabrera Collazo, 2007: 14) y comportamientos necesarios para abrazar el progreso pregonado por el PPD. “Los finales felices... se convierten en una forma de convencer al pueblo del éxito del proyecto histórico del PPD” (Cabrera Collazo, 2007: 14).

El programa de DIVEDCO permitió al gobierno muñocista apoderarse de la producción simbólica y cultural del País. El concepto de nacionalismo se transformó en una cuestión de identidad y cultura, y dejó atrás al nacionalismo separatista que planteaba un cambio ideológico y estatutario. El nacionalismo cultural, a través de espacios como el que proveía la exposición de filmes de la DIVEDCO, representaba acciones de cooperativismo y la resolución de problemas en comunión, de forma a veces idílicas y utópicas. El nacionalismo separatista, en tanto, creía en la revolución armada como medio para la resolución del estatus político, y era retratado por el gobierno como grupos violentos que amenazaban el verdadero progreso de la Isla. Dentro de este contexto histórico, se fue conjugando la identidad puertorriqueña.

Objetivos, preguntas de investigación, marco teórico y metodología

La figura del jíbaro ha sido un tema recurrente en la academia puertorriqueña; sin embargo, la coyuntura histórica actual obliga a cuestionar la realidad socioeconómica y política de la Isla y a retomar el estudio de la identidad e idiosincrasia nacional como elemento central del determinismo político del País. Por esta razón, el presente estudio está dirigido a evaluar el rol del discurso de DIVEDCO sobre la construcción de la identidad puertorriqueña como mito nacional. Además del enfoque del Análisis Crítico del Discurso (Gee, 1999), el trabajo propone un nuevo acercamiento al estudio de la identidad nacional desde otras dos perspectivas lingüísticas: la teoría del mito de Barthes (1957) y la de la metáfora de Lakoff y Johnson (1980). Como planteó Norman Fairclough (1992) hace casi tres décadas, el estudio lingüístico está dominado por paradigmas cognitivos y formalistas; sin embargo, cada vez se reconoce más la importancia de ligar los estudios del lenguaje con el resto de las ciencias sociales, y del análisis del lenguaje como un método importante para estudiar el cambio social. Asimismo, Vélez Rivera (2016) reconoce que el uso de imágenes o ilustraciones como objeto de estudio ha sido muy escaso en las investigaciones de índole histórico y social. El propósito de este trabajo se asimila al planteamiento que realizó Gee, ‘entender cómo funciona el lenguaje en la sociedad para crear mejores o peores realidades, instituciones y relaciones humanas’ (1999: 8 [paráfrasis de K. Cotto]). En fin, esta investigación pretende contribuir al desarrollo de una nueva perspectiva teórica para el estudio de la identidad cultural.

Este estudio examina el rol del discurso de la DIVEDCO, desde la figura de Luis Muñoz Marín y el PPD, en la construcción de la identidad puertorriqueña; identifica el lenguaje y los símbolos presentados en materiales impresos producidos por DIVEDCO que documentan los procesos de mitificación de la identidad puertorriqueña a partir del discurso; y, finalmente, analiza este proceso del lenguaje desde la teoría del mito de Barthes (1957) y la de la metáfora (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), aplicando el Análisis Crítico del Discurso propuesto por Gee (1999). Para alcanzar estos objetivos, la investigación

intenta responder las siguientes preguntas: ¿Cuál fue el rol de la DIVEDCO en la formación de la identidad nacional puertorriqueña? ¿Qué imágenes y símbolos lingüísticos son utilizados en el material de DIVEDCO para crear el mito sobre la identidad nacional? ¿Cómo ocurre el proceso de mitificación (Barthes, 1957) de la identidad nacional a través del discurso de DIVEDCO y cómo la metáfora (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) define este proceso?

La construcción de identidades es un proceso dinámico nutrido por múltiples factores ambientales, psicológicos, históricos, sociales y culturales. Dentro de esta multiplicidad, surgen contradicciones teóricas difíciles de abordar. De acuerdo con Martínez Lahoz:

las construcciones de las identidades nacionales, no nacionales e individuales ocurren como consecuencia de la adaptación que individuos y grupos hacen en el medioambiente sociocultural, político y económico, producto de determinados eventos y procesos históricos. La adaptación responde también al lenguaje y a los procesos cognoscitivos. Esto significa que, si podemos identificar cómo se manifiestan ciertos fenómenos en el medioambiente social, y entender los *mecanismos lingüísticos* y cognoscitivos en la formación de un sentido de identidad o «yo» en el ámbito individual y colectivo, podremos entender cómo se construyen y reconstruyen las identidades. (2005: 29)

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Por otro lado, Anderson (2006: 7) utiliza el término de “*imagined communities*” (comunidades imaginadas) para referirse a las profundas relaciones horizontales de camaradería que unen una nación, a pesar de las condiciones de desigualdad y explotación que existan entre sus miembros. En otras palabras, la identidad se conjuga a partir de los límites que definen la unidad nacional. ¿Pero, quién define los límites de la unidad nacional? En el caso de Puerto Rico, estos límites fueron trazados por el discurso de DIVEDCO. A través de su discurso, este programa de educación popular logró construir y representar esa comunidad imaginada a los puertorriqueños.

Entonces, ¿cuál es el rol que juega el lenguaje en este proceso? Como planteaba Martínez Lahoz (2005), los mecanismos lingüísticos forman parte de la construcción de un sentido de identidad; no obstante, para entender cómo se construye un discurso sobre la identidad es necesario analizar la estructura conceptual del mismo. Esta conceptualización es lo que Roland Barthes (1957) llamaría *mito*. Barthes (1957) define el mito como un tipo de discurso y establece dos acercamientos para su estudio: el semiológico y el ideológico. Aunque resulta muy relevante la perspectiva ideológica para entender la construcción de identidades, este estudio está inclinado a entender la perspectiva semiológica y lingüística en la significación del mito de la identidad nacional.

La semiología postula una relación entre dos términos, un significante y un significado; la correlación entre ambos produce un signo, que según Barthes (1957: 111) es el total

asociativo de los primeros dos términos; es decir, es el producto de la unión del significante y el significado. Por su parte, el padre de la semiótica, Ferdinand de Saussure, propone un esquema semiológico en el que ‘el significado es el concepto, el significante es la imagen acústica y la relación entre ambos es el signo, que representa una entidad concreta (Barthes, 1957: 112 [paráfrasis de K. Cotto]). Para Barthes, el mito se construye utilizando esta cadena semiológica preexistente; en otras palabras, el mito consiste en un sistema semiológico de segundo orden: lo que constituye el signo en el primer sistema, se convierte en el significante del segundo sistema, o sea, del mito.

El sistema semiológico de primer orden es el sistema lingüístico (el lenguaje) que Barthes (1957) llama lenguaje-objeto; el sistema semiológico de segundo orden es el mito mismo, que Barthes denomina metalenguaje. Barthes le otorga al significante dos nombres distintos: en el primer orden (el sistema lingüístico), lo nombra *sentido*, y en el segundo orden (el mito), lo llama *forma*. En ambos sistemas, el significado retiene el nombre de concepto. Para definir la correlación entre el significante y el significado, en el primer sistema, Barthes utiliza, al igual que Saussure, la palabra *signo*; sin embargo, para definir la correlación entre la forma y el concepto, en el segundo orden, emplea el término *significación*.

Barthes (1957) postula que cuando el signo del sistema lingüístico se convierte en el significante del mito (la *forma*), este pierde su sentido y es necesario rellenarlo. Por esta razón, en este estudio se plantea que es posible manipular el sentido de un signo, a través de la construcción de relaciones con nuevos conceptos (*significados*). Asimismo, Barthes plantea que el concepto es de carácter histórico e intencional. Debido a que el sentido es ‘deformado o distorsionado por el concepto’ (1957: 121 [paráfrasis de K. Cotto]), la intención o motivación del mito se presenta a través de este sentido. Esta intención va atada a la función específica del mito y está determinada por la audiencia a la que está dirigido. Además, según Barthes, se encuentra explícita en el discurso mítico; no obstante, debido a su segundo orden semiológico, el mito es capaz de naturalizarse, de transformar una realidad histórica en una imagen natural. De esta forma, el mito ‘se deshace de la memoria histórica de las cosas’ (Barthes, 1957: 131 [paráfrasis de K. Cotto]) y comienza a leerse, no como un motivo, sino como una razón. De acuerdo con este autor, quien se apodera del mito, ‘lo naturaliza a través de la relación del signo con formas determinadas’ (Barthes, 1957: 131 [paráfrasis de K. Cotto]). Este proceso, por el que las intenciones históricas adquieren justificaciones naturales es posible distinguirlo gracias a la conceptualización semiológica del mito (Barthes, 1957).

Finalmente, en su teoría, Barthes desglosa distintas formas a través de las cuales el mito puede presentarse (1957: 151-156): las dos que resultan más relevantes para este estudio son la *privación de la historia* y el *establecimiento de un hecho*. Según Barthes, la primera forma consiste en que el mito priva al objeto de toda historia o, por el contrario, le confiere una existencia eterna, desde el comienzo de los tiempos; y en la segunda forma, el mito tiende a convertirse en proverbio, se presenta como un hecho universal

o algo natural que no necesita explicación. Debido a su estructura semiológica, el mito se construye como un sistema de valores, donde ocurren relaciones de equivalencia. A pesar de estas relaciones análogas de valores que representan una cadena de causas y efectos, motivos e intenciones constituidas por el concepto, el mito es asumido y consumido por su audiencia como un sistema de hechos, de tal manera, que el mito se convierte en un instrumento muy apropiado para transmitir ideologías. (Barthes, 1957). De acuerdo con Barthes, ‘la significación del mito nunca es arbitraria; siempre contiene un motivo, e inevitablemente, contiene una analogía’ (1957: 124 [paráfrasis de K. Cotto]). Las analogías entre el significado y la forma son provistas por la historia y esta relación semiológica define el mito.

Por su parte, Lakoff y Johnson (1980) señalan que estas relaciones análogas se presentan a través de un sistema conceptual mayormente metafórico que define cómo se estructura el pensamiento y, por ende, la realidad. Para ellos, la evidencia más certera para analizar cómo funciona este sistema es el lenguaje, en el que existen dos tipos de metáforas: las convencionales, ‘que estructuran el sistema conceptual ordinario de una cultura y se reflejan en el lenguaje cotidiano’, y las imaginativas y creativas, que ‘son capaces de proveer un nuevo entendimiento de la existencia, otorgar nuevos sentidos al pasado, a la vida diaria, al conocimiento y a las creencias’ (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 128 [paráfrasis de K. Cotto]). Según estos autores, tanto las metáforas imaginativas como las metáforas convencionales pueden tener el poder para definir la realidad y lo hacen a través de una red coherente de implicaciones que resaltan algunas características y esconden otras. ‘La aceptación de la metáfora, que solo resalta ciertos aspectos de una experiencia, permite ver las implicaciones de esa metáfora como ciertas’ (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 133 [paráfrasis de K. Cotto]). De acuerdo con ellos, ‘los valores fundamentales de una cultura son coherentes con la estructura metafórica de los conceptos fundamentales en esa cultura’ (128 [paráfrasis de K. Cotto]). Por medio de esta estructura conceptual y su red de implicaciones, las metáforas otorgan coherencia y sentido a las experiencias y realidades, conectando los recuerdos y las experiencias pasadas de un individuo y proveyendo una estructura coherente en la que se resaltan algunas ideas y se esconden otras.

Lakoff y Johnson (1980) recalcan que ‘las metáforas presentan el principal vehículo para nuestro entendimiento del mundo y juegan un rol importante en la construcción de la realidad política y social’ (133 [paráfrasis de K. Cotto]). Las metáforas no solo ayudan a conceptualizar una realidad preexistente, también pueden crear una nueva realidad; de esta forma, ocurren muchos cambios culturales, debido a la introducción de nuevos conceptos metafóricos y a la pérdida de los viejos. Para Lakoff y Johnson (1980), tanto la realidad social como el mundo físico son entendidos en términos metafóricos, por lo que la metáfora juega un rol muy importante en determinar que es real para un individuo. Cuando la metáfora implica aspectos conocidos por los hablantes,

adquiere un estatus de verdad y se utiliza como guía y retroalimentación en acciones futuras, lo que refuerza aún más la metáfora.

Para analizar el mito de la identidad nacional desde una perspectiva lingüística, es oportuno recurrir al Análisis Crítico del Discurso que propone James P. Gee (1999). Para Gee, las identidades están ligadas al rol del lenguaje en el Discurso, que él denomina como lenguaje social. Este autor distingue entre “*little d*” discourse (discurso con “d minúscula”), como el uso del sistema lingüístico, y “*big D*” Discourse (Discurso con “D mayúscula”), como el lenguaje social que incluye los artefactos que permiten promulgar identidades y actividades específicas. El Discurso (“big D”) representa una identidad; se compone de un sistema de creencias, de una forma de ver el mundo. Como señala Gee (1999: 18 [paráfrasis de K. Cotto]), ‘los discursos siempre están integrados en una mezcla de instituciones sociales, y a menudo involucran varios “accesorios” como libros y revistas de diversos tipos.’ Asimismo, plantea que ‘los Discursos (“big D”) están en el mundo y en la historia como coordinaciones de personas, lugares, tiempos, acciones, interacciones, expresión verbal y no verbal, símbolos, cosas, herramientas y tecnologías que muestran ciertas identidades y actividades asociadas. Pero, también existen como el trabajo que se realiza para que las personas y las cosas sean reconocidas de ciertas maneras y no de otras, y existen como mapas que constituyen el entendimiento de las personas.’ (Gee, 1999: 23 [paráfrasis de K. Cotto]) Estos mapas son las conceptualizaciones metafóricas que construyen el mito.

El acercamiento que nos provee Gee permite analizar cómo ‘el lenguaje es usado para promulgar actividades, perspectivas e identidades’ (1999: 4 [paráfrasis de K. Cotto]). De acuerdo con Gee, el lenguaje tiene significado solo en y a través de las prácticas, y ‘cada dominio de práctica sintoniza acciones, expresiones, objetos y personas de modo que trabajen relacionándose entre ellos’ (Knorr Cetina, citado en Gee, 1999: 19 [paráfrasis de K. Cotto]). En otras palabras, el lenguaje conecta con otros sistemas de símbolos no lingüísticos (e.j., las imágenes). Por otra parte, Gee hace referencia a los modelos culturales, los cuales representan teorías específicas sobre conceptos determinados. Estas teorías, que puede analizarse análogamente a la teoría del mito de Barthes (1957), se enraízan en las prácticas de los grupos socioculturales. Este planteamiento resulta importante para entender como DIVEDCO estructura un discurso que toma como punto de partida las prácticas culturales del campesinado para integrar en esas prácticas los nuevos mitos culturales. Los mitos funcionan como discursos y, a su vez, como modelos culturales.

Para este estudio, se tomará como muestra el corpus de textos e imágenes estudiados previamente por Vélez Rivera (2016) en su libro *Las Ilustraciones de los Libros para el Pueblo de la División de Educación de la Comunidad y la Modernización de Puerto Rico (1949-1964)*. Para Vélez Rivera, “La imagen [de los Libros para el Pueblo] nos servirá como documento histórico en función del proyecto modernizador de la época” (2016: 63). Dada la gran extensión de imágenes y textos que produjo la DIVEDCO, esta

selección está basada en la síntesis que logra Vélez Rivera para recoger imágenes y textos que representan los “valores democráticos” identificados anteriormente en la revisión de literatura. Partiendo de la importancia semiológica en la creación de mitos e identidades (Barthes, 1957), la muestra seleccionada para el análisis crítico estará comprendida tanto por imágenes como por textos. Las imágenes constituirán materiales gráficos producidos por DIVEDCO en el período de influencia política del PPD y Muñoz (1949-1964), determinado por Vélez Rivera (2016); y los textos seleccionados serán aquellos que acompañan estas imágenes, y otros textos que Vélez Rivera ha recogido en su obra en los que se identifican los valores democráticos. El análisis será de tipo cualitativo y se realizará aplicando el Análisis del Discurso de Gee (1999) a las imágenes y textos seleccionados.

Análisis de los datos

En su obra, Vélez Rivera (2016) recupera una serie de ilustraciones y textos de DIVEDCO que representan el mito sobre la identidad cultural y el Discurso que deseaba crear Muñoz con el fin de fortalecer el proyecto económico de industrialización. Las ilustraciones y los textos toman como protagonista y eje central de su discurso la figura del jíbaro. Aunque ya esta figura había sido empleada como un símbolo identitario por artistas y literatos puertorriqueños a principios del siglo XX, el PPD, a través de DIVEDCO, logró transformar su significado y otorgarle una nueva significación; así entonces, resurgió como un signo de identidad en la nueva era moderna e industrial. En la literatura y el arte, el retrato del jíbaro estuvo unido al discurso del campo y el trabajo agrícola; DIVEDCO retoma ese pasado histórico para reconfigurar el significante y el *concepto* atado a ese signo (*forma*) y, así, resignificar este símbolo. Este signo, relacionado con los nuevos *conceptos* de la sociedad moderna e industrial, producirían un nuevo mito, formado por los valores democráticos que se representaban en las imágenes sobre el jíbaro insertado en su nueva realidad. De esta manera, la *forma* del jíbaro atravesaría un proceso de significación, para finalmente convertirse en un mito: un mito que definiría la identidad nacional puertorriqueña.

Como propone Barthes (1957), los mitos se afianzan con eventos históricos. En el caso de DIVEDCO, este evento fue, a nivel nacional, la modernización e industrialización de la sociedad puertorriqueña a partir de la fundación del ELA en 1952 y, a nivel internacional, el nuevo orden capitalista que definió la economía mundial luego de la Segunda Guerra Mundial. En su teoría, Barthes (1957) propone tres modos distintos en los que se puede descifrar y leer un mito: como productor de mitos, como mitologista y como lector de mitos. En este análisis, se asume la tercera postura y se establece esta perspectiva para leer el mito sobre la identidad nacional que nace en DIVEDCO. Barthes considera necesario asumir este tercer rol ‘si se desea conectar el esquema mítico a la historia general, para explicar cómo este mito corresponde a los intereses de una sociedad definida’ (1957: 128 [paráfrasis de K. Cotto]); es decir, para conectar la parte

semiológica con la parte ideológica del mito. En este sentido, la producción cultural de DIVEDCO reprodujo un discurso que representaría los ideales políticos y económicos de una figura y un partido político, Muñoz y el PPD.

Para Barthes (1957), tanto la escritura como las ilustraciones funcionan como signos y ambos constituyen un lenguaje-objeto. DIVEDCO manejó todo tipo de medio y material a su alcance, desde ilustraciones y carteles, hasta libros y películas, para desarrollar un discurso mítico que favoreciera los intereses desarrollistas de la industrialización. De acuerdo con Barthes (1957), ‘cualquier material del discurso mítico (fotografías, carteles, objetos, el lenguaje mismo) es reducido a una función puramente de significación, una vez es atrapado por el mito’ (1957: 113 [paráfrasis de K. Cotto]). Estos materiales constituyen el signo del primer sistema semiológico y el significante del mito. Así, el mito se origina en el sistema lingüístico, en el uso de la gramática y la colocación sintáctica, en la relación entre esta representación lingüística y un *concepto*; para luego convertirse en un signo y fungir como el significante del mito. En el mito, el signo tiene que acoplarse a un lenguaje social, un Discurso (“big D”), y apoderarse de sus representaciones simbólicas; de esta forma, se apropia de sus *conceptos* y ocurre la significación.

Las ilustraciones de DIVEDCO ayudaron a conformar y organizar un mensaje claro que podía ser identificado, decodificado y asimilado fácilmente por su audiencia. Vélez Rivera (2016) apunta a la simpleza de las imágenes en el discurso de DIVEDCO como uno de los factores que ayudó al campesinado, mayormente de baja escolaridad, a distinguir fácilmente el mensaje. El programa de educación utilizó el Discurso (“big D”) del campesinado para transmitir su mensaje democrático, presentando una imagen conocida: la realidad rural. Se adaptó a esta población, manejando un lenguaje simple y claro, sin términos complicados ni palabras rebuscadas, utilizando un tono familiar y cercano, a veces paternalista, pero presentándose como una voz amiga y sabia. Utilizando el Discurso (“big D”) y el signo del jíbaro, la producción de DIVEDCO promovió el Discurso (“big D”) sobre el progreso, la modernidad, la industrialización y la democracia que ya venía desarrollando el PPD y Muñoz a través de sus campañas políticas. Además, introdujo otro Discurso (“big D”) sobre el movimiento separatista, presentando la dialéctica entre el nacionalismo cultural y el nacionalismo separatista y reforzando así el Discurso (“big D”) sobre las “buenas consecuencias” del nacionalismo cultural, relegando el “ser nacionalista... a las consecuencias más trágicas” (Vélez Rivera, 2016: 241).

Por otra parte, para Barthes (1957), el *sentido* en el sistema semiológico contiene un sistema de valores, una historia, un contexto geográfico, pero cuando se convierte en signo (*forma*) pierde todo eso, y es necesario llegar a la significación para rellenarlo. La producción cultural de DIVEDCO se encargó de rellenar este sentido en el desarrollo del Discurso (“big D”) sobre el jíbaro, construyendo relaciones de significado de esta figura campesina con los valores democráticos y el proyecto de industrialización (ver

vinculación en Barthes, 1957: 28). De acuerdo con Barthes (1957), la *forma* no se deshace completamente del sentido: al contrario, lo recupera cuando le es necesario; así, el mito se nutre de ese sentido y de los valores pasados que haya cargado. En DIVEDCO, la figura del jíbaro fue vinculada con el proceso democrático y modernizador, pero, al mismo tiempo, con la agricultura y los valores del campo. Barthes sostiene que las asociaciones contenidas en un concepto mítico son maleables y sin forma concreta; este es el caso del mito del jíbaro contextualizado en la era industrial. En el mito, la *forma* está asociada a elementos espaciales (Barthes, 1957). Esto se observa en el Discurso (“big D”) desarrollado por DIVEDCO, donde se coloca y se enlaza la *forma* del jíbaro a espacios como el campo y, luego, la fábrica. En cambio, para Barthes, los elementos del *concepto* son más difusos y están unidos por relaciones asociativas. Estas relaciones asociativas en el *concepto* estarán definidas por el *lenguaje metafórico* (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

En la producción de DIVEDCO, la *forma* del jíbaro sería representada constantemente con los mismos elementos. Entre el pasado y el presente, se unieron elementos e imágenes que crearían fuertes vínculos de significado entre sí. La imagen funcionó como un espacio simbólico que permitió conjugar diferentes *conceptos* en un mismo plano visual. Esto permitió crear una conexión entre ellos, extender la vinculación de estas relaciones asociativas y, del mismo modo, ampliar el espacio de significación del *signo/forma* del jíbaro, convirtiéndose así en un mito de alcance nacional.

Como apunta Vélez Rivera (2016), la iconografía de DIVEDCO desarrolló un discurso visual para estructurar lo puertorriqueño a partir de la definición del paradigma social, económico y político del nuevo Puerto Rico, y utilizó diversos elementos para armonizar los discursos del progreso y el nuevo comienzo. Se utilizaron elementos existentes del imaginario tradicional para introducir elementos o simbología relacionada al proyecto político y económico de Muñoz. De esta manera, ambos lenguajes sociales (Discursos “big D”), el del jíbaro y el del PPD y Muñoz, se unirían para conformar el Discurso (“big D”) del mito nacional. A los elementos tradicionales se les otorgaron nuevos significados que apoyarían la aspiración de Muñoz de construir un país con una sociedad democrática y moderna y un “buen ciudadano” que mantuviera los buenos valores del jíbaro, como el valor del trabajo, adquiriera los valores democráticos, como la participación, y sostuviera el desarrollo industrial. De acuerdo con Vélez Rivera (2016), las imágenes de DIVEDCO muestran las prácticas familiares y sociales que se deseaba que adquiriera el jíbaro; de este modo, se crea un perfil del puertorriqueño y se transmiten los valores democráticos. Estas intenciones se manifiestan explícitamente, incluso, en algunas imágenes, en la que se muestran letreros como “Se cumple la voluntad del pueblo” y “Primer gobernador electo”.

Para convertir el Discurso (“big D”) del campesino puertorriqueño en el Discurso (“big D”) que necesitaba el PPD y Muñoz para el crecimiento industrial del País, DIVEDCO desarrolló *metáforas imaginativas* (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) y creó enlaces entre ellas

para vincular el pasado histórico y la figura tradicional del jíbaro con el nuevo modelo económico; de tal forma, se desarrollaría el perfil del “buen puertorriqueño” a partir del enlace entre los elementos más característicos del jíbaro y el proceso democrático. El Discurso (“big D”) que quería hacer relevante el PPD a través de DIVEDCO presentaba tales asociaciones por medio de lugares (campo, casa rural), figuras (trabajador del campo, familia), elementos (pava, machete, azadón) que se relacionaban a una identidad particular. DIVEDCO se encargaría de recoger todos estos elementos que representaban al jíbaro para desarrollar la imagen del “ciudadano democrático” y promulgar un Discurso (“big D”) en el cual la audiencia (el campesinado) se reconociera y, por consiguiente, pudiera identificarse.

Al mismo tiempo, se desarrolló la antítesis de este Discurso con otras metáforas imaginativas sobre la identidad de “lo no-puertorriqueño”, caracterizada por los ideales del nacionalismo separatista. Estas metáforas presentarían un enlace entre las características que no eran compatibles con el perfil deseado de ciudadano democrático y las acciones e ideologías de los grupos de izquierda como el Partido Nacionalista de Puerto Rico. El PPD y Muñoz expresan esta visión sobre la identidad a través del discurso de DIVEDCO y presentan estos perfiles desde la visión de “lo puertorriqueño” versus “lo no puertorriqueño”. En los textos e imágenes de DIVEDCO que retoma Vélez Rivera (2016) se puede percibir, en el caso de “lo puertorriqueño”, cómo se crea una vinculación entre la figura del jíbaro, los elementos del campo, el trabajo y la comunidad, y así, se caracteriza al puertorriqueño con una actitud democrática, dotándolo de cualidades consideradas como nobles e integrando y resaltando valores acordes con el propósito económico industrial.

A partir de las ilustraciones y textos de DIVEDCO, puede observarse cómo se mecanizó la construcción del mito nacional por medio de la vinculación de las *formas* JÍBARO-TAÍNO-CAMPO-AGRICULTURA-TRABAJO-INDUSTRIALIZACIÓN-MODERNIZACIÓN-DESARROLLO-PROGRESO. El concepto de metáfora que proponen Lakoff y Johnson (1980) permite describir la funcionalidad de este mito de identidad nacional y desglosar el proceso semiológico de cómo se relacionan estas *formas* y sus *conceptos* para atravesar el proceso de significación. A continuación, se desglosa una vinculación, o secuencia lógica, que presenta cómo las metáforas imaginativas sobre estas características se enlazan como *conceptos* y rellenan el *signo* del JÍBARO para, luego, convertirse en un símbolo del mito sobre la identidad nacional puertorriqueña:

- (1) El JÍBARO vive en el CAMPO.
- (2) El JÍBARO vive en la CASA DE MADERA.
- (3) El JÍBARO tiene una FAMILIA.
- (4) El JÍBARO es como el TAÍNO.
- (5) El TAÍNO es PACÍFICO y AMABLE, *trabaja* la TIERRA y vive en COMUNIDAD.
- (6) El JÍBARO es PACÍFICO y AMABLE.

- (7) El JÍBARO *trabaja* la TIERRA.
- (8) El JÍBARO es TRABAJADOR.
- (9) El JÍBARO *trabaja* en y por la COMUNIDAD.
- (10) El JÍBARO resuelve sus problemas DEMOCRÁTICAMENTE.
- (11) El JÍBARO es un CIUDADANO DEMOCRÁTICO.
- (12) El CIUDADANO DEMOCRÁTICO vive y *trabaja* en la SOCIEDAD MODERNA e INDUSTRIAL.
- (13) El DESARROLLO INDUSTRIAL depende del CIUDADANO DEMOCRÁTICO.
- (14) El DESARROLLO INDUSTRIAL es el PROGRESO de la PATRIA.
- (15) El CIUDADANO DEMOCRÁTICO *trabaja* para el PROGRESO de la PATRIA.
- (16) El JÍBARO *trabaja* para el DESARROLLO INDUSTRIAL.
- (17) El JÍBARO *trabaja* para el PROGRESO de la PATRIA.

En esta secuencia lógica, se observa cómo la *forma* del JÍBARO se va vinculando con otros *conceptos* para rellenar el signo del JÍBARO. En este proceso, la *forma* JÍBARO se va atando con los *conceptos* de CAMPO, CASA DE MADERA, FAMILIA y TIERRA hasta llegar a unas de las proposiciones medulares para el Discurso y estrategia económica del PPD: (8) El JÍBARO es TRABAJADOR. Igualmente, la *forma* JÍBARO se va enlazando con los *conceptos* CIUDADANO DEMOCRÁTICO y DESARROLLO INDUSTRIAL (un *concepto* abstracto, pero con representaciones tangibles, e. g. edificios, fábricas, urbanizaciones), a través de la vinculación de metáforas imaginativas como las proposiciones (8) El JÍBARO es TRABAJADOR y (11) El JÍBARO es un CIUDADANO DEMOCRÁTICO con otras proposiciones como (13) El DESARROLLO INDUSTRIAL depende del CIUDADANO DEMOCRÁTICO. Finalmente, el enlace entre estas proposiciones se *significa* en las proposiciones (16) El JÍBARO *trabaja* para el DESARROLLO INDUSTRIAL y (17) El JÍBARO *trabaja* para el PROGRESO de la PATRIA. El enlace entre estas proposiciones no es unidireccional, sino que ocurre en múltiples direcciones: el proceso de significación ocurre entre unas proposiciones y otras, recuperando el sentido que algunos de estos conceptos ya cargan consigo. Debido a la multilateralidad del proceso, entre estas proposiciones se podrían ejemplificar un sinnúmero de enlaces que en este trabajo no aparecen especificados.

En su discurso político, Muñoz relacionará constantemente la tierra con la patria (Vélez Rivera, 2016); y el enlace entre estos dos *conceptos* será reforzado en el Discurso de DIVEDCO. El símbolo de la tierra, siendo la realidad más cotidiana del jíbaro, permitió que el campesino se identificara inmediatamente con el discurso del PPD. De este modo, se puede interpretar cómo se genera el enlace entre las proposiciones (7) El JÍBARO *trabaja* la TIERRA y (16) El JÍBARO *trabaja* para el PROGRESO de la PATRIA. Vélez Rivera (2016) reafirma esta conexión:

el gobierno intentaba promover una cultura de trabajo y los Libros para el Pueblo de la DIVEDCO jugaron un papel muy importante en medio de este proceso educativo-propagandístico. Ya no se trabajaba para la central [azucarera], ahora se trabajaba para la patria... ahora se trabajaba como parte de la reconstrucción del nuevo país al que aspiraba el PPD. (Vélez Rivera, 2016: 191-192)

El Discurso de DIVEDCO intenta conciliar dos realidades distintas con el fin de promover un panorama social favorecedor para el desarrollo industrial; con este objetivo, se introducen los nuevos mitos a partir de los viejos, a pesar del choque de paradigmas entre la realidad rural y la industrial. El mismo Barthes (1957) reconoce que los mitos pueden ser paradójicos. La paradoja se desarrolla en estas relaciones que se producen entre los *conceptos* de los nuevos y viejos mitos; sin embargo, en el caso del JÍBARO, este posible conflicto paradójico se resuelve con la introducción del “CIUDADANO DEMOCRÁTICO”. Así como el JÍBARO puede identificarse con el “TAÍNO” por sus cualidades y forma de vida, también puede identificarse con el “CIUDADANO DEMOCRÁTICO” porque es “TRABAJADOR” y *trabaja* “POR LA COMUNIDAD”.

El sentido de comunidad y la resolución de problemas democráticamente fue reforzado por la representación de los círculos democráticos. Para Vélez Rivera, la insistencia de repetir las imágenes y el mensaje era transmitir el sentido de democracia que fomentaba el PPD y así “motivar a la gente a organizarse como comunidad al estilo democrático” (2016: 115). Vélez Rivera también distingue “la similitud que existe en la representación del círculo democrático ilustrado por la DIVEDCO con las reuniones sostenidas por el líder máximo del PPD” (Vélez Rivera, 2016: 126) en las comunidades rurales. Esta analogía entre las representaciones visuales posibilitó el desarrollo de vínculos entre un Discurso y otro. Es a través de estas relaciones entre *conceptos* distintos que se promueve el proceso de significación del mito.

DIVEDCO enclava su Discurso en todo el simbolismo que rodea el arquetipo del jíbaro. Por un lado, emplea el imaginario de la “vida buena” (Vélez Rivera, 2016) del campo porque representaba los buenos valores que el trabajador puertorriqueño necesitaba para hacerse partícipe del nuevo panorama político. Por otro lado, también fomenta el Discurso del valor del trabajo por medio de la representación de la agricultura en el paisaje campesino. Como explica Vélez Rivera (2016), las ilustraciones se enfocan en reforzar la cultura del trabajo y en exaltar al trabajador de la tierra como un forjador de riquezas. La clase pobre podía sentirse en abundancia si trabajaba la tierra (Vélez Rivera, 2016); de esta forma, se crearía otro mito que definiría el de la identidad nacional: el mito sobre el *trabajo*, como producto del enlace metafórico entre los *conceptos* de TIERRA, TRABAJO, RIQUEZA Y PROGRESO.

Como parte de este mito, las manos y el cuerpo del hombre van a representarse como los instrumentos necesarios para el trabajo que requería la industrialización y la modernización del País. Así, el significado de las manos y el cuerpo se ata al trabajo y se crea

esta relación de *conceptos* que podría representarse a través de la metáfora imaginativa “LAS MANOS DEL JÍBARO (*hombre trabajador*) SON HERRAMIENTAS”, “HERRAMIENTAS NECESARIAS PARA EL DESARROLLO INDUSTRIAL Y EL PROGRESO DE LA PATRIA”. El mito del *hombre trabajador* se refuerza a través de las constantes imágenes que presentan al jíbaro trabajando la tierra y sus manos haciendo algún tipo de trabajo manual. Asimismo, Vélez Rivera (2016) reconoce el uso de metáforas en la creación de este mito:

Se mecaniza la idea del hombre trabajador y se canalizan las intenciones con metáforas industrializadas... DIVEDCO mecaniza al hombre y lo convierte en la máquina central de la ciudad industrializada. De ese nuevo hombre-máquina dependerá el sustento de la familia y el progreso del País...Las metáforas que utilizan la máquina para explicar el funcionamiento del cuerpo van a ser constantes. (2016: 192)

Las manos serán un referente constante en el proyecto muñocista; incluso, el proyecto de industrialización se conocería como “Operación Manos a la Obra”. Como describe Vélez Rivera, “las manos son las manos del ‘hombre’, callosas, duras, anchas... Los adjetivos y descripciones utilizadas nos dirigen a identificar el destinatario de esta literatura: el hombre campesino trabajador” (2016: 204). De la misma manera, los adjetivos sobre las manos ayudan a quien está dirigido el mensaje de DIVEDCO (el jíbaro, hombre trabajador) a identificarse con el Discurso. El signo de las MANOS será utilizado, incluso, en la portada de uno de los Libros para el Pueblo, donde aparecen unas manos trabajando acompañada del texto “Las manos, instrumentos de paz y trabajo” (en Vélez Rivera, 2016: 205). La *forma* de las MANOS ligada al *concepto* de TRABAJO sería una imagen importante para lograr que el campesino se identificara con el Discurso desarrollado por DIVEDCO. Igualmente, el enlace creado con el *concepto* de PAZ sería fundamental para el Discurso del PPD sobre la unión nacional. Para Vélez Rivera:

las manos serán forjadoras de paz (en referencia a los movimientos violentos del sector nacionalista en los años cincuenta), soberanas sobre la máquina (como una manera de superar el impacto de la llegada de cientos de industrias) y forjadoras de un resurgir cultural (con la construcción de elementos artesanales y culturales propios de una ideología hacia lo criollo). (2016: 206)

La importancia de la imagen para crear nuevos significados se observa en el uso emblemático que desarrolló DIVEDCO de estos signos. En DIVEDCO, los signos del CAMPO, la TIERRA y la AGRICULTURA fueron atados al signo del JÍBARO, logrando así una vinculación de significado entre estos elementos. A través del desarrollo de metáforas imaginativas y la construcción de vinculación entre estos *conceptos*, las cualidades que implicaba el CAMPO (los buenos valores) y la TIERRA (el trabajo), se dotaron de *sentido lógico* y se convirtieron en cualidades inherentes al JÍBARO puerriqueño.

Para entender la fortaleza de este Discurso en el imaginario social puertorriqueño, hay que retomar una de las cualidades que Barthes (1987) le atribuye al mito: su condición histórica. Vélez Rivera también reconoce esta condición y señala que “el pasado siempre va a ser importante en la iconografía de DIVEDCO, especialmente porque ahí es uno de los nichos donde se va a fundamentar el vínculo entre el campesino y el gobierno” (2016: 146). El uso del pasado histórico será uno de los mecanismos del mito más empleado en el Discurso del PPD y de DIVEDCO: la historia y la tradición se utilizarán para presentar la modernidad. Para crear la nueva cultura e identidad puertorriqueña, se debían presentar los nuevos paradigmas de una forma determinada; es decir, crear un mito con el que el campesino se sintiera identificado inmediatamente. Esto se logra gracias al uso del lenguaje como mito: a través del mito se construye esa relación entre el pasado y el futuro, entre las imágenes de lo conocido y lo próximo por conocer, entre el viejo y el nuevo País que anhelaba Muñoz.

En su obra, Vélez Rivera apoya la visión de Barthes al afirmar que “la puertorriqueñidad se explicaba con los orígenes” (2016: 217). La *forma* jíbaro se relaciona al trabajo, a la tierra y, a la vez, constituye el emblema del PPD. Vélez Rivera advierte y reconoce en este uso un esquema ideológico:

...el uso de la figura del jíbaro como emblema del puertorriqueño proviene del PPD y su tradicional logo del jíbaro con la pava. El gobierno utilizó un esquema ideológico para convertir el receptor en el centro de la idea; el partido del pan, tierra y libertad encerró todo ese ideal en la figura trabajadora, sacrificada y honesta del jíbaro... la razón de establecer toda esa relación jíbaro-política, era la fundación de un mito que sería el éxito del PPD y de Muñoz. (2016: 130)

En otras palabras, el PPD utilizaría al jíbaro como enlace entre el pasado histórico y el desarrollo industrial para promover y validar su Discurso político.

En las ilustraciones que recoge Vélez Rivera (2016), se observa como el Discurso que desarrolla DIVEDCO *se priva de la historia* y se transforma en un mito, confiriéndole así ‘una existencia desde el comienzo de los tiempos’ (Barthes, 1957: 152 [paráfrasis de K. Cotto]). La cultura del trabajo se retrotrae hasta la cultura indígena como mecanismo para afianzar el mito sobre el trabajo y la identidad nacional. Como destaca Vélez Rivera:

Los indios son presentados como trabajadores de la tierra y de objetos manuales... El imaginario que ilustra lo puertorriqueño va a presentar a los taínos como el modelo del puertorriqueño ideal: ...eran gente afable, pacífica y trabajadora que vivían en contacto íntimo con la naturaleza. Estos indios fueron los primeros habitantes de Puerto Rico. Podemos, por lo tanto, considerarlos como los primeros puertorriqueños, nuestros primeros antepasados. (2016: 225)

De esta manera, el mito sobre la identidad nacional se extiende hasta la época precolombina; se crea un vínculo entre el campesino puertorriqueño y la cultura taína, y se toman elementos similares del paisaje y modo de vida para lograr el enlace entre las distintas metáforas imaginativas. Una de las ilustraciones que recupera Vélez Rivera demuestra, incluso, el enlace que se crea entre la labor manual de los indígenas y la producción en masa del sistema económico industrializado. A través de estos enlaces, los signos van trascendiendo su “sentido original” y atravesando el proceso de significación para transformarse, finalmente, en un mito.

Además de la apropiación del pasado histórico, otro mecanismo que le otorga al Discurso la cualidad de mito es su naturalización (Barthes, 1957). En sus discursos políticos, el mismo Muñoz admite el uso del sistema educativo como herramienta para fortalecer “las naturales actitudes democráticas de nuestro pueblo” (Vélez Rivera, 2016: 245). La visión de Muñoz sobre el comportamiento “naturalmente” democrático del puertorriqueño se va a sustentar en el Discurso de DIVEDCO con el enlace que se crea entre el jíbaro y las cualidades, históricamente atribuidas, a la sociedad taína. El propósito de este Discurso será representar las metáforas imaginativas que caracterizan el arquetipo del “buen puertorriqueño”: “el ciudadano democrático”; y afianzar en el imaginario social este mito sobre la identidad nacional.

La DIVEDCO (re)construye la historia a través de la transmisión de una determinada percepción histórico-cultural; la recuperación del pasado, el reflejo de lo jíbaro en lo taíno, se conjugará con el presente económico. Este rescate de la figura indígena logrará unificar al pueblo bajo una sola identidad y otorgar un sentido de unión entre los puertorriqueños. Como plantea Vélez Rivera, “el gobierno necesitaba un discurso que fuera unificador, un espacio que hablara de cultura pero que sirviera a los propósitos del estado” (2016: 227-228). Por esta razón, el discurso visual que desarrolla el programa cultural sobre la iconografía puertorriqueña va a recuperar teorías de Antonio S. Pereira como la mezcla de las tres razas. La imagen 6 muestra la importancia dada a la figura del taíno: se encuentra en el foco visual, localizada entre la figura española y la africana. Debajo de la ilustración hay un texto que enuncia: “Es más lo que nos une que lo que nos separa” (Velez Rivera, 2016: 229). Para Vélez Rivera, esta declaración intenta contrarrestar abiertamente el mensaje nacionalista en contra del gobierno de turno. Como identifica este autor, en el libro *Guardarrayas*, donde se encuentra esta ilustración, la acompaña un discurso patriótico:

Somos todos puertorriqueños. Somos una gran familia conviviendo en esta isla que Dios tuvo a bien situar entre Europa y América y que es nuestra Patria. Nos une un pasado común de casi cinco siglos. Tres razas y culturas dieron vida y sentido al Hombre Puertorriqueño: la india o taína, la española y la negra o africana. (Vélez Rivera, 2016: 228)

El mensaje crea un enlace histórico del “buen puertorriqueño” con la cultura taína y apela al sentimiento religioso y familiar, llamando así a la convivencia pacífica y a la unión nacional.

Finalmente, el Discurso de DIVEDCO será ampliamente sustentado por este *concepto* de unión nacional. A través de las ilustraciones de los Libros para el Pueblo se observa como este *concepto* se ata a otros *conceptos* como democracia y progreso: el progreso del País será retratado como consecuencia directa de la unión nacional. La democracia representará parte de esa sana convivencia; y el nacionalismo separatista será una amenaza a este modo de vida, esencial del “buen puertorriqueño”. La metáfora del jíbaro como discurso unificador de la mezcla de las tres razas se repetirá en la simbología de instituciones creadas bajo el ELA como el ICP; la unión del puertorriqueño en un solo paradigma cultural e identitario garantizaba la estabilidad necesaria para el crecimiento industrial.

La visión que se promueve acerca del nacionalismo separatista formará parte esencial del Discurso sobre la identidad nacional. A través de sus discursos políticos, Muñoz creará un vínculo entre la cultura, la religión y el trabajo que le dará fortaleza a esta visión. Vélez Rivera señala que “se fomenta la cultura del trabajo como algo superior al llamado político” (2016: 211) y que “la inclusión de elementos religiosos en los discursos de Muñoz fue constante y deliberada” (235-236): así, “lo religioso y lo político se unen para combatir la idea de la Patria por las armas” (236). Los discursos de Muñoz apelarán al sentido religioso del jíbaro para lograr un vínculo e impulsar un Discurso de rechazo al nacionalismo separatista y sus ideologías. El rechazo a las ideologías de izquierda se mostrará a través de producciones como el libro *Lucha Obrera*, en el que se caracterizan las uniones obreras como “elementos violentos dentro de la sociedad” (Vélez Rivera, 2016: 194). En esta narración, se muestra un enlace entre la *forma* unión obrera y el *concepto* violencia. El *concepto* violencia será representado mediante escenarios donde ocurre “abuso de poder y poca democracia” (Vélez Rivera, 2016: 195). Las uniones obreras, el nacionalismo separatista y todo aquello relacionado con la izquierda política serán vinculados con el socialismo y representados como espacios antidemocráticos, replicando así el Discurso capitalista neoliberal de Estados Unidos que tomó auge luego de la Segunda Guerra Mundial.

El Discurso del “buen puertorriqueño” como ciudadano democrático será presentado en contraste con el Discurso de “lo no puertorriqueño” como toda acción o actitud que amenaza la unión nacional y el progreso de la Patria. Vélez Rivera señala que en el libro *Guardarrayas* “se aconseja constantemente al obrero puertorriqueño a cuidarse de los líderes que quisieran abusar de ellos” (2016: 196) y se presentan a los líderes del PPD como justos. Asimismo, este Discurso en contra del nacionalismo separatista, apelará al valor de la familia, en contraposición con “la lucha por la patria”. Esta visión se ilustra en el cuento “El Rebelde” donde “se estigmatiza al nacionalista con el sello de “rebelde” y se presenta a la familia como víctima del fanatismo del hombre, que decide abandonar

a su esposa e hija por “la patria” (Vélez Rivera, 2016: 242). El nacionalismo, al igual que la lucha obrera, sería *significado* por *conceptos* que representaban espacios y elementos violentos, peligrosos y no compatibles con el ideal de la puertorriqueñidad. Para Muñoz y el PPD, la Patria se forjará a través de las manos y el trabajo del jíbaro para el desarrollo industrial. Para el nacionalismo separatista, la Patria se consagrará luego de alcanzar su libertad a través de las armas. La dialéctica entre el nacionalismo cultural y el nacionalismo separatista junto a la recuperación del pasado histórico taíno para crear metáforas imaginativas y conformar la imagen del jíbaro puertorriqueño serán los procesos fundamentales en la formación del Discurso sobre el mito de identidad nacional.

Conclusión

El programa cultural de DIVEDCO, formado bajo el liderazgo político de Muñoz y el PPD, jugó un rol fundamental en la configuración del mito sobre la identidad nacional puertorriqueña. Los hallazgos de esta investigación muestran cómo las imágenes utilizadas en los carteles y en los Libros para el Pueblo promovieron un Discurso (“big D”) sobre la democracia y el trabajo que favoreció el proyecto económico de industrialización del ELA. Las intenciones modernizantes de Muñoz y el PPD los llevaron a instituir la DIVEDCO como un centro de transformación cultural. A través de la producción gráfica de DIVEDCO, las imágenes y el discurso “little d” fueron capaces de transformar el lenguaje social y crear vínculos de significado entre elementos y cualidades que definirían la identidad nacional. Las ilustraciones de DIVEDCO personificaron al puertorriqueño en la figura del jíbaro; esto constituyó el elemento esencial para lograr que la audiencia se sintiera identificada con el Discurso que se promovía. El discurso visual que desarrolló DIVEDCO destaca al jíbaro puertorriqueño en entornos conocidos como la familia y el campo, y recurre constantemente al uso de elementos cotidianos como las herramientas para el trabajo agrícola. Este uso de la imagen permitió crear una asociación entre la realidad de las comunidades rurales y el mensaje político-económico que deseaba transmitir el Gobierno de turno. Asimismo, la figura del jíbaro fue enlazada con otras imágenes que promovían el comportamiento democrático, como los círculos democráticos que se llevaban a cabo en las comunidades, y la industrialización, como la representación de fábricas. De este modo, se enlazan creencias, prácticas, realidades ya conocidas con conocimientos nuevos, como los valores y prácticas democráticas, y se va tejiendo esa nueva realidad, una nueva identidad; es decir, un nuevo Discurso.

Las ilustraciones de DIVEDCO otorgaron nuevos significados a la simbología de la cotidianidad del campo para cambiar el imaginario social y lograron crear un nuevo mito sobre la identidad nacional. El mito de identidad nacional se produjo como resultado de la relación de *formas* y *conceptos* en el proceso de significación del lenguaje. Estas *formas*, los elementos y la simbología del campo, fueron rellenas por los nuevos *conceptos* que le otorgó la DIVEDCO, bajo la ideología popular de Muñoz. La relación

de estos significados se logró a través del lenguaje metafórico y las metáforas imaginativas sobre esta simbología. Las metáforas imaginativas serán capaces de atravesar campos semánticos, establecer relaciones de analogía y “crear nuevas realidades” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 145). Los enlaces que se desarrollan entre las metáforas imaginativas de estas *formas* crearán las implicaturas con el potencial de transformar y moldear el lenguaje social (Discurso “big D”).

Así, el mito de identidad nacional se construyó a partir del Discurso de DIVEDCO que se basó en utilizar elementos familiares y recurrentes en la realidad del campesino puertorriqueño y en unir estas imágenes con los elementos nuevos que introducía la industrialización y la vida moderna del nuevo Estado. La DIVEDCO solo constituyó un medio dentro del complejo sistema de representaciones que permitieron afianzar los valores del nacionalismo cultural como los valores innatos y necesarios del puertorriqueño para ser parte del nuevo orden democrático y realidad industrial que se erigía en el País. Las creaciones literarias y gráficas de DIVEDCO mostraron una gran capacidad para establecer las relaciones o vínculos entre el lenguaje y las imágenes que representaban la realidad del campesino y la realidad a la que aspiraba el PPD y crear un nuevo Discurso que daría paso a la creación de un mito sobre la identidad nacional.

Debido a que el análisis de un mito requiere el análisis de un discurso pasado, las limitaciones de este proyecto se encuentran en la cualidad transformativa y generativa de los discursos. En el caso de la identidad nacional puertorriqueña sería pertinente ampliar esta discusión hacia la creación de un nuevo Discurso sobre la estadidad con el ascenso del Partido Nuevo Progresista (PNP) en el 1968. Además, para realizar un análisis exhaustivo del Discurso de DIVEDCO y la formación del mito de identidad nacional es necesario abarcar otras perspectivas como el estudio sobre los procesos cognitivos a través de los que se relacionan imágenes y significados. También, debe considerarse que los mensajes transmitidos a través de la producción cultural de DIVEDCO se desarrollaban en resonancia con el mensaje político del PPD y los discursos de Muñoz, y la importancia de la intertextualidad de los textos producidos en DIVEDCO con otros textos orales y escritos que se produjeron en esta coyuntura histórica en Puerto Rico y en Estados Unidos, como lo fue, por ejemplo, el Nuevo Trato. Por esta razón, el análisis del Discurso de DIVEDCO debe realizarse desde un acercamiento macroscópico, tomando en consideración los demás agentes históricos que tuvieron inherencia en la transformación del Discurso, el lenguaje social y, por tanto, en la identidad cultural del puertorriqueño.

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LA CONSTRUCCIÓN DE DISCURSOS DE PROPAGANDA POLÍTICA EN LAS REDES SOCIALES DURANTE EL COMICIO ELECTORAL DEL 2020 EN PUERTO RICO: LA CAMPAÑA PIERLUISI

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Resumen

La campaña para los comicios del 2020 del entonces candidato Pedro Pierluisi, plantea cambios en la agencia de sus comunicaciones a la hora de representar al candidato, así como en la construcción misma de la imagen del candidato como repositorio ideológico equivalente al ideal de la estadidad y otros valores de sus suscriptores. La candidatura se presenta desde estrategias de mercadeo de manera similar a la de un producto de compraventa, como queda evidenciado en las comunicaciones realizadas en algunas de las plataformas sociales de mayor difusión como Facebook y Twitter.

Términos clave: discurso, roles temáticos, elecciones, Puerto Rico, Pedro Pierluisi

Introducción

Las campañas publicitarias políticas, al menos en lo que a Puerto Rico respecta, se llevan a cabo, si bien con los ajustes temáticos necesarios, desde las mismas lógicas que se emplean en el mercadeo y la publicidad para promocionar la compraventa de artículos de consumo. En ese sentido, debemos asumir que el candidato, o más bien su candidatura, es un bien mercadeable ante los ojos de los publicistas quienes asumen la promoción del candidato de manera similar a como se acercan a una venta. A este fin, la campaña en redes del candidato por el Partido Nuevo Progresista, Pedro Pierluisi, promovió contenidos publicitarios en Facebook y Twitter. En muchas ocasiones, estos contenidos se presentaron de manera paralela e igual, es decir, versiones similares o iguales de un mismo texto o material fotográfico o audiovisual, con ligeras modificaciones sintácticas, pero que igual apuntaban pragmáticamente a una misma implicación.

De ambas plataformas, Facebook fue dónde el producto recibió mayor interacción.



Muestras de Tweet, Facebook Post e Instagram en Nov 2, día antes de las elecciones. (Tomas de pantallas hechas en <https://twitter.com/pedropierluisi>, <https://www.facebook.com/pedropierluisi> y en <https://www.instagram.com/pierluisipnp/?hl=en> el 14/11/20.)

Por ejemplo, si vemos las interacciones de *like* (me gusta) y *retweet* ó *share* (compartir) en Twitter en el día antes de los comicios electorales, el post con mayor interacción alcanzó los 600 *likes* y 159 *retweets*. Mientras que en Facebook, un post paralelo con el mismo contenido y compartido en el mismo día, obtiene 1,800 *likes* y 402 *shares*. En posts del día de las elecciones, noviembre 3, posts idénticos en ambas plataformas obtienen 837 *likes* y 193 *shares* en Facebook, mientras que en Twitter, el mismo contenido obtiene 258 *likes* y 105 *retweets*. Por ofrecer constancia futuro, estos son los números de *followers* (seguidores) en las páginas de redes de Pedro Pierluisi hasta el 20/11/20

(Twitter e Instagram solo ofrecen cifras redondeadas a centena sin números de decena y unidad):

Facebook: 155,464 *likes*

Twitter: 68.2K *followers*

Instagram: 21.3K *followers*

Sin entrar en un análisis formal estadístico, vemos que esta tendencia en otros posts hechos de manera paralela, es decir, en mismas fechas y con contenidos idénticos o similares, se sostiene. Es importante aclarar que estos datos no son representativos ni deberían entenderse como que implican las acciones de individuos ni personas reales, tampoco lo contrario. Se toman el total de las interacciones *at face value* (a valor nominal) sin un interés de análisis cuantitativo, ni sobre la composición demográfica de los participantes, sino meramente para argumentar que de entre ambas redes sociales, es Facebook la de mayor alcance y difusión.

Esta última aclaración es necesaria pues investigaciones del Centro de Periodismo Investigativo (Suárez, 2020), DFR Lab (2019), así como el periódico en línea Noticel (Sepúlveda, 2019), revelaron desde tan temprano como julio del 2019, agencias publicitarias asociadas a las campañas del Partido Nuevo Progresista, en particular aquellas dirigidas por Edwin Miranda, miembro cercano al círculo de confianza del renunciante gobernador Ricardo Rosselló. Según reseñan los medios, Miranda o su organización coordinaban un llamado ‘ejército’ de ‘*trolls*’ popularmente denominados como KOI-bots, en referencia a las siglas de la agencia que representa al publicista. La investigación constató puntos discutidos en el ya famoso chat de Telegram que resultó en la renuncia de Rosselló tras los eventos ahora conocidos como El Verano del 19. En la nota de Sepúlveda (2019) se detalla parte del modus operandi:

Según la evaluación realizada por DFRLab, la evidencia más vinculada entre el chat y una cuenta ‘troll’ ocurrió el 13 de enero de 2019, después de que el presidente de la Asamblea Nacional en Venezuela, Juan Guaidó, fuera detenido.

'A la 1:18 PM de ese día, Ramón Rosario, el exsecretario de Asuntos Públicos, escribió: 'Edwin [Miranda, fundador de la agencia de publicidad KOI], mandar redes a emplazar a Juan Dalmau y Yulín a q repudien a Maduro o son cómplices'. A las 1:25 PM, Edwin respondió con 'Done (hecho)', se desprende del chat.

'Apenas tres minutos después, a la 1:28 PM (hora de Puerto Rico; 12:28 EST), la cuenta @FuerzaDPueblo tuiteó la siguiente respuesta al gobernador: 'Emplazamos a @CarmenYulinCruz y @juandalmauPR a que se expresen en contra de la dictadura de Maduro o de lo contrario son cómplices de estos abusos, crímenes y opresión #Democracia #Venezuela', lee la reseña del estudio.

A este post, se suma uno de la cuenta oficial de Ricardo Rosselló que lee: 'Los que estamos comprometidos con la democracia y los derechos humanos debemos denunciar los crímenes de la dictadura de Venezuela'."

Esto probó que las cuentas falsas producían interacciones y promulgaban argumentos en base a *talking points* preconcebidos por la agencia y sus allegados en el gobierno que a orden de estos reproducen de manera textual y coordinada sus discursos a través de la plataforma. Es por esto que no podemos dar por ciertas el total de las interacciones, sino verles meramente como datos de tráfico general en cada plataforma, solo con un estudio más detallado de los datos, el cuál nos es inaccesible, se podría establecer la veracidad de las mismas.

Sin embargo, igual nos sirve pues queda evidenciado que los esfuerzos discursivos de los partidos en las redes no son desarrollos accidentales ni de ninguna manera orgánicos ni representativos del sentir general de incluso aquellos ciudadanos que suscriben al partido y a su contenido ideológico, sino que son el resultado directo del trabajo concertado de funcionarios públicos y privados dentro y fuera del gobierno trabajando activamente en alterar la percepción pública y adelantar sus agendas.

Resolviendo la elegibilidad del candidato y alquimia del rol temático

La campaña de Pedro Pierluisi reconoció desde su comienzo el enorme reto de trabajar la imagen de un candidato con asociaciones directas a pasadas administraciones que fueron ampliamente criticadas. En particular, había que desligar la campaña de las posturas y acciones del candidato quien fuera Comisionado Residente en Washington bajo la popularmente reprobada administración de Luis Fortuño. Durante dicha administración y con el apoyo del entonces Comisionado Pierluisi, se impuso la Ley 7 la cual despidió a sobre 30 mil empleados públicos. Añadiendo a esto, está la relación de Pierluisi como asesor y representante legal de la planta de generación eléctrica AES, cuyas prácticas de incineración de carbón y posterior manejo de las cenizas tóxicas han sido sumamente controversiales y levantado una desaprobación popular que produjo campamentos de protesta así como manifestaciones por parte tanto de los residentes de los pueblos en que ubican los vertederos de cenizas, como de la población en general. Como si no fuera suficiente, su participación también como asesor legal de la Junta de Control Fiscal asociaba su figura directamente a un organismo de control colonial impuesto por la administración Obama sobre las finanzas de Puerto Rico cuyas acciones han sido ampliamente criticadas y protestadas por todos los partidos, incluyendo al PNP. Las acciones de la Junta han resultado en el cierre de escuelas, reducción de presupuestos para servicios básicos, cortes en los pagos de retiro a pensionados, así como una política pública de austeridad que ha tenido nefastas consecuencias sobre la subsistencia de los ya empobrecidos habitantes.

Estas y otras acciones y asociaciones previas del candidato presentaban para los encargados de su campaña un primer obstáculo para la elegibilidad y aceptabilidad del candidato. Los gravámenes impuestos sobre la población por parte de estas entidades así como la poca popularidad y reprobación popular de la gobernación de Luis Fortuño, son elementos de juicio que la campaña trabajó arduamente por desaparecer de la asociación y discusión del candidato y su candidatura. Tanto así, que en las ocasiones en que durante las campañas electorarias se invitó a los aspirantes a la gobernación a participar de debate público, Pierluisi notablemente se ausentó tanto del debate ambiental, como del debate organizado por las comunidades LGBTQ+, en un intento de limitar su exposición en espacios de debate donde el discurso no fuese favorable a la imagen que buscaban construir alrededor de su candidatura.

El equipo de campaña de Pierluisi se enfocó en construir una narrativa, no sobre la elegibilidad del candidato, sino de este como prototipo. Estos optan por no mercadear al candidato en base a sus virtudes ni competencias para ocupar el cargo, sino vaciado de sí mismo y de su historia. A través de esta alquimia, el candidato se convierte en un repositorio, un foco de centralidad para las aspiraciones de los estadistas. La candidatura en sí un mito representativo del común denominador de las ideologías y aspiraciones colectivas del partido, sus suscriptores e incluso de aquellos fuera de este, pero que suscriben al ideal de la estadidad. De esta manera, la campaña articula una oferta dirigida precisamente a este centro ideológico en el que ubican a la estadidad en carácter totémico. Los publicistas apelan a los miembros del ideal a través de lo que llama George Lakoff (2004) en su libro *Don't think of an elephant*, “valores no negociables” y cuyas coordenadas, según la campaña, encuentran su centro en Pedro Pierluisi. Estos valores se representan más no necesariamente se limitan en unas coordenadas argumentales que se repiten en la publicidad que incluyen “igualdad”, “beneficios”, “desarrollo económico”, “gobierno de excelencia”, “calidad de vida” y “estadidad”.

Así sucede la transmutación del individuo, al repositorio ideológico. El candidato rinde su agencia para asumir en las comunicaciones de su campaña el rol de tema o instrumento en relación a la obtención de la estadidad y todo lo contenido en ella, como metas. La publicidad efectiva e incondicionalmente, convierte al candidato en la herramienta que ‘mejor’ posibilita los propósitos de un grupo electoral que desea ratificar un vínculo con los Estados Unidos y que hace de su voto no solo un gesto de aceptabilidad, sino también uno de construcción identitaria y autoconcepto para los votantes. Dicho de otra forma, la campaña argumentó, exitosamente, no que su candidato era el mejor ni el más capacitado, sino que era el único de entre los otros cuatro que representa y ‘garantiza’ un paso concreto hacia la obtención de la estadidad y con ella los “beneficios” e “igualdad” que son la oferta medular de la alquimia personal que ofrece a sus adeptos el discurso proestadidad del PNP.

La transformación de Pierluisi no es meramente un juego argumental o la omisión consciente de sus relaciones con gobiernos reprobados o instituciones controversiales. Detrás de los esfuerzos de campaña, hay un entendimiento claro de la comunicología que se pone a prueba en la articulación del *copywriting* de la campaña. El equipo de publicidad logra consistentemente desplazar a la figura de Pedro Pierluisi del espacio agencial. Es decir, el candidato no es un actuante, rinde su agencia, pero tampoco es la meta u objetivo del argumento publicitario. A lo largo de los trabajos en redes de la campaña de Pedro Pierluisi, su equipo de publicidad se encarga de convertirlo en un tema o herramienta con la que alcanzar un objetivo más allá del individuo o de la colectividad. Esto se logra restándole agencia a Pierluisi y en su lugar enfocándose en hacer de este y su candidatura un tema.

Esto es evidente en su publicidad principal, la cual presenta una foto de perfil del candidato con dos constituyentes en el encabezado y pie de la imagen. Arriba, <Todos por Puerto Rico>, abajo en letra de molde como si se tratara de un ruego escrito a puño y letra misma por el candidato mismo, el ruego enfático <¡Cuento contigo!>. <Todos por Puerto Rico.> es un llamamiento impersonal. La agencia recae en “Todos” sobre el rol de tema que <por> exige y satisface con <Puerto Rico>. En el caso de <¡Cuento contigo!> la agencia se sustituye por el rol de un beneficiario que no está enunciado más si contenido en la conjugación de <cuento>, por lo que <contigo> es el votante robado de su agencia y quien ahora cumple la tematicidad. Es sin embargo un tercer elemento casi transparentado en la composición de la publicidad el que materializa y confirma lo que hemos ya planteado. En el cuadrante más bajo de la imagen y a la derecha la constatación de este llamamiento se hace patente en el constituyente que sirve como enlace a la página del candidato: SoyParte.com.

Constituyentes por separado no tienen las mismas implicaciones que cuando se leen en el contexto de la propaganda. Separarlos no solo cumple con necesidades del diseño sino que aprovecha la indexicalidad de la imagen sobre la experiencia del usuario para guiar una lectura particular de los constituyentes léxicos y visuales de la propaganda. Al igual que sucede con contenidos de tipo meme, el elemento indexical de la foto del candidato materializa un contexto y es inseparable de los constituyentes lexicales sobrepuestos.

<Todos por Puerto Rico. ¡Cuento contigo!> están en relación deíctica con la imagen de Pierluisi, plantean una secuencia dónde <Todos> y <contigo> si bien gramaticalmente no concuerdan, intencionan una relación con el experimentante. La carga semántica nominal de todos está enlazada a la segunda persona singular en contigo. Ambas partes argumentan la acción del rol individual por pertenencia al colectivo. <SoyParte.com> es la ‘constante’ al otro lado de la ‘igualdad’ que la ecuación y operación sumatoria de los constituyentes sobre la imagen. <SoyParte.com> es la síntesis de ese colectivo a cuya vaguedad suscriben todos aquellos que desean las “garantías” de “beneficios” e “igualdad” que se encuentran depositadas en el candidato y su candidatura, quién se

presenta como herramienta o tema, que posibilita entrada a la borrosa membresía recogida bajo la ideología estadista.

Al invertir los roles temáticos no es Pierluisi quien traerá la estadidad, sino que es la estadidad misma la que llegará a través de él. De esta forma, para alcanzar las metas de la ‘estadidad’ el votante, quién asume la agencia, deberá entregar su confianza al candidato, pues de no hacerlo estaría actuando en contra de sus propios intereses y creencias representadas en el contenedor ideológico de la estadidad. En dicho contenedor se incluyen metas como la “unión permanente”, el “reconocimiento como iguales” y en general un ruego ideológico que explota elementos psicolingüísticos en los receptores incluyendo aquellos que experimentan apego ansioso, sentido de insuficiencia y una consecuente noción de dependencia, generalizada dentro del discurso estadista. Pierluisi, su candidatura y la estadidad están inseparablemente entrelazados por el ruego discursivo que hila su campaña. El candidato adquiere tematicidad, la estadidad se convierte en meta y la agencia, toda, recae sobre el votante.

Cabe señalar que la tipografía empleada como ‘handwriting’ para escribir <¡Cuento contigo!> es la misma que es utilizada para escribir el <Todos> al tope de la imagen. Esa concordancia en la tipografía aproxima consciente o inconscientemente la agencia en ambas partes. Pero por tratarse de un elemento de diseño visual y de la experiencia de usuario (UX), no entraremos en su discusión pues nos obligaría a otro tipo de examen.

El partido minimizado

Debemos argumentar que los eventos del Verano del 2019 y la volatilidad del cuatrienio 2016-2020 encabezado inicialmente por Ricardo Rosselló y por Wanda Vázquez tras su renuncia, han tenido una cantidad de casos de corrupción sin precedente: numerosos arrestos por parte del FBI a secretarios de agencia, oficiales gubernamentales y políticos electos de la colectividad, escándalos como el chat de Telegram, irregularidades crasas en el manejo de recursos durante las emergencias provocadas por el Huracán María y la secuencia de temblores en el sur de la isla a partir de febrero del 2020, compras y contratos de manera ilegal, cientos de casos conocidos de nepotismo e inversionismo político. La imagen del PNP como organización se ha deteriorado significativamente tal como reflejan encuestas en los principales rotativos de Puerto Rico y como constata la abismal reducción en votantes en los comicios que hoy en día obtienen si virtualmente una tercera parte de los votos que hace dos décadas.

Relacionar la candidatura de Pierluisi a estos elementos abriría una ventana a una discusión de su pasado que la campaña activamente trabajó en evadir. Precisamente, la campaña minimiza en sus diseños las insignias tradicionales del PNP, optando en su lugar por usar el nombre de Pierluisi como logotipo. La campaña encuentra una oportunidad en un valor abstracto del autoconcepto de muchos puertorriqueños que se piensan parte de una población homogenizada y posracial. Esta concepción es un producto

del mito de las tres razas popularizado durante el medio siglo y que coincide con el programa social que promovía el Estado Libre Asociado desde su inepción. En este se explica la puertorriqueñidad como un proceso de igualdades, una gran homogeneización que ha borrado todo proceder histórico y rasgo físico de su concepción de lo identitario. A pesar de tratarse de una fabulación ahistórica, la campaña ve en dicha creencia una oportunidad. No debe sorprendernos entonces cuando Pierluisi, se refiere a sí mismo como “el negrito de casa” o cuando se identifica ante los electores como una persona de clase media, a pesar de este no ser visiblemente negro y tampoco miembro de la clase trabajadora, sino de las élites políticas y económicas del país.

En ninguna parte de la campaña por la gobernación de Pedro Pierluisi, se alude a la excepcionalidad del candidato. Contrario, por ejemplo, a la del candidato por el Partido Popular Democrático, Charlie Delgado Altieri, cuya campaña se centró sobre variaciones y argumentos del estribillo “Puerto Rico necesita un buen administrador.” Por el contrario, la campaña de Pedro Pierluisi no discute sus capacidades profesionales, su experiencia política previa, ni atributos personales como padre, hijo o esposo, tópicos frecuentes en las campañas políticas. Resulta particular precisamente por la vasta experiencia política del candidato que ha ocupado por más de una década posiciones al tope de la jerarquía del PNP.

Este tipo de desplazamiento discursivo no es nuevo en la política. Popularmente se culpa de las acciones de los políticos corruptos a las personas que los eligen, vaciando así de responsabilidad al político que ha roto la ley y pasando el peso de sus acciones a los votantes. Esta dinámica permite que incluso cuando se prueba que el candidato ha actuado ilegalmente, el votante recibe una parte igual de la culpa y como cómplice, se ve en la disyuntiva moral de reprobar del candidato y a sí mismo, o de excusar el comportamiento criminal del político pues se promueve el mito de que “todos roban” o que “si estuvieran en el poder igual robarían” que implica que tanto el votante como candidatos de minoría son potencialmente igual criminales quienes actuarían de igual manera si estuviesen en el cargo. Esa transferencia de agencias borra la culpa del crimen y por acción de haber votado, le otorga igual agencia al votante y contrincante político aún no electo.

Triunfo y recuento

Hemos visto brevemente como un cambio en el rol temático con el que se refiere la publicidad a un candidato puede vaciar y resignificar al nombre con el fin de desligarse de sí mismo y convertirse provisionalmente en un repositorio ideológico representativo de la centralidad argumental e identitaria. La campaña del PNP fue efectiva en convocar una población socialmente heterogénea a congregarse sobre una candidatura que representa no solo a su colectividad, sino a todos aquellos que suscriben de una manera u otra al ideal de la estadidad y sus objetivos políticos. De la misma forma en que la campaña de Pierluisi ha hecho del candidato un repositorio, un partido al otro lado del

espectro político pudiera teóricamente usar la misma lógica. Basta definir de manera simple y concisa no todo el programa abarcador y detallado de trabajo, sino una serie de puntos bien definidos que abarquen los intereses de la mayoría de las personas.

A casi tres semanas de las elecciones generales, aún se esperaba por los resultados finales de la votación. El proceso electoral, al igual que el cuatrienio, ha sido entorpecido y atropellado. El manejo de actas así como los números de maletines y votos han sido denunciados repetidas veces desde las elecciones por docenas de irregularidades. El Movimiento Victoria Ciudadana dirigió un esfuerzo legal por obtener las listas de voto adelantado para corroborar que no se hayan producido votos dobles a nombre de los mismos electores. El partido en el poder y a cargo de la Comisión Estatal de Elecciones (CEE), el PNP, resistió a entregar dichas listas, reclamando ante el Tribunal Supremo de Puerto Rico que se continúen las votaciones, a pesar de que los incumplimientos de la CEE se fundamentan en la misma ‘Reforma’ Electoral impulsada por el partido para cambiar las condiciones del voto adelantaódo y por correo, dos de las principales áreas con discordancias en el conteo de votos.

Las irregularidades en el proceso de conteo así como enfrentamientos físicos, intimidación y provocación por parte del equipo del PNP liderado por Edwin Mundo laceraron y atrasaron el proceso de escrutinio que se llevó a cabo en el Coliseo Roberto Clemente. Lo que inició como señalamientos por parte del MVC, sumó a la mayoría de los partidos de la oposición. Cientos de maletines aparecieron luego de iniciados los procesos, algunos sin los sellos y actas correspondientes. Pedro Pierluisi resultó electo como gobernador de Puerto Rico.

Resulta difícil no comentar, que en la página central de pedropierluisi.com, aún luego de las elecciones (en una imagen tomada el 20/11/20), la plataforma todavía permitía aceptar donaciones de campaña. Más allá de esto, posicionado entre la barra superior que incluye el logo de ATH móvil y el recuadro más bajo, que lee “Cada centavo cuenta”, se encuentra el lema de la campaña al que hemos aludido, “sé parte”, con un enlace para solicitar puestos en el servicio público de lo que será la administración Pierluisi. Un ofrecimiento similar al que hiciera Ricardo Rosselló con su Banco de Talentos, el cual no se llevó a cabo y pereció sin desarrollo posterior. Teniendo en cuenta que se trata de una colectividad en la cual decenas de funcionarios y allegados han sido arrestados en los últimos cuatro años por esquemas de fraude, mal manejo de fondos y recursos, *kickbacks*, robo de fondos, venta de influencias, otorgamientos indebidos de contratos, salarios inflados, nepotismo, en fin, una serie extensa de problemas que han ameritado la fiscalización activa del pueblo y los medios alternativos, así como la intervención activa del FBI en Puerto Rico. Resulta irónico que se ubique el ofrecimiento de trabajo justamente entre petición de donaciones. El gesto casi se siente como un *freudian slip* (resbalón freudiano).

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BLACK HISTORY, ENSLAVEMENT, AND EDUCATION IN PUERTO RICO: THE TEACHING OF *AFRODESCENDENCIA* IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Abstract

Tradition, influences, melting pot... buzzwords that have been used to describe the people of Puerto Rico not just to tourists, but to themselves. Such terms romanticize centuries of colonialism and oppression, which have established the Spanish ‘heritage’ as the superior one. In recent decades, interest in Taíno cultural preservation has risen substantially, but the study and preservation of Black history in Puerto Rico has been almost completely missing from the mainstream conversation. Scholars have pushed for the inclusion of Black history as part of the curriculum, but it is a topic that is still missing in the Department of Education of Puerto Rico’s study plans and recommendations, which mostly limit themselves to discussing the economics of enslavement. This article describes and analyzes existing approaches to the teaching of Black history in the public education system in Puerto Rico, with a particular focus on how the curriculum appears to limit the conversation to enslavement and bits of folklore, and how this enables the continued erasure and denial of a central component of the cultural and identificational repertoires of the population of the island.

Key terms: *mestizaje*, Black history, silencing, trivialization, social studies education, Puerto Rico

The teaching of Black history in Puerto Rico

Besides a careful examination of the relevant curricular documents and materials, a useful guide in understanding how Black history is taught in Puerto Rico is an ethnographic study carried out in 2008, titled “The lessons of slavery: Discourses of slav-

ery, *mestizaje*, and *blanqueamiento* in an elementary school in Puerto Rico,” by Puerto Rican researchers and anthropologists Isar Godreau, Mariolga Reyes Cruz, Mariluz Franco Ortiz, and Sherry Cuadrado, which focuses on how texts and teachers’ actual classroom performance influence the teaching of Black history in particular public schools in Puerto Rico. Despite its publication in 2008, the deficiencies in the teaching of Black history in the island’s public schools that are highlighted in that study are still very much in evidence today.

In particular, the three key weaknesses identified by Godreau et al. persist in the teaching of Black history to Puerto Rican students, namely 1) maneuvers of silence, 2) maneuvers of trivialization, and 3) maneuvers of simplification. These three maneuvers have together been responsible for neutralizing any moves toward more effective teaching of Black history, in particular, as well as impeding any progress in changing the role of public education in Puerto Rico from one which reinforces the Eurocentric and racist status quo into one which begins to educate students in such a way as to encourage them to proactively challenge ethnocentricity and racism in all of their forms, in general.

We now exemplify how these paralyzing maneuvers of silence, trivialization, and simplification manifest themselves in the island’s public schools with excerpts from a social studies online module designed by the Department of Education of Puerto Rico (DE) in August 2020 for 10th grade secondary students during the COVID-19 pandemic, titled “*Módulo didáctico de Estudios Sociales Puerto Rico: Transformaciones contemporáneas y su realidad actual*” (Departamento de Educación de Puerto Rico, 2020).

Godreau et al. (2008) define maneuvers of silence as “those strategies that lead to the erasure and overall absence of information about slavery” (119). In the social studies module, the maneuver of silence is manifested by minimizing the information provided about the effects of slavery and the systemic racism that enabled enslavement, and instead portraying enslavement as a system that helped boost the economy of the island and enrich its ruling classes, as demonstrated in this excerpt: “*También a los africanos se les trató muy duramente, pues fueron traídos a América con el propósito de sustituir la mano de obra barata de los taínos, necesaria para la empresa colonizadora*” (Departamento de Educación de Puerto Rico, 2020: 82).

Godreau et al. (2008) define maneuvers of trivialization as “discourses that downplay Black resistance to slavery and the systemic, global dimension of racism during slavery” (119). In the Department of Education social studies module under discussion, the rich and extensive heritage of rebellions and other forms of resistance to racism and to enslavement by enslaved people in Puerto Rico is ignored, and effectively erased from the island’s history. The excerpt on the *bomba* music/ dance genre is thus presented in the module in its most sanitized version, completely ignoring the subversive use of music and dance in the struggles of enslaved people against chattel slavery

and racism: “*La bomba es un baile de origen africano, relacionado con las celebraciones y reuniones de los negros esclavos de los cañaverales*” (Godreau et al., 2008: 138). Thus enslaved Africans are portrayed as passive victims of oppression.

Godreau et al. (2008) define maneuvers of simplification as “discourses that reduce, essentialize, and equate blackness to slavery and to a set of narrowly defined features that are seen as unattractive, primitive, and overly folkloric” (119). All of the references across the module discussing Africans and African heritage mention the word ‘enslaved.’ Thus African descended Puerto Ricans and their cultural practices are reduced mechanically to formerly enslaved Puerto Ricans and their heritage as enslaved peoples, totally ignoring the fact that, for most of pre-Abolition Puerto Rican history, free people of African descent outnumbered enslaved people of African descent on the island. African cultural practices are rarely mentioned, but when they are, they are reduced to the usual folkloric musical genres, such as *bomba* and the usual folkloric religious practices, such as *vodoun*. Consequently, the construct of blackness in the module is presented as equivalent to enslavement and folklore.

Institutional approaches and their effects

In 2014 and 2016, the Department of Education of Puerto Rico revised its syllabi and curricular maps for all programs. These documents are supposed to be the guidelines for all the classes taught in the public schools, and many of the island’s private schools use them as guides as well. In the documents, no provision is made for the teaching of Black history per se, even though the revision took place after the Spanish language publication of Godreau et al.’s results (see Franco Ortiz et al, 2010, [2008]). To get an idea of what students might actually be learning on topics related to Black history, we decided to systematically search the documents containing both the standards and the curricular maps of the English, Spanish, and social studies programs of the DE for terms such as slavery, slaves, Africa, Africans, *mestizaje*, etc. While there was a total lack of any mention of these terms in the English program documents, the only mention made of them in the Spanish program documents was in the curricular maps, in the section that describes transversal themes that should be covered throughout some grades. For 4th to 6th grades in primary school, as well for 10th to 12th grades in high school, the document mentions the theme of the three cultural roots of Puerto Rican identity: indigenous, Spanish, and African, with African, as usual listed last, almost as an afterthought. As Godreau et al. (2008) mention, this relegation to third place serves to distance Puerto Rican culture from the African culture (118). No other mention is made in the entire set of documents for the Spanish program (Departamento de Educación de Puerto Rico, 2016a). In the curricular maps for the social studies program, there were only a few more references to the terms that we searched: one on teaching African geography along with European and Asian geography and another about the folklore surrounding the *vejigante* masquerades in the cultural com-

ponent taught in the 12th grade of high school (Departamento de Educación de Puerto Rico, 2016b: 47).

In the social studies standards documents, however, more references were made to the identified terms in the standards for Kindergarten, for grades 3, 4, and 5 of primary school; for grades 7 and 8 of middle school; and for grades 10, 11, and 12 of high school (Departamento de Educación de Puerto Rico, 2014). The social studies standards for each grade are divided into sections, which are then divided into the standards pertinent to that section. The sections are listed here with their initials in Spanish:

- Change and Continuity (CC)
- People, Places, and Environment (PLA)
- Personal Development (DP)
- Cultural Identity (IC)
- Production, Distribution, and Consumption (PDC)
- Civic and Democratic Consciousness (CCD)
- Global Consciousness (CG)
- Scientific and Technological Society (SCT).

In the discussion below, the Spanish initials of each section, followed by the grade number and the standard number, are used as codes to identify the different standards within the larger social studies document (Departamento de Educación de Puerto Rico, 2014). The sections that had references to any of the terms we searched were: Continuity and Change; People, Places, and Environment; Cultural Identity; Production, Distribution, and Consumption; and Global Consciousness. However, the terms were not found in all these sections in all the grades.

Kindergarten. The reference to African roots is embedded in the standard of Cultural Identity as follows: “Define the characteristics that make Puerto Ricans unique, as part of the Caribbean and universal communities, considering our indigenous, European, and African roots” (IC K.2, all translations by Ramírez Rodríguez, Burnett Disdier, and Cortés Bernard, unless stated otherwise). Again, African roots take a third place, reflecting a distancing and trivialization of African heritage.

Third grade. The only term mentioned is slavery, in the context of its abolition, as an important historical event. The standard, which is part of the Change and Continuity section, says: “The student puts important events of the history of Puerto Rico in chronological order: Puerto Rican Culture and presence of Spaniards in America Day; the Cry of Lares; the abolition of slavery; change of sovereignty (Spain to USA); the creation of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico” (CC 3.4). This could be seen as a simplification of slavery by only mentioning slavery in relation to Africans in Puerto Rican history.

Fourth grade. Fourth grade is one of the grades with the most references to the terms that we searched. The first mention of any of these terms is in the Change and Continuity section: “Research fundamental topics in the history of Puerto Rico: the indige-

nous society; the arrival of the Spanish; conquest and colonization; attacks from foreigners; the island as a military fort; mining exploitation; the arrival of Africans; the founding of towns” (CC 4.2). While Africans and indigenous people get one mention each on this list, the other 6 items deal with the European descended colonial ruling classes. The problematic theme of *mestizaje*, which more often than not includes people of European and Indigenous descent, but excludes people of African descent (Godreau et al. 2008: 115-116), is also referenced in this section: “Critically examines the processes in Puerto Rican history: cultural *mestizaje*; clash, confrontation, uprising, evangelization, exploitation” (CC 4.3). In the People, Places, and Environment section, the arrival of Africans on the island is seen as just another example of migration to the island, as if forced removal from Africa and chattel enslavement of people of African descent could be considered as equivalent to the arrival of the conquistadores in the 1500s or the arrival of European migrants during the ‘whitening’ of Puerto Rico in the 1800s: “Pose and analyze the different types of migration (internal, external, emigration, immigration) and present examples in the indigenous, African, Puerto Rican, and Caribbean contexts” (PLA 4.8). There is also a reference in the Production, Distribution, and Consumption section of the standards: “Research the economic development of Puerto Rico in the context of: *encomienda*, partition, slavery, contraband” (PDC 4.5). Relating racialized slavery to the economic ‘development’ of Puerto Rico is highly problematic, risking students being left with the impression that chattel enslavement was somehow a ‘necessary evil’ or even a ‘best practice’ in the business world of the time.

Fifth grade. Fifth grade standards are almost exactly the same and just as problematic as those of the fourth grade, except that the focus is expanded from Puerto Rico to all of the rest of the Americas (CC 5.2-5.3; PLA 5.8; PDC 5.5).

Seventh grade. In the seventh grade, the abolition of slavery is mentioned as one of the important historical changes that occurred in Puerto Rico in the second half of the 19th century (CC 7.2). The commercial routes involving trade in enslaved people and cash crops are mentioned as an example of Puerto Rico’s global networks from the 16th to the 19th century (CG 7.3). In (CG 7.2), the problematic equivalence between the arrival of Africans in Puerto Rico with the arrival of Europeans on the island as immigrants is once again made.

Eighth grade. The eighth grade Cultural Identity section talks about *mestizaje* in the more general context of all of the Americas, and lists Africans as part of the diverse human groups that are present (IC 8.1).

Tenth grade. In tenth grade, the only reference to the searched terms is in the Change and Continuity section: “Research the relationship between the history of Puerto Rico and the culture, economy, politics and society of the Caribbean, Latin America, the United States, Spain, and Africa” (CC 10.12).

Eleventh grade. In eleventh grade, the only reference to the searched terms occurs in the section where slavery is taught as being an element in the economic development of the United States (PSC 11.11).

Twelfth grade. In twelfth grade, there is an inclusion of Africa as one of the regions whose culture, economy, politics, migratory movements, historical events, leading figures, and international politics should be researched in relation to the history of Puerto Rico (CC 12.12). There is also a standard related to studying the geography of Africa, among other regions, using sources such as maps, aerial photography, tables, graphs, statistics, and literary texts, etc. (PLA 12.1).

Contemporary education: how much has changed?

In 2015, the Department of Education made the decision to merge all social studies courses with Spanish language lessons in several grades of primary school. As discussed in the *Carta Circular de Organización Escolar 24-2014-2015* (Departamento de Educación de Puerto Rico, 2015), the DE planned to eliminate social studies courses and extend Spanish language classes for up to two hours and twenty minutes. This meant that what little education students were receiving regarding Puerto Rican history in general and topics related to Black history in particular, would be further reduced. This decision caused an uproar in the community, and some saw this as an incredibly odd political move, since the decision was made under a *Partido Popular Democrático* (PPD) governor, Alejandro García Padilla. The PPD party has always been well-known for its promotion of Puerto Rican culture and history. The outcry against the DE's decision was so strong that they eventually backed down from implementing this change. While the DE sought to erase this gaffe from public memory, it did make a point of noting that it was aware of the lack of attention paid to Black history in Puerto Rico.

The *Serie A 400 curriculum* (Departamento de Educación de Puerto Rico, 2017: 41-42). includes a note on the “Celebración de igualdad racial y la afrodescendencia.” It starts off as a reminder about the celebration of the “Semana de la Igualdad Racial en Puerto Rico,” that takes place in March, which is also the month in which Abolition of Slavery Day is observed on the island. The curriculum mentions that a series of activities will be developed, and that these may include presentations involving musical genres, theater, literature, and art celebrating “el orgullo a la afrodescendencia.” The curriculum adds:

El propósito fundamental de la celebración de la Semana de la Afrodescendencia es resaltar la importancia del transformar la visión de los y las estudiantes sobre nuestra afrodescendencia, la cual ha sido limitada al pasado esclavista, excluyendo las contribuciones significativas que los ancestros negros han realizado (invisibilización) al desarrollo histórico y cultural de Puerto Rico con el

fin de contrarrestar los prejuicios raciales existentes en nuestra sociedad. (Departamento de Educación de Puerto Rico: 42)

This short section, barely a paragraph long, recognizes the need to move on from an educational approach that focuses on African ancestry exclusively as enslaved ancestry, as well as pointing out how “significant contributions” by African descended Puerto Ricans have been erased. However, the DE simply makes this statement and moves on. Any implementation of this recommendation seems to be wholly reliant on individual educators’ independent initiatives. No documentation with literature or references are offered, and no next steps to be followed are established.

The issue was not really addressed until 2018, when the DE would work on providing continuing education to teachers on the subject of Puerto Rican Black history and heritage. On October 6, 2018, the DE announced that 350 social studies teachers would receive online training to learn more about Black history and how to integrate it into their curriculum. Under former Secretary of Education Eligio Hernández Pérez, an alliance was created between the DE and the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) to carry out a series of workshops (14) for a total of 42 contact hours. This was meant to “*implementar un currículo antirracista y transversal que apoye el aspecto socioemocional de nuestros estudiantes.*” (Primera Hora, 2020). The series of workshops was a part of the DE’s activities roster in accordance with the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent, 2015-2024. However, it appears that the DE’s efforts in this area ended once the workshops concluded.

Conversely, the UPR did continue their work on *afrodescendencia*: they celebrated the first *Congreso de Afrodescendencia* at the Río Piedras Campus and then established a union with a local public television channel WIPR-TV to create a series of informative capsules on notable African descended artists, intellectuals, and performers, among others.

Despite the DE’s acknowledgement of its poor performance in regard to integrating Black history into the curriculum and taking steps toward helping educators receive information and resources, no changes have been made to the official English, Spanish, or social studies curricula. Any modifications have been done by individual teachers and schools on their own initiative. Conversely, in the wake of George Floyd’s murder and the Black Lives Matter (BLM) mobilizations, a number of private schools in Puerto Rico have made strides toward including issues related to Black history in their curricula, alongside issues related to other marginalized groups. One example of this is the Ramey Unit School, which carried out a series of activities to celebrate Black History Month, focusing on Black history in Puerto Rico and the United States. In a bigger, more permanent move, the *Colegio Puertorriqueño de Niñas* is in the process of changing its syllabus, as well as carrying out activities to inform the student body about Black history, the BLM movement, and the issues that have hindered ade-

quate systemic and institutional approaches to the teaching of subjects related to Black history.

Moving forward: conclusions and recommendations

There is urgent need for a revision of the DE standards and curricular maps, with the purpose of totally revamping existing themes related to Black history in such a way as to eliminate maneuvers of silence, trivialization, and simplification. Once that is done, more themes related to Black history must be included at all levels. To ensure that this process is maximally protected from the momentary whims of politicians, legislation to this effect should be passed by the government of the island. Students, parents, teachers, and community organizations should work together toward creating a proposal that argues for the importance of the systematic inclusion of Black history at all levels of Puerto Rico's formal education system. There is precedent for such legislation in the United States, where the state of Connecticut passed Public Act 19-12 in December 2020. This law stipulates that all high schools must offer a course "that provides students with a better understanding of the African-American, Black, Puerto Rican, and Latino contributions to United States history, society, economy, and culture" (The Office of Governor Ned Lamont, 2020). A statewide curriculum has subsequently been approved and scheduled for implementation in 2021.

To make sure that people are trained to implement new initiatives related to the teaching of Black history in Puerto Rico, there must be a concerted effort on the part of all institutions of higher learning on the island to develop new courses, programs, study sequences, in house training modules, continuing education workshops, etc. for teachers who are already in the classroom, and especially for those tertiary level students who are aspiring to become teachers.

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YO RECUERDO... I REMEMBER: JOURNEY ONE

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Abstract

Yo Recuerdo...I Remember...Journey 1 is a transcultural artistic expression integrating cultural creativity and Indigenous Caribbean historical heritage narratives blending poetry and prose. This poetic-prose is an excerpt of a performance choreopoem. Life journey experiences of wombyn of AfRaKan Indigenous Caribbean Dominican American ancestry realigning linkages among social, political, spiritual, emotional and economic aspects of alienation within multicultural spaces of gender, spirituality, class, language and birthplace are expressed. Internalized domestic terrorism complemented with cultural bullying, sexism, racism, neocolonialism and class oppression impacting Caribbean-American migrants are included. Trauma created by external hostilities among Afrakans of Caribbean American ancestry are shared beyond complexities of erasure and forced invisibilities of diversity, inclusion, tolerance and equity within intergenerational family lineages. Sociological perspectives of historical experiences linked to exploitation, injustices, displacement and survivability via restorative harmonic ma'atriarchal rebalancing are interwoven within this creative poetic prose.

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Key terms: poetry, migration, Caribbean, cultural creativity

Yo Recuerdo... I Remember: Journey One

Yo recuerdo...

I remember the bacalao and jonni cakes in the morning time

Sweet vibrant aroma... wake up all ah we...

La ciudad beigo keep its' own energy

We cut cane, sucked succulent limonsillos

Devoured sweet mangoes during our pre-dawn chores

Powerlines and phonelines several miles away...
Lights from kerosene lamps were replaced with nu rays of the sun...
Smelling fresh coal filled our young and developing lungs...
All ah this before dawn's sunshine visible in we yards
Abuela Maria make us rise up to clean and feed the animals
Living in the Caribbean positively contributed to my inner strength...
As a wise indigenous afrakan queskeya woman
Seeking connectedness to anu ancient Caribbean southern rhythms
Responsibilities... reciprocities... resolutions...
At least to a point ...

Yo recuerdo...
I remember way after the migration...
Running... multiple summers' end...
Running... up the road to the west west great northern suburbia
Hearing blaring sirens... Seeing polar lights
Screams of anguish and pain
Intimate sensations in we blood of alienation with force-fed vibes
Permeating globally as we of the earth khammunity watched
All ah we dark melanized folks...
All ah we speaking in tongues... languages... full of colorful cultural images...
Dreaming and re-visioning our ancestral southern Caribbean births & roots...
All ah we coming from the insides of earth's myriad of rainbows...
Despite the conscious deafening of
SRO experiences- sexist, racist, oppressive...
Some ah we gained strength
Lovingly embraced an understanding of the seemingly silent sounds
Voices... wisps of shadows... divine presences of wise ancestral ones
All ah we have stories to tell...
All ah we telling real tropical equatorial folktales... narratives...
Mythstories... griot traditions... beyond old language
I am coming to decipher my destiny... my purpose... my space... my place...
Knowing my times and life contributions
At least to a point...

Yo recuerdo...
I remember the sixties American Caribbean experience par excellence...
Being called nigga, eggplant and spic within one square block
By folks who shared my hue as well as by so-called best friends...
Hearing mi Papi calling out to me

‘Nina Maria que venga ahora!’

In his loud ingles english dominicano accent

Making every neighbor peer out their old-fashioned windows

Watching a multi-lingual morena-colored gyal in shock and ignorant disbelief

Audible sounds yet unrecognizable word

Sprinting at breakneck speed up the concrete road to kneel on the ground

Before my paternal head of our home...

Papi remains worthy of following his discipline and guidance...

At least to a point...

Yo recuerdo...

I remember my mulatto and quadroon primos

Our shared homestays nestled in san pedro de macoris, la romana y la capital...

Mami es una doña y reina is our familia matriarch...

I catch words... tongues...lashes all the same...

Annual torment of trying to keep my body exempt from the

Physical and mental trauma of existence as

Una americana y negrita dominicana y africana...

Creates complex intergenerational serious challenges for all ah me...

Crystal pearls of sand thrown in my face when I came up for

Desperately needed breath of air

As I swam in the tranquil Caribbean waters

Conscious slices made in mosquito nets over my bedding

After seasonal tropical rains and flash floods...

Mi primos y amigos knowing full well of sensitivities and allergic death

Of parasitic bloody bites and food poisoning...

Spiritual beyond expressing jealousy, envy and greed faking innocence

Being called una negrita...

Many forgot how beautiful una negrita really was...

Being told tu tiene mal pelo y tu esta feo

Repeatedly over and over again

Immunity prostablished beyond toxic hatred impressed on me...

My natural hair and beauty ...inclusive of my spirit...

Mi padrientes share/d loving words to me and us

Embracing...strengthening...innerstanding

Our natural beauty, love, harmony and dissolving antagonistic enemies of this world...

At least to a point...

Yo recuerdo...

I remember the times I bow to our blessed earth on wounded/humbled knees

Praying for the Heruian Illuminated One...Yeshua...Jesus Cristo...
To save me...save all ah we... without me doing anything but speaking repentance
Speaking truth beyond threats of death...
Turning other cheeks was not my way in young life...or now...
Cerca de bocachica...en san pedro de macoris...en la romana
In so-called free lands and homes of the brave...
I was ridiculed by children and adults for speaking a blend of bastardized languages
In stolen America...
Beyond regal roots of Afrakan...
Queskaya...americas from north to south pole
In a world claiming interculturalism and human harmony
Actively reinforcing mastery of not-so-royal eurasian colonial languages...
Beyond challenges of our Caribbean americas...
I remember the welcoming ancestors...
Healing elders...
Educating wise sages...
Revolutionary youth...
At least to a point...
...Yo recuerdo...I remember...Journey 1...

**DISTANCINGS, ENTANGLEMENTS,
INTERSECTIONALITIES AND LANGUAGES
IN THE CARIBBEAN AND BEYOND**

THE ORIGIN, FORM AND USE OF THE WORD ‘KRIO’

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Abstract

This article addresses a number of the still unsettled questions related to the origin and use of the word ‘Krio,’ including whether or not the term is of local origin via the neighboring Portuguese-lexifier *Kriolu*, whether or not it is a Jamaican import, and whether or not it is of Yoruba origin. The Yoruba origin proposal, first put forward in 1949, has led to highly politicized interpretations of ‘Creole’ identity.

Key terms: Krio; Creole; identity; endonym

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The words ‘Creole’ and ‘Krio’ have been questioned for their use both as an ethnonym and as a glossonym. The first (located) occurrence of the label ‘Creole’ in Sierra Leone dates from 1840, in a report on the state of education in the Colony by Mr. J. Miller (1841), Inspector of Schools. Referring only to *persons*, he wrote “the Creole children receive rapidly those ideas of their own superiority to which all are so prone” (1). The next is found in Clarke (1843), where he comments on the same emerging social distancing from the rest of the population: “The Creoles are taught in schools separate from the Liberated African children. This distinction inspires the Creole children with ideas of their own superiority” (33). One year later, Elizabeth Melville (1844) referred to “a plainly-dressed and rather nice looking *Creole*, as all the children of liberated Africans, born after their parents’ arrival in the colony, style themselves” (202). The earliest names for their language were probably ‘Pidgin’ or ‘Patois’; the former (though not the latter) is found in Bioko (formerly Fernando Po) as Pichi, and the latter (but not the former) in Jamaican, from which it may have been introduced by the Maroons, if not used independently by the Europeans already resident in Sierra Leone.

While Clarke (1843) seems to apply the word only to the descendants of the first three Settler groups (the Black Poor, the Nova Scotians and the Maroons), who were kept “separate from the Liberated African(s)” (33), Melville (1844), Buckle (1939) and

others apply it (instead?) to the descendants of those Liberated Africans themselves who, by the end of the 19th century, outnumbered the first *ca.* 2,000 colonists nearly fifty-fold. In the earliest 19th century accounts, the founders were generally referred to by their group names: “Settlers,” “Maroons.”

The fact of its exclusive use as an ethnonym in 19th century Sierra Leone has been noted by Gberie (2010):

Official censuses throughout the nineteenth and much of the twentieth centuries never recognized the Creole as one coherent ethnic group. There were instead descriptions like “Akus,” “Maroons”, “Kossohs”, “Popo” etc. The government-owned *Gazette* always prefixed Creole with a more established ethnicity in describing people in the colony, as in this “official notice” announcing rewards for some escaped convicts in the 30 September, 1875, issue: James Henry Cole, an escaped prisoner, is described as “Aku Creole;” and Aaron Sangster, “convicted at the sessions of March last of larceny, and sentenced to three years penal servitude,” is described as “Kossoh Creole”. (151)

The existence of the *l*-less form [kɣi'o] earlier than the 1840s may be supported by its occurrence in Pichi, since the first Sierra Leoneans arrived in Fernando Po in 1827, taking the language with them. De Zarco (1938) glosses *Crió* as “criollo, mulato” in his “Inglés-Africano” dictionary (337), again referring only to the population; Yakpo (2009: 644), however, lists *krió* as both the people and the language. This form was also recorded in British Guiana as *Creo* ' by Cruickshank (1916), who referred to the African free labour force as “*Dem Creo*’ (*Creole boys*)” (45). He otherwise called the local population *Creoles*, and today the language is referred to in Guyana alone as Creolese. This label may have been introduced from Barbados, where it was used in the past to refer to the European descended population there (Allsopp, 1996: 177). Although the term Creole has become “disuse[d]” in Jamaica today according to Cassidy and Le Page (1980: 130), Chang (2014) indicates that the word is still sometimes attested: *Di habrij Jumiekan, di taak wa deh taak deh kaal i Patwa, deh kaal i Kryuol* [The average Jamaican, the language that they speak, they call it Patwa, they call it Creole.] (17) (all translations by the author unless specified otherwise). The word was first recorded in Jamaica as early as 1721 by John Atkins (1735), who wrote of “[t]he Cræoles (those born here) which are properly the Natives of the Island” (244). The term survives in Belizean Creole, a (substantially) Jamaican offshoot, for both the language and the people. The *Belize Kriol Dictionary* (Herrera et al., 2007) has:

Kriol n. 1) the language of Belize, 2) Creole; ethnic group traditionally in the colonies, people born of European or African descent or a mixture of both; today in Belize the term refers specifically to anyone with any mixture of African and any other ancestry. (196)

Hair (1988) suggests the possibility of there having been:

a shift, probably from ‘crioulo,’ a version of the Portuguese language spoken by blacks in Africa, to ‘Creole,’ a version of the English language spoken by blacks in Africa, is perfectly acceptable. True, we do not as yet have this final shift firmly documented, but further research may close the gap dividing supposition from proof. (112)

There is also strong evidence that term ‘Krio’ came into Sierra Leone with the Jamaicans. The word also exists in modern Sranan as *kriyoro* (*kriyoo* in Ndjuka), and was listed in Schumann’s 1783 dictionary of Sranan as *kriólo*. Its application to the *language* in Sierra Leone came much later; the first to refer to it in this sense and with the spelling ‘Creo’ specifically, was the Englishman Buckle (1939):

[The] corruption or abbreviation ‘Creo,’ which is more popular than ‘Creole,’ might perhaps be accepted to embrace the descendants of liberated Africans who are born in Sierra Leone . . . I think we should allow this tern ‘Creo’ to supersede ‘Creole’ . . . Every young child naturally acquires its mother tongue; the Creo language would not be spoken by any child born in any house in the Colony unless its parents were Creos or could speak the language A West African who has not had the advantage of hearing or talking the Creo language, and cannot speak English, makes some effort to speak the latter but the results are far from being identical with the former. (20-21)

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Buckle was also the first to have rendered the language phonetically: “*a si, a bin si, a go si, a dan si, a bin dan si, a go dan si,*” etc. (1939: 20-2), although he has the English vowel [ʌ] reflecting his own pronunciation, where in Krio it is [ɔ]. He did not transcribe his word *Creo* in the article. It was in reference to Buckle’s use of an “inverted v” that Decker (1947) recommended that writers avoid using symbols from the International Phonetic Alphabet.

It was in fact Thomas Decker (1947) who first actually introduced its present spelling, written in his proposed phonemic orthography, a decade later. Decker seems to suggest that the spelling *Krio* was already known in 1947, when he wrote:

[t]he name appears to have changed from Creole to Krio in Sierra Leone. Some Creoles never fail to call themselves Creoles, but practically everybody now refers to them as Krios. Hence my preference for the more widely used name ‘Krio’. (1947: 21)

Nevertheless, he used impressionistic (English-based) spelling in all of his writing until 1964 and 1965, when he published “three Krio poems” (1964) and Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* (1965) in his new phonemic system, which used <o> for [ɔ], <oh> for [ɔ], <e> for [ɛ], <ey> for [e], <ai> for [aj], <au> for [au] and <ohi> for [ɔj]. It was later modified

by Clifford Fyle and Eldred Jones for their *Krio English Dictionary* (1980), which introduced <ɛ>, <ɔ>, <ay>, <aw> and <ɔy>, bringing Krio into line with the official spellings used for other Sierra Leonean languages.

Neville Shrimpton tells me (personal communication) that regarding Jones' use of 'pho-netic' letters and a generally semi-phonemic system of spelling for Krio, he once asked him what had inspired them. Shrimpton said it was from his old teacher, Dr. Victor King, at the C.M.S. Grammar School. This would have been in the late 1930s/early 1940s. Possibly, King would have spelt it as 'Krio' in that period too since the word was beginning to be used for the language as well as the people. He seems to have been following—or been influenced by—the *Practical Orthography of African Languages*, the second revised edition of which came out in 1930. Fyle and Jones (1980), and the Krio orthography workshop report (Bangura et al., 1981) both refer to this as a major influence on them. More on Krio orthography are Bangura et al. (1981), Jones, Sandred and Shrimpton (1992), Shrimpton (1982, 1995) and Fyle (2011).

Both the use of Creole/Krio as an ethnonym and its etymology have become contentious on a couple of fronts; Fyfe (2006), for example challenged the Melville (1844), Buckle (1939), etc., definition:

[F]rom the early 1840s the name 'Creole' came to be given to the children of recaptives born in Sierra Leone. It is an inappropriate name. The word is used in many quite different contexts in other parts of the world and, more important, it seems to imply a non-African origin. (Fyfe, 2006: 26-27)

Of particular relevance here is Akintola Wyse's (1979) insistence that writing 'Krio' rather than 'Creole' was "the only acceptable usage" (409). Fyfe (2006) states that:

Wyse ... began using [Krio] as a name for the people. He adopted it gradually: successive published articles show him first shedding the explanatory 'Krios (Creoles)' and then the final 's' in the plural. This gave to the Krio the style which is customary when referring to other African peoples (the Temne, the Mende).

Others soon began to copy. Thus over a brief period he firmly outlawed the time-honoured 'Creole' and 'Creoledom' and established instead 'Krio' and 'Kriodom', using 'Krio' not only as a noun but as an adjective—'Krio language', 'Krio culture'—as the only acceptable usage. (26-27)

Regarding the word's origin, which I questioned in 1971 (Hancock 1971: 353), it has been argued that political and historical factors underlie the enthusiasm with which a specifically Yoruba, i.e., African, etymology has been promoted, first by Frederick Nicol (1949):

The word “Kriyo” is of the Aku [i.e. Yoruba] origin and is made up of two words, a verb and an adjective; from the verb “kiri” (to walk about) and the adjective “yo” (full or satisfied) ... Kri-yo, “to walk about and be satisfied.” (903)

It is not the purpose of this article to examine the social or political aspects of the proposition. Rather, I seek to demonstrate that evidence for a Yoruba origin for the word Krio is weak. Social and linguistic aspects aside, the word ‘creole’ has existed in the English lexifier Atlantic Creoles for far longer than the Yoruba language has been spoken in Freetown, and the Yoruba folk etymology which reinforced, and to some extent has attempted to redefine, the word, was triggered by Decker’s (1947) new “African-looking” spelling Krio, which appeared in the press just one year before.

Folk-etymologizing is not unusual when the source form is no longer accessible. Other examples from Krio include *kabaslɔt* “smock, pinafore,” from “coverslut,” but attributed to “Kabbah’s lot,” from where he sold rolls of cloth, *maklet* “vaccination,” from “maculate,” but explained by the fact that the *mark* left from the injection comes out *later*, and *kɔntɔfili* “negative disagreement,” from Mandinka *kɔnɔ-na-fili* or Susu *kɔ̃tɔfili* “embarrassed,” but attributed to “counter-feelings.”

I questioned the Yoruba origin again in 1993, by which time Fyle and Jones’ (1980) *Krio-English Dictionary* had appeared, where at its entry ‘Krio’, the following is given:

Krio (Us[ually] < E. Creole, cf. J[amaican] creole. But Nicol, F.S.F.O., 1949 gives Y[oruba] *Akiriyo* ‘those who habitually go about paying visits after a church service,’ a reference to a Krio custom which continues to the present. Phonologically this derivation is much more plausible than Krio < Creole, especially as the disappearance of a final /l/ has not been found to occur elsewhere in the language . . .).

n. the Krio people, their language; that which pertains to the Krios. (203)

The late Paul Hair (1988) also expressed some doubt about an African origin for the word:

Why did the developing Freetown community acquire the name “Creole”? As is well known, the term in its original Spanish form [was] “criollo” ... it is perhaps understandable that some recent Creole scholars have attempted to argue that “Creole” and “Krio” are not derived from a term or terms in European languages but from an African language term, perhaps in Yoruba. But this ignores the existence of the Portuguese term “crioulo,” documented from the seventeenth century. (112)

While Allsopp, in response to Hancock (1993), took the opposite position:

In summary, my argument would give *Kiriyo* > *Krio* preference as the original Freetown African label, first for the freed or ex-slaves, then for their ‘English-

oriented' language, and further posit that this term, coinciding as it did with ex-Jamaican *Creo* (*sic*), was universally accepted. (Allsopp, 1994: 5)

And Wyse (1989), who wrote that in 1843 Clarke misunderstood the true Yoruba meaning of the word 'Creole', believed that:

'Krio' could hardly have been derived from 'Creole' ... this hypothesis is not supported by linguistic evidence ... this term, used both for the people and the language, is in fact a contraction of the Yoruba expression *Kiriyo* (to walk about and be satisfied) In essence, *Kiriyo* describes the habit of Liberated Africans which consisted of visiting each other after church, but the word was also used to refer to children of Liberated Africans who tended to go out of the house much too often—a more important derivation. (6)

In his tribute to Wyse, Christopher Fyfe (2006) was unconvinced:

Personally I find this derivation implausible. But the [Krio] linguists assure us that 'Krio' cannot derive from 'Creole' and as I am not a linguist I shall not argue with them. What is important here is how Wyse made use of it—giving the word 'Krio' an African and not a European derivation. (27)

According to Williams (1980: 1659), a different interpretation was provided by Pa Mahdi, an Aku (Yoruba-speaking Krio), who has suggested in conversation with Michael Banton (*cf.* Banton 1971) that the word *akirio* should rather be interpreted as 'scrounger,' though its closest form and interpretation in Yoruba (*akirim nùn*) means one who is "vagrant because he is unhappy at home" (Abraham, 1958: 374).

In a book published subsequent to Fyfe's response Gibril Cole (2013), relying on Nicol's scenario, defends the Yoruba origin of the word:

It should be noted that the term *Krio* is not an adaptation of *Creole* ... the evidence suggests otherwise. While *Creole* has been used historically in reference to persons of mixed African/European descent, the term *Krio* has no such antecedents. Its etymological roots are decidedly African (that is to say, Yoruban) ... it is derived from the original Yoruba *Akiriyo*. (2013: 17-18)

His source for *kiri* is substantiated in Abraham's (1958) *Dictionary of Modern Yoruba* where he has at that entry (374) "ó kiri . . . he roamed about." His initial (though incorrect) statement that *k(i)ri-yo* means "to walk about and be satisfied" is repeated in Fyle and Jones (1980: 203), but which also attributes to him the sentence "those who habitually go about paying visits after a church service" (203) (thus presumably excluding Muslim Krios). This sentence does not in fact appear in Nicols' (1949) essay, where he does include Aku Creoles within his interpretation. While Fyle and Jones (1980) appear themselves to have enlarged upon Nicol's (1949) basic meaning, Nicol too is not

entirely innocent of creating ‘evidence’ to support his case; in his essay (1949: 901–903), he composes an exchange in Yoruba (with English translation) between two neighbours complaining about their children playing outside instead of working—evidently the source of Wyse’s (1989: 6) statement. Yet at the end of the dialogue, he goes on to present his hypothesis as fact, saying: “From the above conversation you can see how the word ‘Kriyo’ originated” (903).

Fyle and Jones’ (1980) *Krio-English Dictionary* argument that “the disappearance of a final /l/ has not been found to occur elsewhere” (203) in support of *Krio*’s phonological shape misses the entry *kabudu* “coterie of friends” on page 160, where the source form “caboodle” is given; similarly *trɔki* “tortoise” is listed on page 377, which is from *[trokl] < *[torkl] < *[tortl] < “turtle” with metathesis and the Jamaican Creole shift of alveolar to velar stop, although Fyle and Jones (1980: 377) in fact list “turkey” as the source form. The loss or vocalizing of final /l/ might be due to Cockney or other British dialect influence; the word’s underlying /l/ resurfaces in the entry *kriolayz* on page 204 in the dictionary. Frederick Jones (1983) noted:

Wyse’s mention of the fact that “the term ‘creeo’ or ‘creo’—the name that the interior people know them by”—in which the final ‘l’ has been dropped did become known, early this century, as an alternative one to ‘creole.’ In fact the dropping of dark /l/ after a back vowel in English-derived words regularly occurs in Cameroon Pidgin, which has been heavily influenced by *Krio*, e.g. *botu/botru* for ‘bottle,’ *kandu* for ‘candle,’ *pipu* for ‘people.’ (30)

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And we could add to the list from *Krio* *pɛkɛpɛku* “speckled,” *ramshaku* “ramshackled,” *te* “(un)til,” *demba* “ladle” (< “demble”), *natay* “nut-oil,” *pamay* “palm-oil,” *katapo* “catapult, slingshot” and the obsolete “*scroo*” “school.”

While Fyle and Jones (1980) maintain that “phonologically this [Yoruba] derivation is much more plausible than *Krio* < *Creole*” (203), a Yoruba source for the word is unlikely on a number of grounds, grammatically as well as semantically and phonologically. First of all, the cluster /kr/ is not permissible in Yoruba. The only other Yoruba-derived item in *Krio* containing it that I have found (and I reject Fyle & Jones’ (1980) suggestion that *kràwó* ‘burnt food stuck to the bottom of the pot’ is of Yoruba origin), namely *àkríbótó* “woman with vaginismus,” is from the /r/-less original *ākííbótó*, with intrusive /r/ (cf. the *Krio* forms *krikrit* ‘cricket,’ *kɔkrùl* ‘cockle(shell),’ *krɔkrɔdâyl* ‘crocodile,’ etc.). Indeed, lexical adoptions into Yoruba from words containing this cluster insert a vowel, thus *Kírísítì* ‘Christ’; cf. also Abraham (who in his Yoruba dictionary (1958) has *Kíríyó* (as *òmọ Kíríyó*, lit. ‘child of Kiriyo’) as a pejorative term for ‘Christian,’ and says “(< Portuguese ‘crioulo,’ as many of the early Christians in Nigeria came from Sierra Leone [and] were called Creoles).” (374) The word was introduced into Yoruba from *Krio*, not the reverse, and from that language directly, rather than from Portuguese, since the Yoruba phonology (unlike *Krio*’s) cannot admit a word-final /l/,

the form */kiri o lo/ could have been retained. The morpheme /yo/ exists in the (somewhat archaic) Krio *yóyó* “full[blooded], pure, of a Creole person”: *mi na yoyo Krio*, [I’m a 100% Krio] (not in Fyle & Jones, 1980).

Secondly, while Yoruba *kiri* does mean “stroll, wander,” (*wirɔn* in Krio), *yó* does not mean “be satisfied, content,” which is *tẹlọrùn*. It means “replete, sated (with food),” which in Krio is *bẹfúl* (earlier *berefúl*). Furthermore, Freetown churches do not regularly feed their congregations on Sundays.

Thirdly, the grammatical multifunctionality of items which characterize creole languages is not possible in Yoruba; you cannot use a verb (in this case two verbs serially) as a noun. If there were a Yoruba word meaning “one who wanders around and is replete (with food),” it would be *ākíríyō* (with nominalizing prefix and adjustment for tone), as Nicol (1949: 903) in fact noted. Besides (*omọ*) *Kíríyó*, the Yoruba (including the Freetown Yoruba) disparagingly refer to the Krios as *ájírẹ̀ẹ̀sì* ‘rice eaters’ (< Krio *rɛs* ‘rice’).

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HOW ZEKE LOSE 'E SOUL

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Abstract

Following Hancock (2019: 13-20), I translated the late Timothy Callender's short story "A deal with the devil" from Bajan into basilectal Bahamian Creole English (BahCE), which is a Caribbean English lexifier Creole spoken in The Bahamas (Seymour 2017: 142). Besides native-speaker intuition, I used two early BahCE written texts (Edwards, 1895; Parsons, 1918) as models for the translation. These texts include folktales, old songs, proverbs and riddles. The original version of the short story, published in an anthology titled *It so happen* (Callender, 2010: 52-57), precedes the translation. The translation is primarily in Standard English orthography, with some exceptions, such as the occasional use of <əy> to represent [ə] or [əɪ] in words such as 'first' (<fəys>). The names of the characters have been changed from *Maysie*, *Jerome* and *Brome* to *Ruby*, *Zeke* and *Ansel*, respectively. I have appended a glossary to the story.

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Keywords: Bahamian Creole English, Bahamian Dialect, basilect, English lexifier Creole

A deal with the devil (Original text in Bajan by Timothy Callender, 2010: 52-57):

From the time that the woman Maysie moved into the house opposite his, Jerome start having temptations. You know how it is when a man living a bachelor life and feeling fit and strong. Jerome feel all his instincts rise up until he couldn't help thinking 'bout this woman, day and night. In the daytime, he watching the house from his window, and catching a glimpse of she any time she passed the window or door as she went about she household duties. At night, Jerome watching she movements until the house in darkness; then he retiring to bed, only to toss and turn til the next morning, when he would get up and start peeping out from his window again. Every day it was the same

thing. But as much as he eyeing Maysie, and as much as he calling at she and trying to hold conversation if he get a chance — no can do — Maysie had a carpenter-fellow named Brome, and she wasn't making no mistakes at all. Brome was a very ignorant man when he get vex, and Brome used to get vex if he hear that another man even *look* at Maysie. And, as Maysie tell Vera, one day when they get to talking, "Huh. You all right hear. I know how me bread butter, and I ain't taking no chances. After all, is Brome that build the house I living in."

As far as I coulda seen it, it seem to me that really and truly she didn't have nothing against Jerome, at least, not to the extent that she couldn't sympathize with his feelings; in fact, if she coulda get a chance she woulda tek it. But as I say, Brome was a very cruel man, over six feet, big and greasy and tough. and from time to time he had used his saw, hammer and other tools on a couple of fellows in the village. Brome didn't like people; he didn't like nothing except houses, in fact. With houses, he constructive; otherwise, he destructive and more than once he had threaten to destroy Maysie if he ever ketch she looking at another man.

This was the situation confronting Jerome, therefore, and while Jerome wasn't a coward, he wasn't foolhardy neither. In fact, he was a brave, brave man, as I going point out to you as this story go along.

Hey now, this day in question, Maysie was out in front of her house tending to a little rose-garden that she had planted up. She had on a pair of shorts, and a old shirt with the two ends tied in front of she, exposing she navel, and the way she bending down and straightening up, and the way the shorts was tight, truth to tell, I personally didn't blame Jerome for not being able to move from the window of his house. But I don't know if I woulda say the same thing he did, because I does think very careful before I open my mouth.

"Boy," Jerome say, talking to heself and shaking he head from side to side. "Half-hour is all I ask, only half-hour. and after that I ain't care what happen." And he continue staring out of the window, across the road at Maysie. And the way Maysie pulling and stretching over the rose-trees, and the way she skin all black and glossy and smooth and shining in the morning sun, Jerome start losing control, and before he realize what he saying, he bawled out loud:

"Yes! I would give my soul to the Devil, just for half-hour with she!"

Well, scarcely had he done saying the words, when, *BRAGGADANG*, the floor of his house rip-up like a volcano explode under there, and next minute when Jerome turn his head, who he should see but the Devil in the room behind him, and the room was full of thick smoke and the smell of brimstone.

Now, Jerome certainly ain't the first Bajan I know who see the Devil, but he was the coolest in such circumstances, and that is why I say he was brave. 'Course, he didn't have to ask *who* it was; a man that never seen the Devil only have to see him to know

that is him. I personally never seen him, so if I describe him is purely imagination, and in any case if you see him you will know, so I will just stick to the facts.

Jerome was brave, brave, brave. Cool so, he look and say "But wait, who call you? I ain't nothing to do with you, man. I does go to the Anglican church."

The Devil laugh out hard. "Is joke you making," he answer. "I distinctly hear you promise to give me your soul, just now."

"Who, me?" Jerome say. "Not me. You lie in hell." "No, no," the Devil insist, "One thing I don't do, is tell lies. And another thing, much as you hear 'bout me, I don't take nobody soul unless I distinctly recognize that they want to give me it. And just now I hear you say, and I quote your actual words: 'Yes! I would give my soul to the Devil, just for half-hour with she!'"

Jerome begin to understand now, and truth to tell, he get a little jittery now. "But I was making sport," he say.

"Another thing I don't do, is make sport," the Devil say. "And once somebody say something, it ain't no going back on it. As far as I concern, you just arranged a deal with me, and it settled: Ain't nothing more to say."

Jerome begin to cry. "My mother bring me up as a God-fearing man," he say. "I never expect it woulda turned out so."

The Devil laugh out again. louder this time. "Is a lot of wunna I ketch already," he say. "You suppose to love God, not fear him. But we wasting time. I ready for your soul now."

Jerome backed away and stood up in the corner, watching him. He see the Devil reach down into the hole outa which he come, and take up a long whip with a lot of different ends, like a cat o' nine tails. Only, when Jerome look close, he see that each separate end of the whip was wriggling and he realize that the whip was made outa snakes, and not of rope.

Well you could imagine how Jerome begin to sweat now, because the Devil was already waving this whip up and down, and smiling, and stroking it, and coming towards him. He raised his hand to stop the Devil, and he say, "Wait, wait, right there. How I know that you going keep the other part of the agreement?"

Same time, there was a knock by the window. The Devil smile and pointed, nodding his head, and Jerome crossed the floor and looked outside, and who should be there underneath the window but Maysie.

Maysie smile up at him, friendly friendly. "Hello, Mr. Jerome," she say.

"Hello," Jerome say, as calm as possible. And, very politely, "What can I do for you, Miss Maysie?"

She look at him like she shy, and then she giggle out loud. "Mr. Jerome, you playing you ain' know? What you expect?" She rub her legs, and now her voice take on a funny note, like she begging. "Is only one thing I asking you to do for me," she say.

“Come over by me and spend a little half-hour or so.” And she turn and hurry back across the road.

Jerome stand looking after her until he hear the Devil call again, and when he turned the Devil was pointing to the dining-table.

“Bend over there,” the Devil say. “Three strokes with this whip, and your soul belong to me. Then I going leave you in peace to find yuh satisfaction with her.”

“Yes, yes,” Jerome said. He was very excited now.

“Quick, quick, you ain’ hear the woman invite me over by she?” And he run and bend over the table.

The Devil stepped back and gauged up the distance well, like a headmaster dealing with a schoolboy. He draw back his hand and bring the whip up; then he said:

“Now listen, don’t call ’pon any divine name, hear? If not, everything spoiled.”

“All right” Jerome agreed.

The first lash come down then; Jerome felt the whip like a thousand snakes stinging into his posterior. He jumped. “Oh hell!” he bawled.

The second lash come down, harder than the first. He feel the snakes bite deep, and he leap up straight with the pain. “Oh the Devil!” he bawled.

The third lash made him snap upright again. Now, suddenly, he could feel like something draining out of him, a funny feeling, like energy, or force, or life or something, leaving. He doubled up on the floor, wriggling. “Oh Jesus Christ! Oh Lord have mercy!” he bawled.

“Too late for that,” he hear the Devil say, and when he turn to see where the voice come from, he discover that the room was empty, and the floor was whole again. like if the Devil never had been there.

At least, that is the story that Jerome tell me personal, the time that I used was to talk to him. I ain’t talk to him for a long time now, and he don’t talk to nobody neither, now. And everybody frighten for him when they see him. It take a little time for me to realize exactly what had happen to him. but now I know, and that is why I telling you this story. And if you doubt, you could ask the same woman Maysie, because she was the first to notice a change in him.

“Jerome come over by me one day and spend half-hour with me,” she tell Vera one day. “Brome was out in the country, and I know how Jerome did like me and used to watch me. One day, I can’t explain why, I just feel deep, deep, in love with him, and I invite he over by me.”

“But Maysie, you bold in truth!” Vera say. “And what happen? Or you ain’ wanta tell me?”

“Girl, you wouldn’t believe it. Even now I frighten when I think ’bout it, that’s the truth. Jerome was *different* from any man I know: cold, like a zombie, like if he is a dead man, only thing he still walking. That is the only way I kin find to describe it. I never had nothing to do with him again.”

How Zeke lose 'e soul (Bahamian Creole English translation by Chanti Seymour):

From di fəys time da' ooman Ruby come fo' lib in-a di house 'cross from he oon, Zeke bin sta't fo' hab all kinda temptation. Yinna know ha 'e does be vhen man libin' da' bach'lor life an' feelin' hesef.

Zeke, him bin so hot-up fo' da' gyal, she a di oonliest ting 'e did tink 'bout. In-a di day, he plonks hesef by 'e winda, a-tryin' fo' ketch one lil look vhen she walk pass di winda or di do'. In-a di night, 'e still right dere, plonks down by 'e winda, a-peepin' at Ruby 'til di house təyn pitch black inside. Aftuh him spen' all night a-pitchin' 'bout in-a he bed, 'stead o' sleepin', 'e does get up an' sta't a-peepin' all ober again. Erry day di seem ting. But Ruby na check fo' 'im — all da' peepin' an' callin' out an' tryin' fo' ben' conwe'sation na wəyk. Ruby fella a one carpenter neem Ansel, an' she na ga do nuttin fo' mess dat up. Ansel did dead stupid vhen 'e get wex, an' 'e did get wex if 'e hear say one nex' man ewen look at Ruby. Like Ruby did say tuh one frien': "Ansel, 'im a one dangerous man, but me know how muh bread butter, an' me kyan tek no chance. Don' fo' get, is Ansel what buil' di house ah lib in now."

Nah, een like Ruby nebber know 'bout Zeke. An' een like 'e wouldna gi' him a chance if 'e coulda get away wit' it. But Ansel a one dead cruel man — tall, ogly, and him na 'fraid o' noone. Man, 'e use some o' he tool-dem tuh mess up odduh fellas-dem in di willage. He eben tell Ruby 'e ga kill her if he ebber ketch her a-lookin' at one nex' man. Ruby a di onliest pəyson Ansel like, an' di onliest ting 'e like fo' do is buil' house.

Listen, Zeke, him not a coward, but him na fool needer. Nah, on dis day 'e de watch Ruby, 'e de weyk in-a her ga'den in some tight tight shorts an' one shəyt wit' her nabel expose. From ha good 'e look vhen 'e ben' ober, ah could see how come Zeke na budge from 'e winda.

"Man, all ah need is ~~ten~~ təyty minutes, da's all," Zeke did say tuh hesef. He couldn' look 'way from he neighbor, den 'e jes' lose control an' holla out: "Look here! Ah would gi' muh soul tuh di Debbil, if ah could spen' one lil half hour wit' Ruby!"

Fo' he did finish talkin' good, BRIGGADUM-BRAM! — di floor in-a he house crack open by 'esef. Di nex' ting what happ'n, Zeke təyn he head an' see di odder room de full up wit' smoke, an' Satan se'f de right in-a di room. Zeke look at di Debbil an' aks 'im say: "A wha' you a do in-a dis place? Nobody na wan' you. I save; I's a good Christian man!"

Satan bəys' out laughin': "Stop jokin'. You jus' offuh tuh gi' me yuh soul if ah gi' you some time wit' Ruby." Zeke say: "Dat na go so. You de lie." Satan answer 'im say: "No, no, me never lie. You jes' aks fo' half hour wit' Ruby."

Erryting did clear as day now, an' Zeke ge' dead scared. He tell de Debbil say, "But me na serious; me de mek joke." Satan tell 'im say, "Well, me nebber does play, yuh unde'stan'? You done say what you say; dat a it. No time fo' talk."

Den Zeke sta't fo' cry. "Muh mudda grow me up in-a di church," 'e say. "How come ah ge' muhsef in-a dis problem?" Di Debbil laugh again. "Ah done ketch plenty o' yinna jus' like dis. Human-dem weak weak. Anyway, le's go — gi' me yuh soul."

Zeke back-back tuh di corner o' di room, a-watchin' Satan. Him see di Debbil tek one long cat o' nine tail whip outta one hole, but 'e mek outta plenty snake, 'stead o' rope. Zeke did dead scared, a-sweatin' an' a-shakin' vhen di Debbil did sta't comin' towa'd 'im wit' di whip. Zeke did give up right dere and den 'cause 'im know 'im na ga win! But 'e aks di Debbil say, "How I know say you ga keep yuh wəyd?"

Just vhen 'e did aks dat, one somebody knock tuh di do'. Satan smile and tell 'im say, "Go see who de dere." Vhen Zeke gone fo' check who de tuh di do', 'im see Ruby. She gi' him one sweet sweet smile an' say, "Hello, Mr. Zeke." Den 'e sta't a-win'in' up her body an' aks 'im say, "You could do sometin fo' muh? Come spend one lil half hour wit' me in-a muh place."

Jus' di gəyl did leave, Satan tell Zeke fo' lay down on di dining table fo' he t'ree lick. Den 'e tell 'im say, "Aftuh dat, I ga oon yuh soul an' you could go 'cross di way an' ge' wha' yuh wan' from Ruby."

Zeke did dead happy now. Him lay on di table and tell di Debbil say, "Mek haste an' whip me. En you hear di ooman aks me fo' come tuh her place so we could spen' half hour togedduh." Satan say, "Awright. But na holla out no holy neem vhen ah lick you, yuh hear? If yuh do dat, erryting ga stop an' go back tuh normal."

Zeke tell him say he did good wit' dat.

Satan gi' Zeke he fəys lash wit' di whip. 'E did feel tuh Zeke like all ~~de~~ di snake-dem did bite 'e boongie di seem time. He holla: "Muddasick!"

Satan gi' him one secon' lash. 'E did ha'd ha'd an' cause Zeke fo' stan' up straight an' holla: "Oh hell!"

Di təyd lash what 'e did get cause him fo' holla: "Jesus, Mary and Joseph!"

All o' sudden, Satan gone. Zeke stan' up an' look 'round an' 'e see di floor na broke nomo', an' all di smoke did gone. Almos' like di Debbil na bin dere in-a di fəys place. Ah mean, dat a di story what Zeke did tell me.

From den, Zeke bin one diffren' pəyson. Him na talk tuh nobody nomo', an' he does walk up and down in-a di road like jumby. Errybody scared o' him.

Is Ruby what did fəys notice 'e did change. 'E did tell her frien' how one day, when Ansel did away, 'e did sta't fo' lub Zeke an' aks him fo' come see her. (Ruby na know why, but, yuh see, she did lub 'im 'cause o' de Debbil fix.) Anyway, 'e tell her frien' say di meetin' did scary 'cause Zeke did so cold — like one jumby. Him na talk; him na do nuttin. From da' day, erryting finish an' done between Ruby an' Zeke.

Glossary

back-back — 'to back up'

ben' conwe'sation (to bend conversation) — 'to engage in conversation'

boongie — ‘buttocks’
 BRIGGADUM-BRAM — ‘suddenly; loud banging noise’ (ideophone)
 jumby — ‘ghost’
 Muddasick! — ‘an exclamation of surprise’
 plonks — ‘to sit determinedly, without moving’
 yinna — ‘second-person plural pronoun’

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TWI LINGUICISM: LINGUISTIC IMPERIALISM AMONG GHANAIA N LANGUAGES

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Abstract

This article explores linguistic imperialism or linguicism (Philipson, 2013) in the relationship between Twi (a dialect of Akan) and other Ghanaian languages. The study upon which the article is based was conducted among students of the University of Education, Winneba (UEW) in Ghana. Sixty students were purposefully selected and data was collected through the use of a questionnaire, recorded group interviews and observations. Results showed that Twi can be considered imperialistic in this context due to its high functional load. Secondly, Twi is imposed on UEW's public and social space through covert and overt means; a situation that automatically marginalizes other languages causing intense resentment and protests. The study also found that Twi imperialism was perpetrated by both native and non-native speakers. Based on these results, we conclude that while English imperialism is sustained through colonialism and formal education in Ghana, Twi imperialism is deployed through sheer numerical strength, economic activities, and imposition through social pressure.

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Key terms: Linguicism, linguistic imperialism, indigenous Ghanaian languages, Akan, public space, marginalization

Introduction

Ghana, like most African countries, has a diverse array of different languages, traditions and cultures. According to Anyidoho and Kropp Dakubu (2008), about fifty-five languages are spoken in Ghana, with the Akan cluster the biggest, being spoken by about 48.1% of the population (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012). Fanti, and especially Twi are the most widely spoken varieties of Akan. Twi is the language of the informal sector of trade and commerce. It is also used widely in the electronic media, especially for advertisements and news reporting. Knowledge of Twi is a necessity for social mobility, especially for those who cannot express themselves well in English, because it serves

as a lingua franca in Ghana alongside English. It is estimated that about 70% to 80% of the Ghanaian population speak some variety or varieties of Akan as second language(s) (Dako & Quarcoo, 2017). Many see competence in Twi as important and indeed a necessity, since many Ghanaians expect other Ghanaians to understand and speak it. For example, when one travels outside Ghana, everyone who identifies you as Ghanaian expects you speak Twi. Akan also seems to be the face of Ghana as tourists and first time travelers to Ghana are met with the Akan expression *Akwaaba* ('welcome,' all translations in this article are by the author, unless specified otherwise). Even foreigners who want to show off their Ghanaian language skills will ask of your welfare in Twi by saying *etse sen?* ('How are you?').

The present study: motivation and research questions

English has always been considered the de-facto imperial language, not only in Ghana but in many other parts of the world and most works on linguisticism deal with the relationship between English and other languages (Crystal, 1997; Cooke, 1988; Phillipson, 1992, Shealy, 2010). In fact, Phillipson (1992) defines linguisticism as the process whereby "the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages" (47). It is therefore relatively rare for a non-European language operating in the environment of a dominant European language like English to acquire such dominating status. Many articles on linguisticism in Kachru's (1985) outer and extended concentric circles of English use have focused on the relationship between English and indigenous languages in pedagogy (Adedun & Shodipe, 2011; Nyamjoh, 2012; Yonnis, 2012; Ljungdahl, 2004; etc.). The present study contributes to the less documented area of the imperialistic use of indigenous languages.

Quarcoo (2013) detected traces of linguisticism in the relationship between Twi and other indigenous Ghanaian languages when she found that some university students refused to join certain study groups where Twi was being used as the predominant language. The present study was designed to test that conclusion drawn from those previous findings, by testing whether Twi may be described as imperialistic in Ghana, and, if that descriptor fits, how this Twi linguisticism is manifested among students at UEW and how students there react to it. The study therefore seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Can Twi be described as an imperialistic language in Ghana?
2. How does Twi imperialism manifest itself at UEW?
3. How do UEW students react to this imposition of Twi?

Literature review and theoretical framework

Linguicism refers to "ideologies and structures where language is the means for effecting or maintaining an unequal allocation of power and resources" (Phillipson, 1992: 55). The ideology in question concerns a belief in the superiority of one language over others

and the justification for the domination of these languages in certain institutional contexts or in the communicative ecology of certain communities of practice. Nordquist (2017) states that Skutnabb-Kangas (1984) introduced the term “linguicism” to refer to discrimination against people based on the linguistic variety or varieties that they use. Gynther (2007) affirms that “fundamentally, linguicism is depriving people of power and influence due to their language” (221).

Agyekum (2012) defines linguistic imperialism as:

A linguistic situation where the indigenous people are gradually conscientised to shun their indigenous language and adopt foreign languages because of the benefit they expect to derive from them. They are made to believe that their languages cannot be used in any transaction in education, economics, science and technology but instead a foreign language is the best (87-88).

Agyekum’s observation describes the common situation whereby minority language speakers strive to acquire one or more dominant languages to enable themselves to participate in privileged spheres of discourse, a process that can result in language shift.

In Ghana, the dominance of English is very profound in education, the media, commerce, culture and, most importantly, politics. The dominance of English in Ghana has always had political backing as it is the official language of the country. Competence in English is an important indicator for social mobility, since lack of fluency in spoken English can curtail one’s career. In relation to a similar situation encountered elsewhere in West Africa, Adedun and Shodipe (2011) postulate that “The predominance of English in the Nigerian linguistic environment has remained a strong determinant of many national issues including education, language planning and language policy as well as the dynamics of culture and socialization across the country” (123).

While Adedun and Shodipe (2011) argue that in countries such as Nigeria and Ghana “no single ethnic group has the necessary political dominance to confer official status on its language” (122), Quarcoo (2014) is of the view that any African government can select one or more indigenous languages to serve as national languages by developing and promoting the those that are have the most speakers and/or are the most widely used, but “... no government has been bold enough to take that initiative” (15).

Ljungdahl (2004) links the spread of English to linguistic imperialism claiming that English marginalizes other languages because it serves as a gatekeeper to education, employment, business opportunities and popular culture (3). Quarcoo (2014) reaffirms this by observing that English in Ghana has become a yardstick used for granting access to education, even at the level of kindergarten. Yonnis (2012: 4) argues that English linguicism can be observed in:

the structural and cultural inequalities [that] ensure the continued allocation of more material resources to English than to other languages [and that] linguicism occurs ... if priority is given in teacher training, curriculum development, and school timetables to one language.

Considering the fact that Ghanaians have embraced English language and culture so enthusiastically, it can be concluded that in the Ghanaian context, English is the default agent of linguisticism. That said, the Twi dialect of Akan has also projected itself as a language to reckon with in Ghana's linguistic space. This projection is what has necessitated the present study.

Philipson (2013: 1) lists a set of characteristics that typify linguistic imperialism/ linguisticism, which will be used in the present study to examine the role of Twi in Ghana:

1. Linguistic imperialism interlocks with *a structure of imperialism* in culture, education, the media, communication, the economy, politics, and military activities.
2. It is about *exploitation*, injustice, inequality, and hierarchy that privileges those able to use the dominant language.
3. It is *ideological*: Beliefs, attitudes, and imagery glorify the dominant language, stigmatize others, and rationalize the linguistic hierarchy.
4. The dominance is *hegemonic*: It is internalized and naturalized as being 'normal.'
5. This entails *unequal rights* for speakers of different languages.
6. It is a form of *linguicism*, a favoring of one language over others in ways that parallel societal structuring through racism, sexism, and class: Linguicism serves to privilege users of the standard forms of the dominant language, which represent convertible linguistic capital.
7. Linguistic imperialism is invariably *contested and resisted*.

Methodology

The present study was conducted in February of 2019 at UEW. UEW is located in Winneba, one of the coastal towns in the south of Ghana where Efutu (sometimes considered to be a dialect of Guan) is the ancestral indigenous language, Fante is the second indigenous language, but Twi is fast taking over, in conformity with students' language choices. A purposeful sampling procedure was used to select 50 students from two undergraduate English classes (25 each) and 10 students from one (post) graduate class. All of the 60 students held diplomas and degrees in teacher education from various Colleges of Education. Gender balance was generally maintained, but at the (post) graduate level, however, the bias tilted towards women, with 7 females and 3 males in the sample.

The sampling procedure was designed to include speakers of as many languages from as many regions of the country as possible. Given the linguistic, cultural and historical background of Ghana as a nation, the study divided the country into three sections to assure balanced representation:

- 1) a southern section, including the Western North, Western, Central, Greater Accra and Volta regions, with a particular focus on the following major languages: Dangme, Efutu, Ewe, Fante (Akan), Ga, Nzema (Akan), and Wassa (Akan);
- 2) a middle section including the Eastern, Asante, Bono East, Brong Ahafo, Ahafo, and Oti regions, with a particular focus on the following major languages: Bono (Akan), Krakye, Larteh, Mo/Deg, Nchumuri, Nkonya, Siwu/Akpafu and Twi (Akan);
- 3) a northern section including the Savanna, Northern, North East, Upper East and Upper West regions, with a particular focus on the following major languages: Chokossi, Dagaare, Dagbani, Frafra, Gonja, Kassem, Kusaal, Sisaale and Talensi.

A survey questionnaire, observations, and audio recordings of group interviews were the main data collection tools. The interviews were in the form of both structured and informal conversations. A survey questionnaire including 10 items was first administered to all 60 students. Secondly, audio recordings were made of 5 group interviews, which were structured in part according to the responses obtained on the questionnaires. Observations were conducted and field notes were made simultaneously with the recordings. Portions of the interviews were selected, transcribed, coded and interpreted for the study. Pseudonyms were employed in all cases in order to protect participants' identities without making them appear faceless.

Results, analysis and discussion

Dako and Quarcoo (2017: 26) found that “Twi seem[s] to be the language commonly used in most offices in the Accra-Tema metropolis” and seems to predominate in many sectors of social, economic and educational life in Ghana. Even in institutions of higher learning, Twi dominates both informal and formal public spaces, as observed at UEW by Orfson-Offei (2015) and Quarcoo and Abrafi Adjei (forthcoming). Orfson-Offei (2015) asserts that participants in her study from the Upper West region of Ghana complained that “sometimes even during lectures you find out that somebody will teach to a point and use ... [Twi] which most of us also don't understand” (231). Quarcoo (2014) records one professor of the department of English at the University of Ghana lamenting that “it is only in Ghana that you hear people speaking Twi in the English department of a university”. (16). Based on this observation, it can be argued that language inequality exists among the indigenous languages and some languages are denied rights in out-group contexts at UEW. Indeed, many of the 24 languages that were considered in the present study appeared to assume subordinate positions in students' interactions.

Ranking the importance of indigenous Ghanaian languages

A study by Quarcoo and Abrafi Adjei (forthcoming) on students' attitude towards Ghanaian languages found that Ghanaian languages dominate oral discourse in many informal domains and that some of these languages, such as Twi, are more widespread and

occupy more public space than others. It was also observed that in fact, Twi seems to be the primary medium of communication and competence in Twi appears to be assumed in most informal interactions. This includes the use of Twi content in the purchasing of goods and services, especially between students and the inhabitants of the local communities that host the universities where they are studying. The study also found that attitude affects students' perception of how indigenous Ghanaian languages relate to one another, and that students could rate the use of each language in social and public space.

In the questionnaires used in the present study, students were asked to rate each of the 24 indigenous Ghanaian languages selected for consideration. Students ranked the 24 languages in terms of their general perceptions about each language and the significance that each language had in their daily activities using a Likert scale with 1 being 'most important' and 5 'least important.' Using SPSS software to tabulate their responses, the following results were obtained: 20 students (some 33%) consistently ranked Twi as the most important of the 24 languages, followed by Fante with 9 (15%), Ewe with 7 (some 12%), Ga with 6 (10%), Dagbani with 4 (some 7%), Dagaare with 3 (5%), Frafra with 3 (5%), Dangme with 2 (some 3%), and Bono, Gonja, Kassem, Krakye and Nzema with 1 each (some 2%). The other 11 languages were not ranked as most important by any of the respondents. It is interesting to note that the five Akan dialects in the list Twi, Fante, Bono, Wassa and Nzema together accounted for 31 or some 52% of the 'most important' responses.

Eleven of the languages rated by the students have some degree of government backing and are studied at UEW. These include Twi, Fante, Ewe, Ga, Dagbani, Dagaare, Dangme, Gonja, Nzema, Sisaale and Kusaal. While some of these languages were rated as most important by the students, others were rated at the bottom of the scale, indicating that government recognition does not always translate into increased rates of use or higher prestige. In the interview sessions, some students said that some of the 24 languages, such as Siwu/Akpafu, Mo/Deg and Chokossi, were unknown to them and that they were not sure whether they were Ghanaian languages. Two students said they assumed Talensi to be a town.

Though five of the northern languages were ranked as important to some degree, they generally fell far below those in the south in the rankings. Orfson-Offei (2015) found that non-northerners are unwilling to learn northern languages for a number of reasons. Historically, people from the northern part of Ghana who migrated to the south were employed in the most menial jobs, due to colonial policies that deprived people from the northern territories from acquiring formal education (Orfson-Offei, 2015). This has influenced southerners' attitude towards them and by extension, their languages. So, while speakers may embrace Akan, at least for instrumental reasons, northern languages may be shunned for integrational reasons (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Students from the north claim as well that there are so many northern languages, that no particular one has a

preponderant number of speakers, in contrast to languages like Twi in the middle and southern parts of the country, and increasingly in the north itself. In fact, nine of the students who had lived their entire lives in the north said that they had acquired Twi there before entering UEW.

Research question 1: Can Twi be described as an imperialistic language in Ghana?

Considering Philipson's (2013: 1) framework of linguisticism outlined above, Twi does indeed coincide with dominance in culture, education, media, communication, economics, and politics in Ghana, given that all of these spheres are saturated with Twi form and content. Akan speakers (including speakers of Twi) do not only constitute the largest language community in Ghana, but they also dominate most economic activities in the country, including trading, manufacturing, transport, etc. and are therefore very often positioned as the employers of speakers of other languages. Orfson-Offei (forthcoming) identified Akan (in this case, used synonymously with Twi) as the main language at the Kaneshie market complex in Accra. She found that participants of her market survey claimed, "the ability to speak Akan [Twi] means getting more customers and therefore more money."

In the present study, the northern students also claimed that Twi dominates the Wa and Tamale markets in the north itself, because these markets are found in urban communities that are home to different ethnic groups, and using Twi facilitates business transactions among their diverse populations. Moreover, most traders in Tamale and Wa purchase their merchandise from Techiman, Kumasi and Accra and therefore need Twi to do business at those locations. Another student stated that Twi is the main language of communication at the Ho government hospital in the Volta Region because most health workers (who may not necessarily be Akans) cannot speak the local ancestral language Ewe.

Quarcoo and Abrafi Adjei (forthcoming) also found that there is a plurality of Akan-medium radio stations in urban areas of Ghana, and most commercials and government information spots and are disseminated using Akan. Twi also dominates Ghana's political landscape. For example, even though the Vice-presidential candidate of the New Patriotic Party and the presidential candidate of the opposition National Democratic Congress (the two main political parties in the country) in the 2020 elections were both northerners, they conducted their campaigns in Twi in all non-Akan communities, except their own home communities. This confirms Adegbija's (2001) claim that "the more powerful functionally the dominant language, the more pressing its attraction and pull and the greater the tendency to shift towards it given the fact that pressure for social vertical mobility is virtually irresistible" (286).

In the area of education, Agyekum (2012) states that in Ghana, the language policy of education favours some languages over others and claims that pupils of different indigenous languages who live in the Asante Region are compelled "to use, study and pass ... Asante Twi for their Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) [and

elsewhere] the Twi language dominates and most children from the three northern territories are forced to study Twi” (91). Akan dominance therefore seems to transcend regional boundaries (Pandharipandhe, 2002).

Research question 2: How does Twi imperialism manifest itself at UEW?

Almost all the participants in the present study reported that they could speak Twi to some degree, with some of them complaining about its dominance on campus, while others made comments such as ‘How can one claim to be Ghanaian and not speak Twi?’ In her study, Orfson-Offei (2015: 231) found that at UEW, “the decision not to speak, learn or admit to understand Twi comes with [...] consequences” because speaking Twi has been internalized and naturalized as the norm, while other Ghanaian languages are considered unimportant for any social interaction except for in-group interactions among their native speakers. One student in her sample claimed that he felt discriminated against and disadvantaged for not being able to speak Twi. In the same study, Orfson-Offei also found that northerners felt pressured into learning Twi, with “the southern students, comprising both Akan and non-Akan speakers put[ting] pressure on them to speak Twi” (230). Returning to Phillipson’s criteria (2013:1) ideological factors seem to be at work here, where Twi is glorified and the other languages are stigmatized, resulting in the creation of linguistic hierarchies that are enforced through such pressure. In the present study, when asked why Twi scored the highest in their rankings, some students were of the opinion that it should have scored more than 33% and accused those who ranked it less than other languages of being ‘ethnocentric.’ They all agreed that Twi has more speakers and it is used more for daily interactions than any other language. Some students commented that one is less likely to be cheated by merchants if Twi is used for informal transactions. Some were also of the opinion that Twi speakers see their language as superior and impose it on others. Others also accused Twi speakers of bullying other languages into submission, as shown in Extract 1 below from the group interviews. In this and the other excerpts that follow from the present study as well as from my 2013 study, I use an orthographic transcription, with passages in English without italics; passages in other languages (Twi, Ga and Ewe) in italics; while double slashes (//) are used for overlapping speech; and a series of three or four full stops are used to symbolise a pause:

Extract 1:

Nii:	They are many. Everywhere you go, they are there.
Adjele:	The truth is Doc [short for ‘Doctor,’ used by students to address the present researcher], Twi is used everywhere; in fact, in Accra for example, even in //erm, erm Okaishie, Makola and //Kantamanto [markets in Accra],
Oko:	//herrr, As for there //die
Adjele:	//It’s Twi they speak otherwise they will say <i>m’enti m’enti</i> and cheat you.
Lareba:	The same in Wa too <i>o</i> [emphasis/solidarity]. These people carry their language everywhere and expect you to learn it by //force.

- Efo: //You can't do any informal transactions in any other language beside Twi if it involves people outside your ethnic group. Like in in Ho hospital like this, Twi is spoken more than Ewe because most of the doctors and nurses can't speak Ewe.
- Oduro: Don't mind them they think their language is superior so //they --.
- Naawu: //they even speak it in class; //can you imagine?
- Emefa: //and can even give examples in Twi but one dares not give examples in other languages.
- Nii: If you dare *hmm* [expression of serious consequences]!
- Lareba: They will travel to your town and expect you to rather learn their language instead of them learning yours ... Can this happen in Kumasi or madam, your place? They just bully us with their language.
- Kwame: Is, is, is not like that *o* [emphasis/solidarity]; it's because everyone understands it and it's easy to learn it.
- Adongo: Easy, you say easy? Every language is easy. Doc, the most annoying koraa is when they ask why you can't speak Twi if you're Ghanaian. Is Twi the only language in Ghana? They just push their language down your throat.
- Ananne: Eish! Down your throat *paa. asem* oh!

The extract confirms Orfson-Offei's findings and also seems to suggest that Twi, as do other imperialistic languages "rob people and their languages of their individual and cultural integrity, devaluing and distorting their differences" (Branson & Miller, 2006: 117). In the case of this extract, overt imposition is identified as one of the mechanisms used to do so. This imposition automatically marginalises other languages leading to intense resentment that sometimes produced heated expressions of protest in the interviews. This support the assertion that the dominance of Twi is a form of linguicism. Language marginalisation was observed in the group interviews. Marginalisation in this context is the direct or indirect means by which one linguistic group (e.g., language community A) forces members of another (language community B) to submit to the dominance of its language (language A). During the interviews, English, Twi and Twi/English codeswitching dominated all the discussions while other languages were notably absent. The use of any other language resulted in sharp criticism; with those doing so often being accused of ethnocentrism. For example, in Extract 2 from the present study below, Adzo and Emefa (Ewe) were accused of planning a 'coup' because they spoke Ewe withing the hearing range of others:

Extract 2:

- Adzo: *edu ɲɔnu xoxoa?* [Ewe: Have you already had lunch?]
- Emefa: *awo, elabe, wobe* Doc *vaɔo*, *esime mebe madzo* [Ewe: No, because they said Doc had arrived when I was about to go]
- Asibi: Ei! What are you people discussing?
- Emefa: What's your prob/--?
- Oko: //But we're we're in a special section with Doc
- Ama: We want to know what you said. You people dez you know, we don't understand but//
-

- Nsia: //don't mind them they are pla-a-anning a coup [a notorious coup planner in Ghanaian history happened to be an Ewe speaker]
 All: [laughter]

Of interest is the fact that most of those who reprimanded Azo and Emefa for speaking Ewe during the section are non-Akans. Students therefore feel intimidated when they use their ethnic languages in out-group interactions, effectively limiting them mostly to asides. A complaint by a female UEW student from the north of Ghana in my 2013 study captures how other languages are marginalized in relation to Twi: "Aow adam, that's how they are o (.) As for them they speak their language but when yo- when you speak yours then they complain that they don't understand, they don't understand (.) They don't want us to speak our language." (Quarcoo, 2013: 110). Orfson-Offei (2015) recorded a similar complaint from a student at the same university: "Well, most people just like em, the other person just mentioned feel that erm everybody should speak especially Twi" (230).

Research question 3: How do UEW students react to this imposition of Twi?

Non-Akan students, especially northerners and Ewe speakers, have adopted various strategies to protest this kind of linguisticism on campus. Overt protests can be observed in Extract 3 below, taken from an interview which I conducted in 2013:

Extract 3:

- Kwame: We are being taught in English even erm the contribution in class is done with the English language In our group studies for instance, is the English language that is being used; it's only when maybe there is erm for clarification sake we tend to code switch aha and the-- even there then people even started complaining because we have the Voltarians [Ewe speakers] around ... We have the Akans and the -- when we tend to use the Akan *ebinom* [some] -- people erm felt erm hurt so they started complaining that we can't use erm Akan when they don't understand meanwhile they erm
 //
- Interviewer://They do understand
- Kwame: //That's the reason why I said some pretend that they don't understand //but they do
- Yaw: //They do understand
- Interviewer://The Akan?
- Kwame: //Yes
- Kofi: //They speak it
- Yaw: And they even speak in proverbiahs [proverbs] (Laughter)
- Interviewer:They what they understand but they don't want to use it because//-
- Kojo: //That's not their native language They think it's dominating their language //so they don't -
- Kwame: //Ahaa so they don't want it
- Interviewer:They they are not using it not because they don't understand but because they //think -
- Kofi: //This especially this my sister like this she pretends not to understand she had //(unclear)

- Oduro: //But she does
 Nii: She cannot speak very //well but they understand. Sister Aku *dee* (unclear)
 Osei: //Aha like Aseye herself like this Aseye can speak in proverbiaIs but yet when you speak the Akan she will be annoyed
 Interviewer: So is it a protest against Akan or – (Quarcoo, 2013: 111)

Aseye's open annoyance and other students' refusal to speak Akan, even though they understand it, are one way of registering their protest. Students have come into an educational community and expect English, which is considered to be an ethnically 'neutral' language in the Ghanaian context, to be the main language on campus, but are surprised that a Ghanaian language dominates instead. Students are compelled to use Twi, which they see as an affront to the dignity of their own languages and are resentful because they are intimidated into not using other indigenous Ghanaian languages. This situation is not peculiar to UEW or to Ghana alone. Swigart (1992: 83) describes a similar conundrum in Senegal where non-Wolofs, like the Diolas and Peuls, exhibit their resentment towards the Wolof language, and express their frustration because it seems impossible to reverse the situation. For instance, as shown in Extract 4 below, when students were asked in my 2013 study which language follows English in order of importance, and virtually all present responded 'Akan', Nii protested that he could not allow his language to take second place to another.

Extract 4:

- Interviewer: And so next to English no what is the next important language?
 Unison: Akan
 Interviewer: Akan?
 Nii: Yea it is; it is; me it is individual base *o* [emphasis/solidarity] // *me na menfa me language nkɔye* second? [Yea, it is individually based, why should my language play second fiddle?]
 Unison: //ooooh (Quarcoo, 2013: 239)

It is particularly telling that Nii made his protest using Twi/English codeswitching instead of using his native Ga language. In their protests, some find subtle ways to retaliate. Retaliation can take various forms, including making someone indirectly feel bad for speaking Akan. For instance, in extract 5 below from the present study, Aseye is annoyed at Serwa's question posed in Akan to Asibi. Though speakers Asibi and others respond to Serwa's question, they are all able to interpret Aseye's comment as expressing annoyance. In this situation, Aseye subtly succeeds in making Serwa and the others indirectly feel bad for using Twi:

Extract 5:

- Serwa: *Asibi ayi na wooka no, ewɔ page sen?* [Twi: Asibi, on which page can I find what you are talking about?]
 Aseye: *ɛhe* [affirmation] yes so when you are summarising, you quantify it

Asibi: //Evaluation page twenty- one
 Serwa: //Assessment and?
 Asibi: //The bible page twenty-one
 Yaaba: Page twenty-one
 Aseye: It's okay //this not the-
 Asibi: //She wants to
 Serwa: No, I was saying that I don't have that quantifying in my notes

Aseye is someone who always selects English and refuses to speak Twi, even though she speaks it fluently. When others make their contribution in Twi, she refuses to converge. Orfson-Offei (2015) observed that northerners at UEW deliberately maintain their language in the face of opposition as a form of defiance and this form of divergence can be considered another form of protest.

As members of the university community, students must construct that membership in part by engaging with prevailing linguistic practices on campus. The language policy in UEW insists on the use of English, as is the case for all universities in Ghana. This policy, however, seems to be confined to formal interactions like lectures, seminars, institutional meetings, etc. It has been observed that outside of these formal interactions, students are no longer restricted to English and move to the Ghanaian languages which constitute the socially accepted languages of interaction in informal situations. The move from the formal domain to the informal domain is indexed by a change in code. The present study reconfirms Orfson-Offei's (2015) conclusion that the use of Twi is interpreted as movement along an out-group trajectory in such interactions, while the use of any other indigenous Ghanaian language is interpreted as movement along an in-group trajectory and attracts accusations of 'ethnocentrism.'

Though students sometimes express the view that all indigenous Ghanaian languages, including Twi, are relatively unimportant, our observations indicate otherwise. Twi is highly valued alongside and together with English, and competence in Twi for many students is one of the sociolinguistic criteria for full membership in the UEW community. At UEW, speaking Twi is part of the university's identity and the use of any other Ghanaian language in out-group interactions is done purposefully to either exclude or to annoy those who do not understand that language. Orfson-Offei (2015) found that students of the Upper West Region of Ghana refuse to speak Twi to maintain their loyalty to, and pride in their languages.

Since the students are products of Ghanaian society, it can be argued that students' attitudes towards Ghanaian languages are a reflection of how the general populace views various languages. While some languages are expected to be used in public discourse, others are prohibited, and this exclusion is often justified by the claim that their use inhibits comprehension. As a result, interviews, dramas, discussions and advertisements done in any other Ghanaian language in the media apart from Twi are translated into

Twi and English. This is because Ghanaian languages operate in a diglossic relationship where English and Twi are ranked as High and the others are ranked as Low.

As a direct legacy of colonialism, English automatically assumes the rank of a High language, while, as a more indirect legacy of colonialism and the construction of a nation-state, Twi is also ranked as High because it is seen as “promot[ing] a unifying model for speech behaviour that crosscuts clan and class division” (Kroskrity, 1998: 333), and so Twi is also allowed into public space. Though languages ranked as Low are largely excluded from public space, students nevertheless associate with their individual ancestral languages because they “can serve as the symbolic and communicative vehicles for their indexically associated social identities” (Kroskrity, 1998: 333). As do other Ghanaians, students select the languages that are appropriate for any particular interaction, bearing in mind the “existence of linguistic hierarchies, together with knowledge about the social values attached to the different codes” (Mæhlum, 2010: 21). During the group interviews conducted as part of the present study, while Twi was blamed for preventing other languages from being used in out-group interactions, it was observed that members of some non-Akan ethnic groups vehemently protested the use of languages other than English and Twi in such interactions with the excuse that they might not understand what was being said. Orfson-Offei (forthcoming) reported that non-Ga speakers (not necessarily Akan speakers) reacted negatively to the use of Ga in the market because they did not understand the language and felt that they were “being insulted.”

Yet non-Akans do not normally have any issues with Twi being used in the market. This has created a situation where Twi speakers seem to be unsympathetic and feel that Twi has a right to be used in public spaces, under the erroneous assumption that everybody can understand and speak it. The use of Twi as the main indigenous lingua franca poses a threat to many other indigenous Ghanaian languages. Orfson-Offei (forthcoming) has argued that although many languages (both local and foreign) are used in Accra, the native land of the Ga people and the capital of Ghana, the greatest threat to the Ga language is Twi.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to corroborate previous findings regarding a relationship of linguistic imperialism or linguisticism between Twi and other indigenous Ghanaian languages. Considering the evidence gathered in the present study in relation to Phillipson’s (2013: 1) criteria for linguisticism, a very convincing argument can indeed be made that such a relationship does exist between Twi and other indigenous Ghanaian languages. Twi dominates in most informal out-group interactions at the university. The fact that students use the term ‘Twi’ synonymously with ‘Akan’ demonstrates how the other varieties of Akan have been eclipsed by Twi in the public domain. But it is not only the non-Twi varieties of Akan that have suffered at the hands of Twi. Our evidence

shows that all indigenous Ghanaian languages, including those with the greatest number of speakers (such as Ewe and Ga) are prevented from being used in public spaces, resulting in resentment and protest against the dominance of Twi. While the English linguicism is perpetuated through colonialism/ neo-colonialism and formal education in Ghana, Twi linguicism is imposed through relative numerical strength, dominance in the economic sector, bias in the media and considerable social pressure. Against this backdrop, many students at UEW consider Twi to be an imperialistic language. Since UEW, like all university communities in Ghana, has a fair representation of all indigenous Ghanaian languages, it can be considered a microcosm of the country, so the language situation at the university can be considered a reflection on the situation in the country in general. Therefore it is not unreasonable to conclude that, in the daily lives of most Ghanaians, asymmetries in power among languages is felt most acutely, not between English and indigenous Ghanaian languages, but instead between Twi, an indigenous Ghanaian language, and the other indigenous languages of the country.

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RECONCEPTUALIZING THE EMERGENCE OF ENGLISH LEXIFIER CREOLES IN THE CARIBBEAN: A SHORT NOTE

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Abstract:

In this short note, I use the work of several creolists, to help begin the process of reconceptualizing the emergence of Afro-Atlantic English lexifier creole languages in the Caribbean, especially in the light of recent studies carried out by Delgado (2021) and Hancock (2021) which allow us to view important earlier work, such as that of Holm (1986) in new ways.

Key Terms: creolistics, Afro-Atlantic Creoles, Caribbean migration, Caribbean history

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Delgado (2021) notes that even before the arrival of European colonial powers, sea routes connecting the Caribbean with Central America, South America, and probably also North America had been established by the Indigenous population for millennia. Migration was “a multi-directional and ancient phenomenon that had prevailed in an interconnected region from long before the arrival of Columbus” (81), something which would become of great benefit to the colonial settlement enterprises, the privateering business, and the renegade communities during and after the first colonial encounters. Linguistic, cultural, and ethnic contact were in many cases the norm rather than the exception, as exhibited by the pluri-linguistic Arawakan-Cariban populations of the Antilles, who spoke several languages among themselves and sustained a rich, complex system of trade and migration between the islands and the Caribbean coasts of Central and South America (Viada Bellido de Luna & Faraclas, 2012). Few creolists have acknowledged the important role that indigenous peoples must have played in the emergence of Afro-Atlantic Creoles, the Afro-Atlantic English lexifier Creoles (AAELCs) included. There now appears to be a critical mass of scholarly work that demands a more serious and systematic look at Indigenous inputs into AAELCs.

Hancock (2021) reminds us that Afro-English varieties emerged early in the colonial period on West Africa's shores, as contact between West Africans and English traders and privateers became more and more common. He also notes that by 1588, the British turned their attention to the Upper Guinea coast, where British merchants established themselves by the early 1600s. The British commanded a fort and a factory on Tasso Island in modern Sierra Leone, performed regular visits to its coast, and even settled permanently there to establish creole families themselves. Hancock (2021) mentions that Mervyn Alleyne (1971) provided evidence to support the development of varieties of AAELC on the coast of Sierra Leone, even before the arrival of repatriated Caribbean Maroons there in the late 19th century (Hancock, 2021: 153). No doubt some of the enslaved Africans bought and sold in the Caribbean colonies brought some of these early varieties of AAELC with them. Certainly, this factor cannot be ignored in any scenario for the emergence of English lexifier Creole varieties in the Caribbean and deserves more attention on the part of creolists.

LeCompte Zambrana et al. (2012) report that in St. Croix in 1767, a survey conducted by Oldendorp identified over 50 African ethnolinguistic groups and over 20 African languages still spoken on the island, most belonging to the Benue-Kwa branch of the Niger-Congo family, and other branches of Niger-Congo (40). A new appreciation and assessment of African influences in AAELCs is overdue, given the persistence of these ancestral African languages for so many centuries in the Caribbean alongside the creolized and pidginized varieties of African and European languages (such as the Afro-English varieties which emerged under contact between the English and West Africans on the coast of Sierra Leone) that the enslaved also brought with them to the Americas. Delgado (2021) demonstrates how, from the 16th century onward, the English relocated thousands of criminalized and dispossessed peoples from the British Isles to the Americas. She also argues that, even though English had limited success establishing colonies in the Americas during the 16th and 17th centuries due to fierce Indigenous resistance and the Iberian colonial domination, during those same centuries, "English, Scots, Irish and Welsh renegades resorted to raiding the Caribbean coastline, where they established privateering and logging bases on the fringes of colonial society" (82). In their initial roles as raiders and contraband traders, Scots, Irish, Welsh and English voyagers accumulated knowledge of settlement patterns and sea routes in the western Caribbean, which brought them into linguistic contact with Indigenous peoples and marooned peoples of African descent living along the Caribbean coast of Central America who had successfully resisted Spanish colonization since the early 1500s. Delgado (2021) notes that Providence Island (now Providencia) and neighboring St. Andrews (now San Andrés) were settled by the British in 1631. These islands were initially populated by Irish, Scottish, Welsh and English slaves and servants from Bermuda and Barbados, in addition to mostly marginalized people who came directly from the British Isles and enslaved Africans (p. 94). Although their stated intentions were trade with (and conversion

of) the Indigenous Miskito, and the farming of crops like cotton and tobacco, given the marginalized nature of the great majority of their population, these islands soon became bases for piracy. In retaliation, the Spanish destroyed these settlements in 1641, and their inhabitants were expelled, many becoming maroons, renegades and logwood cutters on the Miskito coast of Central America, many of whom played a central role in the establishment of other more permanent English colonies in the region, along with the cultural and linguistic practices of the communities that would come to inhabit those colonies.

Delgado (2021) suggests that the development of AAELCs must also have been impacted by the multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic communities aboard English seafaring vessels. Documents from the 18th century indicate that sea captains could enlist as many African descended slaves or freemen as they desired, and a survey of the Royal Navy in 1743 reads that “at least half of the crews on ships moored in Kingston Harbour were black—and that on the sloop *Royal Ranger*, there was only one white man” (Jarvis, 2010, cited in Hancock, 2021: 146). The multiethnic Afro-Indigenous communities of cohabitation along the Miskito Coast aided the British privateers in raiding Spanish ships and settlements throughout the 16th and 17th centuries: “for three centuries, beginning in the early 1500’s, there were maroons who fought alongside pirates in their naval battles, guided them in their raids on major cities, and participated with them in widespread, illicit international trade” (Price, 1996, cited in Delgado, 2021: 98). Delgado (2021) further suggests that the establishment of English control over Jamaica in the mid-1600s would not have been possible without significant assistance from the Buccaneers and other English, Scottish, Irish and Welsh renegades. The undeniable role that this nexus of cohabitation among renegades of European descent peoples, maroons and other peoples of African descent, and peoples of Indigenous descent played in the emergence of the AAELCs is also crying out for more attention from academics.

Even after the establishment of permanent colonies by the English in the Caribbean, maroons, renegades, pirates, sailors, people of African descent, people of Indigenous descent, women, and other marginalized peoples continued to play a central role in shaping Caribbean social, cultural and linguistic repertoires and practices (Faraclas, 2012). Several of the Leeward islands became the first British colonial possessions in the Caribbean from 1624 onward (Holm, 1986: 6) but only through a series of complicated and fragile alliances among the English, the French and Indigenous peoples. Shortly thereafter in 1627, the British settled in Barbados, a major dispersal point for the diffusion of AAELCs in the Caribbean. Holm (1986) notes that in Barbados “During the first twenty years of settlement, most of the labor for growing tobacco was provided by indentured servants from Britain and Ireland” (6) who worked the plantations alongside people of indigenous and African descent. Holm reports that Barbados became an easy dumping ground for the marginalized peoples of the British Isles, including criminals, prostitutes, prisoners of the recent English Civil war, Irish rebels, and Romani.

With the more labor-intensive production of sugar, African slave labor replaced indentured labor after the 1640s, and the marginalized European descended population of indentured servants was largely shipped off to other colonies, such as Jamaica, and Carolina. Holm (1986) also states that after the abolition of slavery in 1834, Barbados then became an exporter of labor to the French-lexifier Creole-speaking Windward Islands, Trinidad, and Dutch-lexifier Creole-speaking British Guiana (15). So, the cohabitation of marginalized peoples of European, African and Indigenous descent on Barbados would have had a major regional impact not just on AAELCs, but on all of the ALCs of the Caribbean, and not just during the 17th century, but all the way into the 19th century.

Holm (1986) reports that Suriname became an English colony in 1651, when the British governor of Barbados sent 100 'men' to found a colony on the Guiana coast (7). Who, exactly, were these 'men' and to what extent did they represent the same marginalized peoples who already constituted the preponderant majority of European descended peoples in Barbados in particular and in the Caribbean in general? In any case they were soon joined by other marginalized peoples such as the Sephardim fleeing from Brazil and great numbers of enslaved peoples of African descent. But, with the handover of Suriname to the Dutch in 1667, these populations became even more marginalized as refugees and soon joined the Buccaneers and other marginalized peoples to constitute the majority of the founding populations of English Jamaica.

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As mentioned above, the initial English conquest, settlement and financing of Jamaica from 1655 onward would have been utterly impossible without the Buccaneers and other renegades who had been circulating in the Western Caribbean for almost a century. Holm (1986) notes that thereafter, the predominantly marginalized people of European descent and enslaved Africans from Suriname described above were joined by appreciable numbers of equally marginalized peoples of European descent and even more enslaved Africans from the British Leewards and Barbados (9), and by 1734, 92% of the total population in Jamaica were enslaved people of African descent (Reinecke, 1972, cited in Holm, 1986: 9). Just as elsewhere in the Caribbean, the enormous impact of marginalized peoples of European, African and Indigenous descent on English colonization, society, culture and language in Jamaica, the crown jewel of the English Empire and the bankroller of the Industrial Revolution in Britain itself, can no longer be ignored by creolists.

The Windward Islands were fiercely defended by their Indigenous inhabitants against European encroachment from the late 1400s onward, and they succeeded in defending them until the mid 1700s, when the British and the French began to claim and settle them with marginalized peoples of European descent and enslaved peoples of African descent. In 1797, the last bastion of Indigenous resistance on St. Vincent was taken by the British in alliance with one faction of the Indigenous peoples of the island (Holm, 1986: 12). Thereafter, in the runup and the wake of the Napoleonic Wars, the British

captured many of them from the French, settling them with even more marginalized peoples of European descent and enslaved peoples of African descent. The Windward are therefore no exception when we consider the importance of the influences of marginalized peoples of European, African and Indigenous descent on AAELCs.

In this short note, I argue for a re-imagining of the Caribbean as a vastly interconnected network of different cultures, ethnicities, and languages, all of which have been indelibly and profoundly marked and shaped by centuries of renegade, maroon and other forms of cohabitation by marginalized peoples of African, European and Indigenous descent. Sadly, just as these peoples and their resistive agency have been systematically written out of history books about the Caribbean, they and their linguistic practices have all too often been written out of creolists' accounts of the emergence of the AAELCs of the Caribbean.

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**DISTANCINGS, ENTANGLEMENTS,
INTERSECTIONALITIES AND LITERATURES
IN THE CARIBBEAN**

COMBAT-TEXTS: AMÍLCAR CABRAL'S *UNITY AND STRUGGLE* AND WALTER RODNEY'S *THE GROUNDINGS WITH MY BROTHERS*

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Abstract

Walter Rodney was influenced by the polemical writings of Amílcar Cabral who helped bring about the emancipation of Portugal's African colonies. Cabral believed that any struggle for freedom in Africa must include a unilateral declaration of culture. Resisting C.L.R. James' idea that the continent was a political lost cause and learning from the practical liberation theories of Cabral, Rodney insisted on a knowledge of African achievements to boost cultural confidence that had been erased by the British in the Caribbean. Rodney's (1969) *The groundings with my brothers* echoes the pragmatics of Cabral's (1979) *Unity and struggle* and encourages liberation from colonialism by primarily emphasizing the roots and inherited cultures that the Caribbean shares with Africa. This article suggests a kinship between the revolutionary writings of Cabral and Rodney's radical thought.

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Key terms: Africa, Caribbean, culture, revolution, combat-text

Amílcar Cabral, the liberation theorist behind the emancipation of Angola, Guinéa-Bissau, and Mozambique from the Portuguese in the 1970s, influenced the radical writings of Walter Rodney, in particular the belief that any struggle for freedom in Africa must include unilateral declarations of culture by those nations under the European boot. Cabral, an agronomist, insisted on the study of the realities of people and place. In *Unity and struggle* (1979), a compilation of speeches and writings from the 1950s to his assassination in 1973, Cabral details specifically the *actualities* of Guinéa-Bissau: agricultural practice, the production, consumption, and exportation of produce, as well as systemic racism and cultural and linguistic disparagement by the Portuguese settlers

(Cabral, 1979: *passim* 4-26). It is impossible, Cabral wrote, "to establish effective armed struggle such as we have to establish in our land, unless we really know our reality, and unless we really start out from that reality to wage the struggle" (Cabral, 1979: 44). By understanding the land and its inhabitants, Cabral prosecuted a military campaign that stressed agronomic, cultural, and social realities with the goal of eventually liberating the colonized territories from the servitude, inferiority, and misery imposed by foreign rule. By proposing a re-Africanization of the African mind, Cabral called for "a cultural reconversion" (1979:146) of the various Africas and their cultures to resist further belittlement by the Europeans.

Understanding that culture is "simultaneously the fruit of a people's history and a determinant of history", Cabral, "nourished by the living reality of the environment", put forward the theory that "if imperialist domination has the vital need to practice cultural oppression," then "national liberation is necessarily an *act of culture*" (Cabral, 1979: 146, 143, 203). Reacting to the Portuguese dictator Antonio Salazar's remark that "Africa does not exist" (Cabral, 1979: 239), Cabral exhorted his rebel forces to silence forever Lisbon's dialectic of suppression. "Our struggle, our resistance," Cabral wrote, must be:

waged on all levels of the life of our people. We must destroy everything the enemy can use to continue their domination over our people, but at the same time we must be able to construct everything that is needed to create a new life in our land. (Cabral, 1979: 45)

Walter Rodney believed that history orders knowledge in such a way that it becomes an active part of a mass consciousness dedicated to political and social change. Rodney was a radical Marxist historian who was assassinated by agents of the Guyanese state in 1980. He believed passionately that freedom from foreign occupation involved cultural defiance. In the same way that Franz Fanon's *The wretched of the earth* declared war on "the rot and gangrene eating into the heart of colonial domination" (Fanon, 2004: 81), Rodney inveighed against those who had chained Africa and the Caribbean to the stocks of racism, underdevelopment, cultural irrelevance, and poverty, and warned that "White power used black people to make whites stronger and richer and to make blacks relatively, and sometimes absolutely, weaker and poorer" (Rodney, 1969: 62).

If Cabral's (1979) *Unity and struggle* offers practical instruction in national and cultural belongingness, then Rodney's (1969) *The groundings with my brothers* acts as a combat-text for the down-trodden and marginalized and is testament to his ability to *ground* politically with *all* people whether they are from Cabo Verde or Guyana. Meeting with those who lived in poverty in the shanty towns and slums, Rodney shared his travel experiences and political reading and attained a concrete analysis in support of his engagement with the oppressed and forgotten. In Fanon's words, it was an absolute of Rodney's thought that the Caribbean make "a new start, develop a new way of thinking,

and endeavor to create a new man” (Fanon, 2004: 239). Although influenced by the ideology of the Marxist historian C.L.R. James, Rodney was skeptical of his mentor's view of the African continent as a lost cause and beyond the boundary of history. While it is true that some in the Caribbean diaspora have regarded Africa in Romantic terms by imagining a surrogate homeland ready to be re-mothered by the Rastafari and other would-be Ethiopians who would restore Abyssinia, for example, to its former glory, Rodney believed that writing about Africa from the outside without paying any attention to the realities of the continent was misguided.

While James remained a philosophical role-model, Rodney was part of a faction of young West Indians studying in London in the 1960s who were intellectually inspired by liberation movements in various parts of Africa. Embracing a combination of nationalism, internationalism, and Marxist-Leninist thought which not only involved issues of class but also race, gender, sexuality, culture, and identity, Rodney drew on the practicalities embedded in Cabral's theories to explain why Africa is germane to the Caribbean.

Before returning to Guyana after his doctoral studies in London, Rodney taught at the University College of Dar Es-Salaam in Tanzania. As a faculty member, he associated with academics and students, who, like himself, were radically engaged with issues and perspectives of African history and were witnessing first-hand Julius Nyerere's efforts to establish a practicable form of socialism in the country. While living in Tanzania, however, Rodney felt that he could only play a tangential part in the political culture as a university teacher and as a concerned foreigner.

Understanding that many of the post-independence countries of Africa were eye-deep in the muddy waters of neo-colonialism, Rodney came to believe in the inevitability of revolutionary violence. “My task”, he wrote, “is not to identify every possible struggle going on, but to identify the leading elements in struggle, so that this will indicate the possibilities for change” (Rodney, 1990: 52). Declaring that the peoples of the New Caribbean should demand different answers to the questions posed by their forebears, Rodney insisted that Guyana, in particular, with its racial and class contradictions, must look at *specific* realities in order to overcome the various *racisms* faced, not only by the black community but also by the indentured Chinese and South Asian populations.

Visiting Jamaica in the late 1960's, Rodney was not only struck by the political dynamism of the people but also by the unfortunate fact that the working class was excluded from the intellectual life of the country. Instituting a series of ‘lectures’ designed to inspire the politically swindled and the desperately poor, Rodney took his ideology to the disadvantaged areas of Kingston. Sharing his experiences in Tanzania, communicating his knowledge of African history, and explaining the “relationship of exploitation which allowed capitalist parasites to grow fat and impoverish the dependencies” (Rodney, 1981: 21), Rodney insisted, as Gordon Lewis has noted, that the “conquest and

colonization of the Caribbean" was simply "a chapter in the expansion of early capitalist society" (Lewis, 1983: 13).

Reading Cabral's political and cultural thought allowed Rodney to redefine many of the ideas promulgated in *Unity and struggle* into a readily understandable *aide de combat* for the Caribbean. Accepting the plain-spoken 'lectures' that Rodney gave in Jamaica in 1968 for publication, London-based press Bogle-L'Ouverture published *The groundings with my brothers* which popularized his political ideas in an easy-to-read and accessible sixty-eight page tract. In *The groundings with my brothers*, Rodney (1969) set out a political and social agenda in such a way as to make sure that both author and reader were establishing common ground wherever it was possible for them to meet. The book encouraged discussions where people talked to each other about their various circumstances in what Rodney believed was the necessary "epochal march forward of black humanity" (1969: 12). The book also cautioned that if the opportunity "to work out the racial question without resort to force" (1969: 16) was missed, then the dominated society would move towards the same kind of destructive racial war that was erupting in Portugal's African colonies. Violence that had as its objective the recovery of human dignity and racial equality, Rodney warned, should not be judged by the same standard as violence whose goal was the continued preservation of racial discrimination and oppression.

As Cabral's (1979) *Unity and struggle* counselled that it was a grave mistake to ignore the cultural strengths of all colonized people, Rodney emphasized that the people of the Caribbean, like the majority of Africans, had been kept ignorant of their cultural and historical achievements for centuries. Being an academic historian who believed that universities are the revolutionary center of any oppressed country, Rodney argued that African histories and cultures have as much relevance to the diaspora as they do to the continent. Just as Cabral insisted on the importance of Africa's oral and written traditions, her music and dance, her religions, her social structures, so Rodney argued that learning one's history was necessary if a cultural and social balance was to be maintained between Africa and the Caribbean.

Reminding people in *The groundings with my brothers* that Africa is the home of mankind, Rodney (1969) wrote that society and culture had reached great heights before the coming of the Europeans, and encouraged, first, a close-reading of the continent and its civilizations, and second, a detailed examination of Ethiopia, the spiritual home of the Rastafari. Just as Cabral believed education is a weapon and that any liberation struggle involves an act of culture, so Rodney insisted on a knowledge of African achievements to regain the necessary cultural confidence which had been erased by slavery and colonialism. By accepting itself as mostly African in origin, Rodney contended, the Caribbean must make a significant contribution to the advancement of culture in the diaspora to liberate it from all European influence. Anticipating an argument he was to make in

How Europe underdeveloped Africa (1981), Rodney (1969) ended his discussion of the history of the continent in *The groundings with my brothers* with the following words:

All over the world, the greatest challenge to man was his environment or physical surroundings. Man in Africa learnt to overcome problems of his own environment. Advanced methods of agriculture developed in Africa many hundreds of years before Europeans went to that continent. Irrigation, terracing and crop rotation were all practiced. The other basic aspect of material culture is concerned with the working of metals and the making of metal tools. Here again, metal working spread into Africa from the Middle East, became widespread long before the European arrival, and in some cases the metal technology was highly developed. Africans in the Congo were famous for mining copper and those in Sudan famous for their iron. Apart from tools and weapons, metals were used for ornament, and here gold played its part. What all of the above really mean is that *ancient Africa was in the mainstream of human history*. (Rodney, 1969: 38-39)

The groundings with my brothers is a revolutionary text for the Caribbean because Rodney understood that marginalized humanity cries out spiritually, politically, and literally for sustenance. Falsehoods such as the so-called ‘integrated’ black man and the ‘harmonious’ multi-racial society, Cabral contended, were nothing more than euphemisms for racial segregation and Gordian knots for the black intellectual to unravel. As the philosopher Antonio Gramsci wrote in his *Prison notebooks* that “all men are intellectuals” and social movements are comprised not only of members of an intelligentsia but also of ordinary people who think, speak, and act in the interest of the masses (1971: 9). This alliance of workers and “organic intellectuals” (1971: 9) Gramsci wrote, was necessary to build links across ideological divisions in order to adapt each particular struggle to the particular *realities* faced by those seeking release from oppressive domination.

Of his duty to promote the centrality of the Caribbean, Rodney was unequivocal. As a self-styled “guerilla intellectual” (1990: 111) who participated in both philosophical and practical struggles for social change and as a committed Marxist working tirelessly with African and African descended communities, he argued for a unity of the working classes against entrenched economic interests. The misinformation fostered by European and US imperialism in all branches of scholarship, Rodney argued, should be countered by intellectual vitality and practical application. The hands-on black intellectual, Rodney wrote, must “move beyond his own discipline” and join the black masses in challenging “the social myths extant in society” (1969: 63).

Rodney believed that the oppressed would be motivated by the need for personal liberty and national emancipation. Critical of the false ‘freedoms’ peddled by the colonialists

during the years following the end of slavery in the Caribbean, Rodney urged all people to be involved in revolution, to begin to dare to make political choices, and to become historical agents.

Returning to Barbados after years abroad, the poet Kamau Brathwaite was horrified that his native land appeared to have no culture, given that the rest of the Caribbean had its own music, its own dance, its own literature, even its own belief systems. In *Barabajan poems*, he complains that while in “Trinidad ... there’s always shango”, Haiti has its “rada & vodoun & in Cuba & elsewhere like Brazil – santeria & cadomble”, but in “Bubaydus”, “we int got nnunnadatt” (1994:167). In that same work, Brathwaite expresses his determination to bring about “an alteration of consciousness” and resurrect a Bajan culture long “SUBMERGED” in “**loneliness disappointment dispossession poverty & fear**” (Brathwaite, 1994: 167, 170, 184, emphasis in original). While Brathwaite understood that “Too many hundred years you see of insult of neglect deculturation apparent deculturation” had “corrupted” people so that “we are ashamed to face our face” (1994: 168), some countries in the Caribbean had descended into neo-/post-colonial hells. Guyana, for example, seemed doomed to never awaken from the nightmare of political exploitation and greed. Quoting Marcus Garvey’s “A race without power and authority is a race without respect” (Rodney, 1969: 22), Rodney asked:

By what standard of *morality* can the violence used by a slave to break his chains be considered the same as the violence of the slave master? By what standards can we equate the violence of blacks who have been oppressed, suppressed, depressed and repressed for four centuries with the violence of white fascists? (1969: 22)

Just as Aimé Césaire had defined colonialism as a “machine for crushing, for grinding, for degrading peoples” (Césaire, 1972: 60), Cabral and Rodney in their respective works recognized the explosive implications of racial, cultural, and economic humiliation. Cabral’s (1979) *Unity and struggle* encouraged those under the colonial yoke to fight for liberation from subjugation while Rodney’s (1969) *The groundings with my brothers* adapted such ideas to fit the reality of the Caribbean in terms of *its* culture and *its* blackness.

Both of these *combat-texts* underscore the necessity of struggle against colonial rule. While Cabral insists on “a spiritual reconversion of the mentalities” (cited in Rodney et al., 2013: 300), he also warns of violence if Africa’s white masters are determined to remain in power. The struggle for national liberation and independence, he argues, is historically a force of progress for all humanity, and the continued control of one country by another inevitably induces any subjugated people to reexamine, reaffirm and transform its identity, its sense of dignity, and its political and cultural consciousness in order to throw off the yoke of domination, by all-out war if necessary. Similarly, Rodney’s radical vision, while rallying support for the peaceful liberation of the neo-/post-

colonial Caribbean, does not preclude the unleashing of violence by those long-mired in what the Guyanese poet Martin Carter called “the latitudes of anguish” (Carter, 2006: 86). While not excluding violence, Amílcar Cabral’s (1979) *Unity and struggle* and Walter Rodney’s (1969) *The grounding with my brothers* nevertheless seek to strengthen the power of culture as the first weapon in a shared struggle against colonial domination.

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‘JÍBARXS’: FROM BOOKS TO BILLBOARDS

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Abstract

In this article, we examine the use of language and image with hegemonic power in Puerto Rico and its diaspora in literary texts and on billboards, paying particular attention to discourse related to terms such as ‘*jíbarx*’ and ‘*criollx*.’ Although these terms are associated with the rural lifestyles that have become a thing of the past for the great majority of the population of the island, their meanings have been reconfigured and reconstructed by the symbolic elites in the construction of a present-day *boricua* identity that has more often than not been used to further the interests of the colonial neo-colonial ruling classes, and against the interests of the great majority of Puerto Ricans, both on and off the island.

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Key terms: *jíbarx*, *criollx*, *boricua*, billboards, Puerto Rican literature

Introduction: The ‘*jíbarx*’ and identificational repertoires in Puerto Rico

Traditionally, linguistic varieties have been studied within a binary perspective that highlights so-called standardized languages and marginalizes other linguistic varieties (Faraclas & Delgado, 2021). When observing the Linguistic Landscape (LL), a term coined by Landry and Bourhis (1997), one often notices the use of language with implicit discursive (or hegemonic) power, and the use of images often complements such language. In this article, we examine this phenomenon in Puerto Rico, specifically in literary texts and on billboards in cities like Carolina, Guaynabo and San Juan, paying particular attention to language and images associated with the rural lifestyles that have become a thing of the past for the great majority of the population of the island.

Historically, the intellectual elites in Puerto Rico have introduced and deployed the figure of the *jíbaro* to represent an almost mythical version of Puerto Rican identity (Scarano, 1996). I intend to demonstrate how the *jíbaro* is constantly re-created by the local symbolic elites in both paper and digital media as a ‘context model’ (van Dijk, 2012). From a ‘post-colonial linguistics’ and ‘post-creole creolistics’ perspective

(Faraclas & Delgado, 2021) and through Multimodal Discourse Analysis (Kress, 2012) these observations suggest how language and image are used as hegemonic tools to maintain the wealth and domination of a few people through ethnocentric, patriarchal and economic exploitation of the island's inhabitants.

Some Puerto Ricans may recall the use of the expression "*El jíbaro es cosa mala*" from the past century, and unfortunately, even today there are Puerto Ricans who use it to 'other' anyone, or anything associated with the countryside and its lifestyles. Raised in one of the many *barriadas* in Guaynabo ("City"), I spent my younger years constantly looking forward to becoming a man of 'progress', that is the opposite of the *jíbaro*. Indeed, this was presented to me as one of the main purposes for my academic studies. School was seen as the tool that I could use to wash away the brown and black dust left on me by my ancestors. While in secondary school, some teachers warned me about hegemonic abuses of power in the education system in general and in textbooks in particular. Although those warnings remained in the back of my mind, I decided to study the physical sciences, where I learned the patriarchal alchemical methods of Western science that work against nature instead of with nature, that poison our biosphere, and that devalue women's work and knowledge. As the years have gone by, I have decided that it is time to move in a different direction, one in which I might actually self-identify as a *jíbaro*. But in order to do so, I have found it necessary to do some linguistic archeology.

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I start this study with some introductory approaches to Caribbean identificational repertoires as outlined by Peter A. Roberts (2008) in his book about race, power and language and the effects of colonial era contact on "Caribbean identity", in which he recounts a general "New World" history that includes a colonization process involving two major population groups: "outsider/newcomer" and "resident" (vii-viii). Roberts points out that the first group "was more driven and quickly overpowered" the other (viii). "People of the islands", he continues, "did not dominate the media that broadcast their identity" (viii) and their notions of language, culture and identity did not correspond to those of the European conquerors.

Referring to European norms, Roberts (2008) affirms that "in the modern, political world human beings are automatically identified with a country, and national identity is generally established by place of birth or place of residence" (1). Language, he continues, "can sharply distinguish between insider and outsider through difference in accent, idiom, structure and word" (1). When addressing Caribbean identity, Roberts is aware of how imposed or distorted identities have impacted the peoples of the region, whereby, for example, "the economic view and the exotic view of the islands complemented each other throughout the colonial period, thereby maintaining an external viewpoint as the wellspring of their identity" (2).

Roberts (2008) also highlights how the term 'creole' was adopted during the colonial period in order to summarize how concepts "such as 'mixed', 'hybrid', 'mutated',

‘syncretic’, ‘blends’, ‘remodelling’, ‘corruptions’, ‘borrowings’, ‘imitations’, ‘fragmented’, and ‘plural’ have been applied to Caribbean societies” (3). Elaborating on the concept of ‘identity’ itself, he contends that identity “is based on two fundamental factors – the perception of sameness/difference and the instinctiveness of man [sic] to be a social being” (3). In cases where a group feels sameness (especially linguistic sameness) among themselves, he sustains, there can be perceptions of ‘others’ as being “abnormal/strange/ foreign” (4).

Roberts (2008) then explains how the formation of ‘communities’ (mainly of a linguistic nature), can be accompanied by notions of inferiority and superiority. “What language or variety of language they speak [...] links them to a community and separates them from others” (5). Then, he states that is not so much a behavioral attitude that leads to group ‘sameness’, but “the senses of sight (colour/ race) and sound (language) that provide the initial and usually most deep-seated conclusions about [...] identity” (5), which he asserts become the main basis for assigning a name to a nation or ‘civilization.’

Pointing out that “new identities” arise from “genetic change” and “ecological change” (10), Roberts (2008) singles out three theories of identity that had been associated with people in the Caribbean before the 20th century: 1) transmission theory; 2) contrastive theory; and 3) environmental theory. He presents transmission theory, as being “part of the consciousness of the colonists ... used with both negative and positive intent” (12) which operated by “creating another identity in one’s own image either by transfer of characteristics, by edict or by model” (10), to which adhered “those who aspired or presumed to be Spanish or came under Spanish control” (13-14).

Contrastive theory is interpreted by Roberts (2008) as “creating ‘otherness’ either for others or for oneself” (13). For example, Roberts cites Elliot’s (1998) notion of the power of a “European imprint” that “renders non-European groups [...] and their culture, ineffective and marginal” (11), so that “the general identity *Indian* was thus accepted by Europeans as a label for all the indigenous peoples of the New World” (11). By citing Adorno (1988), he elaborates on ‘otherness’ and potential *fronteras de la identidad* (13). Adorno’s point of view about ‘the other’ in the Spanish colonies is similar to the one prevalent in Puerto Rico under the colonial power of the United States of America. “The other version of contrastive theory [...] [which is] defined by alterity by Gikandi ... highlights the colonized” (14), with “the coloniser creating otherness and the colonised reacting against the coloniser” (14). In Puerto Rico today, such labels as *gringo* and *boricua* seem to reflect this type of dynamic.

Environmental theory “sees group and national identity as fashioned by local circumstances” and, in its most extreme form, becomes ecological determinism (14). Roberts (2008) cites Elliot (2000) as mentioning cases where identity in the Americas has been defined in terms of a monolithic ‘American environment,’ as well as citing Diop (1974), who quotes a Greek physician who believed that the sun was the main reason for some

stereotypical attributions of good humor or ‘rhythm’ to all of the peoples of Africa (15). Roberts sums up this theory in this way: “as the elements of environments change, identities change” (15).

In terms of “cultural identity”, Roberts (2008) returns to Diop who “identifies *historical continuity* as one of the factors that contribute to ... [its] formation” and who sees historical factors as ‘the cultural cement that unifies the disparate elements of a people to make them into a whole’” (18-19). Roberts agrees with Diop, who considers language to be one “of the major elements of cultural identity” (19), which can be seen as being established and maintained by mechanisms of “memorization” and “accumulation” in “people’s consciousness” (22). He concludes that oral and written historical records “can be used, abused, manipulated and rejected” (23).

Roberts (2008) cites Bourdieu (1995) and some of his ideas on ‘symbolic power’ specifically in relation to the notion that “what creates the power of words and slogans, a power capable of maintaining or subverting the social order, is the belief in the legitimacy of words and of those who utter them” (21). This is related to van Dijk’s (2012, 2015) notion of ‘access to discourse’, which will become an important consideration in the present study.

Puerto Rican literatura: “*La juega de gallos o el negro bozal*” and “*La carreta*”

In the following paragraph^{hs}, I review material from two Puerto Rican theatrical works, some reviews of those same plays, and some academic essays, highlighting the use of words like *criollo*, *jíbaro* and *boricua*. The two plays selected illustrate how the identity-related tropes connected with those terms have been constantly re-created from at least the 18th century up until the present day. In one play, “*La juega de gallos o el negro bozal*” (Caballero Requena, 2015, [1852]), the identity being focused on is performed by the character Señor Epifanio. The other play, which is titled “*La carreta*” (Marqués, 2013, [1951]) *a carreta*” presents “*tres estampas boricuas*” depicting the lives of a migratory family of *jíbarxs*. *boricua* may be seen as a transgressive identity in public Discourse today (e.g., on billboards), and can refer to and be related to a particular mix of races and cultures, including those referred to by the terms *criollx* and *jíbarx*. Of course, this hasn’t prevented the symbolic elites from co-opting the term *boricua* to advance their own hegemonic agenda.

Francisco Scarano (1996) is one of the academic researchers whose ideas have informed my understanding of the social connotation of the word *jíbarx* today. Though Scarano’s perspective is historical, his study contains facts about the original use of the word in the Puerto Rican context. What he denotes as a ‘*jíbaro* masquerade’, is presented as an “identity dialectic” which in turn reproduces “a common language of identity between elites and plebeians [sic]” (Scarano, 1996: 1423). He argues how the discursive interactions between the elite population and the other inhabitants of the island before the

beginning of the 19th century led to a (re-)construction of subaltern self-identification as *jíbarx*, and how both groups eventually embraced that identity.

Newspaper records from the beginning of the 19th century are the sources used by Scarano (1996) to illustrate the *jíbaro* masquerade, as represented by the authors of three poems, which were written in a linguistic variety that was supposed to resemble the peasants' ways of speaking. These poems articulated a mode of elite resistance on the part of those who sympathized with the liberal party that was emerging on the island at the time. Scarano sees the use of such masquerade language by the 'creole elites' as a strategy to reposition themselves in society, while maintaining the island's colonial status under the Spanish. Nonetheless, Scarano also presents evidence for interracial gatherings where the collective acceptance and embrace of *jíbarx* self-identification took place.

Even though some Puerto Rican communities could still have been characterized at the turn of the 19th century as what González-López (2007), Faraclas (2012) and others refer to as 'cohabitation societies' out of colonial control, Spanish colonial rule had been in a process of relatively rapid extension and consolidation since the mid-1700s. Therefore, it is no accident that by the 1850s, when Caballero's (2015, [1852]) "*La juega de gallos o el negro bozal*" appears, social divisions are one of its main topics. Some academics visualize this play within a 'silencing' frame where African ancestry and lifeways are dismissed (Villagómez, 2005; Girón, 2006). When reading/viewing the play, questions such as these may arise: 1) Who is the mother of Rosita, the daughter of an *hacendado* from Arecibo? 2) Was Rosita's *crianza* by Nazaria, an enslaved woman of African descent, compensated by a wage? 3) How can all of the other characters in the play understand the variety used by the *negro bozal* José? 4) If Nazaria is an enslaved woman of African descent, but speaks what seems to be the same variety as Rosita, could she be considered *criolla* or *jíbara* by a 21st century reader/viewer? and 5) Since the play only refers to a man as a *jíbaro*, is the term also being used to advance the patriarchal agenda of many of the intellectuals at the time it was written?

Skipping over one hundred years of literary production, I now mention a particular feature of René Marqués' "*La carreta. Tres estampas boricuas*." (Marqués, 2013, [1951]) which has been considered to be a Puerto Rican national play per excellence (Fiet, 2004). I pay particular attention to the way in which Marqués uses the term *boricua* in the sub-title. Over the past three decades, I have hypothesized that at least some identificational concepts associated with the term today were originally used/ imposed to categorize Puerto Ricans who migrated to the United States from the mid-20th century onward, and from there this expression was eventually brought back to Puerto Rico. I do not have detailed evidence of how exactly the term was being used at the time this play was written, nor do I believe that it was just beginning to be used then. It should be noted that this playwright underwent a considerable part of his formal education in the

city of New York. In any case, apart from in the subtitle, the word *boricua* is only used during the third act, while the family is in New York City.

Tato Laviera (1979: 2) asserts that “*en el fondo del newyorican definitivamente hay un puertorriqueño.*” Without paying attention to his non-inclusive language, I in some sense agree with Laviera to the extent that I consider ‘Newyoricans’ to be the *jíbarxs* that migrated from Puerto Rico to the United States after World War II, and for decades have kept on doing so. These are the same *jíbarxs* that Marqués put in the spotlight in “*La carreta*” and its “*estampas boricuas*”. Now, it is fitting to ask how different the linguistic varieties used by most Puerto Ricans today actually are from those varieties recreated in the plays mentioned in this study. Is ‘Caribbean Spanish,’ which is said by most linguists to include the varieties spoken in Puerto Rico, just a misleading label for at least some repertoires used on the island that resemble Iberian lexifier Creoles such as Papiamentu more than they resemble Standard Castilian Spanish? Are linguists foregrounding the language of the island’s elites, while erasing those of the rest of the population? When observing billboards in Puerto Rico, how are these different lenses on the varieties used in Puerto Rico deployed to both point out and impose identificational constructs pertaining to Puerto Rico as a nation? In the present study, I contend that the creole connotation of words such as *jíbarx* and *boricua* has been systematically bleached and erased in the hegemonic project of reconstructing 21st century Puerto Rico as a society which can be raced as [+white] (von Werlhof, 2001; Alim, Reyes & Kroskrity, 2020).

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If *jíbarxs* come from the rural zones of Puerto Rico, Scarano (1996) shows that their image has been appropriated and reformulated by those in socially privileged positions, in a move that exemplifies coloniality in action. In his article, he discusses the etymology of the term *jíbarx* and its negative connotations in Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Mexico. His approach is like that of Peter Roberts (2008), who also mentions its associations with the negatively stereotyped ‘*shuar*’ or indigenous peoples of Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela (all translations in this article are by the author, unless specified otherwise). Through a ‘translinguaged’ lens, I explore new alternatives to approach the concept of *jíbarx* from a ‘postcolonial’ perspective that includes ‘pluri-lingualism’, ‘pluri-culturalism’ and ‘pluri-identification.’ Scholars like Scarano seem to fall back on the binary, mutually exclusive and conjunctively exhaustive dichotomies of systems of patriarchal, ethnocentric and plundering domination, such as ‘civilized’ vs. ‘uncivilized’, ‘city’ vs. ‘country’, ‘Spanish’ vs. ‘Criollo’, ‘free black people’ vs. ‘enslaved black people’, ‘white people’ vs. ‘Taíno people’, etc. When such historically-charged expressions as *jíbarx* are used in the ways prescribed by the symbolic elites, marginalized peoples’ and women’s historical, linguistic, cultural and identificational agency are normally erased (Benholdt-Thomsen, Faraclas, & von Werlhof, 2001; Faraclas & Delgado, 2021).

Returning to Scarano's arguments, he describes the linguistic variety put into the mouths of *jibarxs* by the symbolic elites in terms of "a disdained and difficult peasant vernacular" (1996: 1400), which I interpret as reflecting a binary approach that juxtaposes a normative standardized 'correct' Spanish to a 'peasant vernacular.' Another area that he explores is the relationship between the *jibarxs* and the indigenous peoples of Puerto Rico, asserting that when the elites began to redefine *jibaro* a shift occurred away from any African influence and toward indigenous influence (1402). He mentions Manuel Alonso's recreation of the *jibaro* 'trope' and how it became convenient to embrace it towards the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century. Alonso's text "*El gibaro*" (1971, [1849]) incorporated an ideal Puerto Rican national 'trope' to be deployed by the elites in resisting both Spanish and North American domination over the island. The trope of the *jibaro* was relegitimized in 20th century Puerto Rican society, first by DIVEDCO (Cotto, 2020) and then through the media and the system of formal education. In my research, I aim to demonstrate how such an image has become a recurrent theme in the LL of the 21st century, specifically on billboards. Later on in the same text, Scarano (1996) mentions African descended peoples on the island, but almost as if they were foreigners. When reading the following verses that supposedly typified their speech centuries ago, one is struck by how similar they are to varieties still in use by people of European, Indigenous and/or African descent in Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and Cuba today:

<i>Vamos Suidadanos</i>	Let's go citizens
<i>jasta ei pueblo oi</i>	to town today,
<i>poique tio Juan Congo</i>	because Uncle John Congo
<i>tocara ei tamboi.</i>	will play the drums. (1409)

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African ancestry and customs are invoked with the mention of "*tio Juan Congo*" and his "*tamboi*". Such images will be readdressed in my study of billboards today in Puerto Rico, 'context models' (van Dijk, 2012) and the hegemonic tools of 'coloniality.'

There are two other aspects of Scarano (1996) that I am interested in: what I call '*jibaro* drag' and festivities associated with *jibarxs*. When doing random internet searches related to the term *jibaro*, one may encounter a pair of European descended Luis Paret y Alcazar's 1775-1776 self-portraits. Of the two pieces, Scarano (1996) includes one with lots of white color and drag-like attire in it, and refers to it as an example of the classical *jibaro*. Today, this image and similarly Eurocentric depictions are common in many contexts: schools, festivities, official events, as well as on billboards and in the rest of the media. Scarano subsumes this *jibaro* drag under his concept of '*jibaro* masquerade' as a possible starting point for the construction of a proto-national icon, which includes 'long skirts' and *vejigantes*. The first, wore by women to dance; and the other, a grotesque character associated with country people. Over the centuries, the *jibaro* image has been 'laundered' for acceptability, from being presented as a grotesque figure

to being depicted a cheerful and sociable person, and ‘bleached’ to erase all but European descent. That said, the *jibarx*, even in this domesticated form, retains gender ambiguous clothing and remains transgressive in his/her own ways.

Martí Carvajal (2006) offers another perspective on ‘*jibarxs*’. Though his observations dialogue with those of Scarano, he researches the concept from the 16th century to the third quarter of the 17th century. The terms “*jibaro*” and “*criollo*” are used throughout his article, even in the title. Taking the Abbad y Lasierra (1866) chronicles as evidence of the lack of communication between Puerto Rico and Spain, Martí Carvajal discusses the coincidence of the notion of *contrabando* with that of *criollo*. In fact, ‘*jibarxs*’, a mix of races and their customs, engaged mainly in subsistence economies of abundance, outside of the formal economy. One observation by Alexander O’Reilly during the last decades of the 18th century cited by Martí Carvajal states that “*con cinco días de trabajo, tiene una familia plátanos para todo el año*” (2006: 35). Today, at the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century, Puerto Ricans fantasize about winning the lottery and living like the ruling classes. This is articulated nicely in publicity for the national lottery that depicts a bunch of plantains with dollar bills coming out from its stems.

Martí Carvajal (2006: 35) also cites Jopling and his description of ‘*jibaro* houses,’ translating them as *casas de los criollos*. Here we find once again the (perhaps) unintentional association of the words *jibarx* and *criollx*. But of even greater importance are: 1) the link made between *jibarxs* and subsistence (Mies, 2001; Benholdt-Thomsen, Faraclas & Werlhof, 2001); and 2) the link made between pluri-ethnicity and *jibarxs* who are said in the same passage to have been of “*ascendencia india, negra y blanca*.” This portrayal is different from that of Manuel Alonso’s (1971, [1849]) portrayal of the ‘*gibaro*.’

One of Martí Carvajal’s final statements demonstrates how, even in relatively well-informed narratives such as his, the prosperous subsistence economies and the subversive pluri-ethnic bloodlines of the *jibarxs* of Puerto Rico are glibly erased, misinterpreted and reduced under the colonial gaze to the catch phrases that pervade the discourse of even the most ‘enlightened’ scholars who write about the colonial Caribbean, such as: ‘*isla pobre*,’ ‘*condiciones muy adversas*,’ and a lack of ‘*una creciente multitud Africana*’:

Puerto Rico no era un gigantesco cañaveral, salpicado de un sinnúmero de haciendas e ingenios dedicados al cultivo y procesamiento de la caña de azúcar, ni estaba poblado por una creciente multitud africana. Tampoco hemos visto evidencia de la tan mencionada dependencia en la que, supuestamente, España mantuvo encadenada a la Isla. Puerto Rico que surge de estas relaciones es una isla marginada y pobre. Una isla en la cual su exigua población se vió obligada a ingeniárselas a adaptarse a condiciones muy adversas, para lograr subsistir. (Martí Carvajal 2006: 42)

While it is true that during the first few centuries of its colonial history, Puerto Rico's involvement in the production of sugar and in the massive enslavement of people of African descent was not as great as in other islands of the Caribbean, most census evidence suggests that well into the 1800s, the majority of Puerto Ricans were of African descent (Girón, 2006). But the posture that has been normalized when speaking about the ethnic make-up of Puerto Rico from the 1500s to the 1700s, which is also unfortunately to some extent adopted by Martí Carvajal in this passage, not only minimalizes the African input into the bloodlines of Puerto Rico, but also juxtaposes the situation of Puerto Rico to neighboring islands, which are depicted in typically colonial mono-ethnic and Euro-centric terms as being somehow overrun with '*una creciente multitud Africana*.' But perhaps even more serious is the extent to which Martí Carvajal completely invisibilizes the ethnic, linguistic and cultural agency of marginalized peoples of African, Indigenous and European descent in creating the bloodlines and linguistic and cultural repertoires that would eventually be appropriated by the ruling classes of the island under the figure of the *jibarx*, whose African and Indigenous roots are more often than not denied, trivialized, or folklorized to the point of becoming museum pieces, as if they were extinct exotic animals.

As mentioned earlier, there are other demonyms that refer to a particular person or group of people in Puerto Rico and its diaspora. In her thesis, Feliciano-Santos (2011: 43-44) includes almost five hundred interviews conducted in Puerto Rico and New York City about people's self-identifications and lists some of the terms used, including '*Taino*,' '*Indio*,' '*Boricua*,' '*Jibaro*,' and '*Caribe*.' Feliciano-Santos introduces an approach worth mentioning here, namely, "the ways in which social actors manage, transform, and challenge normative social categories and identities through their linguistic practices" (47). This relates to my initial observation about Puerto Ricans and the academics interested in their identificational repertoires, when they self-identify as '*criollx*,' '*jibarx*' or '*boricua*'. In this article, I focus on the second term, but from a postcolonial creolistic perspective that includes women, people of African descent, and other marginalized groups to the 'pluri-lingual' varieties expressed in public in the Puerto Rico LL.

One of Feliciano-Santos' research objectives is to elucidate:

the image of the Jíbaro, [...] illustrate[s] how attempts to absorb Puerto Rico's rural populations have served to discursively erase the Island's indigenous population. Furthermore, ... ideologies of racial democracy, as circulated within particular political campaigns around the mid-twentieth century, precluded claims to being indio while making banal any African contribution to Puerto Rican culture. (Feliciano-Santos, 2011: 55)

These ideas are questioned when citing Scarano (1996), where he assigns the following features to '*jibaros*': "*son blancos, negros, mulatos, o mestizos*" (Feliciano-Santos,

2011: 60). She uses the other 1777 self-portrait of Luis Paret Alcazar to confirm the stereotype already established in the 18th century about ‘jíbarxs’. After including descriptions such as ‘uneducated’ and ‘rustic,’ Feliciano-Santos mentions their typical clothes, hats, machetes, etc. (2011: 61). Mention of women’s clothing, however, is notably absent. The wearing of the *pava* hat was sensible in a tropical climate, and also fashionable. It is therefore no accident that the *pava* appears in the above-mentioned self-portrait.

Feliciano-Santos also critiques DIVEDCO and its re-invention of *jíbarxs* as pale-skinned males who wore such *pavas*. Today private Schools on the island celebrate a Puerto Rican Week that culminates with simplistic personifications of *jíbarxs*, a practice shared by public schools as well. What is being projected on huge electronic screens in San Juan and cities around it relates to the ‘context models’ already learned or assumed in the minds of the general Puerto Rican population today. For instance, an advertisement about rice features a grain of white rice dressed up in white, including a white *pava*.

From a literary angle, Villagómez (2005) refers to “*La juego de gallos o el negro bozal*” to indicate the extent to which there has been “*silenciamiento del sujeto de origen africano en las letras puertorriqueñas del siglo XIX*” (7). I find this to be paradoxical. When reading or viewing this play, it is the secondary characters (who are raced as black) who start and end the drama. The play’s title may allude to texts being written in Spain at the time, usually double tittles conjoined by *o*, such as “*Don Álvaro o la fuerza del sino*” by Ángel Saavedra (1835). Caballero’s play, though, has an explicit African element in its title, which describes one of the characters as the ‘*negro Jose*’. Falling into a colonial epistemic trap, Villagómez starts begins her thesis with the verses of Mario Benedetti, and when introducing this play, her words are at best non-committal regarding the social divisions that she claims silence African origins in Puerto Rican literature. According to her, the play “*presenta las imágenes de la vida del jíbaro puertorriqueño, el criollo adinerado, la mulata y del esclavo negro*” (Villagómez, 2005: 76). When one reviews the introduction to the characters by the playwright, after the name “Nazaria” the description is not *mulata* but *negrita*.

Angelina Morfi (1993) also reviews “*La juego de gallos o el negro bozal*” without coherent reference to social divisions. My objective here is not to deny such divisions, but instead to question how they are presented by scholars and possibly repeated in other contexts, like secondary school classrooms. Morfi describes some of the characters with the following epithets: “*el hacendado, el jíbaro inculto y el padre autoritario*” and: “*el tipo don juanESCO, el esclavo y la niña enamorada*” (87). Though the *jíbaro*, is included, what is reinforced is the notion that somehow the *jíbaro* lacks ‘culture.’ Another paradox. Jose has a solo and sings about his reality. Music is an element of any country’s culture. Also, in her introductory paragraphs, Morfi does not mention the other enslaved character: Nazaria. Instead, Manuel Alonso’s *gíbaro* is her foundational reference when

she observes that: “*en el gallero se puede ver la intención de reproducir el habla campesina con sus rasgos fonéticos, tal como lo hizo antes Alonso*” (Morfi, 1993: 88).

Faraclas and Delgado (2021) review from a contemporary perspective the interexchanges -linguistic, cultural and identificational - that have occurred in what they call the ‘Afroatlantic’ over the past five hundred years. They highlight how indigenous peoples from both sides of the Atlantic have come together in the Caribbean by means of ‘cohabitation’ and been able to communicate and share different ways of life. Following this idea, I cite Fiet (2004) who states that “*en el caso del Caribe, el teatro es un tipo de cimarronaje especializado*” (44). The term ‘cimarronaje’ can be related in interesting ways to the term ‘renegade.’ I am interested in considering how the initial *jíbarxs* could have been considered to be renegades, and how hegemonic discourses have been created by the symbolic elites to reshape the *jíbarx* in the interests of dominant classes, starting by assigning a particular linguistic variety to them. That said, there are still people today who self-identify as *jíbarxs* as part of their resistance to capitalism. The latter is evident when it comes to billboards, as a result of what Lyons calls the ‘absent element’ in the LL. It is almost impossible to encounter a depiction of a *jíbarx* on Puerto Rican billboards which in any way reflects the subsistence sovereignty of this renegade population, that could arguably constituted the majority of the island’s inhabitants until the 19th century.

When Lowell Fiet sheds light on the initial dramatic production on the island, he includes census data from places such as Loiza, a town whose inhabitants have traditionally included a high percentage of people of African ancestry. Referring to the beginning of the 18th century, he affirms that:

la población siguió creciendo como resultado de los negros bozales importados de Africa [sic] o del Caribe no hispano, y de africanos criollos que llegaron para cumplir con la demanda de labor agrícola y doméstica dentro de la creciente y renovada economía y sociedad colonial. (Fiet, 2004: 87)

There are two important things to note here. First, the mention of ‘*negros bozales*’ and then, the mention of ‘*africanos criollos*.’ This mention of ‘*criollos*’ differs from most of the readings that one may find regarding the Spanish colonies in the Caribbean, where the norm is a European descended ‘*criollo*’ who was born and/or raised in the colonies. Fiet considers “*La juego de gallos o el negro bozal*” to be “*un estudio cultural muy importante*.” He repositions some of the characters who are raced as black in the play as “*prominentes*,” and focuses on “*Jose*” with his “*habla distinta y específica*” (2004: 100). He also uses some ideas proposed by Peter Roberts at a conference in Puerto Rico in 1997 about artificial divisions among linguistic varieties attributed to *criollxs*, *jíbarxs* and *bozales*.

Using a linguistic approach, John M. Lipski (2001) discusses repertoires associated with *bozales* using the following argument: “Only a handful of texts (little more than a

dozen) represent the Afro-Hispanic speech of Puerto Rican *bozales*, and only three are long enough to allow even a glimpse into what Africanized Spanish might actually have sounded like” (850). He also states that in the 19th century “the vast majority of black slaves in Puerto Rico were island-born and speaking Spanish with no second-language traits, although some ethnolinguistic markers such as key words or pronunciation variants may have remained” (851).

When referring to “*La juega de gallos o el negro bozal*”, Lipski affirms that it “combines scattered structures reminiscent of other Afro-Iberian creoles, set against a generally unremarkable bozal pidgin or learners’ variety” (2001: 852). He exemplifies the latter with some dialog from the drama. After a few grammar observations, he compares such verbal expressions to structures that could be encountered in “any foreign language classroom” (853). After reviewing a few other texts, mainly poems, which I am not taking into consideration at this point, one of Lipski’s conclusions is that “most cases point to authentic interference from one or more African languages, or - in a few texts -. of other Creole languages such as Papiamentu” (854).

Lipski (2001) focusses on the possibility of an “Afro Puerto Rican Spanish” as “part of a larger Caribbean Spanish Creole (856-857). One of his conclusions is that “Afro-Puerto Rican bozal language outlasted and outgrew slavery and oppression, to add its subtle touch to the life, literature, and language of all Boricuas” (857). This directs me to associations between the terms *criollxs*, *jíbarxs* and now *boricuxs* in the ‘contemporary’ Puerto Rico of the past six or seven decades. Lipski explicitly includes the ‘black’ element in the lives of those who consider themselves to be *boricuas*, especially, as I have noted previously, those in the diaspora in the United States.

I cite here two brief exchanges from “*La juega de gallos o el negro bozal*,” in order to raise questions such as: 1) How different are the linguistic repertoires of the enslaved from those of the *hacendadxs* or the *jíbarxs*? 2) Had it changed some one hundred years later when René Marqués wrote “*La carreta*” with his presentation of *jíbarxs* through ‘*estampas boricuas*’? and 3) Are there Puerto Rican linguistic varieties that have emerged from a constant mix of other Caribbean and North American varieties to become a Puerto Rican creole?

José: *Yo ba liberta a tí, Nazaria Yo ta trabajando, y tajuntando dinero pa ti ...*

Nazaria: *La paciencia me vas a acabar ... si no te vas, se lo digo a la señorita en cuanto se levante.*

And in another scene:

Antolín: *Siño Epifanio. ¿Ya se han pesado los gallos?*

S. Epifanio: *Sí, señoi, y ejtan toj en su peso; ejcaibando ejtan poy salir a la gallera.*

Traditionally, cockfights have been associated with predominantly male gatherings. In “*La juega de gallos o el negro bozal*,” this is also the case. The cockfight is the province

of *bozal* men, while dancing is the province of *bozal* women. Although I do not address the legal controversies about cockfights in Puerto Rico today in this work, it is interesting to note that for some time a billboard appeared on the island featuring a multi-colored rooster and the words: “*PELEA POR MI.*” This advertisement was sponsored by companies with names in English. Is it another scam by which a few off-island entrepreneurs get richer at the expense of many families on the island, who go bankrupt because of a game addiction? That is a contradiction in “*La juego de gallos o el negro bozal,*” since all of the problems that emerge over the course of the play seem to be solved with the money that Francisco - an immigrant from Spain who is raced as white and gendered as male- has acquired through cockfighting.

In the 2013 edition of René Marqués’ “*La carreta*” which was edited and annotated by Marithelma Costa there are a great number of quotations that shed light on the topics covered in this article, especially in relation to Lipski’s association between ‘Afro Puerto Rican *bozal*’ and ‘*boricua*’, and the black *criollo* mentioned by Fiet. Towards the end of the introduction, Costa quotes from an interview with Miriam Colón, who played one of the characters in the English version of the play produced in New York City (see Marqués, 2013, [1951]: 12). In other editorial notes, Costa includes another interview between the playwright and Francisco Arrivi (if the reference is correct), where Marqués’ words about the chronotopical frame for the three acts of the play, which he starts with “*el campo boricua*” (see Marqués, 2013, [1951]: 21). Costa enumerates the first three editions, and then shows that is the first one that the author subtitled as “*Tres estampas boricuas*”, published in three volumes of the magazine *Aso-mante* from October 1951 to March 1952. She highlights the critique of this work by another Puerto Rican playwright, Enrique Laguerre, who did not agree with the “*niño campesino*” and his language, describing the ‘*jibaros*’ as ‘*respetuosos*’ when they speak. According to Costa, Miriam Colón thought that such linguistic varieties were a main source for artistic expression in the New York of the 1960s. While Nicolas Kanellos asserts that “*La Carreta Made a U Turn*” is the fourth act from the original play, Costa believes that it is written in “*una nueva lengua coloquial: el espanglish*” (see Marqués, 2013, [1951]: 41).

I focus on the third *estampa* of the play, when the characters have moved to the Bronx. Though they have kept the same *jibarx* ways of speaking, they have added English varieties to their linguistic repertoires. Was this what the *negro bozal* from “*La juego de gallos o el negro bozal*” had to do when in the Spanish-speaking context of the Americas? Is it a *jibarx* or *criollx* or *boricua* set of linguistic varieties deployed by those trying to resist the capitalist machines mentioned in “*La carreta*”? I may not have the answers, but what is clear is the association between such self-identifications and how they are still ‘alive’ in the general epistemologies of those that claim to be Puerto Rican, on and off the island.

“*La carreta*” gives some voice to women who question patriarchy. One of them is Juanita, the daughter that undergoes a metamorphosis from a timid adolescent to a fierce woman. Faraclas and Viada (2012) support such performances during 19th and 20th centuries in the Caribbean:

in spite of conscious efforts to ‘whiten’ Latin American populations through massive and sustained government sponsored immigration from Europe, [...] the *campesinos*, *jíbaros*, and *ladinos* that still make up the overwhelming majority of Latin Americans are the biological, social, cultural and linguistic descendents of [...] Indigenous-Afro-European renegade cohabitation, where Indigenous and African descended women played a leading role. (18)

At the end of the play, the reader/viewer understands the physical and mental transformation in Juanita. She replies to her mother, Dona Gabriela, while alluding to the *carreta*:

Porque la guío pa donde yo quiero. [...] Porque no eh cosa de volver a la tierra pa vivir como muertoh. [...] Y mishihoj aprenderán cosah que yo no aprendí, cosah que no enseñan en la escuela. ¡Así volveremoh al barrio! ¡Uhteh y yo, mama, firmeh como ausuboh sobre la tierra nuehtra [...]! (Marqués, 2013, [1951]: 322)

My objective here is not to problematize René Marqués’ work at DIVEDCO. In fact, his female characters are outside of the discourse condoned by the Division of Education on the island. Juanita, a *jíbarx*, left the mountains of Puerto Rico to live in one of the *arrabales* in San Juan where she was first raped and then tried to commit suicide. When the family moves into diaspora in New York City, she eventually lives by herself, and works double shifts. One of these ‘shifts’ could be prostitution. From a traditional perspective, Costa’s opinion about Juanita’s linguistic repertoire, as well as that of the rest of her family in the city, is characterized as “*corrupciones del inglés*” or a “*deformación*” of English (see Marqués, 2013, [1951]: 233):

Dona Gabriela: *Si, voy a la “marqueta”. (...) Oye, ¿y que te jisihte en el pelo?*

Juanita: *Una permanén. Mire, aquí le traigo argo que compré ayer en la “grosería”. (Marqués, 2013, [1951]: 238)*

Up until today, at the end of syllables, many people in the Caribbean and in Puerto Rico aspirate and/or delete [s] and interchange [l] and [r]. In February 2021 on Radio Universidad, I heard a female judge say: “ar Sistema de Justicia.” Was that a *jíbara* or *boricua* speaking? In this connection, I need to emphasize the first quotations from the playwright as a prelude to the last *estampa*: “*Un año despues. [...] zona boricua del distrito de Bronx en Nueva York*” (Marqués, 2013, [1951]: 235). It may be smoother and more musical to identify oneself as *boricua* rather than Puerto Rican. Both of these

expressions contain an accented [ri] syllable, but it is the former that relates to the Bronx, which itself is probably a Swedish/Dutch term, rather than an English word. Juanita and her discourse are complemented by the presence of Paco, a *jíbaro* in the city who has had access to some academic education. In an avantgarde dialogue with theorists like Renata Klein (2001) who critiques the “cyberdream” that now predominates among “Gods in laboratories” who look forward to ending women’s power to give life, Juanita tells her brother Luis:

No hay dinero sucio ni dinero limpio. Hay dinero. Y yo gano apenah en un taller lo suficiente pa vivir malamente. El rehto que yo consiga pa ayudar a la vieja y pal ah cosah que quiro no le importa a nadie la clase de dinero que sea. (249)

Marqués introduces Paco in this way:

como la mayoria de los literatos frustrados en la colonia puertorriqueña en Nueva York. Es el tipo de jíbaro rubio de ascendencia canaria. Su voz tiene la inconfundible metalización y atildamiento de los locutores de radio. (Marqués, 2013, [1951]: 251)

Indeed, Marqués does try to explore alternatives to the construction of the *jíbarx* that historically occurred on the island, even though he himself may have some to do with that construction, but Paco breaks with the idea of uneducated or ‘uncultured’ people from the country. Though a *rubio* man, he answers Luis’ questions about his origins:

yo no naci en el pueblo. Naci en el campo de Morivis. El hablar fino, como dice usted, es un medio de ganarme la vida. (Marqués, 2013, [1951]: 261)

Dona Gabriela, the mother of the non-nuclear family, is also an example of partial and sometimes contradictory breaks with patriarchal and capitalist domination. She is a widow who in the past remained in silence about becoming the mother of Luis, who happened to be some other man’s son, not her husband’s, who believed he had one. She even goes through the gestures to follow Luis, because he is the man of the house. In the third act, another side of her character comes to the fore, as she becomes more and more in tune with the Indigenous and African subsistence knowledges passed on to her through her mother and grandmothers. At some point she advises a neighbor how to heal illness using home-made remedies. When she is visited by Mr Parkington, a protestant in charge of a fundamentalist Christian organization which is actively colonizing Puerto Rican families in the city, she finds out that Luis has probably died in the accident that her visitor talks about. In response to this news, she speaks about *tierra* in ways that echo Shiva (2001):

La tierra es sagra. La tierra no se abandona. [...] Y hundiré mih manoh en la tierra colora de mi barrio como lah hundia el abuelo pa sembrah la semillah. [...] Y volverá a oler mi casa a pacholi y yerbabuena. Y habrá tierra afuera. [...] Eh tierra que da via. (321)

‘Pluri-identification’ is one of the major themes of this research. As such, it is important to make a break with monolithic notions of a neat singular identity, in favor of messy, intersecting and overlapping identificational repertoires. An interesting definition of identity is that put forward by Garret (2010), who sees language as a personal identity designator, and who considers identity to be both individual and social, with identities embedded at an early age being more inflexible than those acquired later in life.

From Puerto Rican books to Puerto Rican billboards

From a discursive perspective, James Paul Gee (2011) states that social identities are associated to language use and they can be implicit or explicit (Gee, 2011: 2). He explains human discursive capacities in terms of “brain maps.” Even though linguistic identities and social ideologies in Puerto Rico have been the topics of research in the past (e.g., Clachar, 2007; Mazak, 2012; Pérez Casas, 2008, 2016), few of these studies have involved LL. In the study of LL in Puerto Rico, one question that arises is whether the language variety used is a group identifier within the community.

Stating that language “allows us to take on different socially significant identities” (2011: 2), Gee uses ‘discourse’ without a capital letter for casual conversations, but he also uses discourse with capital ‘D’ for “language plus ‘other stuff’” (34) including social debates and ideologies involving economy, politics, religion, etc. He does so to propose a methodology of discourse analysis based on such variables as text and context, social language, local meaning of words and world constructions. Gee links ‘Discourse’ to “a dance that exists in the abstract as a coordinated pattern of words, deeds, values, beliefs, symbols, tools, objects, times, and places and in the here and the now a performance that is recognizable as just such a coordination” (36). His definition expands from human interactions to non-verbal expressions, so that “certain identities and associated activities... are also the maps in our heads by which we understand society. Discourses, then, are social practices and mental entities, as well as material reality” (39).

In summary, Gee discusses two kinds of identity: 1) ‘socially situated identity’ which manifests itself during a certain period with potential for change (for example, a school-teacher working with different approaches for students); and 2) ‘core identity’ which relates to attributes that remain relatively constant. Gee also discusses different types of meaning, including ‘situated meaning’ or contextualized meaning which will be of relevance to the present study. Additionally, Gee asserts that:

when we speak or write we use social languages and Discourses to signal (build, enact) different identities and practices. When we listen or read we use the social languages and Discourse we see or assume to be at play to guide us in construing what identities and practices are being enacted. (2011: 107)

Another idea that is especially pertinent to this research is related to implicit and explicit ideologies. Van Dijk (1993) conceptualizes ideologies as “the fundamental social

cognitions that reflect the basic aims, interests and values of groups” (van Dijk, 1993: 258). Van Dijk (2004) establishes that Critical Discourse Analysis or CDA “is about power and power abuse”, and mentions its “multidisciplinary” aspect (van Dijk, 2004: 3). According to van Dijk, CDA provides “detailed analysis of the relations between text and context” (3).

Van Dijk (2004) observes that “modern power is essentially discursive” (4). To him, “CDA must... provide very detailed insights into this relationship between discourse structures and their social and political context” (5) and that there is a need for “sophisticated theories about the relations between text and social and political context” in order for CDA not to be marginalized (6). He considers discursive power from different points of view, one of which is degree of access to and control over public discourse. The more access one has to platforms of public discourse, the more power or control one has over it. Another aspect of discursive power discussed by van Dijk is the effect that a given discourse is likely to have on its recipients.

Van Dijk (2004: 10) also introduces the concept of ‘manipulation’ through the formation of mental models, social representations and ideologies based on abusive discourse practices. According to van Dijk, words and images contribute in a semiotic or symbolic way to discursive control. On this matter, he adds that “it is especially through public discourse that we can control the formation of representation models” (11). He associates manipulation to the idea of persuasion, as put forward in Gramsci’s (1935) theory of hegemony.

In the present study, special attention will be paid to ‘self-representation’ versus ‘other-representation’, a key mechanism identified by van Dijk (2004) in the abuse of power through discursive domination. This will be done by making reference to what he calls ‘local meaning’ a concept similar to Gee’s situated meaning. Van Dijk insists that “CDA should spell out which discourse structures are most likely to affect mental representations as intended by the power elites” (2004: 18).

Van Dijk (2015) sustains that “*una síntesis totalizadora de... nuevos desarrollos hacia un análisis integral, semiótico (multimodal), sociocognitivo e interaccional del discurso no ha sido realizada hasta la fecha*” [A comprehensive synthesis of new developments toward integral, semiotic (multimodal), sociocognitive and interactional discourse analysis has not yet been realized] (18). To begin to accomplish this task he proposes a mix of components that include discourse structures, social and individual attitudes and ideologies, social structures, cognition and social context (24). Another perspective adopted in this study is the multimodal one. Malinowski (2009) poses the following question: “What is the symbolic and political significance of a particular linguistic code’s appearance with other codes in bilingual signs?” (Malinowski, 2009: 107). Malinowski adapts Scollon and Scollon’s (2003) model to analyze codes and quotes them in this way: “the preferred code is on the top, on the left, or in the center and the marginalized code is on the bottom, on the right, or on the margins” (108).

In terms of images and their meaning, Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) follow Halliday's (1978) interactive perspective and process of thought for developing meanings. For them, being "visually literate" is a crucial skill set. They define grammar as "an inventory of elements and rules underlying culture-specific forms of verbal communication" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996: 3). Like Halliday, their approach is functional, defining visual grammar as providing "an account of the explicit and implicit knowledge and practices around a resource, consisting of the elements and rules underlying a culture-specific form of visual communication" (3).

These authors portray images as matrixes of signs in societies and cultures. For them, "previously produced signs become the signifier-material to be transformed into new signs" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996: 12). Contrary to Ferdinand de Saussure and his idea of an arbitrary and conventional sign, they demonstrate the sign to be "motivated and conventional" (12). Sign makers, then, present how they see an object in what they consider to be the most "plausible form" of representation. Concluding that there is "something like a Western 'Grammar of three-dimensional visual design', a set of forms and meanings... and a Western 'grammar of the moving image'" (15). Kress and van Leeuwen note that globalized public communication demands that authors act as promoters of new modes of representation of societies and cultures. They insist that the realization of visual representation is one coded mode, and that verbal language is another mode. In their study of children's illustrations, they demonstrate how they recreate meaning without verbal language.

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A few years later, Kress (2012) expanded Malinowski's approach to multimodal Discourse analysis or MMDA. Kress uses the term "text linguistics" instead of discourse analysis. According to him, ideology is "the name of the configuration of discourses in any one text" and text is "the material site of emergence of immaterial discourse(s)" (Kress, 2012: 36). He sees text from a semiotic perspective where even text-making and text-production procedures matter. While highlighting the function of discursive agents, Kress understands MMDA to be "semiotic work" for the study and description of space and the presence of resources for meaning (38). He mentions four components of this kind of analysis to differentiate it from traditional discourse analysis: partiality of language, logics and affordances of modes, implicit meanings and agency (38). For him, "writing tells, image shows, colour frames, and highlights; layout and font are used in part for compositional arrangements" (39). In his study of two grocery store signs, he concludes that signs have an informative value and a semantic value but that "entities of writing... are entirely different from those of image" (46).

This research will have three parts: linguistic study, MMDA and socio-cognitive discourse analysis. First, the language variety or varieties used on the billboards will be studied. Then, MMDA will be applied to identify associations among written text and image. Next, socio-cognitive discourse analysis will be used to make inferences about messages being articulated and their probable interaction with observers. By observing

billboards in some sections of the LL in Carolina, Guaynabo and San Juan, I study texts, images or the combination of both, in a contemporary quest for the trope discussed in the earlier pages: the *jíbarx*.

As has been stated above, the present study has been undertaken from a ‘post-colonial linguistics’ and a ‘post-creole creolistics’ perspective. Under a ‘pluri-identification’ paradigm, many Puerto Ricans, on and off the island, have either self-identified or have been identified as *jíbarxs* or *boricuas*. Also, and especially in a culinary context, these identificational repertoires often intersect with the term *criollx*. I have presented some evidence about the complex relationships among these concepts in the media, as well as in academic and literary work. I now use observations from billboards to consider creole-like linguistic varieties in contact, as well as to consider what have been denoted as *criollx*, *jíbarx* or *boricua* ways of speaking. Additionally, such observations highlight the erasure of transgressional peoples the new *jíbarxs* or *boricuas* that still collide with the hegemonic readings imposed on them.

In the lead-up to his observations concerning “*La carreta*”, Fiet (2004) provides readers with a concise summary of those members of the symbolic elites who have constructed a mythical white ‘*jíbarx*’ in the interests of the ruling classes. He refers specifically to Emilio S. Belaval, a Puerto Rican playwright of the 20th century, and the list of names that Belaval recommended as ‘representative’ of Puerto Rican literature. As Fiet underscores, Belaval and his recommended authors did not necessarily include in their works *jíbarxs* of the non-domesticated, non-bleached, non-transgressive types, as Luis Lloréns Torres and Eleuterio Derkes actually did. When Fiet refers to René Marqués, he argues that the playwright needed to “catalogar y representar la experiencia

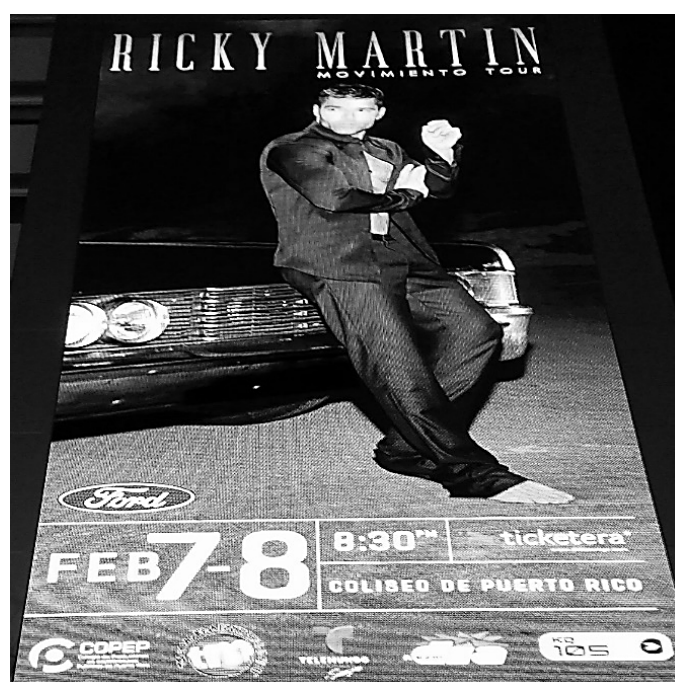


Figure 1 Billboard in San Juan, February 2020

puertorriqueña de tal manera que su identidad nacional - el jíbaro-hispano-criollo 'blanco' pero de etnia indeterminable - viaja" (2004: 175). In "*La carreta*," According to Fiet (2004) "*los tres actos crean 'el habla nacional' de la experiencia geopolítica y moderna puertorriqueña*" (181). He concludes that the end of the play might represent "*un renacimiento emblemático de Puerto Rico libre de ataduras del neo/colonialismo estadounidense*" (182). I essentially agree with Fiet's (2004) general critique of the play.

The year 2020 will never be forgotten, because it is the year in which the COVID-19 virus was confirmed as highly lethal, highly contagious *pandemic*. As shown in Figure 1, a month before many countries started periods of quarantine to stop the spread out of the virus, the popular concert singer Ricky Martin was being advertised on big billboards all around Puerto Rico. These billboards were designed to push all of the pre-installed buttons that the symbolic elites have so perniciously inculcated into the psyche of the people of the island, whose first reactions would have been any or all of the following: 1) "*Oh, Ricky, 'qué bello.'*"; 2) Wasn't he the singer who in the 1990s sang about his "*vida loca*" in New York City?; 3) Isn't it he who sang to his "*boricua, mi india*"?; 4) Doesn't Ricky Martin sing "*le-lo-lai*" to the drumbeat? Marchena (2017) highlights René Marqués' own words in "*La carreta*" when referring to Luis as a "*jíbaro transplantado*" (142). Also, she points out how, in the third act, this character ought to be "*sin camisa y sin zapatos*" (142). Are Ricky and his sponsors playing with that image here by removing Ricky's shirt and shoes? Of all of the many talented musicians on the island, why was a person who on first sight would be raced as white or '*rubio*' and a millionaire masquerading as a *jíbaro* like Ricky Martin selected to be its 'world class' iconic superstar?

Goldman and Papson (2011) notify us about the intentions of those that create public advertising and their presuppositions regarding potential observers. Is it an accident that Rick is sitting on the hood of an automobile on the billboard? The name of the multinational corporation Ford appears prominently, apparently proud of its success in convincing Puerto Ricans that going into debt-slavery to purchase an automobile, impossible traffic congestion, the endless search for parking, and toxic fumes are better than living in communities with shared spaces. This advertisement both conceals and deploys some of the most viciously death-seeking aspects of the systems of domination that underpin globalization, which have enabled the re-colonization of the 'poor' countries and the re-enslavement of humanity. Most of the world's population live in countries which are classed as 'poor' by the dominant elites, such as Bangladesh, and are working in slave-like conditions for only a few dollars a day or less producing the goods sold in 'rich' countries, including the parts used to manufacture the vehicles advertised on this billboard. Because the wages of these workers in 'poor' countries are so low, they have no access to loans, and they can never hope to buy a car. This billboard tells

Puerto Ricans that if you want to graduate from the ranks of Bangladeshi ‘field slaves’ to the ranks of Caribbean ‘wage slaves’ you need to look and act more like people who are raced as white are supposed to act, so that the master will let you into his house and give you a few crumbs off of his table (including a loan to buy a Ford).



Figures 2 and 3 Billboards in Guaynabo

Are any of the women, the ‘*hacendada*’, the ‘*negra*’, the ‘*criolla*’ or the ‘*jibara*’ which were included in the plays reviewed earlier in this article displayed on the billboards in Figures 2 and 3? In the bank advertisement in Figure 2, the symbolic elites allow for a mixed European-indigenous phenotype, as long as she is acting white and acting rich, i.e., being a dutiful debt-ridden spender and consumer with her shopping bags so full that she has to carry them over her shoulder, and smiling all the while! Even the name of the bank ‘Caribe’ has been co-opted by the loan-sharks and turned against the sovereign lifestyles and lifeways that sustained the peoples of the Caribbean for thousands of years before the onslaught of European and US colonization (Faraclas & Alvarado Benítez, 2021).

Meanwhile, a peaches-and-cream skinned, strawberry-blonde slim young woman is prominently featured in the beauty clinic advertisement on the billboard in Figure 3. She brashly embodies the false norms of beauty that have been systematically imposed by the symbolic elites on the people of an island whose mitochondrial DNA is about 60% Indigenous, about 30% African and only about 10% European. In any case, she is being used here in total contradiction to what she is advertising, which is the deeply parasitic and invasive industry of artificial cosmetic ‘beauty’ constructed in clinics, where chemicals and surgery do the work, rather than self-respect, healthy food and exercise. These ladies are nothing like Jaunita or Dona Gabriela in “*La carreta*” who, in the face of a death-seeking system, are able to reconnect with the life-seeking lifeways of the African and Indigenous mothers and grandmothers.



Figure 4 Billboard in Carolina, January 2019

What happens when people go so deep into debt that they cannot afford to eat anything but ‘fast food’? While the billboard in Figure 4 is in Spanish, the global commercial and discursive reach of the company sponsoring the advertisement therein is so pervasive that there is really no need for written text at all. All we need to do is to see the corporate logo, and our brains literally replay a nearly endless cascade of expertly designed and aggressively marketed images and language that have bombarded us literally for our entire lives, to the extent that they have become part of the fabric of our earliest childhood visual, auditory and smell/taste memories, almost as primal as the faces of our mothers.

We have been carefully conditioned to salivate at the image of the hamburger presented on the billboard, even though it and the other addictive products pushed by this corporation have a major responsibility for the current worldwide epidemics of obesity, diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and cancer and the resulting deaths of millions. The abuse of discursive power here extends beyond the fact that the actual product is not health food, but instead is an addictive poison-laced food-like product, or that what you receive at the counter looks nothing like what is represented in the photo.

While fast food may be relatively inexpensive to buy, there are many hidden costs, including: 1) the cost of medical care for the millions of diseased people who consume the products served by this corporation; 2) the cost of lower wages for literally billions of workers based on the model of unabashed exploitation perfected first by fast food corporations and then gradually extended to the rest of the workforce; 3) the assassination of hundreds of indigenous leaders and the removal of tens of thousands of indigenous peoples from their ancestral lands to make way for agribusiness; 4) the systematic destruction of small locally owned eateries and the livelihoods of the hundreds of thousands of people who used to own and run them; and 5) the cost to the environment by the massive destruction of rain forest and the equally massive pollution of bodies of water that result from the expansion of unsustainable cattle ranches, which are presently threatening the very existence of all of the nearly eight billion people on the planet.

Conclusion

And who appears beside the hamburger? Predictably, it is another white-raced peaches-and-cream skinned, strawberry-blonde young woman. This is just another reminder to

Puerto Ricans that if they want any of the leftovers from the imperial feast, they had better be sure to deny their Afro-Indigenous bloodlines, lifeways and lifestyles, and act as ‘white’ as possible. In this article, I have demonstrated that an important part of this process of ‘whitening’ has been a concerted, centuries-long effort by the symbolic elites to completely excoriate any of the original renegade, maroon, Afro-Indigenous, and transgressive meanings of identificational terms which are close to the hearts of Puerto Ricans, such as *jíbarx*, *criollx* and *boricua*, and consciously replace them with meanings that reduce the people of the island and their diaspora to domesticated and indebted consumers of automobiles, ‘beauty’ treatments, and junk food.

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CARIBBEAN DRAMA, TRAUMA AND COLONIAL SCARRING

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Abstract

In this article, I demonstrate how three Caribbean plays: 1) Derek Walcott's *Dream on Monkey Mountain* (1970); 2) M. NourbeSe Philip's *Coups and Calypsos* (2001); and 3) Koko Brown's *White* (2017) all remind us that the processes of colonial traumatization, wounding and scarring have by no means come to an end, but unfortunately are still very much at work in the Caribbean and its diaspora, as well as in the rest of the formerly colonized and presently neo-colonized world.

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Key terms: Caribbean drama, colonization, trauma, Derek Walcott, M. NourbeSe Philip, Koko Brown

Introduction

To those that have been historically marginalized by colonization, the negative consequences permeate all facets of everyday life, including individual mental health. This study focuses on internalized racism, colorism, and trauma in three Caribbean plays with different geographical settings, but similar themes and manifestations of trauma. Trauma theory is an interdisciplinary field that intersects with postcolonial theory. Understanding processes of historical trauma and how it affects human beings in different ways is a vital part of identifying colonial scarring and its manifestations. Trauma is something that every person can relate to, but each of us perceives, internalizes, and reacts to trauma in different ways.

The juxtaposition of three plays that I present in this article explores how different characters created by Caribbean authors internalize trauma. In *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, first published in 1970, Derek Walcott writes about the hardships of the people living in St. Lucia in the early to mid-1900s, a difficult time for the people of the island. Many of the characters in the play struggle to find their identities and come to terms with

hundreds of years of colonial rule. To contextualize the play, it is important to understand that while writing *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, Derek Walcott was heavily influenced by Japanese cinema and plays. Laurence A. Breiner wrote in *The impact of Japan on Derek Walcott's Early Plays* that:

Dream in particular went through various changes, variously motivated, between its beginnings in 1958 and its first performance in 1967. With such cautions in mind, however, we can be fairly specific about the Japanese influences that he encountered. (Breiner, 2014: 28)

This information becomes pertinent when discussing the woman in white in *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, what she signifies, and her connection to Japanese cinema.

In *Coups and Calypsos*, Trinidadian-Canadian author M. NourbeSe Philip (2001) captures the complicated nuances of race relations in Trinidad and Tobago in the early 1990s. Set in Tobago and first produced in 1999, this complex tale of an estranged marriage between Elvira, an African-Trinidadian woman and Rohan, South Asian-Trinidadian man portrays historical and interpersonal ethnic and racial tensions between the African and South Asian descended populations of Trinidad and Tobago. While *Dream on Monkey Mountain* mainly focuses on the experience of people raced as black versus that of people raced as white, *Coups and Calypsos* adds the complexity of two different groups that are both raced as non-white, whose relations are also characterized by the scars that colonialism left behind in Trinidad and Tobago.

These two groups who should that should find commonality in their situation are bitterly divided because of Eurocentric values and perceived advantages. The backdrop of the play occurs during the Muslimeen coup in the early 1990s in Trinidad. Political and racial tensions are extremely high as Rohan and Elvira are reunited because Elvira was not able to catch a flight out of Tobago in time. During their time together, they speak and reflect on their lives, their dead child, the coup, their failed marriage, and address the role race played in the failure of their marriage.

In *White*, Koko Brown (2017) decided to write a play about being mixed race. There are several factors that set this play apart from the other two. The first is location. Koko Brown grew up England and her father is Jamaican. Another major difference is the important role that music and technology play in *White* when compared to *Dream* and *Coups*. In a way music is the supporting cast of *White*. Not only is music constantly being played, but references are made to several contemporary bands and musical movements. The dynamic of the play is different too; with Brown constantly breaking the fourth wall and making her audience think and ruminate.

During the early years of presenting her play, Brown would gather people of mixed heritage and have conversations with them after the show. They would share the nuances about the mixed experience. She realized early on in this process that being mixed race is not a monolith. In the preface, she left the following instructions on how to perform the play.

The character is gender and age non-specific. This play incorporates music throughout. The performer is encouraged to create music live in any format or style that suits them, and to find their own rhythm within the poetry. There is pre-show music playing while the audience enter. The song should represent what the performer listened to when they were younger. (Brown, 2017: 36)

Depending on the performer, the viewing experience of *White* can change from performance to performance. This speaks to the reality that Brown has experienced in her life and how aware she is that being mixed race is not a singular experience.

It is important to note the role music has in all three plays. *Dream on Monkey Mountain* opens with music and the chorus singing “*Mooma mooma, your son in de jail a’ready, your son in de jail a’ready, take a towel and band your belly*” (Walcott, 1970: 280). The song is of Jamaican origin and it is sung by a son who has been arrested and is sorry he has disappointed his mother. In *Coups and Calypsos*, music plays a different role. The juxtaposition of calypso music being played in between important news updates about the coup is similar to the dichotomy that exists between Rohan and Elvira. Rohan appears to be relaxed and enjoys the upbeat calypso music while Elvira is in a serious mood, worried about the state of the island, and very much interested in the news updates. This mirrors the state of their marriage. Rohan wants to continue their romance while Elvira has experienced too much trauma and needs to go on a journey of self-healing and discovery.

One of the major concerns of trauma theory is determining a viable definition of trauma. Current definitions of trauma (Caruth, 1996) are limited because they focus on a singular traumatic event and ignore the cumulative nature of trauma such as micro-aggressions and insidious traumas passed down through history and embedded in the daily structures and practices of society. Craps (2013) details the four ways in which current definitions of trauma have failed postcolonial and trauma theory:

They fail on at least four counts: they marginalize or ignore traumatic experiences of non-western or minority cultures, they tend to take for granted the universal validity of definitions of trauma and recovery that have developed out of the history of western modernity, they often favour or even prescribe a modern aesthetic of fragmentation and aporia as uniquely suited to the task of bearing witness to trauma, and they generally disregard the connections between metropolitan and non-western or minority traumas. (2)

The minimization of the traumatic experiences of non-western and minority groups is a traumatic experience in and of itself. One of the most damaging aspects of living in a postcolonial state is the misrepresentation of the formerly colonized at home and abroad. Often times those who are in power in the metropole, colonial territories, or

post-colonial states have generally ignored minority and marginalized groups' opinions, trauma, and issues in general.

Trauma and internalized racism

One of the main causes of trauma in the Caribbean, and major contributor to colonial scarring is internalized racism. In the 1940s, Kenneth and Mamie Clark conducted the infamous 'Doll Experiment', whose results attested to the existence internalized racism and its negative effects:

It is clear [...] that the majority of these Negro children prefer the white doll and reject the colored doll [...] [and most] subjects indicated [...] that they liked the white doll "best," or that the white doll is a "nice doll." [...] [and] that the brown doll, rather than the white doll, "looks bad." (1947: 175-177)

When confronted with the fact that they believed that the black doll was bad, and that they themselves were black, some of the children ran out of the room, traumatized and crying. Some eighty years later, after the advances made during and after the Civil Rights Era, one might expect society to have moved on, but Kiri Davis (2007) recreated the famous Clark doll experiments in the 2000s and, although her sample size was small (20 students), 15 of the 20 young elementary school students interviewed preferred to play with the white doll. They also pointed to the white doll as the "good doll." This is a stark reminder that internalized racism; Eurocentric values of beauty/goodness, and colonial scars are still very much present and relevant today.

Internalized racism in the Caribbean can be traced back to colonialism and neo-colonialism. This becomes apparent in the plight of Makak, the main character in *Dream on Monkey Mountain* who is raced as black. Makak has basically retreated from society, choosing to live an almost completely isolated life away from the world except for his one friend Moustique, and the time he spends in the market selling charcoal. Other than that, he spends his time on Monkey Mountain living in isolation, speaking to barely a soul, and making charcoal. We can see how deflated a human being he is when he is put in jail for having a "fit" which can be interpreted as a violent manifestation of his trauma stemming from the isolation he has subjected himself to. While in jail, he pleads with the corporal to let him go:

Sirs, I am sixty years old. I have live my life like a wild beast in hiding. Without child, without wife. People forget me like the mist on Monkey Mountain. Is thirty years now I have look in no mirror, not a pool of cold water, when I must drink, I stir my hands first, to break up my image. (Walcott, 1970: 297)

The extent of his self-hatred and self-loathing is such that for three decades, he has decided to hide himself away from society, and has renounced love and companionship, the most fundamental of human needs. As a direct consequence, he has not fathered any

children. A major reason for this behavior is his internalization of all the negative stereotypes that are associated with racism.

Makak is not the main character's real name, and it is no coincidence that his name sounds very much like that of a monkey. We also see the negative effects of colonial scarring and internalized racism on Moustique, Makak's closest and only friend. Moustique is not only raced as black, but also has a clubbed foot. Makak literally picked Moustique up out of the gutter and helped him by giving him a job in his charcoal business. Even though he may be grateful to Makak for everything he has done for him, the classic scars of colonialism can be seen in the way Moustique talks and refers to himself and Makak when he questions his friend about the white woman Makak claims to have talked to all night: "Which white lady? You is nothing. You black, ugly, poor, so you worse than nothing. You like me. Small, ugly, with a foot like an 'S.' Man together two of us in minus one" (Walcott, 1970: 311).

In *Coups and Calypsos* we encounter internalized racism in a subtler manner. While Elvira is speaking to Rohan about the passing of their child, Elvira mentions what people and her family have said about their relationship: "She trying to get a little soft hair and high colour for she children" (NourbeSe Philip, 2001: 129). This desire for lighter skin for oneself or one's children can be attributed to internalized racism. When Rohan attempts to assuage her by telling her that only ignorant bigoted people say such things, she asks him: "Have you ever thought that was true?" (NourbeSe Philip, 2001: 129). That is a telling line. She is simultaneously asking Rohan if he believes that this is what she wants, and casting doubt on herself.

Her family is also complicit. Rohan's family has not been very supportive of their marriage, yet Elvira's has. Elvira understands that that love and support from her family comes from a very dark and upsetting place. It comes from a place of internalized racism. Her family has obviously been thinking of her children, children born with lighter skin and 'better' hair. Elvira is also upset at herself. She loves Rohan, but she feels that she has run away from her blackness. She feels that she has betrayed herself and her color.

In *White*, the subject of internalized racism is also nuanced. At one point Brown writes: "Our narratives have always been anti-black" (Brown, 2017: 364). The "our" here refers to people raced as black. She mentions the widespread use of skin lightening creams and accuses the communities who are raced as black of looking at beauty standards through Eurocentric lenses. After these allegations, she begins to self reflect.

This is not the way things should be but the why, why, did I feel the need to hide from the sun? Staying in the shade is no fun. Saying, 'I don't wanna get a tan', 'I don't wanna get too dark.' Then what does that mean for my naturally dark-skinned friends? Does that mean I subconsciously shed shame on them? (Brown, 2017: 371)

Brown admits that subconsciously, she is aware of her internalized racism. She acknowledges that it should not be that way and that she should not feel that way. For all her positivity and self-awareness, she is still unable to escape this colonial scar. Getting a tan should not be an existential crisis. The fact she even thinks in this manner is evidence of internalized racism and how it affects her life and actions. Staying in the shade means avoiding having fun for the sake of not getting darker.

Trauma and not being understood

Another mechanism of colonial scarring that is at work in these plays is the frustration and trauma caused by not being understood. In *White*, Brown describes one such experience from her childhood. “‘Girl Power’ growled through timid teeth! I was never really a beast. I was actually quite quiet and shy. So I wondered why I always had to be Scary Spice” (Brown, 2017: 76), referring to the only member of the 1990s Spice Girls pop quartet who was raced as non-white. Here she articulates how her friends who were raced as white had unintentionally inflicted trauma on Brown,

Much like Brown’s young white childhood friends, psychologists also show an inability to connect with and understand their patients when they are not raced as white. This leaves the Caribbean diaspora largely underserved when it comes to mental health. To put this in perspective, Sutherland (2011) writes:

The limitations in using Euro-American psychological assumptions in studying Caribbean peoples is that the scholar is likely to commit transubstantive errors or “mistakes of meaning”. These occur when psychologists without critical analysis use cultural and psychological norms developed to explain a particular cultural group’s behavior to understand and explain the psychological functioning of a different cultural group. (1176)

Such misunderstandings may cause people of the Caribbean substantial harm when seeking medical attention for mental issues such as depression and PTSD caused by their experiences with race and injustice. Given that various studies show how ignorant, unprepared, and unequipped psychological professionals are in handling the mental issues of Caribbean people and the diaspora, one shudders at the thought of how such issues are routinely mishandled by all of the non-professionally trained people that traumatized Caribbean people must deal with in their day to day lives. Brown’s friends probably never realized the pain that they were causing when telling her that she had to be Scary Spice, but that does not dull the pain of their actions.

A common byproduct of not being understood is mental anguish. As is the case with micro aggressions, it has a negative cumulative effect that creates trauma for those experiencing it. In *Coups and Calypsos*, Elvira explains to Rohan the toll that such anguish has taken on her everyday life. “You don’t see them, Rohan, but there are these cuts. All over me. (pause) None of them has healed. Or if one heals, another one opens”

(NourbeSe Philip, 2001: 124). It is important to note that this not how she feels some of the time. This is a feeling she carries with her on a daily basis. This is trauma that has haunted her for the entirety of their relationship, since its beginnings, throughout their marriage, and after the death of their child. We can see how weary and mentally drained Elvira is, when she tells Rohan: “They all blame you for killing your father - the shock of your marrying a *hanoman* - a monkey” (NourbeSe Philip, 2001: 121). *Hanoman* is a reference to a Hindu monkey god. While South Asians in Trinidad and Tobago sometimes refer to African descended people as ‘monkeys,’ African descended people in Trinidad and Tobago sometimes refer to South Asians as ‘Coolies.’

We can also see the dynamic of not being understood and the inability to be understood manifested in the relationship between Mrs. Samuels and Rohan. As mentioned before, they are neighbors and friendly towards each other, but racial tension and division can be seen in their interactions. The first time Mrs. Samuels finds out Elvira is African; she playfully admonishes him for not telling her. Rohan’s response is simply “I thought I had” (NourbeSe Philip, 2001: 93). Given that Rohan wants something from Mrs. Samuels, in the form of information about the labor strikes she participated in, you can infer that he kept this information hidden from her on purpose. At one point they are talking to each other about the current coup when Mrs. Samuels asks, “Mr. Rohan, you is Indian and me hear is Indian religion dese Muslimeen following, what dis word Muslimeen mean?” (NourbeSe Philip, 2001: 94). There is a lot to unpack in this seemingly innocuous question. Even though the coup is being conducted by an African descended group, they are Muslims, therefore Mrs. Samuels wants nothing to do with them. The other thing that she is doing is associating Rohan with the Muslim religion. Knowing that the South Asian descended population of Trinidad and Tobago has greatly benefited from the Calvinist Christian movement, this is a subtle dig at the hypocrisy of some of the South Asian descended population in pretending to be Christian to gain advantages while secretly continuing to honor their South Asian religions at home.

When Rohan says he has no idea what they are about, she throws another subtle jab at him by saying: “Me did think since you come from foreign you might a know” (NourbeSe Philip, 2001: 95). To which he replies: “Foreign! (*laughs*) You know I’m from Trinidad, Mrs. Samuels” (95). Mrs. Samuels could have meant several things with this comment. She could be referring to him as a foreigner because he gave up his Trinidadian passport in order to leave the island and gain access to educational benefits in England, an opportunistic move of which many people on the island disapprove. She could have been simply referring to the fact that he has spent time abroad and may have certain knowledge of foreign affairs, or she could have been simply insulting him. Rohan takes the comment in stride and continues forward cordially because he wants something from her.

During the 1930’s, Trinidad and Tobago was feeling the effects of the Great Depression. There was a substantive amount of unrest in the country due to the prevailing unjust

labor practices. The wages in the oil and sugar fields were kept unfairly low as profits skyrocketed for those in charge. Kicked out of the Trinidad Labor Party (TLP) for extreme views, Tubal Uriah Butler became the leader for the African descended oil workers. Butler called for unity between all the unions and people. Together with the help of South Asian descended leaders like Adrian Cola Rienzi, the Butler party was created. Through a series of strikes and perilous situations, they succeeded in unifying the people, in spite of race, and managed to raise the quality of life for the workers.

Mrs. Samuels was present at many of these strikes and related historically significant events. Rohan wants to interview her as part of the research that he needs to carry out in order to write a book that he has been working on for a long time now. Although Mrs. Samuels speaks freely of Butler during the play, she has not agreed to be formally interviewed. She is reticent to share her insight because the person writing the book is of South Asian descent. Her bias can be traced back to her colonial scars. Uriah Butler was a great man in her mind and she is not comfortable having a South Asian descended man write about him, even though she has no qualms asking Rohan for a ride into town when she needs it.

In *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, Makak passes through a number of mental states that range from clarity to madness. When he is arrested for disorderly conduct, his defense is that he falls into “fits” when there is a full moon and he experiences an apparition that goes by many names in the play, including the moon, the muse, the white Goddess, and even the dancer. At first glance it is easy to mistake what she represents. The first thing we know about her is that she inspired Makak and gave him a calling, a purpose for his life. That combined with the description Makak gives of her: “The loveliest thing I see on this earth” (Walcott, 1970: 299), may lead one to believe she is simply a benevolent spirit or the idealized, stereotypical idea of Eurocentric beauty and goodness, but she is much more. Here, it is important to understand that when Walcott wrote *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, he was heavily influenced by Japanese film and theatre. The image of the white Goddess represents a merger of similar figures in Japanese films that heavily influenced Walcott’s writing at the time.

Years of self-isolation has left Makak scarred and in mental anguish. When the apparition first appears, she gives Makak a purpose and a mission. This purpose and mission are what he becomes obsessed with. Near the end of the play, when Makak has achieved his goal and becomes a tyrannical leader, he is urged to kill her. Before he does, he asks the Corporal to tell him who she is, who she really is. “She, she? What you beheld my prince, was but an image of your longing. As inaccessible as snow, as fatal as leprosy” (Walcott, 1970: 413). A bit later, he continues with the description: “She is the white light that paralyzed your mind, that led you into this confusion. It is you who created her, so kill her” (Walcott, 1970: 414). Shortly after these words are spoken Makak beheads her and the dream is over. He has killed the obsession that has taken over his life

and sanity. Once he kills the moon Goddess he snaps back to reality and discovers it has all been a dream.

Trauma and colorism

Colonial scarring and trauma also manifest themselves in the characters of these Caribbean plays as colorism. There is tremendous trauma in not knowing one's place in this world, feeling lost, and feeling out of place. Makak sets out on a journey to find Africa because he feels lost. Makak tells Moustique in the beginning of the play:

Saddle my horse, if you love me, Moustique, and cut sharp bamboo for me, and put me on that horse, for Makak will ride to the edge of the world, Makak will walk like he used to in Africa, when his name was lion! (Walcott, 1970: 310)

When Moustique asks Makak if they are going to war, he simply replies "Non. To Africa" (310). Makak has figuratively been lost on a mountain for over thirty years. He is looking to reclaim his heritage while cementing his place in history. The apparition has given him motivation to move forward. To walk like he walked in Africa means to walk with pride. In his vision of Africa, there are no white people looking down on him and holding him back. This perceived holy land holds the promise of erasing all the scars caused by his being black in a world that values only whiteness.

Skin color stratification is system that grants privileges and opportunities to those who possess lighter complexions within communities that have been raced as non-white. Hunter (2005: 1) states that: "Hidden within the process of racial discrimination, is the often-overlooked issue of colorism. Lighter-skinned African Americans and Mexican Americans enjoy substantial privileges that are still unattainable to their darker-skinned brothers and sisters." In *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, the Corporal is described as being a mulato, in other words, he is of mixed racial descent. Because his skin color is closer than most of the local population to Eurocentric norms of beauty, he has rank and a higher quality of life than most of the people mentioned in the play. As he walks around the market and interacts with the locals, he has certain authority that goes unchallenged. At one point, he calls a melon a pawpaw [papaya]. When the sanitation inspector informs him that it was a melon, Corporal responds: "I know. But in the opinion of the pistol, and for the preservation of order, and to avoid any argument, we both satisfied it was a pawpaw" (Walcott, 1970: 342).

The Corporal also engages in what Pyke (2010) describes as defensive othering:

These terms are used to "other" members within the subordinated group, deeming them inferior in order to mark oneself or one's co-ethnic peer group as superior. By attributing the negative stereotypes and images that the dominant society associates with the racial/ethnic group to "other" members within the group, the subordinated can distance themselves from the negative stereotype. (557)

Although the Corporal himself is raced as at least partially black, he uses racial slurs against the African descended prisoners in order to distance himself from them, manifesting his colonial scarring and trauma. Instead of being at peace with who he is, the Corporal prefers to engage in defensive othering in order to distance himself from the pain of being racially othered.

Similar behavior can be observed in *Coups and Calypsos*. As is the case elsewhere in the Caribbean, in Trinidad and Tobago both African descended and South Asian descended people generally view lighter skin as more desirable. Even though Rohan loves Elvira deeply, and he shows it when he is willing to overlook the fact that Elvira has been seeing someone else, he admits that his love did come with shame. He felt shame at loving her color. Colonialism has scarred the peoples of the Caribbean into believing that the whiter something or someone is, the better it is, the closer to purity and goodness it is.

In *White*, Koko Brown (2017) contemplates the role light skin has or does not have in her life:

I've got a lot of privilege, But I am not white, So I, can't call it white privilege,
I've got a lot of privilege, But I'm half white, So what should I call the half-white privilege? Is 'Mixed' privilege a thing? Should I call it 'mixed-race privilege', is that even a thing? (162)

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Brown is referring here at least in part to the colorist manner in which those who are raced as black treat her and speak to her. Although whiter features are seen as more desirable, they do not come without their drawbacks: "They say: 'You think you're better than me 'cause you're lightskinned, but we came in the same boat [a reference to enslavement]'" (Brown, 2017: 172). This is a way of reminding her that even though she is light skinned, she is still raced as black. Brown tells the audience that people constantly call her exotic, ask her where she is from, and tell her that she is not really black or white.

Trauma and 'double consciousness'

Another of the scars that stem from the traumas of colonialism is that of not knowing where one belongs. Being stuck in between two worlds without really belonging to either. Frantz Fanon wrote: "Ontology does not allow us to understand the being of the black man, since it ignores the lived experience. For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man" (Fanon, 1967: 90). Fanon is speaking about being raced as black and being colonized at the same time. He is expressing how difficult it is for colonized people to just be themselves. Everything they do, everything they say, and however they act, are in relation to the white man and his Eurocentric values. Those values are ever present and asphyxiating, and together they constitute the standard that no colonized person can ever measure up to.

One hundred years after W.E.B. Du Bois (1903) introduced the concept of ‘double consciousness’ to describe this traumatic state of affairs and the scarring that it causes, not much has changed: “One ever feels his twoness, -an American, a Negro: two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder” (3). In *White*, Brown (2017) illustrates this when she writes:

You don’t know who you are. You, you’re being torn apart from the inside out.
You don’t know where you fit. You want to escape it but can’t figure a way out.
Hey kid get your gun, get your gun, get your gun. You are in a war, in a war, in
a war, you are in a war with yourself. Two worlds collided and here you are.
When worlds collide, Where do you stand.? (231)

Brown uses the word war to describe the feeling she has within. To have a war raging inside of you is a poetic way to describe the trauma of being in between worlds and not knowing the path forward. She also refers to this when she is being described as black. “Who’s your friend over there? The black girl with the short hair. *She stops the music*. Where? Me? Nah, can’ be. You see I think you’ll find that I’m mixed. I’m as much black as I am white” (2017: 92). While she acknowledges that she is of both worlds, people do not let her claim either of them. She is too black to be white, and too white to be black. Whenever she claims one, people are quick to tell her that she does not belong.

In *Coups and Calypsos*, Elvira gives Rohan an impassioned speech in which she explains the toll that such duality takes on her everyday life.

I always feel as if I’m bleeding, Rohan. Oozing. And the questions: Should I go back or should I stay in England. Am I coloured, Negro, or Black? Afro-Saxon, or Afro-English? Or just plain African? West Indian or Caribbean? Depending on whom I talked to I could be all those things in one day. You don’t see them, Rohan, but there are these cuts. All over me. (pause) None of them has healed. Or if one heals, another one opens. (NourbeSe Philip, 2001: 124)

There is an excruciating tug of war in the heart of the colonized. There is a huge divide between where they come from and where they are going, who they are, and who they want to become. Elvira and Rohan had to give up their Trinidad and Tobago citizenship in order to realize their educational dreams in Britain. For this, they are sometimes called traitors in the land where they were born. But when they travel abroad, they find out they are not welcomed there either. Rohan also comments on the effects that this duality has had on his life and his relationship with Elvira.

What don’t I get, Elvira? That we are the products of one of the biggest fuck-ups in history? And the only thing that fuck-up has birthed are crazy, confused people like us – you and me- Elvira and Rohan – who talk about belonging, when we

don't even have a pot to piss in. (NourbeSe Philip, 2001: 109)

This feeling of not belonging is a reoccurring theme in postcolonial studies and trauma theory. Elvira and Rohan are stuck between two worlds, the British world and the one on Trinidad and Tobago. To complicate matters, they are also stuck between the racial divides of their island that were designed to pit them against each other. In characterizing their situation as the result of one of 'the biggest fuck-ups in history', Rohan is telling Elvira how he feels not only about colonialism, but also about the fact that having two distinctly racialized groups living in such proximity feels like a bad experiment to him. This duality is what makes Elvira eventually leave Rohan. She decides to separate from him and date someone who is also raced as black. She wants to immerse herself in a world where everyone and everything is black, so she doesn't have to live between two worlds.

In *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, the Corporal also mentions his precarious duality. Near the end of the play, once Makak has become king of all nations, the Corporal convinces Makak to kill the apparition. In a way, he is attempting to help Makak overcome his obsession, or madness. He wants him to behead the woman in order to be free of his madness. While doing this he describes the woman and his feelings about duality. "Nun, virgin, Venus, you must violate, humiliate, destroy her; otherwise, humility will infect you. You will be what I was, neither one thing nor the other" (Walcott, 1970: 406). Once again, we see this feeling of being stuck in limbo, being neither one thing, nor the other. Trapped between two worlds, never actually belonging or being able to find a safe haven. The Corporal's feelings are so strong on this subject that he uses such words as 'violate,' 'humiliate,' and 'destroy.' This feeling of not belonging is so strong that the Corporal finds himself projecting it onto the apparition. Being stuck between two worlds feels like a violation, a violation of one's own being. It is humiliating. Not belonging and not finding one's place feels like humiliation because you have failed. You have failed to find your place. Lastly, it feels like you are being destroyed. Destroyed from the inside out because there is no reprieve, there is no sanctuary, either physically or emotionally when one is stuck between two worlds.

The church as an agent of colonial scarring and trauma

Finally, I will touch upon the complicity of church in the colonial and neo-colonial enterprises and the pivotal role that the church has always played, and continues to play, in traumatizing and scarring the people of the colonies in the Caribbean and elsewhere. One of the key institutions responsible for the propagation of the Eurocentric values that have been so detrimental to the colonized in general and to people raced as non-white in particular is Christianity:

The Church in the colonies is a white man's Church, a foreigner's Church. It does not call the colonized to the ways of God, but to the ways of the white man, to the ways of the master, the ways of the oppressor. (Fanon, 1963: 7)

Christianity has been used as a weapon to suppress the fighting spirit of those who have been subjugated by colonial and neo-colonial rule. By promoting meekness and suffering, the church has aided and abetted the forces of colonization and neo-colonization to quell the rebellious spirits of those who have dared to question the colonial status quo and/or the systems of domination upon which it depends. The church has always taught that suffering here on earth leads to a greater prize in heaven. These 'teachings' have made the church a more than willing accomplice in the process of colonial scarring and trauma.

When Makak is being interviewed in jail by the corporal, he is asked what religion he belongs to, his response is *Catolique*, a reference to the Catholic religion. There is a connection between Makak's self-hatred and his religious views. In *Coups and Calypsos*, religion is one of the complex factors that create animosity between the South Asian and African descended people. At one point, Elvira is arguing with Rohan and gives us an insight to the damage and trauma caused by the church: "It beats Elvira Jackson. And those missionaries - the racist, Presbyterian ones from Canada whose names you have - didn't they come to civilize Indians and not Africans, because they thought we were incapable of being civilized?" (NourbeSe Philip, 2001: 127). Elvira bitterly mentions the Canadian Presbyterian Church that arrived on the island in the 1800s and almost exclusively catered to the South Asian descended population. While the church required them to convert to Christianity, the educational system that they set in place allowed South Asian descended Trinidadians an easier path towards upward mobility. The fact that one of Rohan's Christian names is Morton is not lost on Elvira.

The colonial scarring inflicted by the church has not only pitted African and South Asian descended people against each other, it has also pitted Christians against non-Christians. It is important to note that even though members of the African descended population are carrying out the coup, their Islamic faith has deprived them of the support of many of the African descended people on the island. Elvira was not interested in the Muslimeen, their coup or their intentions. At one point she tells Rohan "Sun, sea and sex! Isn't that what all the tourist brochures promise you? They don't say anything about coups and soldiers. They should all bloody well be sued" (NourbeSe Philip, 2001: 92). It is a humorous proposition, to sue soldiers for breach of contract, but it reveals her state of mind and her feelings towards the coup. She simply doesn't care for it. She shows more concern for the travel delays the coup will cause her, than the political ideology and program being fought for.

Conclusion

The characters of the three plays considered in this article have all lived deeply traumatic experiences that do not fit the traditional definitions assigned to trauma in a number of ways. The fact that their trauma is left largely unacknowledged and unaddressed by psychiatrists, psychologists and other professionals who are normally tasked with

healing the scarring that results from traumatic experiences speaks volumes about the degree to which racism has saturated the entire edifice of Western science. It is no accident that the recent emergence of critical race theory (for example, Alim, Reyes & Kroskrity, 2021) has met with such irrational and visceral resistance. Critical race theory represents one of the first comprehensive and systematic attempts in Western academia to definitively break with its racist past, in order to recognize and begin to heal the scarring that results from internalized racism, colorism, double consciousness and the other toxic waste of racialized domination described in this article. As such, it threatens some of the key internalized mechanisms upon which the entire edifice of hegemonic domination depends, and therefore has become the vilified target of a coordinated smear campaign which has rapidly spread from right wing echo-chambers to the mainstream media with a virulence that smacks of neo-fascist witch-hunting.

The deliberate failures of Western science and Western medicine to deal with the types of trauma and scarring that have been inflicted by colonialism and neo-colonialism on the characters examined in this article could in some sense and in some cases be considered irrelevant, since those who are most severely traumatized and most deeply scarred are usually those with least access to Western medical and psychiatric care. But many of those who lack such access ‘jump from the frying pan and into the fire’ by turning to Christianity instead for psychic healing. The tragic irony whereby millions of the most seriously traumatized and scarred people in the Caribbean and its diaspora flock every Sunday to the same churches that have played such a central, relentless and unapologetic role in amplifying their trauma and deepening their wounds is almost too revoltingly apocalyptic to contemplate. Instead of the healing that they so desperately seek, their colonial wounds are violently reopened and caustically inflamed each sabbath by the neo-colonial, racist, patriarchal and fascist diatribes of pastors and priests who are supported and funded by fundamentalist Protestant millionaires and reactionary Catholic bishops in the US. The three plays that we have studied in this article remind us that the processes of colonial traumatization, wounding and scarring have by no means come to an end, but unfortunately are still very much at work in the Caribbean and its diaspora, as well as in the rest of the formerly colonized and presently neo-colonized world.

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A NUYORICAN CRIES OUT: TATO LAVIERA'S *PREGÓN*

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Abstract

Tato Laviera is one of the most well-known poets of the Puerto Rican diaspora. An engaged community activist during his life, Laviera was deeply involved both in confronting social issues as well as in articulating the voices of his community. In this article, I highlight the transnational nature of his writing.

Key Terms: Tato Laviera, Puerto Rican poetry, transnational literature

Introduction

Tato Laviera (1951-2013) also known as “Taro,” is one of the most prolific and celebrated poets in Puerto Rican diaspora history. Born Jesús Abraham Laviera Sánchez in Santurce, Puerto Rico, at the age of 9 he moved with his family to the Lower East Side of New York City. As a teenager he began studies at Cornell University and afterward at the City University of New York's Brooklyn College, but he did not complete his undergraduate studies in either institution. Instead, Laviera chose to dive into an education project called the University of the Streets. This project aided adults in earning a high school diploma and in some cases attending college. Laviera was also an administrator of a community service agency called the Association of Community Services. As a young man, Laviera directed the Hispanic Drama Workshop. During the 1970s, he taught at Livingston College of Rutgers University.

Laviera was deeply involved and active in confronting the social issues of his community, and this is where his socially-conscious poetry can be at least partially traced back to. His Puerto Rican ancestry and New York City upbringing account for the transnational characteristics in his writing. Laviera is also influenced by the Puerto Rican tradition of the poet as *pregonero*, [towncrier] (all translations are by the author unless specified otherwise). The transnational aspect of Laviera's outcry is seen through the way island and diaspora Puerto Rican communities participate in Puerto Rican identity

discourse. Laviera's *pregón* forces them to acknowledge each other. What I call *pregón*,

"AmeRícan"

The poem "AmeRícan" (Lavieria, 1985) in the book of the same title, is an affirmation of Puerto Rican identity. When one pronounces the title of the poem, it sounds like 'Am a Rican,' which is exactly what Laviera intended, to affirm his Puerto Rican-ness. However, this double entendre also means American, as in citizens that are an indelible part of the United States, which Puerto Ricans have been since 1917. Laviera is suggesting that Puerto Ricans are a definitive part of the American experience, "defining the new America," (1985: 95, line 50) while remaining true to their island roots and culture.

Lavieria begins by establishing the important contribution of the Puerto Rican nation to US culture, and how Puerto Rican nuances have given shape to modern American life. Laviera writes: "we gave birth to a new generation... / AmeRícan, it includes everything/imaginable you-name-it-we-got-it / society" (1985: 94, lines 6-8). Moreover, Laviera stresses the richness of Puerto Rican culture and its characteristic racial diversity, paying tribute to all who have contributed to the formation of the Puerto Rican nation: "We gave birth to a new generation, / AmeRícan salutes all folklores, / European, indian, black, spanish, / and anything else compatible:" (1985, 94: lines 9-12).

Duany's theoretical approach in *Blurred borders* (2011) is useful to comprehend Puerto Rican racial stratification, as expressed in the poem. Regarding Puerto Ricans in the diaspora, the mixture is seen as so diverse that they define themselves with various terms. Duany writes: "Puerto Ricans in the United States may define themselves as a "racial," ethnic, national, panethnic, or transnational group..." (2011: 111).

The contributions of African descended Puerto Ricans such as Pedro Flores, as well as those of all Puerto Ricans of African ancestry, are always present in Laviera's work. Amerindian, Spanish and Spanish-Gypsy or Roma ancestries are also celebrated by Laviera in this poem, which suggests that he attributes a starring role to all in Puerto Rican identity. *Música jíbara*, [rural native music] is alluded to as another staple of Puerto Rican culture. These are all distinct ways in which Laviera affirms his Puerto Rican-ness, demonstrating his full knowledge of Puerto Rican culture and its idiosyncrasies. Laviera writes:

AmeRícan, sweet soft Spanish danzas gypsies / moving lyrics la Española cascabelling / presence always singing at our side! / AmeRícan, beating jíbaro modern troubadour / crying guitars romantic continental / bolero love songs! (1985, 94: lines 15-20)

After affirming his Puerto Rican-ness, Laviera begins to reveal the transnational phenomenon that I address in this article. Laviera writes: "AmeRícan, across forth and

across back / back across and forth back / forth across and back and forth / our trips are walking bridges!" (1985, 94: lines 21-24).

Laviera goes on to point out the discrimination and marginalization that so many Puerto Ricans must endure when residing in the 'belly of the beast'. Laviera describes the intent of Puerto Ricans of the Muñoz era diaspora to adapt to US culture without losing their island culture, but they were rejected by mainstream US society and even when managing to succeed, often have been labeled as 'affirmative action cases'. Such was the case of the New York-born Puerto Rican Judge, Sonia Sotomayor, who in 2009 was selected by President Barack Obama to be appointed Supreme Court Justice. Sotomayor was deemed an affirmative action case by the conservative and racist political commentator Pat Buchanan, and in her memoir also details how she had to confront such criticism while studying at Princeton University and Yale Law School. However, Laviera suggests that within that marginalization, Puerto Ricans have created their own identity to combat such ostracism and function as an antidote to those discriminatory and racist practices. Laviera writes:

It all dissolved into itself, the attempt / was truly made, the attempt was truly / absorbed, digested we spit out / the poison, we spit out the malice, / we stand affirmative in action, / to reproduce a broader answer to the / marginality that gobbled us up abruptly! (1985, 94: lines 25-31)

Laviera states that Puerto Ricans must construct their identity on their own terms, without allowing anyone, whether it is a US native or island Puerto Rican, to define who they are. Laviera affirms his Puerto Rican-ness within the United States once more by emphasizing the capitalized R and the accent on the í. The R is to express that he is referring directly to Rican from Puerto Rican. The accent on the í is an even stronger statement affirming his Puerto Rican-ness because the accent is emblematic of the Spanish language. Laviera is also suggesting that Puerto Ricans are as American as any other Americans. This is Laviera's creative genius, the ability to use neologisms and language play to convey his message. In this case, the author suggests Puerto Ricans have both feet firmly planted on both sides of the fence concerning American culture and Puerto Rican culture. Laviera writes:

defining myself my own way any way many / ways Am e Rícan, with the R and the / accent on the í!... / AmeRícan, integrating in new york and defining our / own destino, our own way of life. (1985: 95, lines 36-38, 48-49)

Laviera states that although stateside Puerto Ricans may be physically far from the island, Puerto Rican music is deeply embedded in their identity. This poem reflects how the author writes of rejoicing in Afro-Puerto Rican music, *plena*, while attracting admiration from other people in The City, as New York City is often called. This is also a way of suggesting that the beauty and influence of Puerto Rican music does not wither

despite geographic distance or influence of another culture. Laviera writes: “AmeRícan, walking plena -rhythms in new 260ork, / strutting beautifully alert, alive, / many turning eyes wondering, admiring!” (1985, 94: lines 32-34).

Laviera reveals the influence of transnationalism on Puerto Rican identity again when he speaks of the creation of “Spanglish” in the slums and street corners of The City. The usage of this speech repertoire attests to the fact that Puerto Ricans have been brought up while balancing two cultures and languages, a ‘trans’ ‘in-betweenity.’

Though it might seem ironic, being brought up in among multiple cultures provides ground for stateside Puerto Ricans to construct their own identity because it forces them to find their true selves in a land far from Puerto Rico. And they are thrust into being part of and contributing to the very same US society that often marginalizes them and stagnates their chances at upward mobility. In her article, “The Playful ‘i’ in Tato Laviera’s Poetry: An ‘Arte Poética,’” Nancy Bird-Soto (2013) interprets the ideas of subaltern studies theorist Homi Bhabha in order to shed light on this matter. Bird-Soto writes:

According to Homi Bhabha, in-between spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood---singular or communal---that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself. (2013: 2)

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Laviera finalizes the poem by expressing his dissent with US discrimination against Puerto Ricans and reveals why he cannot fully adhere to the plain term ‘American’ in the US context. Laviera’s verses reflect an air of hope, for he wishes he could identify with the term ‘American’ because the US is his second home, but it is impossible for him to do so completely under the oppressive circumstances in which the Puerto Rican communities in New York live. This shows that along with criticizing Puerto Rican island culture heavily as well, Laviera criticizes US culture with the same ferocity, especially concerning acceptance. These issues reflect the complexity of a transnational culture such as that of the Puerto Rican diaspora. Laviera writes:

AmeRícan, yes, for now, for i love this, my second / land, and i dream to take the accent from / the altercation, and be proud to call / myself American, in the u.s. sense of the / word, AmeRícan, America! (1985, 95: lines 56-60)

Laviera reveals how Puerto Rican diaspora identity is an amalgamation of island culture and US urban influences that are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but rather in negotiation with one and other. It is from this negotiation that Puerto Rican identity emanates. When looked at from this optic, one gets a clear picture of the transnational phenomenon also happening within island Puerto Rican society. Insular culture impacts Puerto Ricans residing stateside as much as US culture impacts those on the island. Laviera uses the lower case ‘i’ to suggest Puerto Ricans’ individual and collective

identity is negotiated from that ‘in-between’ position that is part of their history. Bird-Soto (2013) discusses this in her work:

Laviera’s cultural landscape encompasses both the Puerto Rican insular and the migratory/bicultural experience. This is a *yo poético* that dialogues with culture on all levels, as a migrant who bridges the island with the American metropolis. It is an “i/yo” that mingles within city streets, homeland connections, and other literary texts that shape its own sense of being...Resistance thus becomes a means of survival and, in the sense of the “i/yo” play, a way to anchor a collective persona. (3)

Laviera’s contends that US and Puerto Rican cultures must acquiesce to the changes thrust upon them by an evolving world filled with nuances. Laviera defies archaic monolithic paradigms of identity and culture imposed by both sides and addresses this through his poetry. The poetic effect compels both societies to acknowledge the transnational phenomenon taking place. Bird-Soto (2013) discusses this: “He also exposes his cultural critique of traditional American and Puerto Rican societies while expanding the horizons of language use as a transnational/bicultural subject” (2).

“Nuyorican”

Now I will discuss the poem “Nuyorican” (Laviera, 1985) an often-cited and powerful poem from the same *AmeRícan* volume, whose importance to Puerto Rican identity discourse cannot be overstated. “Nuyorican” is perhaps the work in which Laviera most deeply expresses his feelings toward Puerto Rico and toward the *criollo* intelligentsia who have historically discriminated against diaspora Puerto Ricans.

Laviera commences by vehemently affirming his Puerto Rican identity by standing up for Puerto Rico’s honor. He suggests that his identity should not be questioned when he is defending the island. And he should not be put through such suffering, especially from the people who he is advocating for. Laviera states that this rejection from some islanders provokes feelings of anger in those Puerto Ricans in the diaspora because those who migrated to the US did so out of necessity, and that stateside Puerto Ricans are sons and daughters of Puerto Rico as much as islanders. Laviera writes:

yo peleo por ti, puerto rico, ¿sabes? / yo me defiando por tu nombre, ¿sabes? /
entro a tu isla, me siento extraño, ¿sabes? / entro a buscar más y más, ¿sabes? /
pero tú con tus calumnias, / me niegas tu sonrisa / me siento mal, agallao / yo
soy tu hijo / de una migración, / pecado forzado (1985: 53, lines 1-10)

Duany (2011) sheds light on how stateside Puerto Ricans, specifically middle-class Puerto Ricans in Orlando who he interviewed in a case study, feel much the same way as Laviera concerning their identity politics. Instead of labeling themselves with terms such as Orlando-Rican, they call themselves as Puerto Rican. This shows that they will

not allow any discrimination or misconceived notions of Puerto Rican ‘authenticity’ to question or define their Puerto Rican-ness. Duany writes:

Middle-class Puerto Ricans in Orlando resisted being assimilated into mainstream US culture as well as being bracketed as a racial minority with other people of Latin American ancestry. They insisted on calling themselves Puerto Rican, rather than Nuyorican, Puerto Rican American, or any other compound expression. (2011: 130)

Laviera is pointing out the fact that the diaspora was triggered by poverty and a desire for upward mobility that was very limited on the island and not just by any trivial desire. Laviera also has no compunction about expressing his thoughts concerning matters of Puerto Rican identity. This is also Laviera’s way of criticizing Puerto Rico’s characteristic and ever-present discrimination against the economically disadvantaged on the part of the more affluent on the island. Even today, misinformed people utter that those who receive government-funded assistance programs, such as food stamps to prevent hunger and/or housing to prevent homelessness live better than those in the middle classes. This belief stems from a long history of hatred and exclusion toward the poor. Laviera’s narrative reflects a socioeconomic situation in which the island wanted to rid itself of the poor. Laviera defends those born stateside by speaking in the first person in this poem, including himself despite being born in Puerto Rico. Laviera states: “me mandaste a nacer nativo en otras tierras, / por qué, porque éramos pobres, ¿verdad? / porque tú querías vaciarte de tu gente pobre” (1985: 53, lines 11-13).

Laviera underscores the rejection that diaspora Puerto Ricans receive by some island Puerto Ricans when visiting the island. Here, Laviera taps into language tensions. The author suggests that while Puerto Ricans of the diaspora visit their homeland, they are looked upon with contempt due to their speech despite the love they feel for the island. This is a consequence of the *transnational space* which diaspora Puerto Ricans must navigate. Their speech has been heavily influenced by English due to the necessity of the language to survive in the US work force and social arena. Of course, the upper classes in Puerto Rico are also often fluent in English, but that goes unquestioned.

Certain islanders feel that diasporic Puerto Ricans’ speech has been contaminated with English, which in turn somehow makes them less Puerto Rican. However, Laviera sharply rebuts that nonsense by pointing out islanders’ hypocrisy. Laviera places a mirror in front of island Puerto Ricans, including the discourses that they unquestioningly accept from the *criollo* intelligentsia who have the audacity to question stateside Puerto Ricans’ identity and loyalty to the island’s culture when in reality island Puerto Ricans engage with US culture as much or even more than their diaspora counterparts. Laviera writes: “ahora regreso, con un corazón boricua, y tú / me desprecias, me miras mal, me atacas mi hablar, / mientras comes mcdonalds en discotecas americanas” (1985, 53: lines 14-16).

In the above passage, Laviera also suggests that attacking one's language is a direct assault on a person's identity, and since this study concerns identity, I now provide a theoretical analysis by Nancy Bird-Soto (2013) in which she cites Chicana writer Gloria Anzaldúa to make this point. Bird-Soto is suggesting that 'idiolect' is an integral part of any individual's identity. When an individual's idiolect strays from the collective 'status quo' way of speaking, these persons are deemed as 'inauthentic' by language purists. Such actions intend to undermine diaspora Puerto Ricans and exclude them from the Puerto Rican identity discourse altogether.

Language is one of the primary markers of identity in any society. Laviera attacks the negative stereotype that diaspora Puerto Ricans cannot speak 'correct' Spanish. To combat this fallacy, Laviera writes "Nuyorican" entirely in standard or 'correct' Spanish instead of the more creative Spanglish. In the 2014 article, titled: "Insular Interventions: Tato Laviera's Dialogic Dialogue with Luis Muñoz Marín and José Luis González" Maritza Stanchich writes: "Laveria's later often cited poem "Nuyorican" is strategically written in only Spanish to challenge island misconceptions of the diaspora" (Stanchich, 2014: 145).

False notions of stateside Puerto Ricans' Puerto Rican-ness must be destroyed, for many have developed the ability to speak in both Spanglish and standard Spanish. Diaspora Puerto Ricans' use of creative Spanglish should not be deployed to attack their sense of collective Puerto Rican identity. In addition, it should be deemed as a plus that shows the resiliency of a people who have had to adapt to survive in an English-speaking country while still maintaining their *puertorriqueñidad*.

"Asimilao" and other poems from the volume *AmeRícan*

In the poem "Asimilao" (Laveria, 1985), Laviera continues his critique of Puerto Rico's *criollo* intelligentsia and its stubborn refusal to accept that Puerto Ricans' identity has evolved to become much broader. Laviera stresses that assimilation has not overwhelmed Puerto Ricans in the diaspora. The first example of this is Laviera questioning the use of the word 'assimilated' and changing it to the popular African-influenced Puerto Rican Spanish word *asimilao*, which substitutes for the standard Spanish *asimilado*. Laviera writes: "assimilated? qué assimilated, / brother, yo soy asimilao" (1985: 54, lines 1-2).

Here Laviera also includes the complex issue of race, and sharply criticizes the island's racism against Puerto Ricans with African ancestry. Moreover, Laviera emphasizes that African descended Puerto Ricans who are raced as black have carried the banner of Puerto Rican identity, so much so that the Africa-influenced way of pronouncing Spanish stuck, and that even Puerto Ricans who have not been raced as black have embraced such pronunciation. This is Laviera's way of acknowledging the strength of African ancestry in Puerto Rican identity and culture. Laviera uses *asimilao* instead of *asimilado* to make the point that diaspora Puerto Ricans are as 'genuine' as any Puerto Rican and

this assimilation cannot absorb or erase Puerto Rican culture. There is a paradoxical element in Laviera's writing. He concedes that some stateside Puerto Ricans are being somewhat assimilated because of their closeness to the US American experience. However, Laviera uses the colloquial *-ao* at the end of *asimilao* to firmly state that the diaspora Puerto Ricans' Puerto Rican-ness and African ancestry are ever present. Laviera writes: "así mi la o sí es verdad / tengo un lado asimilao" (1985: 54, lines 3-4).

In "Three-way warning poem" (Laviera, 1985) Laviera reaffirms the Puerto Rican-ness of diasporic Puerto Ricans while making a statement about José Luis González' "*En el fondo del caño hay un negrito*." The poem consists of two sections. One is titled, "*sin nombre*," and the other, "*sin nombre the first*." In the first section, Laviera suggests that in the depths of the diasporic Puerto Rican's character resides a Puerto Rican. The poem is also written in Spanish, emphasizing his mastery of the island's main language to signify stateside Puerto Ricans' 'authenticity.' Laviera writes: "en / el / fondo / del / un / yo / ri / can / hay / un / pu / er / to / rri / que / ño" (1985: 49, lines 1-17).

In the second section, Laviera goes further and suggests that not only are diasporic Puerto Ricans just as Puerto Rican as islanders, but are also willing to include islanders in their identitarian environment, unlike the island *criollo* intelligentsia that excludes stateside Puerto Ricans and classifies them as the Other. Laviera writes: "ste / reo / type / pu / er / to / rri / que / ño / sí / yes / we / can / cut / you / all / in" (1985: 49, lines 18-34). By adding the Spanish and English words for yes, Laviera is affirming Puerto Rican identity while criticizing the discrimination against diaspora Puerto Ricans by the island's *criollo* intelligentsia. Stanchich (2014) discusses this second section of the poem: "part two [...] critiques stereotypes of the diaspora and advocates, at the moment of the affirming "sí / yes" [...] for inclusion to Puerto Rico's discursive national imaginary" (150).

The poem "Brava" (Laviera, 1985) is the last poem from Laviera's book *AmeRícan*. that I will discuss in this article. Laviera uses the female voice to vehemently affirm the 'authenticity' of Puerto Rican diasporic identity. The author chooses the female voice to show Puerto Rican women's characteristic strength of character, especially concerning this issue given that women are key disseminators of Puerto Rican identity. The poem is written in an aggressive and proud tone to dispel any misconception that stateside Puerto Ricans are not 'genuine' Puerto Ricans. Laviera writes:

i am puertorriqueña in / english and there's nothing / you can do but to accept /
it como yo soy sabrosa / proud ask any streetcorner / where pride is what you
defend / go ahead, ask me, on any street- / corner that i am not puertorriqueña, /
come dímelo aquí en mi cara / offend me, atrévete, a menos / que tú no quieras
que yo te meta / un tremendo bochinche de soplamoco / pezcozá that's gonna
hurt you / in either language, así que / no me jodas mucho (1985: 3, lines 20-34)

La carreta made a u-turn and Mixturao and other poems

In his 1979 book of poetry, titled *La carreta made a u-turn* (Laviera, 1979), Laviera began espousing his opposition to one-sided image of Puerto Rican diaspora identity endorsed by Puerto Rico's *criollo* intelligentsia. In this collection, the poet suggested that New York City was indeed a viable destination for Puerto Ricans who sought to improve their working and living conditions, providing an antithesis to René Marqués's *La carreta* (1971, [1953]).

Language is an important marker of Puerto Rican identity. It is the poem "my graduation speech" (Laviera, 1979) that best reflects Laviera's stance concerning language. The poem is written in a sarcastic tone. It is believed that the language in which people think is their native tongue. Laviera makes this point clear in the first lines of the poem to suggest that diasporic Puerto Ricans are as Puerto Rican as any Spanish speakers from the island, and that for them, English compliments Spanish. Laviera writes: "I think in Spanish / I write in English" (1979, 7: 1-2). With the employment of both languages Laviera is also providing a space in which Puerto Ricans in general can forge an identity because it is forcing them to face the transnational reality that produces so much of their experience. As Bird-Soto (2013) writes:

His use of language and the way he chooses to represent his role as poet confirm the collective dimension of his poetry [...] Playing with words as well as with traditional expectations of the use of English or Spanish, or both, Laviera revolutionizes poetry and charges it with a sense of social and political responsibility [...] And what that 'i' says is that language and poetry not only facilitate the validation of the experiences of 'his people,' but also create a space of contestation and reformulation of sociocultural, linguistic, and personal identities. (10)

Laviera then criticizes the racism in Puerto Rico that has been swept under the rug for many generations. Since his hair is coarse, he doubts he will be well-received in some parts of the island. Therefore, he opts for not returning to the island, at least at the time that Laviera wrote these words in 1979. Laviera writes: "I want to go back to puerto rico, / but I wonder if my kink could live / in ponce, mayagüez and carolina" (1979: 7, lines 3-5). Today in 2018, there would be a sense of irony concerning Carolina because the town of Carolina is now one with a high concentration of Puerto Ricans of African ancestry. This passage is also reminiscent of the book's title. Puerto Rican migrants might find it difficult to go back to the island because the sociocultural landscape has changed and there is little opportunity of upward mobility. Therefore, he chooses to make a 'U-Turn' and return to New York City.

The language in-betweenity experienced by diasporic Puerto Ricans is very well represented here. Laviera speaks of the amalgamation of Spanish and English, and how he is the same Puerto Rican in either language, although it may sound different. Again from "my graduation speech," (1979) Laviera writes: "escribo en Spanglish [...] / tato in

spanish / 'taro' in English" (1979: 7, lines 7, 10-11). Moreover, Laviera is suggesting that diasporic Puerto Ricans can communicate effectively in Spanglish because fluctuating between two languages is not an impediment, but a quality that shows a high level of cognitive and linguistic competence. Theorists Juan Flores, John Attinasi and Pedro Pedraza Jr. suggest this while discussing this poem in their article: "*La carreta made a u-turn*: Puerto Rican language and culture in the United States" (Flores, Attinasi & Pedraza Jr., 1981):

The entire poem, in fact, rather than degenerating into sheer nonsense or incoherent rambling is a carefully structured argument that demonstrates a wealth of expressive potential and rigorous logical ability...Thus '¡ay, virgen, yo no sé hablar!' at the close must be understood ironically: the reader is by now aware that the speaker knows what he is saying and can say what he thinks, in both languages and in a wide array combinations of the two. (208)

In addition, choosing one tongue over the other is out of the question for Laviera because it would only serve as a stifling act. Flores, Attinasi and Pedraza Jr. (1981) refer to Laviera's sarcasm and irony as "self-mocking," making a strong case for diasporic Puerto Ricans' characteristic duality in language:

Prefacing his self-mocking 'speech' with the sucking paradox, 'I think in spanish i write in english,' the speaker then offers possible 'resolutions' to the conflict--return to Puerto Rico or deliberate gravitation toward one or the other language. Each is rejected, the second not only because his voice does not fit neatly into exclusive idiom, but also because such a choice would only limit his linguistic virtuosity. (208)

Laviera defies simplistic notions of language and identity. The author not only attacks past Puerto Rican *criollo* intelligentsia's Hispanophile construction of Puerto Rican identity and their exclusion of diasporic Puerto Ricans, but also their stance concerning language. The author is criticizing the then *criollo* intelligentsia's hesitance to acknowledge an ever-evolving Puerto Rican identity that is constantly undergoing changes due to an ongoing transnational phenomenon. Flores, Attinasi and Pedraza Jr. (1981) state that "his intention is to illustrate and assess the intricate language contact experienced by Puerto Ricans in New York, and to combat the kind of facile and defeatist conclusions that stem so often from a static, purist understanding of linguistic change" (208).

The poem "nideaquíndeallá" (Laviera, 2008) from Laviera's 2008 book *Mixturao and other poems* is the last work that I discuss in this article. In its lines, Laviera reflects on the in-betweenity that stateside Puerto Ricans must navigate and all it encompasses. Laviera contends that Puerto Ricans abroad are in a kind of limbo concerning their identity because their identity is constantly undergoing complex evolution and non-stop

growth. Laviera writes: “backnforth here soy de aquí / [...] yet-to-be defined / evolucionario hybrid” (2008: 4, lines 2, 8-9). Here Laviera addresses the ambiguity of Puerto Rico’s colonial status as a contributor to the in-betweenity experienced by Puerto Ricans on the island and abroad. Laviera writes: “in my yet-to-be defined / birthplace homeland / dual citizenships accusations / indignations differentiations” (2008: 5, lines 36-39).

In the next passage, Laviera describes the amalgamation that constitutes Puerto Rican identity, given that Puerto Ricans are Caribbean, Latinx and US Americans at the same time. Such complexity contributes to the Puerto Rican identity conundrum and sheds light on Puerto Rico’s geo-political status. Laviera writes: “original by parent’s birth / caribbean by folklore / hispanic by culture / nuyorican by geographic / migrational displacements / latino by mutual promotion” (2008: 5, lines 56-61). Laviera ends the poem by discussing how the discrimination endured by Puerto Ricans because of their cultural heterogeneity continues to this day. That said, he also invokes the resistive translingual, trans-cultural and trans-identified repertoires that are the product of that heterogeneity, which provide Puerto Ricans, both on the island and in the diaspora, with an ‘in-between’ space for survival and fulfillment:

Siempre malnombrándonos / We fight not to be brainwashed... / nideaquínde-
allá / impossible to blend / impossible to categorize / impossible to analyze /
impossible to synthesize / our guerrilla cultural camouflage. (Lavieria, 2008: 6,
lines 80-81, 85-90)

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**DISTANCINGS, ENTANGLEMENTS,
INTERSECTIONALITIES AND EDUCATION
IN THE CARIBBEAN AND BEYOND**

TEACHING ENGLISH WHILE AFRICAN: NAVIGATING RACE IN INSTRUCTOR-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

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Abstract

In this article, I take a reflective look at the role that race plays in English language teaching, based on my experience as an oral English proficiency tutor. The discussion is centered on relationship building between my students and me and addresses racially biased conceptualizations of the English teacher. By drawing on and questioning the concepts of ‘native speaker’ and ‘non-native speaker,’ and considering evidence from pedagogical engagements with students, I examine how my students have assessed my competence based on my race and ethnicity. The article concludes with an exploration of the implications of racial perceptions on English teaching and learning and a discussion of the need to address racialization in the English classroom, with the goal of contributing to the discourse on how the perception of teacher competence in the classroom is influenced by race and accent.

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Key terms: race, English language learners, teacher competence, African, international students

Introduction

Graduate school provided me with a privileged opportunity to teach Multicultural Education and oral English Proficiency in a university in the American Midwest. Even though both courses had different objectives, there were noticeable connections between the two, which became very apparent in my experiences as an English language learning (ELL) tutor. In my role as multicultural education instructor, my job was to prepare pre-service teachers to sensitively address both racial and linguistic biases in their classrooms, as well as to address the diverse cultural needs of their students. In my role as ELL tutor, however, I encountered a situation where students’ racially and linguistically biased stereotypical conceptualization of an English teacher created a potential barrier to their learning and success. As instructors and tutors of Oral English

Proficiency, my colleagues and I had encounters with students who felt that they communicated well enough and therefore did not need to be in an oral proficiency class that was designed to help them prepare for their roles as teaching assistants and instructors. The difficulties posed by such attitudes were compounded in my classes, however, where largely because of my race and ethnicity, I found myself having to ‘prove’ or somehow convince students of my competence as an English language tutor.

With the aim of fostering an open and productive learning environment, I set out to reduce the discomfort that typically predominated in these tutorial sessions throughout the semester, and to give my students the confidence to achieve the most from their work. Such an open environment also engendered more effective communication between my students and me, particularly in relation to difficult questions and concerns, such as race. In this article, I discuss what I learned from my students in this process and the impact it had on our tutor-student relationships.

Where are you from? Language teaching and race

After the first week of introductory tutor sessions, I had already gotten a sense of which students were ready to engage and learn from our sessions and those who were still unsure or questioning. Right from my first interaction with them, it was clear to me that my students had a lot of questions about the oral English test score that placed them in the class. Having been trained and prepared for such students, I assumed that this was the source of these questions. However, it became evident after three more weeks of sessions that there was something else going on. And what it was reared its head with a seemingly harmless question: “Where are you from?” A little surprised by the question, I asked why the student needed to know where I come from. In that instant it was apparent that the student was tired of wondering or questioning and it was time for answers. I took my time to explain that I am a Ghanaian, that English is the official language of Ghana, that I grew up speaking English and therefore, English is my native language in addition to my indigenous first languages. That answer, needless to say, was unsatisfactory as the student’s immediate response was that I was not a native speaker and therefore not fit to be a tutor.

But who is a ‘native speaker’? The challenge to settling on an acceptable answer to this question has continued unabated after decades of debates (Dewaele, 2018; Faez, 2011; Kahmi-Stein, 2016), with Paikadey (1985) concluding that the ‘native speaker’ is ultimately a “figment of linguists’ imagination” (16). Instead, a number of scholars have suggested a variety of alternate terms/ concepts in an attempt to resist the white-monolithic and deficit perspectives associated with ‘native’ and ‘non-native’ speaker. These terms include ‘proficient speaker’ (Paikadey, 1985) and ‘expert speaker’ (Rampton, 1990) instead of ‘native speaker,’ and ‘new speaker’ (O’Rourke & Pujolar, 2013) and LX (Dewaele, 2018) instead of ‘non-native speaker.’ The controversy around what this term means and who it stands for continues to change along with the traditional view

where English is restricted to a single norm in the ‘inner circle’ (Australia, Britain, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, and the United States) (Kachru, 1985; Canagarajah, 2014). However, in the context of my teaching and from the perspective of my students, these changing views, which have given rise to movement towards the ‘renationalization’ of English (McKay & Bokhorst-Heng, 2008; Sharifian & Marlina, 2012 cited in Tajeddin, Alemi & Pashmforoosh, 2018) and to Kachru’s (1985) World Englishes model, have not yet had an impact on who is qualified to teach English effectively. Therefore, in this paper I share my experiences in teaching English in order to promote conversations on the normativity of whiteness in schooling and the need to engage teachers (Tanner, 2017; Lynch, 2018) and students in efforts towards change.

Not synonymous with White people, my use of whiteness here functions as a racial perspective or worldview that is characterized by racially indexed privilege and power which is maintained through various colonial legacies, especially formal education (Leonardo, 2002). Shaull (2018) states that, because of colonial legacies:

Education either functions as an instrument that is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, *or* it becomes “the practice of freedom,” the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (8)

After the session was over, I went to my supervisor to inquire about moving the student in question to another instructor, but the student’s request was denied. Keeping in mind that my role as an educator was to teach my students and help them succeed, I decided to persevere. Aware of the extra burdens that this put on me as the only Black member of our team, but with hopes of fostering a better relationship with my students, I started engaging in conversations with them about race and my role as an English language teacher, with the support of my immediate supervisor.

The use, teaching and learning of languages are intrinsically linked to identity, people, cultures, and worldviews. Therefore, the concept of race or racialization has been present in linguistic spaces as language has been used as a tool for oppression, domination and assimilation – colonizing and erasing people’s cultures, identities and worldviews (Glenn, 2015; Von Esch et al., 2020). Even though there is a lot of scholarship on the connection between race and education in general (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Friere, 2018; Gillborn, 2006; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2012, Leonardo, 2002), it is just recently that the field of language teaching has taken up the issue of race and its implications in the field (Von Esch et. al, 2020; Kubota & Lin, 2006). Scholars such as Amin (1997), Curtis and Romney (2006), Jenks (2017), Kubota and Lin (2006), have discussed the issue of race and language teaching engaging concerns and implications it has on curriculum, pedagogy, identity, diversity, equity and learning.

My approach to the issue of race, experience in teaching English and the strategies used to create a conducive space for learning and productive engagement emanate principally from three perspectives: 1) the work of Amin (1997), who examined the issue of race relations in the classroom from the perspective of teachers, instead of students; 2) the work of Kubota and Lin's (2006) related to language teaching, perceptions and privilege that come with native speaker identity; and 3) the work of McGlynn's (2001) which provides strategies for engaging with students to motivate them to take an active role in their learning. Using these and other perspectives, I was able to strategize on how to engage with my students on the issue of my race and my role as their tutor, as well as the impact that this was having on our classroom dynamics.

Amin (1997) interviewed TESOL professionals who were non-White or People of Color about students' perception of their competence and "What happens when students feel that the teacher of the class in which they are so heavily invested is not an authentic teacher?" (581). I come from Ghana, a country in West Africa, which has English as its official language because it is a former British colony. As such I consider myself to be a native speaker of English, a view which is supported by some of the literature on World Englishes (Schneider, 2003, 2014; Davies, 2013). It is also important to note here that not all scholars in the field agree with this perspective, especially when it comes to speakers of English from former colonies outside of the 'inner circle' (Kachru, 1985). Like me, Amin (1997) conducted his study because of his experience as an ethnic Pakistani-Canadian teacher of English whose competence had been questioned by students because, as far as they were concerned, he was not Canadian and, therefore, not a native speaker of English. What he found is that many ESL students who are new immigrants to Canada have the following views: "(a) Only White people can be native speakers of English; (b) only native speakers know 'real, 'proper, 'Canadian' English; and (c) only White people are 'real' Canadians" (580). He concluded that "there is a connection between the attitude of the students - many of them new immigrants - to non-White teachers and their investments in learning English" (580). Similar to my experience, Alim reported that students were constantly challenging him on the rules of English grammar, with the intention of catching him in a mistake, a dynamic that has a damaging impact both on students' learning as well as on our ability to effectively negotiate our identities as teachers in order to help students to succeed. He recommended that a process of demystification was necessary concerning concepts such as 'native speaker,' ownership of English, race and pedagogy, etc. that have systematically disempowered teachers who are non-White or People of Color.

Kubota and Lin (2006) (as well as Curtis & Romney, 2006) state that even though race has been alluded to as a salient issue in the field for so many years, researchers have not really confronted it in SLA or TESOL because it is often seen to be too threatening to a status quo that has naturalized and perpetuated asymmetric power relations and discrimination based on racializing language and languaging race (Alim, Reyes &

Kroskrity, 2020). Kubota and Lin (2006) problematize the preference and promotion of the myth of the ‘native speaker’ of English who is prototypically White, for instance, as the best person to teach the language to learners in spite of the availability of very qualified ‘non-native’ teachers, who are prototypically non-White. They also stress the importance of overcoming deficit perspectives on the ‘non-native’ language teachers’ competences.

Talking race in the English language learning classroom

McGlynn (2001) argues that success for both students and teachers in the classroom stems from creating an engaging environment from the very first day of class, and outlines several strategies aimed at encouraging students to be self-motivated and play an active role in their learning. Even though these pedagogical strategies are meant for small groups and larger classes, some of the techniques work well for one-on-one interactions. One such strategy is the Family Name exercise. This exercise gives the teacher and student opportunities to tell each other a bit about each other’s background, in order to develop a comfortable sense of familiarity that is useful for learning. especially in a language classroom where student errors are constantly pointed out. To promote student’s active learning, they encourage the use of engaging homework that requires students to interact with the material and come to class with questions. In my case, I decided to assign the viewing and the writing of summaries of podcasts in English to my students, with the aim of discussing the content during my classroom sessions. The students, depending on their specific needs, were also asked to come to sessions with questions about new vocabulary, etc. that they encountered in the process.

I also centered the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of my students, making room for the incorporation of their cultures, experiences and worldviews in order to promote more effective teaching (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Pirbhai-Illich, Pete & Martin, 2017). My aim was to cultivate and sustain intercultural understanding, and linguistic and cultural pluralism where each student “wins back the right to say his or her own word, to name the world” (Shaull, 2018: 6), as a way to create an environment conducive to transformative discussions about race. Beyond that, it was very important for me as an individual with a multilingual and multicultural background to help prepare these international graduate students to be ready to effectively engage with the diverse students and colleagues they will encounter in their classrooms and professions.

After the first few weeks with my students, I started conversations with some of them about the issue of race and how it affects the process of learning, especially in ESL/ELL situations. In an attempt to break with the culture of silence that resulted from my positioning as the figure of authority and power in the classroom (Shaull, 2018) and to promote critical consciousness, I began to dialog with them about how the concept of whiteness as a prerequisite for teaching English reinforces power and racial inequalities (Motha, 2014 and about how “*native speaker saviorism*... reflects the long-standing

assumption that the White community can ‘save’ peoples of color by teaching them English” (Jenks & Lee, 2020: 186). Conversations revolved around questions such as “Does the race of the teacher/instructor matter in the English classroom?” Overall, students stated that race didn’t matter if the person spoke good English, and they also believed that the university will not hire someone if they were not qualified to do the job. In order to start one such dialog in my classroom, I posed the question: “Who is a native speaker of English and how do you identify one?” Among the students’ answers were the following:

- Native speakers speak English is like other native speakers. They are fluent, have good intonation and can produce complex sentences.
- Native speakers do not have to translate from their L1s into English.
- Native speakers live their whole lives in an English-speaking country.
- Native speakers were born speaking English.
- My professor who is Caucasian, native speakers are White.
- British, American.

Building on these answers, I rephrased the question to ask students if People of Color could be considered native speakers of English, and obtained answers such as:

- Someone from India who has English as an official language/If the country has English as the official language, then they can be called native speakers.
- I have a feeling: if someone speaks fluently and there are different types of Englishes so we can tell (here my students were making references to accents).
- It is possible for someone to be Korean or Chinese but a native speaker of English.

The instructor with whom I was working was White. At this point in the conversation, I asked my students to assess our respective ‘native speaker status.’ According to them, my colleague was a native speaker because he/she was White, was born in the US, was a professional teacher with a lot of experience in teaching English and was definitely ‘more native’ than I was. References to me included being a professional teacher with experience, having the ability to express myself in English, but ultimately, I was ‘less native’ than the other instructor.

Based on those answers, I then asked them “Who is a non- native speaker of English and how do you identify one?” to which they replied:

- Most of my professors are from China and India are non-native speakers.
- Non-native speakers speak English with an accent (an example was given for someone from India whose accent was difficult to understand).
- Non-native speakers make statements that are unfamiliar (reference to idiomatic phrases or expressions).
- The fact that one speaks the language well does not make you a native speaker.

- Multilinguals are not native speakers: one who speaks both English and Chinese, for instance is not necessarily a native speaker.
- Brown or Black person can't be a native speaker (oh no!).
- If an Asian is an instructor, that Asian cannot be a native speaker; they may be considered a native speaker-like.
- Korean American is not a native speaker because he comes from somewhere else.
- Indians will not be considered native speakers of English/it's hard to get what they are saying.

Some students stated that they were uncertain about their answers, and that their responses were just based on what they were familiar with and what they had been exposed to. This underscores the need to consider the effects in ELL/ESL classrooms of both explicit and hidden curricula, i.e., “the unstated norms, values and beliefs that are transmitted to students through the underlying structure of meaning in both the formal content as well as the social relations of school and classroom life” (Giroux & Penna, 1979: 22). Whether explicitly stated or implied, the association between whiteness, colonial power/ privilege and standard language ideologies that perpetuates racialized hegemony is reinforced (Von Esch et al., 2020). Below, I share some of the students' responses related to these uncertainties, which in part emerged from our recent conversations in class and to opportunities that I provided for them to listen to videos featuring English speakers from different regions of the world.

- There are different pronunciations between people from Europe, America, Australia
- It is just difficult; you can't tell.
- Without background information or talking to them, one cannot tell who a native speaker is. And sometime, it is still not clear after talking to them
- I know about World Englishes, so I cannot make that distinction.
- Everyone can be a native speaker.
- It is diverse here in the U.S.
- There are no native speakers in the world.
- You can't tell native speaker by how they look.

Discussions with the students revealed varying perceptions or attitudes toward issues of race in English teaching. For those who were certain they could identify a native speaker, a native speaker had to be born in an English-speaking country (e.g., Britain or America), speak fluent/ good English and be White. When I probed further, some added Asians born in America to the definition of native speaker. However, when I raised the issue of Asian-English bilinguals, some of the students stated that bilinguals could not be native speakers of English. For others, a native speaker “doesn't have to

translate from a mother tongue into English.” I had one student in the group who had taken a World Englishes class who said that individuals from countries where English is an official language can be considered native speakers, mentioning briefly the inner and outer circles of English-speaking countries (Kachru, 1985). The fact that the majority of my students were unable to make an absolute determination concerning who a native or non-native speaker is, supports Faez’ (2011) findings about the contradictions inherent in assumptions about language, identity and culture as fixed and monolithic that saturates educational discourse around the world. In many students’ minds, a speaker of English, no matter how well they speak, cannot be considered a native speaker as long as they come from a country, a home or another context that is multilingual. Therefore, as indicated in one of the responses above, a Korean American is not native if s/he speaks Korean in addition to English.

A very important discovery in this process came when I questioned some of the students about how they identify ‘good English,’ the ‘right accent’ and correct sentence structures, especially since they are learners who are now working on identifying and self-monitoring their own errors. Their answers included the following:

- We learn English with recordings of White people, so all videos were of White people – ergo, English is White.
- Identification based on my impression of that individual and the ‘standard’ – Hollywood movies, English recordings for listening exercises, former Teachers of English.
- Accent matches impression of the native speaker based on [the] movies I’ve seen.

Consequently, the examples of native speakers of English that ESL students are exposed to contribute to the racialized perception they have about what race can and cannot be identified as native, and this includes a teacher or instructor. I could not help but notice the embarrassed look on one of my students’ face after stating that a “brown or black [person] can’t be a native speaker” - and there I was, sitting right in front of him. This was particularly enlightening for me, as it explained my students’ surprise when I explained that my focus for our sessions was not for them to sound American, but rather for them to communicate effectively and be understood. Thus, when we look at language-focused discrimination, it is important to go beyond the language itself to understand the “individual’s beliefs about language and following from those beliefs, institutional practices” (Lippi-Green, 2012: 67) and socialization.

Unfortunately, my experience not only confirms the findings of previous studies that demonstrate English learners’ preference for ‘White native speakers’ (Galloway, 2013; Tajeddin, Alemi & Pashmforoosh, 2018) but also the role that race, indexed as skin tone, plays in this determination and how that affects the relationship that is developed between English teachers of color and their students. There is an urgent need for more

conversations to take place concerning this phenomenon that can render Teachers of Color ineffective in reaching and motivating students to be successful. It is imperative that language teachers and all stakeholders in the English learning field definitively break with current practices where the terms ‘native speaker’ and ‘non-native speaker’ are used as reference points in the classroom, as recommended by Davies (2003), Paikadey (1985), Dewaele et. al. (2020) and Houghton, Rivers & Hashimoto (2018). Additionally, the nature of support available to English teachers of Color as they navigate such skepticism about their competence is crucial. In educational spaces with few Teachers of Color, the issue of race and how it affects teaching and learning are either ignored or become a source of racial fatigue for the teachers concerned. Thus, creating opportunities for allyship with people such as my supervisor and director, even though they may not fully understand our experiences, can engender positive attitudes towards change.

My experience as a multicultural educator was instrumental in helping me design strategies to effectively engage with my students by building a comfortable space right from the beginning of the class, by developing curriculum and lessons that affirm students’ linguistic and cultural backgrounds as important to their success, and finally, by making room in the curriculum for conversations around language and power aimed at bringing about change and achieving justice in English teaching. In the end, students generally left my classroom with a clearer awareness of the complexities involved in determining who can be considered to be a ‘native speaker’ of English. I do not think that their perception of White people as the most competent speakers of English, or as the most prototypical ‘native speakers,’ had necessarily changed, but what most of my students had clearly gained by the end of the process was a critical approach that they could bring to similar conversations.

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TRANSLANGUAGING IN A MULTILINGUAL CLASSROOM: BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN LANGUAGES FOR STUDENTS IN PUERTO RICO

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Abstract

This article examines the use of multilingualism as a tool to teach languages and linguistic varieties and repertoires in a university level Mandarin Course at the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez Campus. Examples are provided of how to incorporate multilingualism in the classroom, with sample activities. The data was collected through classroom observations throughout a semester and interviews with the professor. Findings show that multilingualism, along with translanguaging, helps educators and students build bridges between knowledges and varieties of languages, promoting a positive environment that acknowledges superdiversity. Not only does this approach help students to learn different varieties of language, but it also helps them to learn when to use each, depending on the social context.

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Key terms: multilingualism, translanguaging, superdiversity

Multilingualism and translanguaging have proved to be valuable frameworks for language teaching. However, in order to understand how these approaches work and the ways in which an educator can create bridges between different linguistic varieties, repertoires and knowledges, it is important to discuss some definitions. Multilingualism and bilingualism are often conflated in the literature, but it is important to highlight the fact that bilingualism traditionally refers to competence in just two languages, while multi- and pluri-lingualism expand this competence to more than two languages and move us further away from dominant monolingual ideologies. In any case, bilingualism and multilingualism do not only have to do with being proficient in more than one language, but instead they also involve the ability to use and experience more than one language across a variety of contexts and functions. A bilingual/ multilingual individual can draw from a range of the linguistic and semiotic repertoires available in more than

one language to create repertoires that are more than the simple sum of their parts (Gort, 2019).

Instead of bilingualism/ multilingualism being represented by the image of two or more monolinguals in one mind who never interact, in a translanguaged framework, bilingualism/ multilingualism can become a bridge that allows one language or variety to interact with others. In other words, in a bilingual/ multilingual brain, two or more languages/ varieties are active even when the person is only using one of the languages in a monolingual context (Giambo & Szecsi, 2015). Thus, the concept of dynamic bilingualism/ multilingualism is gaining currency, to refer “to the multiple language interactions and other linguistic interrelationships that take place on different scales and spaces among multilingual speakers” (García & Wei, 2014: 51).

Ofelia García and Li Wei (2014) mention the existence of programs such as multiple multilingual education, which acknowledge that students may have language practices that involve more than one or two languages, so that these programs employ three or more languages as media of instruction to address the diversity existing in classrooms. Thus, multilingualism can be traced back to “local practices where multiple languages are negotiated for communication” and where competence is not entirely separate for each language, becoming a “multicompetence that functions symbiotically for the different languages in one’s repertoire, tasking the individual to focus on repertoire building such as developing abilities in different functions” (Canagarajah, 2011b: 1). In the end, multilingualism is an individual’s ability to build and cross bridges simultaneously between different linguistic varieties to make sense of the world, making extensive use of translanguaging.

Translanguaging can be defined as the use of all linguistic and semiotic varieties and repertoires available to make sense of the world, and when used as a classroom resource, teachers and students can use translanguaging to teach and learn languages along with content (Mazak, 2017). At its core, translanguaging is a pedagogical approach that allows for building bridges among different languages or varieties to negotiate meaning through oral or written communication, creating spaces where students and teachers can forge real communities of co-learners. A study on the way students activate multilingual repertoires when learning languages showed that students were able to draw “upon Spanish, English, and translanguaging as cultural and cognitive tools to mediate learning” when they found themselves in a diverse space that offered them equal opportunity to learn and communicate (Martin-Beltrán, 2014: 208).

This article is based on a case study of a professor from Beijing teaching Mandarin at the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez Campus (UPRM). This professor, who spoke different variations of Mandarin, English, and was learning Spanish, knew that half of the students would be interacting with the linguistic and cultural repertoires associated with Mandarin in a real-life scenario for the very first time in the class. To reach these

and other students, the professor planned the course not only to teach different variations of Mandarin, but also to teach more culturally-related material, such as social etiquette (greetings, tableside manners), popular culture, festivals, folktales, beliefs, and cuisine using multimodal resources such as interactive presentations, videos, and songs. In order to facilitate the lessons, the professor created a bridge to Mandarin by incorporating activities which included varieties of English, Spanish, Mandarin, and other semiotic repertoires that mirrored a real-life scenario interactions. For instance, in order to teach each Mandarin sound, the professor included images and translations of words in English or Spanish that had similar sounds. To teach the Mandarin initial sound [ʃ], which is spelled <sh> in pinyin, the romanized Chinese orthography, the professor used the word ‘shirt’ in English and explained that the initial <sh> sound in ‘shirt’ is similar to the initial <sh> sound in Mandarin. The US pronunciation of ‘shirt’ uses the sound [ʃ] for initial <sh>, but because it is followed by a retroflex sound, in practice it comes close to Mandarin [ʃ]. To further contextualize the example, the professor then made reference to the popular Latin American singer Shakira, explaining that the initial <sh> sound in Shakira was similar to the initial <sh> sound in Mandarin.

When teaching grammar, the professor might read a sentence used in a greeting exchange in Mandarin, asking students to identify parts of speech, and highlighting the similarities and differences between Mandarin, English and Spanish grammar. The professor would not dwell too long on the mechanics of grammar, but instead use the sentence in context, pointing out formal and informal variations, and emphasizing the importance of knowing how to refer to people depending on their age. Once, that explanation was done, the professor would present a video of people interacting in Mandarin in a specific scenario, so that students could imagine themselves in a specific context and determine which specific Mandarin variant they would need in that situation. In the practice sessions with peers and the professor that followed, students could use all their languages to find common ground, understand, and practice Mandarin. Once the professor confirmed that students were understanding, the professor would begin to cue conversation in Mandarin that mirrored real-life conversations such as introductions and greeting exchanges (Ducuara & Roza, 2018). Singing was used in more rote-like vocabulary learning activities, such as lessons on numbers and the days of the week.

When teaching writing, the professor used a translanguaged approach that incorporated different semiotic systems, including both the pictographic characters and the pinyin orthography. The professor explained the history behind some of the pictographic characters, or created narratives to learn them. For example, the professor explained that the word ‘woman’ in Mandarin is represented as <nǚrén> in pinyin and as <女人> in pictographic form. By drawing their attention to the shapes of the pictographs, the professor helped the students to recognize the figure of a woman sitting 女 representing *nǚ* ‘female’ followed by a person walking 人 representing *rén* ‘person.’ Combining the Chinese characters for female and person creates the word woman. Similar strategies

were used by the professor to explain other Chinese characters but for other complex characters, she encouraged students to create stories in their minds that represented the pictograph so they could associate the Chinese character with something. Once the material was understood, the professor assigned worksheets to be completed by students in which they had to practice sentence construction and translate from English to Mandarin (or vice versa) using pinyin and pictographic characters.

This professor's inclusion of plurisymbolic resources in negotiation of meaning is an example of translanguaging, using both multiple linguistic varieties and repertoires as well as multiple symbol systems in codemeshing (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011; Canagarajah, 2011a). The professor planned the course acknowledging students' existing communicative repertoires and language practices class in lessons that build on what students already in order to introduce new material (Hornberger & Link, 2012). This approach is not entirely new. Effective language teachers have always incorporated translanguaging into their lessons. For example, in a study conducted by Danping Wang (2016), which involved students from 22 countries studying Mandarin, one of the teachers, who knew more than two languages, noticed that some students were struggling to learn new vocabulary and communicative practices common in China. To help students learn new vocabulary, the teacher allowed them to use all of their languages when practicing or completing certain tasks, which helped them create a bridge between their languages and Mandarin (García & Wei, 2014; see also Choi & Leung, 2017).

In the teaching of language, the professor at UPRM adopted a multidisciplinary approach, teaching Chinese history, ethnography (festivals, cultural practices, cuisine, folklore), sociology, etc., a pedagogical practice known as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) that is becoming more and more common in foreign language classrooms (Fortanet-Gómez, 2013). A study focused on the use of translanguaging in a Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) English language course in a Japanese university found this approach to be beneficial (Adamson & Coulson, 2015). Students in this course used different varieties of Japanese and English to negotiate complex academic tasks and convey meaning, always focusing on a task they were assigned to complete instead of focusing on whether they were proficient in any given language or not. Another way to incorporate multilingualism as a tool through translanguaging, is by using images, translations, songs, videos, movies, journals and other symbolic resources (Mazak & Herbas-Donoso, 2014; Lopez, Turkan, & Guzman-Orth, 2017). For example, assignments may consist of worksheets to practice writing and develop translation skills that encourage students to draw on all of their existing linguistic and semiotic repertoires (Carroll & Sambolín Morales, 2016). Some worksheets may incorporate exercises based on the use of the language in a specific context so students can practice using different variations of a language by identifying and determining which

sentences require a specific variation. Some educators allow students to use all linguistic and semiotic repertoires in specific assignments, and base assessment more on content than on form.

One area in which a multilingual/ translanguaging approach has been shown to be useful is vocabulary learning. Fortanet-Gómez (2013) observes that multilingual students may have a less extensive mastery of vocabulary in one of their languages compared to a monolingual speaker of that language. A study on the importance of translanguaging in a science classroom showed how the use of Arabic, English and images together proved to be effective in explaining content and vocabulary by allowing “students’ experiences and diverse cultural and linguistic resources [to] interweave with school science” (Karlsson, Larsson, & Jakobsson, 2018: 2049).

Myrta Alvarez Aguirre’s (2000) study on the attitudes and experiences of Puerto Rican students toward learning French and English at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras, shows that students find the contextualization of a new language to their own world and situation important, since they can draw from their existing knowledge to learn something new in another language. Not only does contextualization of lessons make the language accessible to students, but it also helps them develop biliteracy/ multiliteracy in all of their linguistic and semiotic repertoires (Delbridge & Helman, 2016). Biliteracy/ multiliteracy serves as a tool for students to navigate between and within multiple worlds through their ability to decode and encode meaning from written texts in more than one linguistic variety or repertoire (de la Luz Reyes, 2012). An approach to writing exercised that includes biliteracy/ multiliteracy and translanguaging creates opportunities for students to mobilize all of their knowledge to convey their message without losing their line of thought (Ascenzi-Moreno & Espinosa, 2018). Thereafter, the teacher can ask students to create a final product using a particular academic language.

The classrooms of the 21st century include students from multiple linguistic, cultural and ethnic backgrounds (Song, 2011). This superdiversity (Vertovec, 2007) involves individuals retaining their previous linguistic, cultural and other semiotic repertoires, while constantly expanding those same repertoires as a result of contact with people from other places (Duff, 2015). By taking this superdiversity into consideration in the classroom, the professor has better chances of teaching in a way that demonstrates empathy towards students and create a sense of community. One strategy used by the professor at UPRM was to negotiate the course content with students, as well as the assignments to be used as an evaluation tool for the course. Another area of negotiation which flipped the roles in the classroom was this professor’s willingness to learn about Puerto Rican linguistic and cultural practices from the students while teaching Mandarin. When a foreign language instructor uses multilingualism as a tool, it opens a space for empathy towards the challenges that students face when learning a language (Bovill, Jordan, & Watters, 2015). This, in turn, helps to prepare students for real life situations,

which are becoming increasingly superdiverse everywhere in the world (Kramsch & Yin, 2018). Catalano and Hamann (2016) emphasize that when a teacher uses a range of languages to teach a particular language, even monolingual students benefit, because it provides them with an opportunity to learn about their peers' languages and backgrounds.

Yip and García (2015) mention how students learning a foreign language are sometimes excluded by teachers insisting on complete monolingualism in the target language, and reprimanded "for speaking the 'wrong' language or using the 'wrong' language features" (2015: PAgEno page). A multilingual/ translanguaging framework can invoke multilingual scenarios to explain how and when certain varieties of language are used without saying that students' language practices are 'wrong.' Having empathy toward students and building a sense of community within the foreign language classroom (or any classroom) is important. In a study on developing pedagogies that accommodate student diversity, Canagarajah (2016) discovered that students feel that they stand on unequal and disadvantaged ground in the classroom, as well as in relation to scholarly discourses and educational policies. An approach that incorporates multilingualism, translanguaging and superdiversity can help teachers to find common ground with students, because such an approach can enhance sensibility and empathy toward people from different socio-cultural backgrounds, emphasizing the way students from different backgrounds can and should help each other along with their professor to achieve greater knowledge and understanding. A study of Japanese students in an English writing course (Kano, 2012) found that when translanguaging was used as a resource, students felt empowered because their linguistic and semiotic knowledge was validated by their professor and was used to help them move forward into complex tasks in English. Classrooms that embrace multilingualism, translanguaging and superdiversity encourage students to learn a target language by acknowledging and mobilizing their existing language practices and making them more aware of the fact that linguistic repertoires are complex and vary according to context. This approach also helps to promote a sense of community in the classroom by creating spaces for empathy and mutual assistance among students and between the teacher and the students, thus promoting life-long learning and the capacity to survive and thrive in our increasingly diverse societies.

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EXPLORING FACTORS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: A LOOK AT FOUR PUERTO RICAN ENGLISH MAJORS

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Abstract

The research project upon which this article is based used a case study approach to explore how English majors at the University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez Campus learned English. The original goal was to look into the role media played, if any, when it came to motivating this population to learn English. However, over the course of the study it became apparent that, although the media did play a role in the participants' English acquisition, other key motivational elements were also identified, including parental involvement, privilege and access to cultural capital.

Key terms: bilingualism, second language learning, ESL, motivation

Introduction

Puerto Rico is a Spanish-speaking Caribbean island which has been under the colonial control of the United States since 1898. As Pousada (2010) observes:

although Puerto Ricans are a primarily Spanish-speaking population, they were obligated for 50 years to receive their education exclusively or partially in English, as part of an Americanization effort aimed at displacing their native language and integrating them, culturally and linguistically, into the United States.

(1)

Once the first non-US born Puerto Rican governor of the country was elected in 1948, the main language of instruction became Spanish, with English as a mandatory subject in all schools from kindergarten up until the end of secondary school. Besides these English classes, Puerto Ricans are also exposed to the language through different types

of media. Whether it is through television programs, movies, music, video games, or websites, they have easy access to media content in English.

This regular exposure to English has caused some Puerto Ricans to acquire it as a second language, however this has not been the case for the majority of the island's population. One of the leading newspapers in Puerto Rico, "El Nuevo Día", reported that according to the 2011 Census, barely 10% of its population is fluent in English (Velázquez, 2013: 4). This means that the majority of Puerto Ricans do not consider themselves to have even a basic proficiency in English, despite it being taught in the schools. Additionally, the U.S. Census Bureau (2019) estimates that 94.6% of Puerto Ricans speak a language other than English at home. All of this motivated the present researcher to delve deeper into how English majors at the University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez Campus (UPRM) had learned English. The researcher wanted to explore the elements that made a difference in these individuals' second language acquisition, motivating and enabling them to successfully learn English, while most other Puerto Ricans fail to do so.

Theoretical framework

Some key theoretical frameworks in the study of second language acquisition include Stephen Krashen's 'informal' acquisition vs. 'formal' learning hypothesis (Krashen, 1982), Lev Vygotsky's Social Constructivist interactional framework (Lantolf, Thorne, & Poehner, 2015: 207-218), and Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Ryan, 2001: 1; Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017: 2-6; Morales Carrero, 2019: 11). Over the course of the present study, the level of parental involvement, which intersects with all three of these frameworks, emerged as a major motivational factor. According to Baker (1992), "parents' attitudes toward language learning are especially important in concepts when predicting children's level of success in language attainment" (cited by Hosseinpour, Sherkatolabbasi & Yarahmadi, 2015: 176). This means that parents have the power to influence how their children learn, even if they are not aware of it. When talking about second language learning specifically, researchers such as Hosseinpour, Sherkatolabbasi and Yarahmadi (2015) found that "parents who have high level of involvement in and positive attitude toward their children's English language programs caused their children's higher level of achievement in the language program" (182). Similarly, research done by Jeynes (2003) indicates that "parental involvement affects the academic achievement of minority students" (213). Zarate (2007), suggest that Latinx parents' perceptions of parental involvement could be grouped into two distinct categories: academic involvement and life participation. Academic involvement encompasses any activity associated with school such as homework, educational enrichment, and academic performance. On the other hand, life participation refers to the "ways that parents provided life education and were holistically integrated into their children's lives in school, as well as away from it" (Zarate, 2007: 8).

The concepts of social/ cultural capital and the framework based on it which was originally formulated by Pierre Bourdieu (1986), is another motivational element that emerged as being of key importance in the present study that also intersects with the frameworks of Krashen, Vygotsky and Bronfenbrenner. Bourdieu (1986) asserted that the social/ cultural capital framework:

made it possible to explain the unequal scholastic achievement of children originating from the different social classes [by relating] academic success, i.e., the specific profits which children from the different classes and class fractions can obtain in the academic market, to the distribution of cultural capital between the classes and fractions. (243)

Cultural capital theory establishes a correlation between students' success at school and their degree of socialization into the dominant/ official socio-cultural milieux established and perpetuated by the symbolic elites, via such activities as reading canonic literary works, attending plays and museums, being exposed to classical art and music, etc. As De Graaf, De Graaf and Kraaykamp (2000) propose, "the theory holds that children who are not familiar with this kind of socialization will experience school as a hostile environment" (93), because they lack the skills, habits, and styles that are rewarded in the classroom.

New approaches to second language acquisition that center bilingualism, translanguaging and language ideologies also intersect with all of the above listed approaches the frameworks. Bilingual education normally has additive bilingualism as its stated goal, i.e. the achievement of high levels of both informal and formal competences in more than one language (Garcia, 2011; Garcia & Wei, 2015). In practice, however, many if not most bilingual programs are geared toward achieving subtractive bilingualism whereby "a person learns the second language to the detriment of the first language, especially if the first language is a minority language" (Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique, n.d.) typified by "little or no interest in the development of the home language" (Garcia & Wei, 2015: 208). This means that so much emphasis is placed on mastery of a second language, that competence in the home language decreases. Unfortunately, this is the model that most bilingual schools in Puerto Rico follow; they teach all of their classes in English, except Spanish class, which rarely allows students to gain adequate competence in academic Spanish. The most extreme form of subtractive bilingualism is known as submersion. This "entails the complete prohibition of the use of the home language in school" (Garcia & Wei, 2015: 208), meaning that the student's first language is not allowed to be used at all.

Translanguaging (Canagarajah, 2013) is a term derived from Welsh *trawsieithu*, which was originally coined by Cen Williams. It is defined as "the process of making meaning, shaping experiences, gaining understanding and knowledge through the use of two languages" (Garcia & Wei, 2014: 20). According to Garcia (2009) translanguaging includes "multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense

of their bilingual worlds” (cited by Mazak, 2016: 2). In other words, translanguaging encompasses all of one’s linguistic repertoire at the same time, without any boundaries between linguistic codes, and thus better captures the sociolinguistic realities of everyday life. Gorter and Cenoz (2015) also point out that translanguaging “assumes that bilinguals have one complex linguistic repertoire from which they select features that are socio-culturally appropriate” (56). However, this idea has been very controversial since it goes against the dominant monolingual ideologies that academics still too often accept without question.

Monolingual ideologies assume that communication is only efficient and successful when using a single common language with shared norms that are stipulated by the native speakers of such language (Canagarajah 2013: 1). For example, a common misconception under the monolingual gaze is that people who code-switch in a conversation do it because they are not proficient in either, and bilinguals are viewed as two monolinguals in one body. Rosa (2016) states that monolingual ideologies “are characterized not simply by the promotion of a single language, but rather by an investment in the value associated with particular standardized varieties of a given language” (165). According to Canagarajah (2013), during the beginning of the period of Romanticism towards the end of the 18th century, the dominant ideologies of European colonialism began to claim that each community is the exclusive owner of its language, with outsiders being illegitimate users, because they could never capture its ‘essence’ (20). This territorialization of language means that people from a specific country are assumed to have only have one identity, one culture and one language, a notion referred to as the ‘Herderian Triad,’ named after the German Romantic philosopher Herder, to whom much of what has survived today as monolingual ideology can be traced

The study

The study on which this article is based consisted of individual in-depth interviews designed to elicit self-reported data regarding the relationship between the acquisition of English and each participants’ background and life experiences. Supplementary information about participants’ personal and academic backgrounds were also collected in order to shed light on the factors and events that aided or hindered their acquisition of English. The participants consisted of four undergraduate female English majors at the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez Campus. All participants had to be regularly immersed in an English-using context at the time of the study, which is why upper-level undergraduate English majors were targeted. All four participants are between 21 and 24 years old and had lived their entire lives in different parts of Puerto Rico. Even though the researcher originally intended to interview an equal number of males and females, no males volunteered. Each participant was assigned an alias (Laura, Camila, Pia and Natalia) for the purposes of the discussion of results and analysis that follows.

All four participants identified the household as the main source of Spanish in their lives. Since Spanish was the main language in all of their homes, they reported acquiring the language just by interacting with their family. The only participant who did not have monolingual Spanish-speaking parents was Pia, however, when talking about their English proficiency she mentions: “my parents do think they have broken English so they don't speak it that much”. This meant that even though they knew some English, they did not consider themselves proficient enough in the language to use it on a regular basis. This is why their main language at home was also Spanish.

Regarding their English, participants' answers varied. Both Laura and Camila attributed their English proficiency to traditional schooling saying things like “English became part of my language because I started in a private school” (Laura) and “English ... I learned it at ... school, even though it took me awhile. I was also in ... [a program] which is like ESL” (Camila). They both attended bilingual schools that followed the subtractive bilingualism model, meaning that the main language of instruction was English. The only class taught in Spanish was Spanish class, therefore, they would spend the majority of their days immersed in English. As a result, they developed a certain inclination for using English in their day to day lives.

Pia, however, never attended a bilingual school but nevertheless developed proficiency in English. When asked about how she learned this second language, she brought up the fact that her grandmother used to be an English teacher. She mentioned, “that's why my parents were very on board for us to learn the English language” referring to her grandmother as the reason her parents were enthusiastic about her learning English. Interestingly, when asked about her relationship with her grandmother she answered, “my grandparents ... we are not very close ... they were not much in the picture with us” and “I don't know them that well.” This, it became apparent that she did not actually acquire her English proficiency from interacting with her grandmother. It can then be assumed that this was just one of the reasons her parents wanted her to learn the language.

After mentioning her grandmother as one of the reasons why she learned English, she followed up by saying “we were fortunate enough to have cable in our house, so we were able to watch TV in English.” This means that she attributes some of her English proficiency to media exposure. Similarly, Natalia also identified television in the target language as one of the factors that influenced her English proficiency. Even though she attended a bilingual school during her early school years, when asked how she acquired English, she answered, “I basically learned English by myself” and “I began having contact with English due to TV programs or movies”.

When asked about whether or not they ever made a conscious effort to learn any particular language, the only participant who reported putting some effort into learning Spanish was Camila. She noted that “since my English was more developed {after years of immersion school}, I kind of tried giving Spanish a chance; [but it] didn't go as well”.

While talking about her schooling Camila mentioned that even though they did take Spanish class in school “they would give you the readings in Spanish, but they would discuss them in English.” This is something she found to be very problematic since she felt like she did not have a chance to develop her Spanish because her home language was censored at school. She expressed her concern by saying “besides speaking it at home (Spanish) I was not given any books to read and they didn't allow me to focus on Spanish.” Since she was barely getting any formal education in Spanish, she felt the need to take the matter into her own hands as an adult.

Both Natalia and Laura actively tried to improve their English by learning new vocabulary. Natalia mentions that whenever she found a new word, she would ask her teacher how to pronounce it and would “record it in her mind.” This happened frequently, especially during elementary school. Laura was also very interested in learning new words since she mentioned “when I hear a new word I feel like, ‘Oh that's nice I will try to use it more in my vocabulary’”. Interestingly, this only happened to her with words in English; when she encountered a new word in Spanish, she would notice it “but then it would go away.” She also mentioned actively correcting herself whenever she spoke English. Both of these participants were intrinsically motivated to improve their English. In other words, they did not need anyone to ask them to expand their vocabulary; this is something they were genuinely interested in doing on their own.

For Pia, learning English and Spanish was more of an innate process since she did not report doing anything in particular of a conscious or deliberate nature to learn these languages on her own.

When it came to participants' ideology towards bilingualism, they had all adopted a translanguaging perspective. As Gorter and Cenoz (2015) point out, translanguaging “assumes that bilinguals have one complex linguistic repertoire from which they select features that are socioculturally appropriate” (56). All of the participants understood that learning languages is a dynamic process where there are no clear boundaries between codes. As Laura stated, “when speaking with someone you got these two languages in your brain that you just like, start talking in Spanish but then you code switch back to English”. All four participants reported making use of code-switching and choosing between English and Spanish depending on the situation. Pia, Natalia, and Laura mentioned that they constantly code-switched when speaking with their siblings. Camila did not have any siblings, but she usually code-switched when speaking with her friends and peers. She also mentioned that she modified the language she used based on who she was addressing, saying, “if the person felt more comfortable in English I would speak in English or if a person thought better in Spanish like I would accommodate myself to speak their language”. For example, she reported that “I had a friend who wasn't very well developed in English, so I preferred to talk to her in Spanish instead of English”.

Besides mentioning that they picked and chose between Spanish and English, the researcher was also able to observe the participants code-switching during the interview, which indicated that code-switching came naturally to them, and that it was something that they considered to be normal. Even though the researcher consistently only spoke in English during the interviews, Natalia and Laura alternated constantly; while Pia only did so a few times. Camila on the other hand, never switched to Spanish. This was apparently due to her negative self-perception in terms of her proficiency in Spanish. She mentioned, “usually I speak English because I feel more comfortable with my English than I do with my Spanish” However, she also mentioned that she spoke Spanish at home, saying “nobody at home speaks English besides me ... so I always had to speak in Spanish.” The word “had” in that last quote shows that even though she could speak Spanish, she only used it as a last resort.

Even when asked to identify their first language, participants adhered to a translanguaging perspective. Natalia and Laura made it clear that their first language was Spanish because it was the one used in their households. However, they also included English when asked what their first language was, because there were some instances when English was their language of choice. For example, referring to conversations at home with her brother, Natalia said “we both speak either Spanish or English depending on the situation.” Laura also commented on the matter by saying, “English when I want to talk better; Spanish when I am passionate about something”. For example, when she wanted to curse, she normally did so in Spanish, since she found it to be more expressive. As she mentioned, referring to Spanish, “it's a lot closer to my heart.”

Pia and Camila, on the other hand, were hesitant to choose just one language when asked the same question. They explained that since they began learning both languages from a very early age, they learned both at the same time. Pia stated, “it's kind of difficult to answer that since I don't remember an age when I didn't know both languages.” Ultimately, she decided that Spanish was her first language because it was the one mostly used in her household. Camila expressed her dilemma by stating:

I would say ... there's a mix because I would say English because I was first ... I went to ... school and I was basically all in English since I entered pre-K, but at home I was speaking Spanish.

She then concluded that both English and Spanish are her first languages, which again, was an example of how the participants has adopted a translanguaging perspective.

In regard to participants' self-perception on their language proficiency, some participants lacked confidence in their Spanish skills. For example, Pia expressed her discomfort by saying “I am not very good at it” and identified this as the cause for her choosing books in English over those in Spanish. She mentioned, “I don't read in Spanish basically because most of the Spanish is pretty advanced.” This meant that she did not consider her Spanish to be at an adequate level for her age. This self-perception was something that could have emerged as a direct result of her classmates' reaction to her

Spanish pronunciation. She recalled some peers making fun of her because of it while attending private school from third to ninth grade. Pia commented, “since my Spanish is not very good, they would also tease me because of some Spanish words I didn't know very well.” However, she also believed that her Spanish had been improving since then. As an example, she mentioned that she was able to watch TV series in Spanish with her mom, which was something that she previously did not do. Pia noted, “because my Spanish vocabulary got better from high school to now, I could understand most of what they were saying”.

Camila's self-perception of her language proficiency was very evident in the way she spoke, since she did not code-switch throughout the interview. She also repeatedly mentioned that she was more comfortable speaking English than Spanish, therefore she displayed a more positive attitude towards English. This was also evident in the way that she code-switched since she identified her style as “using a little bit of words of Spanish to my English.” Additionally, she talked about some of her struggles with the Spanish language mentioning that “I could read it even though I take longer than it would in English. Spelling wise, I still confuse a couple of letters here and there”. This all pointed towards her not feeling comfortable with Spanish.

Natalia and Laura did not make any negative comments about their Spanish, but they did have positive things to say about their English. Natalia, for example, mentioned “I consider myself clearly very fluent in English” when she was asked what her first language was. Laura also made positive remarks about her English by pointing out how much she enjoyed English class. She recalled, “in middle school and throughout high school I would always love English Week... I was always very good at spelling bees” and “I would always go to like the test just because I wanted to.” She also mentioned that, “although I would say my Spanish is quite good; but my English I do say it's good.” This is another example of how these participants exhibited intrinsic motivation when it came to learning English.

In order to gain a more holistic view of how these participants acquired their languages, it was also important to consider their parents' views on bilingualism and how they influenced their children. In Pia and Natalia's cases, both of their parents viewed learning English as a tool that would help their children in their academic and professional future. For example, Pia recalled her mother sharing job listings with her that required the applicant to know English. She explained, “my parents knew knowing the English language should help me not only in my academics, but in finding a job.” When asked about how the people close to her reacted to the fact that she was learning English she answered, “my parents were ecstatic because here in Puerto Rico a lot of people who learned the English language do it because they want to get better jobs,” which makes it clear that her family views English as the key to a brighter professional future.

Natalia's father also shared this way of thinking about the importance of English since she reported that, “I learned it (English) thanks to my dad since I was like probably one

year old... obviously not learned it, but began having contact with English due to TV programs or movies.” Her father always insisted that she watch television in English in order to learn the language. He told her, “you need to learn English too, so I'm going to play every single cartoon in English and then you will thank me”. In this case, his interest in her learning the language stemmed from a negative experience that he had in the past. Her dad lived in the United States for about five years during his adolescence and experienced a lot of frustration because he did not know the language. Even asking the teacher if he could go to the bathroom was a struggle. Natalia shared, “he told me *‘Natalia, yo no quiero que tu pases por lo mismo que yo pasé así que yo quiero que tanto tú, como tu hermano tenga esa base en el inglés para que tengan mejores oportunidades de trabajo’*”. Having had this negative experience with the language is what convinced this parent that learning English could improve his children’s lives; he did not want them to suffer like he did.

Sometimes actions speak louder than words and in Camila’s case this proved to be true. Even though her family was happy about how well she had developed in English, it was also evident that they always prioritized English over Spanish. For starters, she was always enrolled in bilingual schools where Spanish was de-emphasized. As previously mentioned, while she attended school her Spanish class consisted of reading texts in the target language but then discussing them in English. She believed that her mother did not mind this because the main purpose of signing her up for that school was to help her to improve her English. Referring to her mother, Camila stated, “when she found out about ... [the bilingual] school, that was her intention signing me up; she wanted me to learn English.”

Camila also had a tutor who would tell her “we are not focusing on Spanish because it could ruin your ability to learn English.” Because of this way of thinking, Camila was never exposed much to Spanish other than it being the main language used at home. This meant that in terms of reading and writing and other more formal, more academic competences in Spanish, she did not get much instruction since it was believed that it would interfere with her English. When talking about what the tutor would tell her and her mom, she mentions, “that was the main reason they didn't give me books or spelling in Spanish or anything. I think I developed English better because of that; because they didn't allow me to.” She believes that all of these factors taken together affected her chances of further developing her Spanish. English was prioritized in her life so much that her Spanish was neglected.

Conclusion

Having regular access to English, mainly through formal schooling and media exposure, helped all of the participants to develop an inclination to use English over Spanish on specific occasions. For example, for some, Spanish was generally used to express feelings and emotions, while English was preferred in everyday situations. In the beginning,

all of the participants began consuming media in English with the active encouragement of their parents. However, all of them voluntarily continued watching movies and television shows in English as they aged. They grew so fond of media in English that all of them said that they would rather not watch a movie at all than having to watch a dubbed version in Spanish. Reading in English for enjoyment was another habit that continued into their teenage years and, in some cases, all the way through to their years as university students.

All participants came from homes where English was considered to be an important tool for accessing better employment opportunities and life possibilities. This is why the participants' parents did everything in their power to expose their children to as many sources of English as possible. This type of extrinsic, parent centered motivation to learn English eventually gave rise to intrinsic motivation on the part of the participants themselves. As Ortega (2009) mentions, intrinsic motivation is associated with higher levels of achievement (188), and this explained, at least in part, why these participants decided to put in the work required to learn English.

Just as was the case for the participants in Zarate's (2007) research, these Puerto Rican parents were very involved with their children's every-day activities such as reading and watching television, rather than with their schoolwork per se, exhibiting more 'life participation' than 'academic involvement.' This could have something to do with the fact that none of their parents self-identified as proficient English language users. As Zarate (2007) mentioned in her study, "for many parents, language was an insurmountable barrier to participation in their children's academic tasks" (9), which could be part of the reason why the participants' parents did what was in their power to help their children learn English by means other than those of formal schooling. Even though they might have not been able to help their children with homework in English or serve as a person to practice English with, they found other ways to support their daughters in learning English.

The fact that participants had regular access to English in Puerto Rico was also a sign of privilege. Not everyone on the island has been fortunate enough to afford cable television, books for enjoyment, or private education, therefore the participants' relatively high level of privilege was also a determining factor in their acquisition of English. The fact that their parents were encouraging them to learn English through reading and having regular contact with the target language, shows that they were aware of the fact that, in the Puerto Rican context, competence in English represents considerable social/ cultural capital. The fact that parents made sure that participants were constantly surrounded by English also shows how the environment directly affects an individual's development according to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. These are certainly areas for further research.

All of these factors were complemented by most participants being enrolled in bilingual schools. However, the fact that these schools followed a subtractive bilingualism model

acted in detriment to the participants' acquisition of Spanish, especially in terms of the more formal and academic competences. Since their "bilingual" schools did not encourage the use of Spanish, participants never had the chance to develop their academic Spanish, making them insecure about their Spanish proficiency. If bilingual educators on the island were only as willing as all of the participants proved to be to adopt a translanguaging approach, the goal of additive bilingualism would be much easier to achieve in Puerto Rico.

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LANGUAGE ATTRITION AND THE ENGLISH OF PUERTO RICANS WHO HAVE RETURNED TO PUERTO RICO FROM THE US

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Abstract

The objectives of this research were to examine various aspects of the phenomenon of English language attrition in bilingual Puerto Ricans who returned to Puerto Rico after having lived more than 5 years in the US and then at least another 5 years in Puerto Rico. To meet this objective, the researcher administered a five-part self-evaluation questionnaire to 35 participants, 20 of whom were also interviewed to investigate if their self-evaluations concerning English attrition were realistic or not. Since the participants no longer used English as much in most domains in Puerto Rico as they had in the US, they showed some degree of attrition in various skill areas. The participants' most frequent stated reason for losing English competence was lack of practice, due to having fewer daily encounters with speakers of English in Puerto Rico than in the US.

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Key Terms: language attrition, language loss, language contact, sociolinguistics, bilingualism

Introduction

The investigation presented in this article focused on English language attrition among Puerto Ricans who, after having spent at least 5 years in predominantly English-speaking environments in the US, returned to spend at least another 5 years in the predominantly Spanish-speaking environments of Puerto Rico. *Merriam-Webster's New World College Dictionary* (2018: 93) defines attrition as a "the process of ... gradual wearing [down]," and the *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* (Richards & Schmidt, 2013: 314) describes language attrition as "language loss that is gradual rather than sudden." Linguists such as Keijzer (2010), Schmidt (2009), and Dorian (1982) understand language attrition to be the result of forgetting a language after a personal change in circumstances which can lead to what they have labeled as

language death; that is, “the disappearance of a living language as its speakers switch to using other languages and children cease to learn it” (Richards & Schmidt, 2013: 316). In addition, Köpke and Schmid (2004: 1-2) refer to attrition as “the erosion of the language of emigrants after being exposed to another language for a long time,” and this description corresponds to Sharwood Smith and Van’s interpretation of the phenomenon (2010, [1991]: 43).

Roman Jakobson’s (1941) regression hypothesis claims that language loss occurs in the same order in which language was acquired but in reverse order. Therefore, if a language is acquired in the sequence of 1•2•3•4, it will be lost in the opposite sequence direction of 4•3•2•1. In other words, the things that are learned last are the first to be forgotten. Jakobson’s main goal was to show parallels in language development between language acquisition and loss (de Bot & Weltens, 2010, [1991]). Although his research only focused on the phonological system of young native speakers from different Slavic languages (Keijzer, 2010: 3), Jakobson believed this theory could be extended to all forms of language loss.

In 1989, Sharwood Smith asserted that language loss research can be conducted in different ways including examining the effects of attitude and motivation on language retention, as well as examining political aspects such as the effect of policies aimed at maintaining or discouraging a minority language. The notion of language attrition is related to those of language transfer, which is “the effect of one language on the learning of another,” and overgeneralization, which is “the extended use of a grammatical rule by making it follow a more regular pattern” (Richards & Schmidt, 2013: 322, 416). An example of the former is the literal translation of the Spanish sentence “Yo tengo 18 años” into English as “I have 18 years old” whereas an example of the latter is adding the plural suffix -s to English irregular nouns as in “foots” and “mans” (Yule, 2006: 155).

Researchers such as Keijzer (2010), Schmidt (2009), and Haugen (1978) have studied attrition in sociolinguistic domains such as the home, work, school, church, and social activities. Haugen (1978: 37) states that “as the learner builds new systems in the language being acquired, he dismantles and reorders the systems of the language he already knows based on the sociolinguistic contexts in which he is using the language.” A study of language attrition in speakers of Dyirbal and Fijian was conducted by Schmidt in 2009, in which she found that media, church, education, intermarriage, and contact with foreigners were key causal factors.

The island of Puerto Rico (PR) became a United States (US) territory at the end of the Spanish-American War in 1898, and Puerto Ricans were granted American citizenship in 1917 during World War 1 (Negrón de Montilla, 1990). Nonetheless, in Puerto Rico, Spanish continues to be the main first language of most of the population and is used as the majority language or “the language spoken by most of the population in a country”, whereas English is used primarily as a minority language or “a language spoken by

individuals who form a minority group within a country” (Richards & Schmidt, 2013: 351). US citizenship allows Puerto Ricans to move freely from Puerto Rico to the US and vice versa, and those who return to the island from the mainland often experience some form of English language attrition. Since they typically speak more Spanish than English in PR, their competence in English often gradually decreases.

The study

The participants in this investigation were 35 Puerto Ricans born in Puerto Rico who were at least 15 years of age at the time that the research was carried out. All had lived in Puerto Rico for at least five years prior to moving to the United States, had then spent a minimum of another five years in the US before coming back to Puerto Rico, and had then resided in Puerto Rico an additional five years by the time of the study. The data was gathered using a five-part questionnaire and face-to-face interviews. The first part of the survey collected demographic information about the 35 participants’ sex, place of residence in Puerto Rico, education level, age, and years spent in Puerto Rico and the US. The second part included questions regarding their self-assessment of their use of English and Spanish before they left Puerto Rico. The third part included a self-assessment of their English use and proficiency in English while in the US. The fourth part focused on the participants’ life in Puerto Rico after they came back from the US to determine when and where they use English on the island. The fifth part was a self-evaluation of the level of English language attrition experienced by the participants since their return to Puerto Rico.

Since answers to the questionnaire were solely based on self-assessment, interviews composed of three parts were carried out in English with 20 of the 35 participants in order to confirm that participants’ self-evaluations of English attrition were realistic. The first part engaged them in a 20 minute long free-discussion in English to confirm self-reported pronunciation, fluency, syntax, morphology, and oral comprehension levels in English. The second part contained a reading passage that was read aloud by the participants in English and followed by questions to confirm self-reported fluency, clarity, and reading comprehension in English. In the third part, the participants were asked to write a paragraph in English about what they had read in part two, in order to corroborate their self-assessments regarding coherence, grammar, spelling, and syntax in English.

Results

Table 1 presents the information collected in part 1 of the survey, including participants’ sex, place of residence in Puerto Rico, education level, age, and years spent in Puerto Rico and the US. Most participants were between the ages of 15 and 35 and the sample was balanced in terms of sex and place of residence in Puerto Rico, either urban or rural. Most participants had some post-secondary education with many holding jobs in the

fields of retail, teaching, and technology. Most participants had left Puerto Rico for the US between the ages of 5 to 12, had lived in the US for between 5 and 8 years, and had been back in Puerto Rico for between 5 and 14 years.

Table 1 Demographic information, number of years spent in Puerto Rico and the US and language dominance and use before leaving Puerto Rico

Sex	Number	Percentage
Masculine	18	51%
Feminine	17	49%
Residence in Puerto Rico: Urban versus Rural	Number	Percentage
Urban	17	49%
Rural	18	51%
Highest level attained in the formal education system	Number	Percentage
Secondary	6	17%
Undergraduate	21	60%
Graduate	8	23%
Age at the time of study	Number	Percentage
15-25	9	26%
26-35	15	43%
36-45	8	23%
46-55	3	8%
Age at the time of leaving Puerto Rico for the US	Number	Percentage
5-12	22	63%
13-17	12	36%
21→	1	3%
Years lived in the US	Number	Percentage
5-8	22	63%
9-12	6	17%
13-17	7	20%
Years in Puerto Rico since return from the US	Number	Percentage
5-9	16	46%
10-14	6	17%
15-18	7	20%
20-23	6	17%
Dominant language before leaving Puerto Rico	Number	Percentage
English	4	11%
Spanish	29	83%
Both	2	6%
Language used at home before leaving Puerto Rico	Number	Percentage
English	0	0%
Spanish	28	80%
Both	7	20%

Table 2 Participants' self-assessment of their use of English and Spanish before they left Puerto Rico

Language use at home before leaving for US	English	Percentage	Spanish	Percentage
Never	24	69%	0	0%
Sometimes	9	25%	2	6%
Often	2	6%	9	25%
Always	0	0%	24	69%
Language use at school before leaving for US	English	Percentage	Spanish	Percentage
Never	0	0%	2	6%
Sometimes	31	88%	2	6%
Often	2	6%	31	88%
Always	2	6%	0	0%
Language use at work before leaving for US	English	Percentage	Spanish	Percentage
Never	31	89%	31	89%
Sometimes	3	8%	1	3%
Often	1	3%	3	8%
Language use at church before leaving for US	English	Percentage	Spanish	Percentage
Never	31	88%	11	32%
Sometimes	2	6%	0	0%
Often	0	0%	2	6%
Always	2	6%	22	62%

Table 3 shows participants' self-assessment of their use of English in the US and the level of competence that they attained in English while living in the US. Besides the workplace domain, and, to a greater extent, the school domain, where English was the main language of instruction, Spanish continued to be the predominant language used in all other areas although no major difficulties were reported by the participants when employing English as a means of verbal and written interaction.

Table 3 Participants' self-assessment of their use of English in the US and the level of competence that they attained in English while living in the US

Frequency of use of English at home in the US	Number	Percentage
Never	5	14%
Sometimes	18	51%
Often	10	29%
Always	2	6%
Frequency of use of English at school in the US	Number	Percentage
Never	8	23%
Often	21	60%
Always	6	17%
Frequency of use of English at work in the US	Number	Percentage

Never	17	49%
Often	2	6%
Always	16	45%
Frequency of use of English at church in the US	Number	Percentage
Never	21	60%
Sometimes	6	17%
Often	6	17%
Always	2	6%
Frequency of understanding English vocabulary while in the US	Number	Percentage
Sometimes	1	3%
Often	16	46%
Always	18	51%
Frequency of understanding English grammar while in the US	Number	Percentage
Sometimes	1	3%
Often	15	43%
Always	19	54%
Level of English reading skills while in the US	Number	Percentage
Very Good	19	54%
Good	15	43%
Fair	1	3%
Level of English writing skills while in the US	Number	Percentage
Very Good	13	37%
Good	18	51%
Fair	1	3%
Poor	3	9%

Table 4 presents participants' self-assessment of their use of English since leaving the US and returning to Puerto Rico, and indicates that they use English, especially in a code-switching mode with Spanish, to an appreciable degree in all domains, especially at work.

Table 4 Participants' self-assessment of their use of English after leaving the US and returning to Puerto Rico

English use at home since returning to Puerto Rico from the US	Number	Percentage
Never	9	26%
Sometimes	12	34%
Often	11	31%
Always	3	9%
English use at school since returning to Puerto Rico from the US	Number	Percentage
Never	17	49%
Sometimes	13	37%
Often	4	11%
Always	1	3%
English use at work since returning to Puerto Rico from the US	Number	Percentage

Never	6	17%
Sometimes	3	9%
Often	16	46%
Always	10	28%
English use at church since returning to Puerto Rico from the US	Number	Percentage
Never	9	25%
Sometimes	17	49%
Often	7	20%
Always	2	6%

Table 5 displays participants' self-assessment of their loss of English competence since they returned to Puerto Rico from the US. While they all reported some degree of attrition in relation to their English skills, in every case, the degree of loss was reported to be relatively minor. The competence levels demonstrated by the 20 participants who were interviewed largely corroborated their self-assessment in the survey.

Table 5 Participants' self-assessment of their loss of English competence since they returned to Puerto Rico from the US.

Loss in ability to understand spoken English since return to PR	Number	Percentage
Very Little	21	60%
Little	10	29%
Much	4	11%
Very Much	0	0%
Loss in oral command of English grammar since return to PR from the US		
Very Little	18	51%
Little	11	32%
Much	5	14%
Very Much	1	3%
Loss in oral command of English vocabulary since return to PR from the US		
Very Little	13	37%
Little	19	54%
Much	3	9%
Very Much	0	0%
Loss in command of English pronunciation since return to PR from the US		
Very Little	14	40%
Little	14	40%
Much	7	20%
Very Much	0	0%
Loss in oral fluency in the use of English since return to PR from the US		
Very Little	16	45%
Little	9	26%
Much	10	29%
Very Much	0	0%

Loss in oral ability to construct sentences since return to PR from the US		
Very Little	13	37%
Little	15	43%
Much	7	20%
Very Much	0	0%
Loss in reading speed since return to PR from the US		
Very Little	13	37%
Little	20	57%
Much	2	6%
Very Much	0	0%
Loss in understanding read sentences since return to PR from the US		
Very Little	17	49%
Little	18	51%
Much	0	0%
Very Much	0	0%
Loss in understanding read words since return to PR from the US		
Very Little	12	34%
Little	19	54%
Much	4	12%
Very Much	0	0%
Loss in ability to write coherently since return to PR from the US		
Very Little	10	29%
Little	14	40%
Much	11	31%
Very Much	0	0%
Loss in ability to spell correctly since return to PR from the US		
Very Little	19	54%
Little	9	26%
Much	7	20%
Very Much	0	0%
Loss in ability to conjugate verbs correctly since return to PR from the US		
Very Little	15	43%
Little	13	37%
Much	7	20%
Very Much	0	0%

Conclusions

As shown in Tables 1 and 2, the majority of the participants left Puerto Rico at a relatively young age, most before they were old enough to join the workforce. Some 80% reported Spanish as their main language and the language that they used at home before they left for the US, with only moderate exposure to English, mostly at school. Therefore, the majority saw themselves as Spanish-language dominant, and potentially even monolingual in Spanish before they arrived in the US. As demonstrated in Table 3, this

changed dramatically during most participants' time in the US, where the use of English became predominant at school and work, and was also used, to a lesser degree, in the domains of church and home. Essentially, most participants described themselves as competent bilinguals in their self-evaluations of the levels of English competence that they achieved while living in the US. Table 4 indicates that upon their return to Puerto Rico, their use of Spanish increased in all domains except the workplace, where they seem to have used their English language skills to their advantage to gain employment in which English competency is a requirement. Participants' use of English was, nevertheless, appreciably greater than before they left Puerto Rico for the US.

In Table 5, we see that although participants generally reported some degree of loss in English competence since their arrival back to Puerto Rico from the US, they still report to have maintained sufficient skills to be considered bilinguals even in most of the more restrictive senses in which that term is used. This was also evidenced during the interviews, where participants showed substantial levels of proficiency in oral and aural competency with less competency notable in reading and writing skills. That said, almost all the interviewees needed some help from the researcher to be fully understood, and this may suggest that when they were in the US, many participants were able to employ both languages to communicate meaning, particularly for those participants who reported using English "sometimes" or "often" in specific domains rather than "always" or "never." The results clearly show that participants experienced language attrition to some degree since their return to Puerto Rico and this is explained by the fact that Spanish, not English, is the default language used on the island. Educators in Puerto Rico all too often are unaware of this phenomenon or worse, simply ignore it, when dealing with their Spanish-English bilingual students, many of whom have spent appreciable time living in the US before returning to the island.

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**CARIBBEAN WITHOUT BORDERS 2020:
VOICES OF CHANGE
AND RESISTANCE**

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION TO THE CARIBBEAN WITHOUT BORDERS 2020 SECTION OF THIS VOLUME

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The 18 articles in this section are based on presentations at the Caribbean Without Borders conference, which held at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras from the 3rd to the 5th of March 2020, as one of the last opportunities for non-virtual intellectual, academic, and intrapersonal contact before COVID-19 lockdowns in Puerto Rico and the rest of the Caribbean made such gatherings unfeasible. It was here, among other aspiring scholars and academics, that participants were able to share their research on literary, linguistic, pedagogical, and social representations that explore the myriad voices of change and resistance within the Caribbean. As co-chairs of the conference, we remain truly in awe of the number of outstanding presentations, as well as of the number of participants who were actively invested in one another's research. We are therefore truly thankful to have been able to create this collection which includes some of the conference participants' superb contributions. In the first of the 5 sub-sections that follow, we begin with work on Caribbean film and poetry, including the conference keynote address, which was delivered by film maker Maria Govan. The other 4 sub-sections include articles on Caribbean society, education, music and literature. As editors of this section, we wish to express our thanks to Keyla N. Vélez, Kevin J. Méndez, Fernando Alvarado, Sherean Shehada Hader, Norma Liz Rodríguez-Santiago, Virginia M. Burnett and Marlene Aponte for their efforts and unwavering commitment.

**CARIBBEAN WITHOUT BORDERS 2020:
VOICES OF CHANGE AND RESISTANCE IN
CARIBBEAN FILM AND POETRY**

MARIA GOVAN'S KEYNOTE ADDRESS TO THE CARIBBEAN WITHOUT BORDERS CONFERENCE

EDITED BY NORMA LIZ RODRÍGUEZ-SANTIAGO

I hail from documentary filmmaking and want to share the journey that I've been on for the last forty-five years as a writer, producer, and director. In her novel *A mercy*, Toni Morrison said, "We never shape the world, the world shapes us" (2008:71). As Morrison points out, it is important to recognize that we do not move through the world controlling it, but rather we listen, and we allow it to come to us. I come from the Bahamas and, unbeknownst to many, there is a very vibrant Greek community in the islands. My mother is Greek: she was born in Greece and my grandmother and grandfather migrated to the Caribbean from an island near Turkey called Samos.

I lived with my grandmother in the house I grew up in, in the Bahamas. She had a little dress shop where she sold church dresses to mostly Black Bahamian women. I would spend the afternoons in the shop, a very dingy shop if I may say, with these old church dresses draped in plastic. These older women would come in and tell stories to my grandmother, and I spent my afternoons listening to these stories. I feel like through my mother's line there was a kind of innate resistance. She resisted arranged marriages, which was part of the culture at the time. There is an intersection of culture in my family, and belonging is something that I have always grappled with. While growing up, it was apparent I was a queer little trans-child. This is important to note because I grew up in a religious family and religious community. However, even with my parents' support, there was always a sense that I was different, and something was wrong. It all comes back to the idea of belonging, which is part of the work I create because I do believe that, as artists, we form out of necessity. As much as we would like to think it's altruistic and want to change the world for all the right reasons, the reality of why we create is very selfish — and sometimes we do it because we have a question that needs an answer or something else wanting our attention.

I knew that becoming a filmmaker was my goal and started my career as a production assistant on set. It is an awful job, in a way, but also great in others because you learn so much while allowing yourself to obtain a lot of experience. I dropped out of college, which I would not advise anyone to do because I would do anything to go back to school right now and read for four years. However, I did it with this conviction that I would learn the craft of filmmaking by practicing it. For me, the classroom was quite limiting,

and my parents were not wealthy. It is a fact that film school is very expensive, therefore, it was not an option for me. I moved to Los Angeles and worked in film for many years while also writing. I worked with Gary Marshall as a production assistant. One day, at the end of the shoot, he asked me, "What do you want to do when you grow up?" and I told him that my goal was to be a writer/director. "Well, have you written anything?" to which I replied "Yeah! I've written one script." He asked me to send this script to him. It took me one year to finally make the decision to send him my work. He was nice enough to read it, we met, had lunch, and he told me, "This is terrible. *Pretty Woman* was depressing, but I made something out of it. This is awful and I don't even know what to do with it." Still, he continued to mentor me and was very supportive and encouraging.

However, my experience in Los Angeles was difficult. I was too young to be there in the first place and decided to move back to the Bahamas. I bought a camera and started making documentary films. It was kind of an accident; I had been pondering about change in our lives, why we change, and what is a catalyst for change. For me, it has been two things: love and crisis. And sometimes a crisis of love. In this case, it was love. I met somebody, and together we made a film about Junkanoo in the Bahamas, which is an Afro Caribbean festival rooted in the slave experience. While Junkanoo has transformed over the years, it used to be largely organized around the working class and their experience. Nowadays, it has shifted. The roots of Junkanoo, as we understand it, are that slaves were given time on Christmas night and New Year's morning after their masters had had their parties. When the slaves had cleaned up and everybody in the master's home was drunk and passed out, the slaves were able to celebrate. They would kill echo and drum, while also creating costumes and it became this really valued festival that was organized geographically. The festival has become widely commercialized to attract tourists because that's how things work in the Bahamas. Everything is done for tourists and tourism.

After finishing the documentary about Junkanoo, I went to Cuba, did a little bit of studying, learned how to shoot on video, and made a second film. It was about HIV and AIDS in the Bahamas. This took place during the nineties, and it was a time when people with HIV were really stigmatized. A self-proclaimed minister took over a colony in New Providence, Bahamas for people with HIV to live. It was a horrible environment, but these people had nowhere to go because their families didn't want them at the time. The stigma was so profound many of them were also addicted to drugs. We were naïve at the time and our main concern was being able to find people suffering from HIV willing to share their struggle. In the end, it was the people in power, the politicians, and the doctors who became the ones that did not want to talk to us. Ironically, it was the exact opposite of what we thought. People who had been alienated and marginalized, who were HIV positive, desperately wanted to speak. They showed us an incredible amount of gratitude and appreciation. The film focused on a mother of five, Glass,

who was addicted to crack and pregnant with her fifth child. She started using crack again after the baby was born. Glass managed to stay clean for most of her pregnancy, and then moved to a crack house. She was raising her kids; the kids eventually ran away and followed her. We spent a lot of time in this crack house and somehow, they trusted us with cameras. We developed relationships with these people and Glass, all of whom partly inspired *Rain* (Govan et al., 2008).

The genesis of *Rain* comes from a feeling that the country [Bahamas] spoke to me. Junkanoo was present, as was the Greek influence on my family, and Glass's story. *Rain* was a homage to the work I had done for four years. However, *Rain* was a film where almost everything went wrong: we had two rental cars stolen, the hotel got broken into, my relationship fell apart at the time, the film was incomplete, the lead actress got sick with pneumonia. The whole thing came crumbling down. The film was terrible. I went to L.A. to look at the cut of the film, and it was awful. It was the worst. I had no money, I had not been paid, I was living on a couch. It was a very difficult time in my life, and I needed help. I made the decision to try to work out my relationship because I did not want to rush back to it out of necessity. I called her and she said, "come to New York, we'll talk." I called my producer and I said, "look I'm not an L.A. person. L.A.'s chewed me up and spat me out. I'm gone." The relationship worked itself out, and within a week, I had fifty thousand dollars in the bank, paid off my American Express, and sort of slowly built myself out of debt. Over a year and a half later, I had found money to finish shooting *Rain*, which later got into the Tribeca Film Festival. I was with my father the day I got the email. I did not even know what I was reading. My dad and I cried together. These stories are the reality of what it takes to make a film, how god-awful it can be, and how much we must love what we do.

Play the Devil (Govan & Hadeed, 2016) was my next project. I took a break from making documentaries and went to Trinidad and spent time with Trinidadian photographer Abdul Majeed, who for decades had been photographing traditional clothes for the blue devils. The blue devils of Paramin are bands of young people who cover themselves in blue paint and dress up as devils. They come into the villages, scare the villagers, and allow the devil his dance for the night. What interested me is that in such a religious space there is actually a place for the shadow. I feel like in our world today we are so hypervigilant about being positive all the time. We need to honor the parts of our lives that cause hardship, and the issues in the world that are difficult and not working. This idea of honoring our shadow struck me. At the same time, I heard about a young man who committed suicide. He killed himself because he was with a lover who threatened to "out" him to his friends and family. It really struck me because I know how difficult it is to grow up as a queer person, and the violence that happens with it.

I wrote a film called *Play the Devil* that incorporated the idea of violence coming out of the repression of ourselves. It leads me to this quote by James Baldwin that says, "You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world,

but then you read” (cited in Howard, 1963: 89). You watch films, look at art, talk to people and you start to walk, and all of this goes back to this idea of what it means to witness others. In 2016, when this film was in post-production, my mother's sister, Poppy, got very sick. I grew up with Poppy, she has Down syndrome. I believe people with Down syndrome are the angels of this earth. She was in the hospital with kidney failure and my parents could not afford to care for her and, as a family, we all had to do it. I also had a film to finish, and going through this situation, I went into this deep, dark space. I had lost track of myself, my journey, and my dreams.

My friends convinced me to go to the Sundance Film Festival in 2018. The next day after our arrival, CCH Pounder, who is an actress in *Rain*, called me and told me, “Ava DuVernay is looking for you. She wants to hire you.” Directing TV is so hard to break into. It is a field dominated by white men, which is why DuVernay is working very hard to incorporate women. I called my mother to tell her about working with Ava, and she replied that Poppy had a fever of a 105°F. My whole time at Sundance was spent calling doctors and trying to get medicine. Long story short, she had an infection that had got to her brain and she was massively bleeding. Upon my return to the Bahamas, and while we were at the hospital, I found a wedding ring and gave it to security. Poppy went into surgery and she miraculously survived. While we were waiting, my mother realized that she had lost her wedding ring, the one I found before and gave to security. I was able to recover the ring. This experience was a representation of the circle of life. I'd gotten Poppy back, and the ring. I had not heard from Ava at the time. Ten days later, Poppy got worse and now the infection had spread to other organs and bone marrow. That same day, Ava DuVernay left me a message asking me to call her. I had to pull myself together and call Ava. She said, “If you literally want this job...this job is yours.” She didn't even ask me if I had watched her show, which I had not. Not a single episode. Ten days after that call, Poppy passed away. After coming from the hospital, I read a message from the show's frontrunner saying, “Welcome to the family.”

This is such an important story in my life. For those of you who are having a difficult time, as artists and creators, I just encourage you to listen to the world around you. Listen and pay attention to what is there for you because there is treasure in everything. There is treasure in the things that we give less value to. Trust that things come to us, stories come to us. They pick us; we don't pick them. Whatever force is out there, I swear to you, there is an amazing thing that is looking after us and paying attention. Rainer Maria Rilke said, “If your daily life seems poor do not blame it; blame yourself. Tell yourself that you are not poet enough to call forth its riches; for the creator there is no poverty.” (1954: 17). It is up to us to find treasure in places we take for granted.

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THE NEGOTIATIONS OF A PUERTO RICAN IN (TRANS)IT: THE JOURNEY THROUGH IN-BETWEEN SPACES IN *LO TERCIARIO* BY RAQUEL SALAS RIVERA

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Raquel Salas Rivera's *Lo terciario* [the tertiary] was published on April 18, 2018, two years after the US government imposed the Fiscal Control Board on Puerto Rico, an event that raised awareness about the sociopolitical status of the island. It debunked the idea that the so-called Free-Associated State¹ of Puerto Rico was anything else than an unincorporated territory of the United States of America. The imposition of the Fiscal Control Board and its World Bank-IMF style neoliberal 'structural adjustment' stranglehold over the governance of the island was a clear political statement: Puerto Rico is a colony of the US, which is bad enough, and worse, a neo-colony of US corporate and banking interests, both at the same time. These realities, which many administrations had been trying to sweep under the rug for decades, were laid bare for all to see in the process.

Through a fractal of stories intertwined with poetic language, Salas Rivera manages to break down the barriers of Puerto Ricans' private lives and blends them seamlessly with the public sphere. Salas Rivera's poetic voice creates several spaces and experiences of what I see as the (trans)it of the queer subject. These spaces include the conservative home, left-wing resistance spaces, and the Puerto Rican diaspora. Through Salas Rivera's poetry, these spaces are presented, critiqued, and expanded by linking them to the experience of living as a Puerto Rican in an explicitly colonial situation under the kleptocratic regime of the Fiscal Control Board. In this article, I trace and study the transit through these spaces, while analyzing the discourses that each space promotes and their resonances and dissonances with Salas Rivera's poetic voice.

Salas Rivera's book is divided into two sections; the poems in one section are in Spanish, and in the other they are in English. This makes it difficult for the reader to tell which section should be read first, which section is the original, and which the translation. Within each of these sections, there is a collection of poems subdivided into three parts. These are: 1. 'the debt-production process', 2. 'the debt-circulation process', and

¹ From Spanish, *Estado Libre Asociado* (all translations in this article are by the author, unless specified otherwise).

3. 'notes on a derailed circulation'. Embedded in the titles of each of these parts is the issue of the debt ostensibly owed by Puerto Rico to the big banks in the US, which was used as the pretext for forcing the government of the island to submit to what amounts to dictatorial rule by the Fiscal Control Board, even though it was these US banks who are largely responsible for running up that debt in the first place. Each of these parts approaches a specific space/moment in the life of the poetic voice, which in turn is presented as, and further connected to, the experiences of the queer subject.

In the first part, Salas Rivera presents the domestic landscape of the home and of the poetic voice's family while mentioning the hardships that some family members experience. By doing so, Salas Rivera allows the reader to see how the imposition of the Fiscal Control Board is not an isolated event disconnected from the reality of everyday Puerto Ricans. The family members described in the text are characters of importance to the poetic voice, such as *Titi Irma*, *los primos*, *mami*, *papi* and *stepmother*, all set in juxtaposition to the Fiscal Control Board. This is an attempt at breaking down the boundaries around their domestic space by bringing the political situation of the island into the home. This functions as a constant reminder that the Fiscal Control Board also lives within the family's private space and impacts the lives of all of its members. It shows the reader that this colonial artifact not only is located within the spaces of government, the luxurious hotels where meetings take place, and the front pages of the news, but also in living rooms, while commuting, and in the conversations of couples before going to bed. The Fiscal Control Board becomes a ubiquitous and quotidian presence, colonizing and disrupting in the lives of Puerto Ricans. It should also be noted that, by placing these family members alongside the Fiscal Control Board's ominous presence, these characters are humanized by the question that prevails within the lines of the poem: how much are these lives worth?

Salas Rivera manages to dramatize the looming need to pay this debt created by corporate interests by evoking ordinary, but nonetheless unsettling imagery, such as glow-in-the-dark rosaries carried by *las doñas* and ants crawling out after cutting the grass. This mixture of images can be viewed as an absurdist painting in which Salas Rivera begs the question of the value of things, and brings into sometimes startling relief the differences between what Puerto Ricans themselves value versus what colonialism values. The hunger for profit on the part of the banks and corporations whose interests are represented and protected by the Fiscal Control Board is unmasked as a cancer-like disease that seeks to satisfy its need to grow and grow *ad infinitum*, regardless of the lives that it undoes in the process. The poetic voice uses this juxtaposition of everyday life with political theory to both construct and dismantle the distinction between the public and the private, which results in a nuanced and upended understanding of the social contract. Moreover, the poetic voice deploys discursive devices such as irony and figurative absurdity to draw attention to the real life absurdity, not only of Puerto Rico being both a

colony and a neo-colony simultaneously in the 21st century, but also of the entire population of the island being held hostage to a virulent strain of corporate greed that unabashedly supersedes, trumps and lays waste to the value of their humanity and their livelihoods.

Salas Rivera borrows phrases from Karl Marx's *Capital* and uses them as titles for the poems. In a review of Salas Rivera's work, Claire Jiménez (2019) states this is how she "demystifies the jargon and queers/decolonizes the lens of her critique by placing real people at the center of fragmented Marxist theory". I agree with this interpretation of Jiménez and I add that, in doing this, Salas Rivera takes what has been considered to be the public and the theoretical and subversively embeds it deeply in the real and private world of family experiences, thus inextricably intertwining the lives of *Titi Irma*, *Uncle Ju*, *Mommy*, *Mrs. Sophia*, etc. with the crises of debt and colonialism.

In this process, Salas Rivera begins to reveal her many insights into how hegemonic discourses have distorted and delinked the concept of 'value' from any accountability to real people and real life. In the first poem, value is defined, in Marxist fashion, as 'crystallizations' of the residue of the product of labor. But when she actually attempts to concretize this meaning by determining the value of the labor that might be sufficient to pay the debt of Puerto Rico, she realizes that even the most sophisticated formulations of economics are nothing more than a game of smoke and mirrors to conceal the raw plunder that is being inflicted on Puerto Rico, the type of plunder or 'accumulation of capital' that Marx relegated to earliest stages of capitalism in the distant past, but which in fact has remained an integral part of capitalism up to the present day.

In the poem "you don't exchange a jacket for a jacket", the poetic voice offers their life as effectively enslaved labor in order to pay their debt to a bank, but the bank responds that an entire human life in enslavement, or even a series of human lives in enslavement, is not enough to cover the insatiable greed that defines this debt:

just as the debt and the fifty years of work have use-values that
are *qualitatively different*, so are the two forms of labor that
produce them: that of the investor and that of the colonized.
your life is not enough. you will have to pay the labor of your
children and your children's children (Salas Rivera, 2018: 20)

Later on, the poetic voice mentions that some characters in this absurd, but all too real drama have no children to 'inherit' the public debt, thus launching the poetic voice into a mad chase for all objects, places, and people that could be of value to pay off the debt, including: "your neighbors, / with your grandmother, / with the dog that sometimes searches your trash" (Salas Rivera, 2018: 21). Then it becomes apparent in the narrative that rivers are needed, thus all the rivers and other resources are collected: "here I have all that fits / between the Caribbean Sea and the north Atlantic / here I have: my imaginary, ... gasoline station umbrellas, limestone, birth certificates, shutdown, etc. etc. etc." (Salas Rivera, 2018: 22). In these lines, all of the images that define Puerto Rico

in the public imaginary have to be gathered in order to be exchanged for another supposedly equivalent value, which is the ever increasing interest-driven level of the debt, which was purposefully designed to grow exponentially and infinitely in such a way that it can never be repaid, resulting in the permanent enslavement of the people of the island and their progeny forever.

Reador (2016) states: “Absurdism occurs when the public and the private spheres are conflated in war time; when violent public acts become so common place that they lose their sense of emancipatory defiance” (124). Although Reador talks about absurdity and war, it is possible to adapt her understanding of absurdity to Salas Rivera’s understanding of absurdity and colonialism. In the final analysis, it becomes difficult to distinguish warfare from what colonialism has inflicted on Puerto Rico, including the genocide of the island’s indigenous peoples through armed conquest, the enforced labor of both indigenous and African descended peoples in the concentration-camp like *encomiendas* and plantations, the policies of linguistic and cultural ethnocide designed to impose the languages, cultures and identities of the colonizer on the colonized, the dumping of hazardous waste, the experimentation on women’s bodies, the use of Vieques as a weapons testing site, etc. All of these meet the definition of war formulated by Reador as a violent and lethal phenomenon that is manifested through a constant repetition of violence that ruptures both the public and private lives of people. In *Lo terciario* Salas Rivera makes a convincing case that the Fiscal Control Board is currently waging outright war against the people of Puerto Rico, and this colonial warfare is just as deadly, but also just as absurd, as more conventional forms of war.

In the poem “the secondary” Salas Rivera plays with other theoretical terms and their empty meanings through a flow of words that begin to sound like the mathematical equations of the hegemonic and colonizing logic of the Western episteme:

the brain’s *expenditure*
the *duration* of that expenditure
the *quantity* of that labor,
the difference between *quantity* and *quality*.
the term *puerto rico* signifies the externalization of the measurements,
the quality of a secondary citizenship (Salas Rivera, 2018: 80)

Salas Rivera formulates an academic-sounding mathematical equation in which the term Puerto Rico has a constantly decreasing weight or value, as she reveals how the abstract concepts of politics and economics are incessantly manipulated by the symbolic elites of the universities and the media who do the bidding of the banks, the corporations and the ruling classes.

If the poetic wordplay and juxtaposition of theoretical financial terms and family members works as a way to present how colonization and its mechanisms, such as the debt and the Fiscal Control Board, systematically devalue the importance of actual human beings, then it is also important to understand where the queer subject stands within all

of this. The presence of the family in the poems has more than one purpose. Although the family is effectively used to humanize the Puerto Rican population in the face of the debt and the banks, the family is equally effectively employed by Salas Rivera to show that, although the poetic voice is being devalued and rejected as a colonized Puerto Rican, there is a double rejection resulting from the devaluation of queer lives within many Puerto Rican families. This double rejection is tied to religion in the poems, specifically to Catholic dogma that obliges the poetic voice to constantly present itself as an unsettling force within the family environment.

In the poem “commodities can’t go by themselves to the market” the tremendous impact of this abstract Dogma on the real lives of family members is demonstrated in the first two lines: “my stepmother says it’s time. / i have to give birth outside the Christian academy.” (Salas Rivera, 2018: 45). Throughout the poem, the reader can perceive the internal conflict of the family over the identities assumed by the poetic voice. This voice speaks of leaving, or removing itself from the family space, in addition to alluding to the tensions and silences that the presence of the poetic voice causes within the family:

I didn’t visit my other grandmother
because she thinks I’m confused
I refuse to tell her
that I’m marrying my girlfriend. (Salas Rivera, 2018: 45)

Because of the family's dogmatic disapproval, the queer subject slowly begins to exile itself from the grandmother’s house, which has become a place that devalues and invalidates the queer subject's experience. Such disagreements within the family are not often talked about, and this silence becomes all the more deafening in the following line: “after orlando, they never called us” (Salas Rivera, 2018: 45).

This line introduces the Pulse massacre of 2016² and the silence of a family in the face of an attack on an LGBTTQIA+ Puerto Rican community which had been recently displaced by the debt crisis and the policies of the Fiscal Control Board to Florida in the US. This silence shown by the family towards queer identity and the well-being of the poetic voice is also shown in the traditionalist left-wing resistance spaces, or *espacios de lucha*. This deals directly with the way in which the poetic voice relates to the left-wing nationalist groups that it seeks to join, as mentioned in the following lines: “when I read the capital of marx I was 16 years old. / in the meetings we discussed breaking fences in Vieques”³ (Salas Rivera, 2018: 38).

² “The Pulse massacre occurred on the nightclub’s ‘Latin Night,’ and of the 49 dead, 23 were Puerto Ricans. “It was narrated as a tragedy against the LGBTTQIA+ community, that storytelling is very problematic for many reasons. One, because it wasn't the whole community, was it? It was a Latin night, and there were many Latinos, including undocumented people. Twenty-four or twenty-six of those people attacked were Puerto Ricans.

³ Reference to the occupation of Vieques (also known as “*Isla Nena*” in Spanish) and its use as a weapons testing site by the United States Navy. The occupation began in 1898 with the invasion of Puerto Rico by the United States after the Spanish-American War. After decades of popular struggle, the death of David Sanes Rodríguez resulted in an enormous protest march in 2000 accompanied and followed

The work of Marx is overwhelmingly present in *Lo terciario*, and already during the adolescence of the poetic voice, it has become significant. For example, in the poem titled “(highest stages)” Marxism is discussed several times in relation to the years when the poetic voice was part of a left-wing movement and participated in protests. By the end of the poem, there is a reminiscing which goes back to the first time the poetic voice read *Capital*:

i remember that first time i read marx
 I wanted to be marx and also wanted him to like me.
 that was the most important thing:
 that carlitos liked me. (Salas Rivera, 2018: 39)

By referring to Karl Marx as “carlitos” which is the endearing diminutive of “Carlos” [Karl] in Puerto Rico, the poetic voice may be using humor as a way of demonstrating the foolishness of wanting to live up to his expectations and earning his approval.

In the poem “(original bromancy)” we find satire about male dominance in supposedly revolutionary spaces, articulated through a series of phallic images, and the mention of women as romanticized figures rather than active participants in the struggle. In the first lines, Salas Rivera writes: “with your revolutionary beret and futurity pliers [...] you clean the feet to my potential / you make me the supreme *jeva* [wife] of the commune” (Salas Rivera, 2018: 40) to express how the poetic voice has been granted an illusion of privilege within the hierarchies of patriarchy. At that moment in the past, the poetic voice identified as feminine, perhaps because it had not yet found a name for its nonbinary identification, or because in these spaces of revolutionary nationalism, there is no space for anyone outside the binary. In these spaces, the man rules while “in the rear-guard your barefoot woman plants station wagons” (Salas Rivera, 2018: 40). In another part of the same poem:

this conference is dedicated
 to the piraguas of the fountains,
 those angelic snouts.
 your pistil honey arches
 and down to the beach
 runs the sacred piss of your origin gene. (Salas Rivera, 2018: 40)

Images such as *piraguas*⁴ and piss on the beach are meant to evoke the androcentric setting that have typified many *espacios de lucha* [left-wing resistance spaces].⁵ The word bromancy in the title comes from the term ‘bromance’ meaning a strong platonic

by constant demonstrations of civil disobedience. In 2003, the US Navy finally announced their departure, but to this day, the Navy have not cleared the coasts of Vieques and several bombs and tanks remain on the island.

⁴ A typical Puerto Rican shaved ice dessert shaped like a cone that is covered in syrups of different flavors.

⁵ For more about the androcentric history of Puerto Rican resistance spaces, see Findlay (2003) *Imposing Decency*.

relationship between men. The text alludes to how these relationships between ‘fighting men’ have been replicated since the first revolutionary movements in Puerto Rico. Within this solidarity there is no space for women, an allusion made by the poetic voice in the poem “(natural selection)”: “i ask you to name three girls who have/diversified the revolutionary portfolio” (Salas Rivera, 2018: 41).

It is necessary for women and LGBTTQIA+ people to be included in these spaces, but all too often, people who do not fall within the cisgender/heteronormative dichotomy typically associated with men and patriarchy are excluded. Frequently, this exclusion is justified by the need to focus on the nationalist, anti-colonial struggle. However, the poetic voice proposes new forms of resistance with inclusive struggles, not just for independence but also for an intersectional liberation from all of the systems of domination through which colonialism operates, such as ethnocentrism/ racism, patriarchy/ cis-hetero-sexism, plunder/ globalizing capitalism, anthropocentrism/ ecocide, etc. This new type of resistance space incorporates an intersectionality that paves the way for developing solidarities against all kinds of oppression in broader, deeper struggles that expand our revolutionary focus from the ‘commanding heights of power’ to our day-to-day lives, once again healing the rift between the public and the private that was created by Western colonial thought.

This new understanding, which is articulated in the poem titled: “the conversion of a sum of money into a sum of commodities” is one where every action, although it may seem silly, mundane, or absurd, serves as an initiative towards the building of a new Puerto Rico. The poem contains traditional images of *la patria puertorriqueña* [the Puerto Rican fatherland] mixed with contemporary images that incorporate intersectionality:

for every poem you write about debt, /fifty eight unicorns gather at the bottom of a pool /.... every time you believe a woman who’s been raped, / a teen of trans experience acquires hormones (Salas Rivera, 2018: 51)

This new vision of struggle makes revolution something that all of us can start doing right here and right now to help bring about the day when Puerto Rico becomes a place without debt, without naval cruisers, without cruise ships, and without vultures, but instead, a place where more and more Puerto Ricans want to stay and find fulfillment, instead of migrating to the US.

In the third part of the text, Salas Rivera begins to introduce Puerto Ricans’ queer struggles that transcend the archipelago. They connect to the queer experience of the Puerto Rican diaspora, a diaspora that grows as a result of the economic crisis in the island.⁶ In the essay titled, “Female Sexiles? Toward an archeology of displacement of sexual minorities in the Caribbean,” Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel (2011) emphasizes another

⁶ There have been several displacements of Puerto Ricans throughout the island’s history. The main ones have been: 1. First Wave Migration (1899-1901), 2. The Great Migration (1945-1965), and 3. *La Fuga de Cerebros* [The Brain Drain] (1980- the present).

type of displacement, which many do not recognize, *sexile*. Martínez-San Miguel defines *sexile* as the:

displacement of subjects who are deemed misfits within the patriarchal, heteronormative discourse of collective identity formation in the Caribbean national states, neocolonial overseas territories, commonwealths, and the departments that in many cases mimic the practices of exclusion found in the most traditional national discourses. (2011: 814)

The trans queer poetic voice narrates how reality shifts upon entering the space of the United States, a country that advertises itself to be more accepting and open minded toward the LGBTTQIA+ community. Raquel Salas Rivera has been part of the Puerto Rican diaspora and served as Poet Laureate of the city of Philadelphia from 2018 to 2019. In the text, the intersections of national, ethnic, sexual and gender identities are explored within this space of the diaspora, since she was in the United States pursuing graduate studies at the University of Pennsylvania at the time when the book was still being written.

In July of 2019, as part of my work with a summer research group,⁷ I conducted an interview with Raquel Salas Rivera. In this interview, Salas Rivera explained that inspiration for the poem arose while she was in Philadelphia and the media began to talk about the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA), and the other political initiatives that opened the road for the Fiscal Control Board to take control over the finances and governance of Puerto Rico. Salas Rivera also stated in a phone interview:

The devaluation of the bonds had already occurred, and more or less after they devalued them, we began to see massive migrations from Puerto Rico to the United States, the restructuring of the community in Puerto Rico and by then I began to write *the tertiary*. (Sastre-Rivera, Reyes Matanzo & Costales Del Toro, 2019)

This work therefore also reflects the realities of a (post-)Trump America and post-María Puerto Rican diaspora. The poetic voice speaks about the diaspora in a way that portrays a closeness to the island that has transcended measurable distances and talks about the here and there, and—in the process—a new imaginary space is created. This space embodies a change in relations and distance between the diaspora and Puerto Rico that has been created through calls, texts, the mails and solidarity. A space in the middle where both parts of the country exist, as if the states, inhabited by the Puerto Ricans there,

⁷ The group in charge of the project *Narrating Queerness Under Colonialism in Contemporary Puerto Rican Poetry and Short Stories from 2010 to the Present* was comprised of Fabiola Reyes Matanzo (primary researcher), Daniela Crespo Miró (co-researcher), Ariana Costales Del Toro (co-researcher), and myself. This project was part of the Summer Research and Creation Experience program of the Interdisciplinary Research and Undergraduate Learning Resource Center (CRiiAS) program at the University of Puerto Rico.

were part of this archipelago that grows with every mass migration. Salas Rivera traces a story that takes place here (Puerto Rico), there (United States), and in-between, similar to Gloria Anzaldúa (2012) in *Borderlands*: “A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is a constant state of transition.” (in Salas Rivera, 2018: 25).

This transitional and transitory space in which a trans poetic voice, Puerto Rican, *Cuir*, *Latinx*, *Cholinx*, etc. is transferred can become a space of uncertainty and double oppression. In the *aquí* (Puerto Rico) one suffers for being *cuir*, for breaking the norms of the church, for existing in one’s own body, for seeking more than a family based on blood, for being who you are, and in the *allá* (the US) for being queer, for speaking Spanish, for being a colonial subject who lives in the empire, for calling out the empire, for being who one is. In both places, you suffer for being who you are, for wanting something better, as explored in the poem “if they refuse to be taken, he can resort to violence or, in other words, take possession of them.” (Salas Rivera, 2018: 62). In this text, there is a reflection upon the violence that saturates life in the United States, framing its ugly portrait within the days before, during and after the fourth of July:

here I ask myself if the bricks withstand the firecrackers.
for example, will there be a fire and will they burn my trash?
I’m sure one neighbor hates because he’s a neo-nazi,
another because paterías transcend
the membrane that divide us.
another says she admires me
being the way I am.
which of the many things I am not
labors to forge these admirations? (Salas Rivera, 2018: 62)

This final question speaks to a personal preoccupation that echoes through the poem. An ‘I’ who questions themselves, thinks, and feels:

no one wants to be vulnerable
when there is a war of pacification
vulnerability, like poetry,
it is a promise:
if death says hi,
I can feel fear. (Salas Rivera, 2018: 65)

Maintaining the capacity to feel and continue to create life in a system that peddles addictive numbness and seeks death is perhaps one of the greatest revolutionary acts, especially when one is marginalized by society. When the poetic voice talks about wars again, it talks about wars in the context of Puerto Rico. A war for a daily existence

within an environment that seeks to kill and exterminate its people.⁸ Contrastively, “In my Puerto Rico, war is grocery shopping, / is watching the news in the afternoon” (Salas Rivera, 2018: 71).

This brings us back the space of the home, or a nostalgic memory of it, but framed by the realization of a return that becomes more difficult by the desire to stay:

(peace takes place desperately)

(each time I’m back)

(each time I stay longer)

(each time more and more finally (stayed) (enough). (Salas Rivera, 2018:

71)

In these lines, Salas Rivera presents one of the greatest dilemmas of transit: the mixed feelings, the memories that are created in both homes and what people leave on the way. Living between two countries that are completely different spaces, each with its particular challenges, has a fragmenting effect on diasporic peoples. The realities of Puerto Ricans and Nuyoricans have changed, and so have the relationships between the two. The Puerto Rican diaspora is growing, and Puerto Rico has expanded to new horizons. This space that the island occupies is an invisible space. It is possible that this space, the same space narrated by Raquel Salas Rivera, is a space that is also carried within, lodged between the heart and lungs. A space that is created during the long moment of being in transit. A space that fluctuates between the *aquí*, *allá* and something new that you just start to explore.

Although she exposes terrible realities with an ironic humor, Salas Rivera also inserts moments of joy, anger, and great pain her poetry. There are vulnerable moments showing the pain of living with the knowledge that your well-being has no value under capitalism, not in the eyes of the State, not before the Church, not in the eyes of neo-Nazi neighbors, nor in the eyes of a religious grandmother. These moments of vulnerability humanize the queer subject's anger, tiredness, sadness, happiness and love. These are weapons of revolution in the face of the temptation to fall into denial, illusion, indifference, apathy, and heartlessness. The poem “vii.” expresses fury and pain. “I am tired of being tired” is the first stanza, followed by: “my friends warn me that every word in a poem can be used as evidence in a court of law” (Salas Rivera, 2018: 75).

Perhaps the most important thing that Salas Rivera does in *Lo terciario* is to show that although words such as hers might mean very little to the agents of oppression, they can mean so much to the oppressed, who find in those same words a means to safeguard their violated humanity. This fulfills the duties of the poet, as stipulated by M. NourbeSe Philip (1997): “The poet must, often uneasily, often tentatively, find her own unique

⁸ One of the most recent scandals that has rocked Puerto Rico involved former Governor Ricardo Rosselló's administration. There is textual evidence of one of the governor's cronies and accomplices, Edwin Miranda, jokingly replying in a Telegram chat: “I saw the future... it was woouooooooooonderful... there are no puertorricans.” In addition, expressions such as #MeCagoEnLaIsla [#IshitontheIsland] were frequently used in the chat, among other deeply disrespectful and disturbing remarks.

answer to the question of place, be it through language, through connectedness with a particular geographical locale, or through an understanding and acceptance of a particular experience” (in Salas Rivera, 2018: 67). Salas Rivera skillfully deploys a variegated mix of references, tropes and words from Puerto Rican everyday language, which helps establish a particular geographical anchoring for the text. Poetry as an act of resistance must maintain such relevant points of reference because they help keep the marginal subject alive. These poems—that sing of the misfortunes of a people, of their transit through different oppressive spaces—function as a way to name their country and name their pains. Voices such as that of Salas Rivera also reveal the people of Puerto Rico to the world, so that those who do not know us finally see us, as they saw us in our millions flooding the streets of San Juan during the uprising of the summer of 2019, praying, hoping and struggling for a new Puerto Rico as only we know how to do it: painting walls, playing *plena* and *perreando*.

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VOCES DE RESISTENCIA Y DESCOLONIZACIÓN EN LA DIÁSPORA PUERTORRIQUEÑA

MYRNA MIRANDA-O'NEILL

CENTRO DE ESTUDIOS AVANZADOS DE PUERTO RICO Y EL CARIBE

La producción literaria de la diáspora puertorriqueña en Nueva York se ha comprometido en documentar con fuerza y creatividad los desplazamientos de la nación puertorriqueña. Estas diversas voces poéticas, de temática enraizada en la experiencia misma del diario vivir, inspiran a imaginarse, a soñar y luchar en inglés, español y en Spanglish, intersectando raíces culturales, vencen distancia y tiempo y enriquecen el imaginario cultural. En la poética de la diáspora puertorriqueña, la palabra se completa y se engrandece en interacción con su audiencia. Su presentación performativa, permite ese desarrollo e integración del medio. Las voces de la diáspora, amplifican el lente que nos sirve para describir la nación, sus culturas, sus lenguajes y geografías. Escuchar sus voces de resistencia a las perspectivas exclusivistas y opresivas es aceptar la hibridez y la transitoriedad de la experiencia cultural. Mercedes López-Baralt (2004) en la antología, *Literatura puertorriqueña del siglo XX*, expone la importancia de la literatura para la historia de los pueblos, “la literatura registra la historia, la anticipa, la contesta, la tergiversa y la corrige” (xxi). Para López-Baralt (2004) la literatura rinde una labor fundamental respecto a cómo nos pensamos. Les dedica la antología “A nuestros escritores, que día a día forjan, con la palabra, el Puerto Rico posible.” A través de la obra literaria según López-Baralt (2004), “confirmamos con orgullo que somos, que tenemos historia y cultura” (xx). Nos encontramos ante otro ejemplo en donde el arte toma la función de documentar y representar la historia y contamos con muchas voces creativas.

En el proceso de entender nuestra realidad colonial, el trabajo investigativo gira en torno a una historia compartida, marcada por el genocidio, la esclavitud y el saqueo de regímenes imperialistas. Se hace labor imperante articular nuestra historia aparte de la versión mediatizada y marcada por el paternalismo imperialista. Según el investigador Edward Said (1994), la empresa colonizadora crea la imagen inferior del colonizado, incapaz de controlar su vida y su medio y por ende al europeo responsable de “civilizar,” o controlar dentro de un marco geográfico, silenciar las voces del colonizado y su derecho a ser libre. (Said, 1994: 41) Tal opresión se manifiesta en la debilidad económica y moral inherente en una relación de dependencia con la nación/imperio dominante. Las

voces de oposición y la invención de nuevos conceptos identitarios han sido nuestros instrumentos de afrontar esa realidad.

La obra literaria de la diáspora consecuentemente recoge estos enfoques e inquietudes, sumándole la experiencia del desplazamiento, la migración circular y relacional para articularlos en la interacción y la experimentación con una multiplicidad de voces y contextos. La expresión literaria de la diáspora es un discurso amplio que incorpora varias vertientes lingüísticas y experiencias socioculturales, frente a la realidad política de un sistema colonial y de territorio legal de los Estados Unidos; realidad ambivalente y deshumanizante que nos convierte en sujetos marginados dentro de Estados Unidos y en Puerto Rico.

Liberación en la obra de Tato Laviera

“La lengua es la ametralladora de la libertad.” (Laviera, 1988: 51)

La voz hablante de Tato Laviera responde a las exigencias del espacio que se ocupa en el poema “AmeRícan”: (2003) “we gave birth to a new generation/AmeRícan, broader than lost gold/ never touched, hidden inside the/ puertorican mountains.” (Laviera, 2003: 94). La voz de Laviera apunta a lo translocal, no somos “nideaquí, nideallá”.

AmeRícan, across forth and across back
back across and forth back
our trips are broken bridges!
my last name is nideaquí nideallá/ yet-to- be- defined
evolucionario hybrid (Laviera, 2003: 94)

Para Laviera es importante representar las voces marginadas como también sacar de la invisibilidad al inmigrante puertorriqueño. Laviera se compromete a documentar, educar e inspirar una espiritualidad y una comunión intercultural entre seres humanos, sin exclusión de género, clase, raza o ideología religiosa. La voz del historiador se confirma en “para ti, mundo bravo,” del poemario *La carreta made a U-turn* (Laviera, 1992 [1979]: 13): “in the final analysis/ i am nothing but a historian/who took your actions/and jotted them on paper.” (13)¹

Laviera narra la “otra” versión de nuestra historia, la de los que sufren los efectos del imperialismo y el colonialismo, dentro de ese doble margen del inmigrante de la diáspora. En inglés, español y en Spanglish la voz poética crea disonancia, marca el espacio lingüístico y dice “presente.” Laviera crea espacios para las voces de la calle, intercambia el orden sintáctico, juega con la ironía y el sarcasmo. Todas estas técnicas señalan hacia un texto que va más allá del significado de las palabras y que también quiere interrumpir e incitar al lector o al oyente a percatarse de la diferencia y de las

¹ Al fin y al cabo
no soy más que un historiador
quien tomó tus acciones
y las apuntó (traducción mía de Laviera, 1992 [1979]: 13)

relaciones entre los sistemas que operan en la sociedad. La voz de Laviera interrumpe e incita a repensar los conceptos de raza, clase y género en oposición a los modelos dominantes aceptados.

Laviera escribe como parte y desde la experiencia de la diáspora. Predomina el hablar desde un nosotros amplio. Su estilo discursivo no se lee arrogante porque no es una voz privilegiada, sino una voz más que comparte la realidad que describe. La voz poética celebra la vida y la supervivencia de la razón, la imaginación y la solidaridad a nivel internacional y espiritual. En el poema “conciencia”, (1988: 49-52) predomina el hablar desde el nosotros y la intención de fortalecer y presentar una respuesta que promete posibilidades desde la resistencia y el pensamiento crítico:

a ver si

un nosotros
un nosotros verdadero
un nosotros poderoso
un nosotros lleno
un nosotros amoroso

a ver si

un nosotros humano
alzamos las voces
constantemente
al ritmo de insistencia
resistencia
un nosotros crítico
que abre la boca
que no se estanca
un nosotros que declara
somos el mar de nuestro destino
somos la lengua de nuestras acciones (Laviera, 1988: 50)

Trascendencia en la poética de Willie Perdomo

Where I'm from, it's pretty
like my niece stopping me in the middle of the street and telling me
to notice all the stars in the sky.” (Perdomo, 1996e: 18)

Las voces de la diáspora dentro del espacio urbano en decadencia contrarrestan el sentido de inferioridad, el odio internalizado y la ansiedad prolongada por un sistema opresivo que demoniza al individuo con imágenes despectivas. La voz hablante de Perdomo no sólo señala los problemas que afronta la diáspora, sino también presenta la opción del amor. En el poema “Prophet Born in Harlem” (Perdomo, 1996c: 44), Perdomo presenta la importancia de exponer la realidad compartida sin temor a amar:

Strip the mask

off his face
 until you see
 blood pour
 like yours
 Talk about/the real problem
 And don't be scared to use
 four letter words: **L-O-V-E**
 It works better than
 a bullet
 baby (Perdomo, 1996c: 44).²

Según expone el intelectual Fanon (2008) en *Black Skin White Masks*, los afrodescendientes y el colonizado han aprendido que ser negro es denigrante en la sociedad y recurren a esconderse tras la máscara blanca para ser aceptados. Esta acción cancela el sentido del ser y perpetúa la opresión internalizada. En el poema, la voz trasciende a desenmascarar al opresor para establecer que debajo del color de la piel todos somos iguales. En el poema "Nigger-Reecan Blues" (Perdomo, 1996b: 19- 21), la voz expone que para la opresión no hay jerarquía. La percepción de la persona como Boricua o afrodescendiente causa las mismas reacciones de exclusión, desconfianza y miedo. Se expone además el racismo internalizado y la necesidad de adquirir aceptación social: "Yo soy Boricua! Yo soy Africano! I ain't lyin'. Pero mi pelo is kinky y curly y mi skin no es negro pero it can pass..." (Perdomo, 1996b: 19)

La voz nos recuerda que todavía nos escondemos tras la máscara

Willie Perdomo es un poeta que escribe desde la minuciosa observación del medio en el presente y el pasado y se compromete a servir a su comunidad en una relación simbiótica. El poeta encuentra en la calle sus poemas. La calle le provee el material para su labor escritural y pasa a entregarse como su historiador y su conciencia; cito del poema "Lexington Avenue Prelude" (Perdomo, 2004: 10): "You need to get up there and give it away so you can keep it."³

² Quítale la máscara
 de la cara
 hasta ver
 sangre que brota
 como la tuya
 Habla sobre
 el verdadero problema
 Y no tengas miedo de usar
 palabras de cuatro letras:
 A-M-O-R
 Funciona mucho mejor que
 una bala
 bebé (traducción mía, Perdomo, 1996c: 44)

³ Tienes que subir allá y regalarlo para que puedas preservarlo. (traducción mía de Perdomo, 2004: 10)

En "Writing About What You Know" (Perdomo, 2002: 36) Perdomo escribe:

It's your turn. Ahora vengo yo...

Dog-eared to the Revelations, the part that says that you will
write what was, what is, and what will be porque ya llegó la
hora to give your journey away so you can keep it, kid. (Perdomo, 2002:
36)⁴

La musicalidad y el dinamismo del Caribe, nuestras raíces africanas, elementos presentes en la poética de Perdomo, crean un apunte biográfico que nos revela la dignidad humana y son el contraargumento al espacio hostil urbano. El poema "123rd Street Rap" (Perdomo, 1996: 15-16), es un canto, un rap sobre la desesperación de los desposeídos. Perdomo llena el espacio de sonidos que chocan con una realidad desesperante y contradictoria. Nos asalta el tumulto de la calle, techos que se derrumban, y tiros que repican en las entradas de las viviendas mientras campanadas de iglesia retumban para los borrachos acongojados. En sus poemas Perdomo también posiciona la figura de la abuela o la madre que reza y vigila a los niños jugar:

Doña Rosa kept praying into the black
crucifix clenched between her palm
Que viva chango (líneas 3-5, 15)⁵
...She chanted
And chanted. And chanted. No more harm could be
done to Juanito.
Que viva chango. (Perdomo, 1996: 15)⁶

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En "123rd Street Rap" (Perdomo, 1996: 15), Perdomo también nos retrata cómo se sobrevive el mundo duro entre el escape, la economía ilícita y las encantaciones para encomendar y sanar:

Automatic bullets bounce
off stoop steps
It's about time to pay
all my debts (Perdomo, 1996: 15)⁷

⁴ Te toca a ti. Ahora vengo yo...

Marcado por el libro de las Revelaciones, la parte que dice que vas a escribir lo que fue, lo que es y lo que será porque ya llegó la hora de entregar tu jornada para que te la puedas quedar, chico." (traducción mía de Perdomo 2002: 36)

⁵ Doña Rosa continuó rezando en la oscuridad
Apretando el crucifijo entre las palma de las manos
Qué viva Changó (Perdomo, 1996: 15, líneas 3-5)

⁶ En cántico

Y cántico. Y cántico. Ningún otro daño podrá
caer sobre Juanito.

Qué viva Changó. (traducción mía de Perdomo, 1996: 15)

⁷ Balas automáticas repican

En “Save The Youth” (Perdomo, 1996d: 47-48) otra referencia a la economía ilícita que esta vez señala a las simientes económicas de Estados Unidos:

They stay up
way past bedtime
selling brand-name poison
keeping the economy healthy
and making new rules
Just like the men
who built
this country (Perdomo, 1996d: 48)⁸

En yuxtaposición al mundo duro, Perdomo nos recuerda de los eventos cotidianos. El olor a café y pan permean el caos y las injusticias que se viven en el medio que ocupa la diáspora. Cito un fragmento de los muchos ejemplos de contradicciones en el poema “Where I’m From” (Perdomo, 1996e: 17-18): “Where I’m from, Puerto Rico stays in our minds when the fresh breeze of café con leche y pan con mantequilla comes through our half-open windows and under doors while the sun starts to rise.” (Perdomo, 1996e: 17)⁹ En este poema a pesar de toda la violencia redactada, la voz hablante continúa llevándonos a la ternura y a la sensibilidad humana que triunfa y se impone. Insiste en rescatar a la humanidad que sobrepasa la realidad fuerte y nos presenta la figura de la abuela y la sobrina:

Where I’m from, it’s sweet like my grandmother reciting a quick
prayer over a pot of rice and beans. Where I’m from, it’s pretty
like my niece stopping me in the middle of the street and telling me
to notice all the stars in the sky (Perdomo, 1996e: 18).¹⁰

en los escalones de la entrada

Es el momento de pagar

todas mis deudas (traducción mía de Perdomo, 1996: 15, líneas 6-9)

⁸Se quedan despiertos

mucho más tarde de la hora de acostarse

vendiendo veneno - de marca

mantienen la economía saludable

y crean nuevas reglas

De la misma manera que los hombres

quienes construyeron

este país (traducción mía de Perdomo, 1996d: 48)

⁹De donde soy yo, Puerto Rico permanece en vivo cuando la brisa

fresca de café con leche y pan con mantequilla entra por

la ventana abierta a medias y por debajo de las puertas mientras el sol comienza a salir (Perdomo, 1996e: 17)

¹⁰De donde soy yo, es dulce como mi abuela recitando una oración

rápida sobre el caldero de arroz y habichuelas. De dónde soy yo, es bonito,

como cuando mi sobrina me para en medio de la calle y me dice

que me dé cuenta de las estrellas en el cielo (traducción mía de Perdomo, 1996e: 18)

De existir alguna duda del compromiso de este poeta con “su gente,” o de ser motivo de envidia su posición de observador, encuentro la respuesta de la voz poética de Perdomo en el poema “Monkey in the Middle” (Perdomo, 1996a: 57-58):

One day I
caught the ball
and threw it away
And told them
I know/who I am
I know/where I’m from
And I ain’t got no/time to be playing
games (Perdomo, 1996a: 58)¹¹

Sandra María Esteves: conexiones ancestrales y espirituales con la naturaleza una ruta hacia la descolonización

Para Sandra María Esteves, el espacio del ser marginado se transforma en un espacio de actuación y auto potenciación a medida que se hace resistencia con creatividad, imaginación y valentía. Es una obra literaria rica en texturas, musicalidad, la utilización de diversos lenguajes, mitos, tradiciones caribeñas urbanas, y de espiritualidad que retan la injusticia, la invisibilidad y la inequidad sistematizada.

En el poema “In The Beginning”, (1991b: 188-189), la voz poética de Esteves expresa el sincretismo y musicalidad al relatar una versión alterna al mito de la creación:

In the beginning was the sound
Like the universe exploding
It came, took form, gave life
And was called Conga. (Esteves, 1991b: 189)¹²

El poema continúa la historia de la creación utilizando instrumentos típicos percusivos de la tradición africana como el origen de elementos que constituyen la música y la

¹¹ Un día, Yo
capturé la pelota
y la boté
Y entonces les dije

Yo sé
quién soy
Yo sé
de dónde soy
Y no tengo
tiempo para
juegos (traducción mía de Perdomo, 1996: 58)

¹² Al principio había el sonido
Como el universo estallando
Vino, tomó forma, dio vida
Y se llamó Conga (traducción mía de Esteves, 1991b: 189)

humanidad y termina con la celebración de la creación que se ha dado a través de la palabra escrita y declamada:

“Que viva la música!

Que viva la gente

Que viva la Raza!

So it was written.” (Esteves, 1991b: 189)

La voz poética toma el discurso europeo del mito de la creación y lo sitúa en el discurso y la historia ancestral de los oprimidos. Hay una insistencia en marcar las historias silenciadas por los imperios.

En el poema “From Fanon”, (Esteves, 1991a: 181-182) la voz nombra las contradicciones de la colonización y el origen de la opresión:

Our kindred was the earth

polarity with the land

respected it

called it mother

were sustained and strengthened by it

The european thru power and fear became our master (Esteves, 1991a: 181-182)¹³

La investigadora y autora bell hooks, señala que el proceso de descolonización empieza cuando el individuo cobra conciencia de su opresión. Cuestionar y retar la representación de los hechos históricos en la versión del opresor, de acuerdo con hooks (2006: 22), conlleva a crear una representación alternativa a través del estudio crítico, libre de las nociones y prácticas opresivas que se han sufrido. Bell hooks resume la opresión como las prácticas imperialistas, racistas del patriarcado capitalista. La labor transformativa de deconstruir sistemas de opresión se hace desde el margen. El margen informa la diferencia e importancia de no recrear o imitar los sistemas de dominación pero explorar una realidad radicalmente diferente e inclusiva. El margen es el lugar desde donde afrontar y deconstruir los sistemas de opresión, “...a site of resistance, as location of radical openness and possibility” (hooks, 2006: 22).¹⁴

El potencial transformativo y liberador se manifiesta en la voz poética de Esteves y de otras voces de la diáspora que declaman nuevas posibilidades desde la marginalidad. En el poema “I write” (Esteves, 1998a: 15) se destaca la imperativa de escribir para

¹³ Nuestra familia era el planeta

polaridad con la tierra

la respetábamos

la llamábamos madre

nos sustentaba y nos daba fuerza

El imperio europeo a través del poder y el miedo se hizo nuestro amo (traducción mía de Esteves, 1991a: 181)

¹⁴ Hooks explica la importancia de distinguir entre el margen impuesto por la estructura dominante y el margen que se define por voluntad propia. Es este margen “un lugar de resistencia, como lugar de aperturas radicales y posibilidad.” (traducción mía de hooks, 2006: 22)

nombrar y reclamar ese espacio. Es importante que en el proceso de re-crearse el ser marginado sea quien decida los elementos que lo representen. También es importante que ese proceso surja de lo que la voz poética llama, nuestras “semillas ancestrales, de los árboles nativos” (Esteves, 1998: 15) nuestras historias, de nuestra cosmología. La palabra es el instrumento de labranza que la voz utiliza en ese proceso de crear el espacio discursivo y cultivar la resistencia, como lo articula la voz hablante de Esteves en este fragmento del poema “I Write,” del poemario *Contrapunto in the Open Field* (Esteves, 1998):

I write to water grasses
Draw up flowers from the mud
Recreate ourselves
Unravel inner mysteries
Plotting a course through cosmic messages
Gather old bones
Ancestral relics
Shape planting songs
Spark life breath into seeds
Waiting to rise again. (Esteves, 1998: 1)¹⁵

I write to *rename*
This source that incites us
Give up voice to sound (Esteves, 1998: 1)¹⁶

I write to define a circumference
You cannot find on a wall” (Esteves, 1998: 1)¹⁷

¹⁵ El poema I write fue publicado en 1998. Utilizo aquí la versión del portal de la poeta Sandra María Esteves.

Escribo para regar las yerbas
Saco flores del lodo
Nos creamos otra vez
Desatamos misterios internos
Trazando un curso a través de mensajes cósmicos
Reuniendo huesos viejos
Reliquias ancestrales
Doy forma a canciones de siembra
Respiro el soplo de vida a las semillas
Esperando se levanten otra vez. (traducción mía de Esteves, 1998: 1)

¹⁶ La voz da énfasis al proceso de renombrar, dar voz y definirnos a través de la escritura.
“Escribo para renombrar
Esta fuente que nos incita
Dar voz al sonido” (traducción mía de Esteves, 1998: 1)

¹⁷ Escribo para delinear la circunferencia
Que no se puede encontrar en la pared” (traducción mía de Esteves, 1998: 1)

La palabra y el ser son inseparables:

“where the soul can breathe and be,
that’s where these words live.” (Esteves, 1998: 1)¹⁸

A través de la conexión de la palabra y el ser, y a su vez el arte en función de incitar acción, liberar y combatir las injusticias, la voz hablante se hace de palabras y las escoge para combatir la opresión y sembrar esperanza. Para la voz hablante, existe un almacén donde buscar palabras poderosas que necesita. “I go all thru my file cabinets/to find me some seeds of rebellion.” (Esteves, 1990: 11)

En el marco teórico de la *Pedagogía del Oprimido*, Paulo Freire (2007, [1968]) propone que el oprimido es también un recurso de aprendizaje. Entender y articular la opresión sirve para potenciar la liberación. El performance en la obra literaria de la diáspora y la teoría de la educación popular se sitúan dentro de la comunidad, se informan de los conocimientos y las experiencias vivenciales del individuo. Se asume la tarea de aprender y recibir tanto como la de enseñar y transmitir una variedad de conocimientos en el proceso de liberación.

Esteves identifica personajes claves de nuestra realidad política como recursos de aprendizaje. En el poema “For Lolita Lebrón” (Esteves, 1991: 181), la voz de Esteves, le pide a Lolita que escriba libros para redescubrir identidades y romper muros de ignorancia:

Write us books
to rediscover our identity. (Esteves, 1991: 181)¹⁹

La voz equipara la fuerza y la sabiduría que representa Lolita con cualidades espirituales de tono bíblico:

give power to the air
Unlock the walls of ignorance
teach the lame to walk. (Esteves, 1991: 181)²⁰

Esteves analiza y critica los valores y las imágenes dominantes que estimulan al reto, a la resistencia y a la reconstrucción del ser. En este fragmento de “Take the Hearts of Children” (Esteves, 1991c: 187), la voz hablante de Esteves apunta a la importancia de instruir a las nuevas generaciones porque serán ellos los que tendrán que continuar la lucha:

Take the hearts of children
teach them to fight for the land
with machetes and songs

¹⁸ en donde el alma puede respirar y ser,
es donde viven estas palabras. (traducción mía de Esteves, 1998: 1)

¹⁹ Escribenos libros
para volver a descubrir nuestra identidad (traducción mía de Esteves, 1991: 181)

²⁰ dale fuerza al viento
Abre las paredes de la ignorancia
enséñale al cojo a caminar (traducción mía, de Esteves, 1991: 181)

we stand strong as one.

Fly. (Esteves, 1991c :187)²¹

En el poema “Homenaje al Reverendo (in his own words)” (Esteves, 2009: sin página), la voz poética resalta conceptos de liberación y la imperativa de ser uno el agente de una realidad alternativa:

El Reverendo knew what was hidden and what was fake
and didn't just happily eat whatever was served on the plate
He taught us how to see beyond the ridiculous and absurd
to laugh at our foolish ways no matter what we heard

He was a lover of life and the theater of words. (Esteves, 2009: sin página)²²

La voz resume con el mandato de “El reverendo Pietri, “Free your mind and the way you think.” (Esteves, 2009: sin página). Un ejemplo de la solidaridad amplia entre los oprimidos, se encuentra en “Anonymous Apartheid” del poemario *Bluestown Mockingbird* (Esteves, 1990a: 63-64). El hablante poético nombra al opresor y sus actos como expresión de oposición y reto que se perpetúan hasta el presente:

There is a stranger in our house
who looks half blind at us,
does not know our names,
assumes the earth is flat,
wraps a ball and chain around our tired legs, (Esteves, 1990a: 63)²³

does not speak our language, wear our colors,
nor understand the soul of these tender thoughts.” (Esteves, 1990a: 63)

²¹ Llega al corazón de los niños
enséñales a luchar por la tierra
con machetes y canto
resistiendo unidos somos más fuertes.
Volemos (traducción mía de Esteves, 1991: 181)

²² Este fragmento se encuentra en el portal de la autora.
El Reverendo podía ver lo que estaba escondido e identificar lo falso
y no se conformaba comiendo cualquier cosa servida en su plato.
Nos enseñó a mirar más allá de lo ridículo y lo absurdo
a reinos de nuestras ocurrencias sin importarnos el qué dirán
Era él amante de la vida y el teatro de las palabras. (traducción mía de Esteves, 1990a: 63)

²³ Hay un extraño en nuestra casa
que nos mira a ciegas
no sabe nuestros nombres
da por sentado que la tierra es llana
amarra un grillete a nuestras piernas cansadas (traducción mía de Esteves, 1990a: 63)
“no habla nuestra lengua ni lleva nuestros colores
ni tampoco entiende el alma de estos tiernos pensamientos.”(traducción mía de Esteves, 1990a: 63)

En los siguientes fragmentos, la voz nombra y describe la violencia, la ineptitud y la opresión de la estructura dominante del imperialismo, como también la respuesta de resistencia y solidaridad:

...upsets our garden,
turning seeds of potential into desert soils,
...for no better reason than greed, (Esteves, 1990a: 63)²⁴
...steals from our mother,
separates us from our brothers and sisters,
...cuts off rebellious tongues,
...orders us to kneel,
though we refuse (Esteves, 1990a: 63)²⁵
... destroys the covenant of humanity, (Esteves, 1990a: 63)²⁶
... suggests we are low, worthless, incompetent,
... where act one lasts more than five hundred years,
...bigoted abuse,
racial condescension, poverty,
transitions of ‘rapes, muggings, lynchings,
scenes of jailhouse tortures and hangings,
life sentences to minimum security housing projects. (Esteves, 1990a: 64)

Una vez más, la voz poética apunta a la determinación del oprimido a liberarse y la importancia de la solidaridad para alcanzar esa meta. Esa solidaridad también se puede apreciar en las voces que hoy en día marchan diciendo “somos más y no tenemos miedo”:

... Yet we refuse, and will continue to refuse,
along with our planetary relatives who also refuse
this stranger in our house

²⁴ ... disturba nuestras siembras
convirtiendo el potencial de nuestras semillas en desiertos
... por ninguna otra razón que la avaricia (traducción mía de Esteves, 1990a: 63)

²⁵ ...le roba a nuestra madre
nos separa de nuestros hermanos
...corta las lenguas rebeldes
... nos manda a arrodillar
aunque nos neguemos (traducción mía de Esteves, 1990a: 63)

²⁶ ... destruye la alianza con la humanidad
... sugiere que somos despreciables, inútiles e incompetente
...donde el primer acto dura más de quinientos años
... de prejuicios y abusos
...desdén racial, pobreza
...transiciones de violaciones, atropellos y linchamientos
escenas de encarcelamiento, torturas y ahorcamientos
sentencias de cadena perpetua de seguridad mínima en caseríos (traducción mía de Esteves, 1990a: 64)

who has no face (Esteves, 1990a: 64)²⁷

Las diversas voces de la diáspora Nuyorican atraviesan geografía, clase, y género en diálogo vivo con la audiencia. Las voces poéticas documentan y representan la concienciación política, el entendimiento de las estructuras del poder y los movimientos de resistencia del espacio urbano compartido. El texto se pone en práctica en un espacio discursivo apropiado, sea una sala, un café o en la calle. Desde el margen se hace el análisis crítico, se forjan estrategias de supervivencia y resistencia a la exclusión política y económica. La ruptura y la deconstrucción de principios ya aceptados interrumpen la complacencia pasiva, la petrificación de ideas y la inflexibilidad. Las voces poéticas retan la versión dominante de la historia imperialista que ha justificado el genocidio, la esclavitud, la toma de recursos y la anexión de terrenos, en otras palabras, la versión eurocéntrica del 'Otro,' en el discurso esencialista, racista, patriarcal y neocolonial. De ese reto surgen otras versiones de sociedades libres, dinámicas y heterogéneas ya que el proceso de descolonización depende de la capacidad para asegurar la expresión de las múltiples voces con diferentes temas y códigos lingüísticos. El discurso poético de la diáspora es fundamental a este proceso, escuchemos.

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²⁷ Más nos negamos, y continuaremos rehusando,
al lado de nuestro parentesco planetario, quienes también rechazan
a este extraño en nuestro hogar
que no tiene cara. (traducción mía de Esteves, 1990a: 64)

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**CARIBBEAN WITHOUT BORDERS 2020:
VOICES OF CHANGE AND RESISTANCE CON-
CERNING CARIBBEAN SOCIETY**

HOW DO WE DEAL WITH VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN? CONTEMPORARY CUBAN STORYTELLERS¹¹

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Gender violence is occupying an increasingly central place in Latino writing and literature. Now, as a result of both the long history of female oppression and the media's reaction to movements such as #MeToo, #Time'sUp, #NiUnaMenos, #YoTambién, #QuizásNoTePegue, female writers are finally sharing their stories without compromise. In Cuba, women have been writing about gender and gender violence for some time. The best-known writers in this vein include Mirta Yáñez, Marilyn Bobes, Ana Lucía Portela and Wendy Guerra.

According to the United Nations, 35% of women in the world have experienced violence of a physical or sexual nature at the hands of a person that was not their partner and close to 70% have been abused by their own partners (UN Women, 2019). This psychological and emotional abuse is the most common form of violence against women, and manifests itself as a way to "control, punish, or isolate any person [in this case, a woman] through the use of humiliation or fear" (Karakurt & Silver, 2013: 816). This type of abuse is complicated since, often due to a lack of concrete physical effects (in the short-term, at least), patriarchal society tends not to take it seriously. Psychological violence includes any action or sentiment that hurts the feelings or self-worth of a woman and "can manifest itself as abuse, restriction, humiliation, manipulation, or isolation that can cause damage of an emotional nature, and threatens our personal development. This violence has caused emotional and psychological problems that have led many women to commit suicide." (Karakurt & Silver, 2013: 810).

In this article, I shall analyze short stories from the anthology *Sombras nada más: 36 escritoras cubanas contra la violencia hacia la mujer* (Fernández de Juan, 2015). Given limited access to these texts by women who live and publish in Cuba, this article is a valuable addition to research in this area. From the perspective of gender studies, I focus on how these writers both reflect on gender violence in their works and call for radical

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reform based on equality. We must take into account the ways different artistic discourses (narrative, plastic arts, cinematographic, and musical) address gender issues and violence. Writers and artists are applying their deep understanding of gender issues as well as their respect for abused women to advocate for change and denounce gender violence without falling into the usual paternalistic patterns. The message of empowerment that runs through their creative work grows from the women's movement and shines a ray of hope on our difficult times. Nowadays, society is regressing in terms of the acceptance and inclusion of minorities, as well as the advancement of a dangerous discourse that licences sexism and the objectification of women. Cuban writers such as Marilyn Bobes in her story "La Infamia" (2015) and Laidi Fernández de Juan in "Bumerang" (Fernández de Juan, 2015), are trying to shake readers' consciousness and launch a counterattack to empower women and fight gender violence.

In the world of film, Barbara Zecchi coined the term '*ginocine*' in 2014 and applied it to all films that deal with the representation of women in society. Everly (2016) thus explains, "*El ginocine no es necesariamente feminista: pero su lectura sí lo es*" (183). This term is a neologism that Zecchi used as a corrective to the limitations of terms like 'feminist film', 'feminine film' and 'film for women'. The concept is based on the ideas of the 1970s and the surge of feminist literature since then. The term '*ginocrítica*' was coined by Elaine Showalter in her book, *A literature on their own* (1977), which rescued previously unknown or forgotten texts by women that were not known inside the critique of resistance led by Virginia Woolf's *A room of one's own* (1929).

The gaze of women as critics or producers of transgressive images fits in what bell hooks called in 1992, the "oppositional gaze". It stands against the male and white gaze and places itself within the field of intersectionality, where not only gender, but also race, power, and class are determinants of the production of any cultural discourse. Third Wave Feminism, as represented in the work, for example, of Rebecca Walker and Diane Elam, positions itself as a sociopolitical movement that goes further than the fight for women since it expands its scope to include the struggles of other marginalized groups in society. It proposes feminism as a force against patriarchal power as well against globalization and capitalism (Crenshaw, 2014).

Female resistance against paternalistic norms has existed since the very beginnings of patriarchy itself. Women have faced oppression from the demonization of witches in the 16th and 17th centuries, to the division of labor based on gender and the expropriation of land from peasants at the start of capitalism, to efforts to keep women in the home and reduce and define them only in terms of reproduction (Gómez, 2018: 18). Today, women do 66% of the world's work and produce 50% of our food, but they only earn 10% of global income and own only 1% of property worldwide (Gómez, 2018: 18). The responsibility of the critic is to open a dialogue about how media represents gender violence, to broaden our perspectives and to ask the risky questions that force us to reflect on our reality of considering different points of view.

The stories to be analyzed in this article are told based on a transversal gaze that tries to subvert gender stereotypes and resist gender violence through characters like Iluminada Peña in “La Infamia” (Bobes, 2015) and the writer/narrator in “Bumerang” (Fernández de Juan, 2015) who resist what their partners, family, and society expect of them. These characters are nonconformists who hope to break the circle of oppression. Though they feel rooted in their Cuban culture, their writing reflects the reality that they perceive themselves to be different. This feeling causes them to live eternally as a sort of bridge “in between” (*en la frontera*/borderland) like Náhuatl *nepantla*, or the land in between that Gloria Anzaldúa (2002) used in her writings:

Bridges are thresholds to other realities, archetypal, primal symbols of shifting consciousness. They are passageways, conduits, and connectors that connote transitioning, crossing borders, and changing perspectives. Bridges span liminal (threshold) spaces between worlds, spaces I call *nepantla*, a Nahuatl word meaning tierra entre medio. Transformations occur in this in-between space, an unstable, unpredictable, precarious, always-in-transition space lacking clear boundaries. *Nepantla* es tierra desconocida, and living in this liminal zone means being in a constant state of displacement--an uncomfortable, even alarming feeling. Most of us dwell in *nepantla* so much of the time it's become a sort of “home.” Though this state links us to other ideas, people, and worlds, we feel threatened by these new connections and the change they engender. (1)

Through the analysis of these texts, I argue that gender violence is presented as a social phenomenon that patriarchy trivializes, causing gender violence to be reduced to a sad daily reality. Psychological and emotional abuse are types of gendered violence which are in evidence in “Bumerang”. The narrator relates the psychological damage she suffers when her boyfriend cruelly tests her while they scuba dive in a cave:

Pasé mucho tiempo buscándote en el agua. Tanto, que casi se acaba el oxígeno de mi tanque, hasta que, desfallecida, encontré la salida de la cueva y fui hasta la claridad de arriba. Tú estabas en la orilla sin el traje de buceo, y me esperabas sonriendo. (Fernández de Juan, 2015: 47)

Here, we see a clear example of panic, fear, and isolation, even of humiliation and manipulation that the female protagonist suffers in this story. Her partner is supposedly testing her endurance under water but he is actually testing her loyalty to him. In this story, the narrator describes the negative side of the protagonist and the fact that she feels responsible for her partner's violent outbreaks: “I thank you for the way in which you brought to light my imperfections” (Fernández de Juan, 2015: 19).

In “La Infamia”, the main form of violence in the text is physical, but psychological violence is also present. Iluminada feels responsible for the abuse she suffers at the hands of her partner: “*El Bebo no tenía excusa del alcohol y la muchacha se preguntaba si no sería ella misma, su mera existencia, la que desataba la agresividad de su enamorado*” (Bobes, 2015: 19). Similarly, she feels the beating she suffers after the dance at

El Tropical is her fault. After the “*andanada de galletazos*” (Bobes, 2015: 20), she apologized to her partner, claiming it was inappropriate for her to dance at El Tropical with Rufo:

No fue su novio quien la llamara arrepentido. Iluminada en persona lo había ido a buscar hasta el parque Maceo para pedirle perdón. Reconocía que su actitud con Rufo no era la de una muchacha decente [...] pero le juraba a El Bebo que eso no ocurriría otra vez, que cuando fueran a La Tropical no se despegaría de su lado ni bailarían con nadie más [porque él era] el amor de su vida, el único hombre del que había estado verdaderamente enamorada. (Bobes, 2015: 20)

El Bebo manipulates her to the point that she feels less than him, even though he is the perpetrator of her psychological and physical harm. It was El Bebo who left her alone and went to get drinks with his friends. The sexist culture of patriarchy puts women in a space inferior to men. In “La Infamia”, Iluminada finds herself descending more and more into a toxic relationship because the abuse in this type of relationship starts with small arguments, escalates to insults, and ends in physical violence.

In “Bumerang” the author writes about how the protagonist of the story feels inferior to her partner: “*Me hiciste saber en detalle cuán lejos estaba yo de haberme acercado a dicha superioridad, aunque a tu lado, si prestaba la debida atención, quizás lo lograra con el paso del tiempo*” (Fernández de Juan, 2015: 49). The narrator’s partner exercises complete and total control over her and holds the key to make her accept the superiority of the men in her life who will always be teaching her lessons. The narrator sees her boyfriend as a sort of savior, since he calls the beatings he gives her “life lessons”. One of the clearest examples of this is when he throws a bowl of hot spaghetti at her because the dish is not cooked to his liking; she takes this as a teaching moment and thanks him for the lesson she learns: “*No sabes cuánto te lo agradezco... no te conté que me ardía el cráneo, porque el descubrimiento de lo correcto en cuanto a lo que me habías enseñado era superior a esa molestia, que considerarías banal*” (Fernández de Juan, 2015: 48).

He teaches her that it is weak to show feelings and to admit to what bothers her. All these life lessons are examples of both physical and psychological abuse. The boyfriend, after hurting her, treats her with great care and convinces her everything he does is justified. This type of manipulation is called ‘gaslighting’, a type of abuse difficult to describe:

El abuso luz de gas es una forma de violencia muy perversa porque es continua y se consigue mediante el ejercicio de un acoso constante pero sutil e indirecto, repetitivo, que va generando duda y confusión en la mujer que lo sufre, hasta el punto en que se llega a sentir culpable de las conductas de violencia emitidas por el maltratador y a dudar de todo lo que ocurre a su alrededor. (Carretero, 2017)

This type of abuse is dangerous because it leaves the woman completely vulnerable and causes her to not recognize the suffering and damage she is undergoing. The experience

of ‘gaslighting’ causes women who are abused to feel it is their fault. It is difficult to describe a form of abuse like this because, while it has deep psychological effects, it is often deceptively non-violent at the surface. Too often, emotional manipulation is not considered abuse, even though it is a very powerful tool men use to control women.

This abuse can lead women to believe they are no longer capable of independent thought and not even see themselves as human beings. Though the narrator of “La Infamia” does not let us know everything Iluminada thinks, her words allow us to understand the thoughts of a woman who feels trapped and desperate. Her actions at the end of the story are extreme, but understandable because of her circumstances; we can understand her frustration, confusion, pain, and fear. Iluminada experiences feelings that many abused women have felt in a culture that avoids addressing problems head-on and justifies abuse. Too often it tolerates abuse and fails to offer victims help in hope that the abuse will be temporary and that, because of her love, the couple will be eventually redeemed through the woman’s forgiveness, placing the entire burden on her shoulders. In almost all cases, however, instead of finding redemption, the woman encounters increasing levels of terror and abuse, which in the end force her to either escape or become once again a victim of gender violence.

It is evident that the different forms of gender violence are connected. Physical violence is usually accompanied by psychological and emotional violence. In both stories analyzed in this article, the protagonists end up feeling responsible for the abuse they are suffering. Along with physical, psychological, and symbolic abuse, there are countless other types of gender violence; economic, institutional, work-related, and sexual, to name a few. As feminists and intellectuals, it is our responsibility to use all available platforms to raise awareness in the hope that this may help ourselves and other women avoid these forms of violence in the future.

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ME VENGO, TE VIENES, NOS VENIMOS: EDUCACIÓN SEXUAL, GÉNERO Y PLACER SEXUAL

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El ámbito sexual es un espacio más en el que se pueden expresar las relaciones de poder en una sociedad. En la cultura puertorriqueña, al igual que en muchas otras, las relaciones sexuales, aunque se suelen circunscribir a un espacio privado e íntimo, difícilmente quedan fuera de la influencia del contexto sociocultural. En nuestro país, por ejemplo, la educación sobre la sexualidad se ve trastocada por el sistema patriarcal que, entre otras cosas, prioriza el placer sexual masculino. Alice Colón et al. explican en su libro *Políticas, visiones y voces en torno al aborto en Puerto Rico* que:

el placer sexual se entiende como una necesidad – es decir, un privilegio – sólo de los hombres, mientras que para [las mujeres] se concibe una sexualidad escindida entre el erotismo y la procreación, y que [las] divide entre dos tipos: las madres y las prostitutas. (1999: 14)

Los conocimientos que se adquieren de la sexualidad humana, digerida por el patriarcado, tienen como resultado sociocultural, entre otras deficiencias, una educación sexual que normaliza las violencias sexuales. En el 2018, dos amigas universitarias me contaron anécdotas de supuestas experiencias sexuales que evidentemente fueron violaciones: Quiqui fue violada por un militar que se aprovechó de que ella estaba borracha. Riri fue violada por un exnovio, quien ignoró que ella le dijo que no quería tener sexo, repetidas veces. Ninguno de los hombres utilizó profilácticos, poniendo la salud física de ellas y de ellos en riesgo. Ambos hombres consiguieron su orgasmo sin importar la evidente falta de consentimiento, lo cual, además, transgredió la seguridad y salud emocional de ellas. Si una persona no está del todo consciente de lo que hace por los efectos del alcohol, o por alguna otra razón, no puede consentir. Si una persona dice que no, es no. Estas, entre otras, son premisas básicas de lo que es el consentimiento sexual. Según sus relatos, ninguna de las muchachas identificó que habían sido violadas, ni en el momento en que ocurrió ni posteriormente.

La prioridad y relevancia del orgasmo masculino, junto a una visión de la sexualidad femenina como una realidad innombrable, da paso a que se desarrolle una educación sexual incompleta que perjudica a las mujeres, ya que se invisibiliza la violencia sexual

hacia ellas, al concebirla como un hecho “normal” en las experiencias heterosexuales. Luciana Ramos-Lira et al. plantean que “a veces las mujeres no reconocen la violencia sexual que han experimentado como una violación o como otro tipo de abuso debido a que el contexto sociocultural normaliza, minimiza, tolera o promueve estos actos” (2001: 183). De esta manera se pone en riesgo la seguridad, la salud, el placer sexual y el bienestar de las mujeres. A esto se le añade que es una experiencia generalizada, pues todas las mujeres, “although certainly to different degrees, live under the threat of sexual or physical violence, episodic or chronic, at home and in public” (Susser, 2009: 217).

En este contexto vuelve apremiante la necesidad de una educación sexual integral y feminista que discuta la sexualidad humana a profundidad y atienda temas fundamentales como: el consentimiento, la comunicación exhaustiva y sin ambigüedades, los posibles riesgos y la importancia del placer. No obstante, la educación sexual en Puerto Rico ha estado condicionada por una perspectiva biológica, sexista, salubrista (con un tono alarmista) y predominantemente judeocristiana. Esta perspectiva provoca que la educación sexual que se enseña en la actualidad sea limitada, lo que implica un daño “que repercute en serias problemáticas, tales como: baja autoestima, rechazo a sí mismo, incapacidad para manejar la presión de grupo y de pareja, abuso sexual, sexo no seguro, infecciones de transmisión sexual/VIH, embarazos no deseados, violencia de género, entre otros” (Ortiz Resto, 2017: 368).

Esta investigación analiza los resultados socioculturales de la educación sexual en Puerto Rico. Escogí a las mujeres para realizar esta etnografía por dos razones principalmente. En primer lugar, porque delimitar la población permite enfocar la investigación. Y, en segundo lugar, facilita identificar los patrones existentes en las narrativas experienciales que tiene un grupo de personas en específico. Las participantes fueron seleccionadas de acuerdo con la técnica de muestreo no probabilístico: bola de nieve. Trece estudiantes estuvieron dispuestas a conversar sobre sus experiencias y su educación sexual.

Los requisitos para participar de la entrevista fueron ser estudiante mayor de 18 años, de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, recinto de Río Piedras (UPRRP) e identificarse como mujer. Las identidades de las participantes fueron protegidas por pseudónimos. De los datos demográficos es relevante, para los resultados de la investigación, indicar que todas las participantes fueron mujeres cisgénero que narraron, mayoritariamente, experiencias heterosexuales (véase Anejo). Las citas de las entrevistadas, que aparecen a través del texto, fueron transcritas textualmente.

El concepto teórico que utilicé para analizar las entrevistas fue el de la perspectiva de género. Esta es una “herramienta esencial para comprender los aspectos fundamentales relativos a la construcción cultural de la identidad personal, así como para entender cómo se generan y reproducen determinadas jerarquías, relaciones de dominación y desigualdades sociales” (Martín Casares, 2008: 10).

La educación sexual oficial

Luna: El curso iba dirigido a que no tomáramos la mala decisión de tener sexo, y mucho menos de nosotras quedar embarazadas o enfermarnos. Y yo recuerdo: si tan malo es, ¿qué es la que, por qué tanta gente tiene sexo?

Marina: (imitando a su maestra): Pues ya todo el mundo sabe lo que es el sexo, pues nada, este es el sistema reproductivo de la mujer y este es el del hombre y pues, usen condones. Pero, el sexo es malo, so, no lo hagan.

Luna: So, aprendí a qué no hacer sin saber qué hacer.

En Puerto Rico, uno de los debates más comunes tocante a la educación sexual es sobre a quién le corresponde responder “the basic premises and content of sex education and about who is best able to provide it - i.e., whether parents or schools should be the primary sex educators” (Shtarkshall, Santelli & Hirsch, 2017: 116). Estos autores reconocen la importancia de las madres y padres en la educación sexual de la niñez, sin embargo, plantean que “they may not be the best providers of specific factual information and social skills training” (2017: 117).

La educación sexual en las escuelas públicas de Puerto Rico se atiende por medio del currículo de la clase de Salud. También se discute el tema en las clases de Biología y de Maternidad y Paternidad Responsable. En Biología se enseña anatomía, los sistemas de reproducción y se mencionan ciertos riesgos del sexo. El prontuario del curso de Maternidad y Paternidad Responsable señala que este tiene como propósito primordial “fortalecer los valores que conducen hacia una maternidad y paternidad responsables y crear actitudes positivas hacia la sexualidad, la prevención de embarazos y la prevención de “violencia doméstica” [violencia de género o por razón de género]” (Cintrón, 2003: 3). Es relevante comentar que los valores que presenta el prontuario son judeocristianos y se evidencian en la discusión de las consecuencias del sexo premarital, los riesgos de tener más de una pareja y la descripción morbosa del aborto. Además, contienen escenarios o “soluciones” extremas, no científicas, con una evidente moral religiosa como trasfondo para provocar en el estudiantado cierto espanto o sentido de culpa (Cintrón, 2003: 33-34).

El currículo de Salud, que atiende el tema de la sexualidad con mayor especificidad en las escuelas públicas, se ha vuelto cada vez más conservador con el pasar de los años. Ha ido eliminando conceptos fundamentales como la perspectiva de género y las prácticas de sexo seguro (Nieves-Rolón, 2014: 5-6). Viviana Ortiz Resto plantea que esto se debe a que: “Las ideologías conservadoras y religiosas que fomentan una visión negativa y tergiversada de la sexualidad, quebrantan cualquier intento de educación sexual integral y limitan el quehacer de los docentes” (2017: 367). A esto se le añade lo expuesto por Marimer Colón-Alicea et al. (2018) en la presentación oral de la investigación “Conocimientos y actitudes de un grupo de jóvenes sobre la educación sexual en Puerto Rico” en que se planteó que la educación sexual suele tener un énfasis biológico

que ignora el elemento social-emocional, la falta de preparación de las personas responsables de ofrecer el conocimiento y lo evasivas que tienden a ser las personas adultas responsables sobre el tema.

En el 2015 se aprobó la Carta Circular 19-2014-2015, que presenta la “Política pública sobre la equidad de género y su integración al currículo del Departamento de Educación (DE) de Puerto Rico como instrumento para promover la dignidad del ser humano y la igualdad de todos y todas ante la ley”. La carta expone un compromiso de parte del DE para “transformar e implantar los contenidos y las prácticas curriculares, proveer servicios y difundir información que promuevan la equidad entre los géneros” (Departamento de Educación, 2015). No obstante, nunca se llegó a implementar rigurosamente (Colón-Alicea et al., 2018), y fue derogada en el 2017 (López Alicea, 2017).

En las últimas dos décadas se ha cuestionado la permanencia de una educación sexual dirigida a la abstinencia. Se considera que es el mecanismo antiembarazo o antirrelaciones sexuales prematrimoniales más esgrimido en hogares y en los sistemas de educación pública y privada en Puerto Rico. John S. Santelli et al. (2017) plantean:

U.S. abstinence-only-until marriage policies and programs are not effective, violate adolescent rights, stigmatize or exclude many youth, and reinforce harmful gender stereotypes. Adolescent sexual and reproductive health promotion should be based on scientific evidence and understanding, public health principles, and human rights. (273)

Nieves-Rolón resalta el comentario siguiente que hace Ada Verdejo:

la educación sexual incluye la violencia doméstica; la educación sexual incluye la vida en familia. La educación sexual incluye el incesto y la prevención de la violación; la educación sexual incluye, también, lo que es [sic] las relaciones: padre e hijo, madre e hijo, lo que significa ser hombre en la sociedad, lo que significa ser mujer en la sociedad. O sea, la educación sexual es mucho más que la abstinencia, e incluso la abstinencia es mucho más que lo que se define. (2010: 143)

Socialización sexual

Marisol: Entonces ya tenía una perspectiva de que la sexualidad era el yo complacer a un hombre.

Ivy: Recuerdo siempre sentir ‘guilt’ por tener deseo. Querer hacer cosas o porque me gustara alguien.

Cinda: Y era más como yo querer complacer a la otra persona, que la otra persona tuviera placer, se viniera y toda la cuestión y pichaera a mi placer. Y eso es algo con lo que todavía estoy lidiando.

Un aspecto importante para considerar cuando se estudia el tema de la educación sexual es la socialización sexual. Esta se da desde que a la niñez se le enseñan valores y expectativas de comportamiento a través de mensajes implícitos o explícitos. Se entrelaza con

la educación que se da en los hogares y en las escuelas, ya que incluye el que “children and adolescents observe community norms, consume mass media, and practice cultural and religious activities” (Shtarkshall, Santelli & Hirsch, 2017: 116).

Un ejemplo de la socialización sexual en Puerto Rico, relacionado a las influencias religiosas y los roles de género que se asumen en el comportamiento sexual, es lo siguiente: “with its long history of Catholicism and emphasis on virginity, extremely high rates of anal sex between male and female young college students have been documented” (Susser, 2009: 36). Susser cita a Cunningham (1994) para dar cuenta de que estas altas cifras de sexo anal pueden indicar que las mujeres están tratando de evadir embarazos y la ‘violación’ de su virginidad mientras consienten las demandas de sus compañeros (Susser, 2009: 36).

Distintos grupos feministas, tales como el caucus de Mujer del Movimiento Socialista de Trabajadoras y Trabajadores, Taller Salud, Proyecto Matria, y el Movimiento Amplio de Mujeres, han planteado que las ideas que imperan en la socialización sexual del estudiantado puertorriqueño son patriarcales. “La mayoría de las imágenes a las que están expuestos los estudiantes de edad escolar durante toda su vida muestra a las mujeres como objetos que deben dar placer sexual al varón. Además, los medios de comunicación sólo valoran a las mujeres por su físico” (Caucus de la Mujer, 2011: 4). Según estos grupos, la discriminación por razón de género hacia las mujeres y personas lesbianas, gays, bisexuales, trans, queer e intersexuales (LGBTQI) es un tema que se debe trabajar desde las escuelas, por ser un problema sociocultural que no está siendo responsable y eficientemente atendido por el Estado. La directora ejecutiva del Proyecto Matria, Amárilis Pagán Jiménez, expuso que:

desde hace años Matria y otras organizaciones hemos denunciado la falta de políticas públicas y acciones gubernamentales dirigidas a erradicar la violencia hacia las mujeres en Puerto Rico. Tras más de una década chocando contra la misma pared de indiferencia y negligencia gubernamental, decidimos dar este paso para comenzar a documentar la magnitud de la violencia de género en nuestro país y la persistencia de la indolencia, y la insensibilidad de la estructura gubernamental ante este problema. (citado en Puerto Rico Te Quiero, 2019)

Las injusticias que padecen las mujeres, además del abandono del gobierno, han motivado la creación de organizaciones que las atienden y las protegen, como Coordinadora Paz para las Mujeres, Asociación Puertorriqueña Pro-Bienestar de las Familias, Casa Protegida Julia de Burgos, Taller Salud, Centro Integral de Apoyo a Víctimas (UPRRP), entre otras. En los últimos años, con la intención de informar y denunciar los abusos contra las mujeres y personas LGBTQI, además de alentar el empoderamiento femenino y queer, también se han creado páginas en las redes sociales (como (Con)sentimiento, Con el verbo en la piel, Kilómetro 0, entre otras) con evidente apoyo de la ciudadanía, según la alta cantidad de ‘followers’.

Salud, seguridad, antropología y sexualidad

Sara: ... tuve una experiencia bien traumante... tuve relaciones con ese muchacho, pero pues en una no se usó condón y pues tú sabes...él me llama como a los tres meses desde que yo dejé de hablarle y él me dice, ‘mira chequéate porque yo creo que tengo una STD’. Y cuando viene pues era clamidia.

Lesliann: Yo me hice las pruebas por una experiencia que tuve media extraña en un jangleo y pues, mala, mala, mala, malísima, que no estaba en mis cinco sentidos, ‘whatever’, pasaron cosas que ni me acuerdo. Fue un desastre y pues, tenía miedo y pues, me hice las pruebas y salieron negativas.

Se suele asociar la salud sexual de las personas con no tener ninguna enfermedad de transmisión sexual (ETS). Las estadísticas del Departamento de Salud en Puerto Rico sobre las ETS entre el 2008-2017 muestran que la clamidia, el herpes genital, la gonorrea y la sífilis no se han reducido significativamente. Al contrario, algunas han aumentado (Departamento de Salud, 2017: 3, 8, 13, 15 y 28) y la mayoría de las personas que contrajeron las enfermedades estaban entre los 20 y 24 años (5-6, 10-11 y 18). Sin embargo, según presenta el Informe Semestral de la Vigilancia del VIH en Puerto Rico, la tasa de personas diagnosticadas con el VIH presenta una tendencia descendente durante el periodo 2008-2015 (Departamento de Salud, 2017: 3). Por otro lado, el World Health Organization establece que la salud sexual es:

a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity. Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. For sexual health to be attained and maintained, the sexual rights of all persons must be respected, protected and fulfilled. (World Health Organization, 2019)

En términos de seguridad, las mujeres en Puerto Rico se encuentran en una posición vulnerable. Lyanne Meléndez García reporta en el periódico Metro que según el informe *La persistencia de la indolencia: feminicidios en Puerto Rico 2014-2018*, “por el hecho de ser mujer, cada siete días una fémina es asesinada en Puerto Rico. Este estimado surge cuando se contabilizan los 266 casos de feminicidios registrados de 2014 hasta 2018” (Meléndez García, 2019). Este informe concluyó que “las mujeres con bajo nivel educativo en Puerto Rico tienen tasas de feminicidios casi 5 veces más altas que su grupo de edad, y mujeres entre las edades de 25-34 años están a mayor riesgo que las demás” (Meléndez García, 2019). Para marzo del 2019, la estadística más reciente de la Policía de Puerto Rico muestra 467 casos reportados de “violencia doméstica” (Policía de Puerto Rico, 2019b). En las estadísticas sobre delitos sexuales aparecen 974 que-
rellas en las que las mujeres son las víctimas (Policía de Puerto Rico, 2019a).

A través de la teoría del constructivismo social, Will Roscoe (2000) sostiene que “los roles de género, las sexualidades y las identidades no son naturales, esenciales ni universales, sino que se construyen a través de discursos y procesos sociales” (citado en Martín Casares, 2008: 56). Sin embargo, la idea que se ha establecido como estándar general es el determinismo biológico, según el sistema de creencias a nivel cultural y educativo. Este intenta explicar la mayoría del comportamiento humano a base de referencias biológicas (Bowie, 2006: 83). La siguiente concepción responde a una perspectiva determinada por el factor biológico:

males, constantly producing new sperm during their fertile years, are ‘naturally’ bent on having as much sex with as many different partners as possible, to spread their genetic heritage; females, on the other hand, with a finite supply of eggs, and the burden of actually carrying children before birth, find it important to limit their partners and work towards assuring stability for the offspring they have. (Stearns, 2017: 5)

Alicia Martínez Sanz (2018) refuta esta idea al exponer que sirve de justificación para invisibilizar y normalizar la violencia sexual hacia las mujeres. Pues se plantea que la: “necesidad imperiosa de los hombres de tener relaciones sexuales... justifica la exigencia sexual de los hombres hacia las mujeres. Se entiende que es una necesidad para él y una obligación para ella” (Alicia Martínez, 2018: 133). El rol masculino socioculturalmente aceptado es el que le otorga poder al hombre para que imponga su deseo sexual sobre la mujer. Este rol masculino afecta la percepción de lo que es la agresión sexual. Los hombres no lo consideran un abuso y las mujeres le restan gravedad según la cercanía del agresor (Martínez Sanz, 2018, 134).

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Hallazgos

¿Educación alarmista e incompleta?

Cinda: En grado diez hubo como una conferencia que era sobre la abstinencia y qué tipo de enfermedades hay ahora mismo en nuestra sociedad. Y ponían imágenes de los peores casos que tú te podrías imaginar. Y como el condón no te protege, como las pastillas no sirven, como todos estos métodos en verdad son como que, esta persona tuvo todo esto [repercusiones] a pesar de que se protegió. So, lo mejor es, no hagas nada.

La educación sexual de las trece participantes fue intervenida en mayor o menor grado por el discurso judeocristiano, ya fuese en la escuela o en el hogar. Los comentarios moralistas iban mermando mientras la mayoría de ellas crecía. Durante su adolescencia, los comentarios que predominaban respecto al comportamiento sexual estaban dirigidos, en sus hogares, a intimidarlas por la posibilidad de un embarazo, y en las escuelas, por las ETS. Lesliann contó: “[tuve] dos clases de educación sexual. Me enseñaron las cosas técnicas, pero las otras cosas fueron como que, no sé si las enseñaron correctamente o lo hicieron en manera de meter miedo o intimidar”. Es decir, se discutía el tema

del sexo desde una perspectiva heteronormativa y salubrista, pero esta última de alguna manera alarmista.

La manera en la que las participantes complementaron o subsanaron las insuficiencias de la educación sexual recibida fue a través de la internet y la pornografía. Lele cuenta cómo adquirió la educación sexual que tiene ahora mismo:

un poco de lo que aprendí de noveno, otras quizá hablando con mis amistades, averiguando y pues lo que yo he pasado por experiencia propia. Y obviamente buscando por internet, porque uno es curioso y uno dice, yo quiero saber, no me dan la información, pues vamos a buscarla.

¿Consentimiento?

Laura: Yo he tenido más que una pareja por algún tiempo y yo siento que antes yo misma no conocía muy bien qué era dar consentimiento. Y, este, en verdad lo aprendí aquí [en la universidad]. Con el tiempo. Cogiendo clases, hablando con personas. No fue rápido que entré a la universidad fue que yo me eduqué mucho en esos temas. Fue más como ya en el camino. Para segundo, tercer año. Que uno puede poner los límites y que uno tiene que ponerlos para uno sentirse bien. Porque yo, aquí siendo súper sincera, hubo momentos en que no me sentí cómoda y no dije nada, ¿entiendes? Ni siquiera estaba consciente de que no me sentía cómoda. Algo así. Y en verdad, sinceramente, cogí una clase aquí con una profesora de CISO [Ciencias Sociales] y tenía un enfoque feminista y gracias a ella dejé a mi ex novio. Literal. Gracias a ella, yo lo dejé.

Muchas de las participantes (ocho de las trece) se adentraron a las prácticas sexuales sin conocer qué era el consentimiento sexual. La mayoría de las entrevistadas iniciaron sus primeras experiencias sexuales sin conocer sus cuerpos ni cómo alcanzar orgasmos, sin esperarlos ni exigirlos, pero otorgándolos. Sobre esto Luna cuenta que: “cuando yo estuve con un muchacho por primera vez yo ni me había metido un de’o. Me sentí en completa desventaja. No sabía que quería o no y cómo funcionaba y no fue hasta ese momento que me cuestioné sobre las zonas de la vagina”. Cinda definió el consentimiento como:

el consentimiento puede ser entre muchos escenarios y muchas dinámicas entre dos personas. Pero para mí lo primordial es que si hay un consentimiento es que tú estás dialogando. Y si tú estás dialogando tú estás interactuando y no solamente vocalmente con una persona, tú también tienes ‘body language’, tú estás teniendo una conversación completa con esta otra persona. Y no es solamente que te digan que sí. Consentimiento es que estemos ‘engage’ en lo que sea que se esté decidiendo.

Te vienes

Marisol: Entonces esa experiencia sexual fue todo para él, todo para él. En realidad, me usó por un año. Se venía y después ponía cualquier excusa, te digo, cualquier excusa, es que mi abuela está afuera. Pa'no seguir. Él ya había terminado lo suyo. ¿Pa' qué seguir?

Lele: Porque por lo menos hubo uno, una vez yo sentí que nada más estaba ahí para él. Porque se dio a entender eso, como que no buscó una manera de enfocarse un poco en mí sino sólo en lo que él quería. No se supone que sea así. En por lo menos mi conceptualización. Yo pues me sentí incómoda.

Sabrina: Una vez 'I was so drunk, and so drugged', que iba a pasar algo y recuerdo que, me llegaron a quitar parte de la ropa y yo me la volví a poner, eso fue un 'sign' de que no quería que pasara, pero me la volvieron a quitar y yo no pude hacer nada y... pasó.

Ivy: ... yo no sentí ningún tipo de intimidación. No sentí ninguna conexión, como que, el tipo literalmente me usó a mí como si fuese un toto para él mismo darse placer. Esta idea, nuevamente de que el placer se lo tiene que dar él y tú tienes que estar ahí.

Entre las participantes, seis de trece fueron violadas sexualmente mientras que un total de diez de ellas sufrieron distintos tipos de violencias sexuales que categoricé como *dinámicas macharranas*. Defino estas como: toda actitud o comportamiento que transgrede emocional o físicamente a la(s) otra(s) persona(s) involucrada(s), ya sea consciente o inconscientemente, específicamente al descuidar los límites del consentimiento establecido y al priorizar el placer sexual propio sobre el bienestar y placer de la otra persona.

Entre las prácticas categorizadas como dinámicas macharranas que ellas mencionaron están: 1) la insistencia en tener sexo, 2) engañar o hacer promesas, que no piensan cumplir, para alcanzar la interacción sexual, 3) no utilizar profiláctico o quitárselo durante la interacción sexual sin consultar o insistiendo, 4) no parar el acto a pesar de notar la evidente incomodidad de la otra persona, 5) culminar el acto una vez él ha conseguido el orgasmo, 6) mentir sobre las pruebas de ETS, 7) la prisa de que ellas terminen, 8) la agresividad no consentida, 9) humillar o degradar a la otra persona, 10) no considerar el factor de que eran menores de edad para establecer una verbalización o contacto sexual y 11) violarlas sexualmente.

Me vengo

Kathy: En cuanto a la educación religiosa llegué a tener una clase de religión en la que nos inculcaron o nos trataron de convencer de que masturbarse era serle infiel a la futura pareja...con tan buena educación sexual que pude haber recibido, pues nunca fue un tema nombrado so lo único que tenía era, por ejemplo, la masturbación es pecado. Cuando estás en la escuela te dicen estas cosas y

entonces uno salir y darse cuenta de que no es así. Que es algo normal e ir como que poco a poco despojándote de ese sentimiento de culpa tanto con eso como con otras cosas que están mucho más internalizadas. Incluso, el tener sexo y el poder disfrutar de una relación sexual plenamente. Sin sentirte culpable cuando has crecido tanto tiempo con esto internalizado.

Ivy: A fin del día, el mejor sexo que yo he tenido ha sido conmigo misma.

Con cada una de las entrevistas fue evidente que en las escuelas, tanto en los salones como en los pasillos, se dio por natural el deseo sexual de los hombres mientras que el de las mujeres era tabú o un presagio de castigo. Según comenta Lesliann: "...para los nenes es como que, ah, tú te pones un condón y síguelo. Pero para las nenas era como que, si quedas preñá vas a cargar con la responsabilidad...". Esta perspectiva, consistente entre los relatos de las entrevistadas, es una mezcla de la educación sexual que recibieron en las escuelas, en sus hogares (ambos espacios intervenidos por principios religiosos) y de lo que aprendían a través de los medios de comunicación. Y así se expone implícitamente un desarrollo o una formación de lo que componen los roles de género y el lugar de cada cual, de acuerdo a las expectativas de comportamiento sexual establecidas. En palabras de Cinda:

Esta narrativa de que el hombre sabe todo lo que está haciendo y tú confías en él, que esto también implica que tú no le vas a pedir que haga esto y lo otro porque tú vas a asumir que la persona sabe más que tú. Y tú cuando no llegas hasta ciertos puntos puede que pienses que el problema eres tú. Y a mí me pasó eso. Yo pensaba como que, wow, sí, quiero estar contigo. Y después era como que, de que a mitad o a cierto punto de la interacción se me quitaban las ganas y esa es otra. No les decía: para, pero era como: diablo, que se venga ya. Que ya pare.

Análisis

¿Nos venimos?

Marina: Eso es lo que ellos siempre quieren hacer, so, es como, si lo vamos a hacer, deberías lograr que tenga un orgasmo. Pero, por ejemplo, tuve una pareja que él siempre, al principio, siempre terminaba él primero y se quedaba todo pegado dormido y llegó un punto en que yo me encabroné y yo, no, esto no puede ser así. Los dos vamos a terminar. ¡¿Ok?! Y él como: 'oh shit, ok. Mala mía'. Y después de ese momento, pues, tomó conciencia y pues bregó.

Lele: Encuentro que si ambas partes se disfrutaron el momento y se sintieron cómodos no hay necesidad de tener un orgasmo.

A través de los relatos de las universitarias se nota que ellas buscaban cierta seguridad y placer en la interacción sexual, pero no necesariamente buscaban llegar a tener orgasmos. La mayoría (diez de las trece) los podían conseguir a través de la masturbación,

pero varias (siete de las trece) no esperaban que la persona con la que compartían sexualmente les provocase siquiera uno. Parecería que sus interacciones sexuales estaban dirigidas al placer que ambas partes podían recibir por la penetración vaginal. Sin embargo, esta práctica no atiende la estimulación del clítoris, por lo que no necesariamente provoca orgasmos femeninos. Curiosamente, esta práctica sexual, enseñada muchas veces como la única o principal, usualmente solo asegura el placer y el orgasmo masculino. Sobre buscar el orgasmo en la relación sexual Luna comparte:

Yo ahí estoy trancá porque cuando tengo sexo me enfoco más en que esa persona tenga placer. Y se me hace bien difícil. Cuando hace algo que me da placer se lo dejo saber. Pero no es que pida algo que a mí me guste. Y yo creo que eso es algo de la opresión sexual que se nos ha impuesto. No pedir. Estar para complacer. Y de eso no me he liberado muchísimo, pero lo estoy trabajando.

Roles de género

La mayoría de las estudiantes mencionó dinámicas macharranas en sus primeros encuentros sexuales con hombres. Estas dinámicas fueron patrones de conducta sexual dirigidas al placer masculino, mientras que ponían en peligro la seguridad, la salud y el bienestar de las estudiantes. Muchos hombres, o demasiados, se aprovechan de su privilegio masculino en esta sociedad machista y tienen sexo con el objetivo de alcanzar únicamente su propio placer. Este patrón masculino, que sobresale en las conversaciones con las participantes, responde a una construcción social estereotipada del género masculino. En estas violencias normalizadas, invisibilizadas y minimizadas (dinámicas macharranas), pueden estar presente, además del factor machista, la ignorancia, e incluso la ingenuidad que responde a la limitada educación sexual que se imparte y reciben los hombres.

El imaginario sexual que surge en la construcción social por géneros (a partir de la educación y la socialización sexual tal como se ha impuesto) no provee herramientas para que las mujeres entiendan sus cuerpos, ni naturalicen sus deseos sexuales, ni se comuniquen abiertamente teniendo una idea clara de qué quieren, qué no quieren, y puedan así adentrarse a las interacciones sexuales sabiendo qué esperar. No se educa sobre el empoderamiento del propio cuerpo. Al contrario, se recalca la importancia de conservarlo libre de deseos o toques sexuales, propios y/o ajenos, por tanto, se deja a un lado la importancia del placer y mucho más de los orgasmos femeninos, mientras el orgasmo masculino no queda limitado porque está intrínsecamente relacionado al proceso de reproducción.

Queda claro que de esta manera no se hace una aportación pertinente para que se puedan reconocer escenarios de riesgos ni tener los mecanismos para defenderse. Al contrario, la educación sexual biologicista, sexista e impregnada por creencias judeocristianas provocó que once de las trece participantes tuvieran dificultades para saber y expresar lo que deseaban y no deseaban en sus primeras interacciones sexuales. Sabrina comentó:

“la verdad es que yo no disfruté esas primeras relaciones, no las disfruté como las estoy disfrutando ahora mismo, porque no tenía mucho conocimiento en cuestión a cómo funcionaba el cuerpo y cómo debía fluir la cosa”.

Doce de las trece entrevistadas expresaron que habían estado o estaban en el proceso de apoderarse de su propia sexualidad. El proceso de empoderamiento responde a una misma problemática: las experiencias negativas que las han llevado a establecer unos límites o unos estándares para compartir sus cuerpos y sexualidad. La mayoría estaba en busca de conocer su propia sexualidad y disfrutarse las experiencias sexuales solas, o acompañadas por personas que entendieran, principalmente, lo que significa el consentimiento. Luna define el sexo como:

acto consentido entre dos personas, es un tipo de intimidad. Compartir tu cuerpo con una persona y no es que lo quiero reducir a eso, pero para mí no es de, no va atado al amor, porque muchas personas pueden tener sexo sin este tipo de conexiones, pero, aunque no estén, hay que tener unos cuidados por el bienestar de esta persona, aunque lo único que quieras sea sexo.

Con esto resalta lo vital del consentimiento, el sentido de seguridad y cierto grado mínimo de empatía entre las personas que van a tener un encuentro sexual.

Las violencias del sexo patriarcal

Marisol: Al momento tengo una pareja sexual, él es un hombre, somos súper abiertos sobre nuestras experiencias sexuales, lo que queremos y lo que no. Por ejemplo: a él no le gusta para nada la idea de la agresividad, del sadomasoquismo. Que, en verdad para mí, desde que he estado con él me he dado cuenta de que a mí tampoco. Yo soy súper feliz sin hacer eso. Todo el mundo con quien yo estaba quería hacer eso. Me querían dar en la cara, o sea, ¿quién hace eso? Mi primera pareja sexual, a los 18 estaba bien metido en eso. Le encantaba dar cachetadas y a mí no, pero eso nunca lo impidió. Así que todo esto de sadomasoquismo lo vi como algo normal porque lo fue en mis primeras experiencias sexuales. El otro con quien estuve a los 18 le gustaba también. Y ahora que estoy con alguien que no le gusta es como, qué alivio. No tengo que estar obligada a que me hale el pelo y me haga todas estas cosas.

El tema del consentimiento sexual fue central en estas entrevistas. Permitted que las participantes comentaran sobre sus experiencias sexuales y, de paso, de las violencias que padecieron. Las influencias del patriarcado se evidencian en que las muchachas supieran cómo hacer que los hombres tuvieran orgasmos, pero no cómo provocárselos a ellas mismas o no consideraran la posibilidad de pedirlos, además de la culpa o vergüenza que sentían en su adolescencia por tener deseos sexuales. La normalización del machismo se expone en el hecho de que las participantes no pudieran identificar las violencias sexuales como tales en el momento en que ocurrieron, como narra Marisol:

Me pasó a los 16 y no lo hablé hasta los 18. Se lo conté a mi hermana y diciéndoselo a mi hermana fue que ella me miró y me dijo: a ti te violaron. Y al principio yo le dije: no, no. En parte yo pensaba, eso no le pasa a la gente como yo. Eso es de mil en cien. Y ella me lo seguía diciendo, Marisol, te violaron. Y me tomó par de segundos caer en cuenta. Pero, en realidad paré y cuando lo pensé era como que...fue un alivio, me entiendes porque, o sea, no es mi culpa. O sea, no me siento sucia por mí. O sea, no es mi culpa. No fui yo la que me dañé. Fue él. Porque así era que me sentía, yo estaba usada, ¿sabes? Estaba podrida.

En el caso de Marisol, como se ve en ambas citas, la desinformación respecto a qué es el consentimiento y su importancia tanto para las dinámicas sadomasoquistas, como para cualquier actividad sexual, provocó que ella normalizara el comportamiento que la hacía sentir incómoda sin tener las herramientas para cuestionarlo y que no pudiera identificar que fue violada. Este es un ejemplo más de cómo a las entrevistadas no se les explicó claramente qué es consentimiento, qué es violencia sexual, quiénes las suelen cometer, contra quiénes, por qué, y tampoco se les enseñó cómo manejar estas posibles situaciones o cómo defenderse ante ellas.

Conclusiones

Educación sexual ideal

Susana: Hay muchos temas alrededor de la sexualidad que sí se pueden tocar desde bien jóvenes. Porque sí sentimos cosas desde súper jóvenes. No solo como que cosas físicas, pues, hay muchas cosas que se piensan, muchas curiosidades, y pienso que eso se debe atender como se atiende cualquier otro tipo de curiosidad de un niño.

Según las participantes es necesario transformar la educación sexual para que atienda las necesidades de la población puertorriqueña. Primeramente, la educación sexual debe sobrepasar la prioridad que se le da al tema de la reproducción. Por otro lado, debe tener presente lo esencial que son el consentimiento (a través del lenguaje verbal y corporal) y el placer sexual para todas las partes involucradas en el encuentro sexual. En tercer lugar, que se rechace tratar como prohibidos, perversos o inmorales, los temas del placer, la masturbación y los orgasmos femeninos. Además, discutir a cabalidad la diversidad de orientaciones sexuales, las identidades, expresiones de género, los métodos anticonceptivos y prácticas seguras que respondan a la diversidad sexual.

En un país machista, como Puerto Rico, las expectativas y las prácticas sexuales se ven trastocadas por la manera en que se normalizan socioculturalmente los roles de género, por lo que se hace necesaria una educación sexual con perspectiva de género. Como resultado de esta investigación queda claro la necesidad en promover la comunicación efectiva y exhaustiva, sin ambigüedades, entre las personas que pretenden participar en una interacción sexual. Las tendencias del comportamiento sexual por género se deben contextualizar.

Las mujeres en Puerto Rico, como en muchas otras partes del mundo, son abusadas, maltratadas y asesinadas, mayoritariamente por sus parejas, exparejas u hombres por ellas conocidos. Por esto es esencial que la educación sexual atienda, señale, problematice y prepare a las mujeres para que tengan una idea del marco que podría predominar en sus relaciones con los hombres, y puedan, más allá de comprender la realidad machista, evitar situaciones incómodas y defenderse. Y, evidentemente, educar a los hombres para que rechacen el comportamiento violento, comprendan lo que es el consentimiento y no agredan o violenten a las mujeres consciente o inconscientemente.

La educación sexual debe también estar orientada a atender la problemática de género y violencia que vivimos en el país. Debe estar dirigida no tan solo a señalar el machismo, sino también las vivencias y violencias que experimentan las personas LGBTQI. Enseñarles a estas, como cuerpos socialmente vulnerabilizados, a protegerse. Por otro lado, se debe enseñar a no violentar, agredir o abusar de nadie. Una educación sexual completa puede aportar a una seguridad física, sexual, emocional y espiritual que abarque la posibilidad de que la niñez pueda comprender qué es el sexo, el consentimiento, los acercamientos indebidos y puedan identificarlos, denunciarlos y defenderse.

Ciertamente la educación sexual integral y feminista no evitaría totalmente que se dieran prácticas violentas contra las mujeres. Sin embargo, ayudaría a que muchas de estas violencias puedan ser identificadas a tiempo y proveer los mecanismos de respuesta y defensa para las personas más vulnerabilizadas por el patriarcado. Como en el caso de Laura, que pudo identificar las violencias a las que se exponía en su relación y la hacían sentir incómoda gracias al enfoque feminista de la profesora en su curso de Ciencias Sociales. En cuanto al impacto de una educación sexual Luna completa la frase “a mayor educación sexual...”:

mejores polvos, full. Primero porque si estas educadita y educadito sexualmente, hay tantas cosas que se van a evitar en un encuentro sexual, tantas. Vas a poder fluir, vas a saber con quién puedes conectar, con quién no. Qué hacer cuando conectas o no. Y mira, te ahorras el tiempo. Lo que haces es conectar con buenas personas, buenas vibras. Y lo que se da, se da y lo que no se da, no se da y todo va a estar bien. Y fuera de compartir con otras personas, a mayor educación sexual más rápido vas a saber cómo conocerte, más rápido vas a crecer sexualmente, más rápido vas a saber cómo quieres compartir tu sexualidad.

Más allá del coito

El machismo, que predomina en la cultura puertorriqueña, estuvo involucrado en el proceso de aprendizaje de las participantes. Esto se dio a través de los roles de género que se asumen y las expectativas de comportamiento sexual que se normalizan. Los imaginarios sexuales de once de las trece participantes fueron influenciados por las expectativas dadas por aceptables y que están dirigidas al placer masculino. Estas afectaron, en menor o mayor grado, su salud, su seguridad y el disfrute de estas interacciones.

Las experiencias sexuales negativas, entiéndanse las incomodidades y violencias que mencionaron haber experimentado las participantes, son unos de los resultados socio-culturales de la sesgada educación sexual recibida tanto en sus hogares como en la escuela. A las estudiantes no les enseñaron ni explicaron qué es el consentimiento sexual ni cómo se manifiesta la violencia sexual ni tampoco la relevancia del contexto socio-cultural en el que se podrían enmarcar la mayoría de los encuentros sexuales. No se les educó sobre la importancia de la comunicación, ni del placer sexual ni de los orgasmos. Todo esto resultó ser un factor que incrementó las posibilidades de que las participantes se adentraran a la interacción sexual sin conocer realmente qué esperar ni los límites que podían establecer. Y tuvieron que, en la práctica y desde la desinformación, analizar las incomodidades que estaban experimentando para poco a poco ir enfrentándolas. Según sus relatos, muchas llegaron a normalizar las dinámicas macharranas, aunque todas parecían identificarlas y rechazarlas al momento de la entrevista.

Me parece importante destacar que las violencias que las participantes experimentaron fueron innecesarias y prevenibles. La falta de educación sexual perjudica tanto a los hombres como a las mujeres al tener intimidación sexual. Claro está, las mujeres están en una posición mucho más vulnerable por la realidad machista que predomina en la sociedad puertorriqueña. Lo cual hace importante que la educación sexual contrarreste el machismo que se normaliza. No se debe esperar a que las malas experiencias sean parte del proceso de aprendizaje. No todas las jóvenes puertorriqueñas son universitarias o tienen una educación más allá de la escuela o el hogar, no todas tienen el mismo acceso a herramientas conceptuales críticas provenientes de influencias académicas o recursos accesibles como la internet, lo que en los casos de las participantes fue la principal fuente de información en su educación sexual.

Cabe recalcar que a pesar de que las participantes tuvieron experiencias “non gratas” que han sido resaltadas para ejemplificar el problema de investigación, las participantes han tenido también muchas experiencias satisfactorias y han podido desprenderse, en el proceso de conocerse, de las expectativas sociales establecidas y disfrutar de su sexualidad. Como se ha demostrado a través del escrito, el comportamiento sexual, según los géneros en un contexto sociocultural machista, puede tener repercusiones en la salud, seguridad y bienestar de las personas que se involucran en interacciones sexuales. Por lo tanto, estos temas no pueden quedar fuera de la discusión ni del proceso de enseñanza sobre la sexualidad humana.

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ocasiones, quizás en la mayoría de las conversaciones, hubo momentos incómodos para las estudiantes, sin embargo, el hecho de que terminaran la entrevista es una manera de validar la investigación y la necesidad de estudiar y atender el tema de la educación sexual en Puerto Rico. Realmente fue una experiencia gratificante. Conocí a trece personas brillantes que me dieron esperanzas de que lo que enfrentamos es transformable.

Anejo Perfil demográfico de participantes

Participantes (pseudónimos)	Edad	Orientación sexual	Procedencia escolar	Auto identidad racial
1. Kathy	20	Heterosexual	Privada	Blanca
2. Ivy	22	Queer	Privada	Isleña mestiza
3. Lesliann	21	Heterosexual	Pública	--
4. Susana	19	Pansexual	Privada	Afrocaribeña, negra
5. Luna	22	Bisexual	Pública	--
6. Laura	20	Heterosexual	Pública	Blanca puertorriqueña
7. Sara	22	Heterosexual	Privada	Afrocaribeña
8. Marina	24	Bisexual	Privada	Blanca
9. Cinda	22	Bisexual	Privada	Afrolatina-puertorriqueña
10. Maritza	21	Heterosexual	Privada	Negra
11. Lele	22	Heterosexual	Privada	Blanca
12. Marisol	18	Bisexual	Privada	Blanca
13. Sabrina	24	Bisexual	Privada	Latina

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COMPARING METHODS OF HEALING TRAUMA AFTER HURRICANE DISASTERS IN PUERTO RICO

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Introduction

In this article, diverse methods of healing from trauma after atmospheric catastrophes are discussed, with a particular focus on the use of works of creative expression such as poems, essays, journal entries and photographs as part of Puerto Rican society's process of healing in the aftermath of different hurricanes. From 1502 to 2017, hurricanes such as San Felipe II, San Ciriaco, Hugo, Georges, and María, have affected the island in devastating ways. Previous records, such as Ferdinand Quiñones' (1992) "Resumen histórico de los temporales en Puerto Rico" document the different trajectories and intensities of these atmospheric phenomena. Other sources, such as local newspaper *Primera Hora*, shed light on their true impact on the island and its inhabitants. In this article, we critically analyze a sample of works of art created as instruments to heal the traumas caused by these phenomena. Comparing successive traumas and healing processes from the past to the present, we ask ourselves: Has anything changed over the island's the years after having been ravaged by hurricanes? How have people dealt with these disasters with the resources in their communities?

Ritchie and Roser (2014: par. 2), estimate that natural disasters have been the cause of death of around 60,000 people per year over the last decade. WAPA Radio, and the *Centro de Periodismo Investigativo* have contributed to informing the public on the true damage that these disasters inflicted on the island. Puerto Rico is often presented as 'la isla del encanto', a place where tourists can come to relax and escape reality (Palm & Hodgson, 1993). However, reality is different for Puerto Ricans, who have endured hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis, flooding and other natural disasters.

History of hurricanes in Puerto Rico

Oblack (2019) states that the word 'hurricane' comes from Spanish *huracán* which in turn can be traced back to '*Huricàn*' the name of the Taíno/Carib god of evil, and to '*Huracán*' the Mayan god of wind, storm and fire. In Puerto Rico, it is said the word for hurricane is derived from the name of the deity *Juracán* who resides in El Yunque

(“El dios Juracán era una deidad femenina,” 2008: Par. 2). Based mainly on Fanfán Torres (2013) a brief summary of the most destructive hurricanes to hit Puerto Rico from 1899 onward is provided below.

San Ciriaco, 1899. Hurricane San Ciriaco passed through the island on August 8, 1899, killing 3,369, people, the most deaths caused by a hurricane in Puerto Rico’s history until María in 2017. Damage to property reached some \$35 million (Fanfán Torres 2013, par. 28).

San Felipe II, 1928. Hurricane San Felipe II made landfall on the island on September 13, 1928. The main difference between San Felipe II and the previous hurricane is its lower death toll, perhaps due to better infrastructure and earlier warnings, given that this was the first time that radio was used to notify people in advance. There were 312 deaths, 24,728 people lost their homes, and around 770 schools were either destroyed or damaged. Damage was estimated at some \$50 million (Fanfán Torres, 2013: par. 36).

San Ciprián, 1932. From September 26 to 27, 1932, Hurricane San Ciprián entered Puerto Rico through Ceiba and exited through San Juan, leaving 225 dead and 3,000 injured. Damage, estimated at \$40 million, included 42,431 buildings, and left 76,925 people without homes. After San Felipe II, the government created an emergency fund for natural disasters (Fanfán Torres, 2013: par. 43).

Hugo, 1989. Hurricane Hugo slammed into Puerto Rico on September 18, 1989. Primarily affecting the eastern part of the island, damage extended much further westward. 56 towns were designated as eligible to receive assistance under the US Federal Disaster Program. Damage to private and public property was estimated to be around \$1 billion. 90,000 to 100,000 people had to flee to shelters, and some 13,000 were left homeless. The total number of deaths, however, was only two (Fanfán Torres, 2013: par. 58-63).

Georges, 1998. Hurricane Georges arrived on the island on the 21st of September 1998. The eye of the hurricane was 20 to 25 miles wide, thus leaving no part of the island unscathed. Approximately 96% of the population lost electric power, 75% lost running water, and 8% lost mobile phone service. A total of 28,005 houses were destroyed and another 72,605 houses were partially damaged. Losses amounted to some \$2 billion (Fanfán Torres 2013, par. 79).

María, 2017. Category four Hurricane María made landfall on the island on September 20th, 2017, 14 days after hurricane Irma, a category five hurricane, had passed over the northeastern part of the island. As a result, many rivers overflowed, causing floods in some 78 towns. The flooding occurred so quickly that many remained trapped in their homes. More than 2,000 people were rescued after the National Guard arrived on the scene 24 hours later, after more than 4,000 people had lost their lives. Causing some \$100 billion in damages, María left 100% of the island without electricity, 60% without running water, and severely disrupted telecommunications. Orengo-Aguayo et al. (2019) noted that “studies have demonstrated that up to one-third [of people affected by

the hurricane] will develop chronic symptoms such as post-traumatic stress, depression, anxiety, substance use, suicidal ideation, and/or aggressive behaviors” (2).

Trauma

The APA defines trauma as “an emotional response to a terrible event such as an accident, rape, or natural disaster” (American Psychological Association, n.d., par. 1). When a natural disaster hits, people can only do so much to prepare for it. There are emergency plans created by the government of Puerto Rico to deal with these situations that include such measures as gathering emergency phone numbers, identifying alternate routes, designating meet-up spots, and locating shelters. (Criollo Oquero, 2017: par. 5-12) It is unclear, in the case of María, when there was plenty of advanced warning, if the public actually was aware of these recommended plans, and, if they were aware, if they acted upon them in time. Pinchin (2019) observes that “nearly half of the population lives in poverty, [...] which makes it particularly vulnerable to disasters” (par. 8). For citizens below the poverty line, disaster relief is virtually out of reach. Pinchin (2019) notes that the number of people who were without power for up to a year after the hurricane was alarmingly high. Werner states: “Changes that are happening with the earth are causing a huge amount of suffering, which is totally concentrated on the most marginalized people.” (cited in Pinchin, 2019: par. 17)

Roque describes how the lack of access to clean water impacted people’s health. (cited in Pinchin, 2019: par. 24). These effects were amplified by corruption and negligence at both the US federal and local government levels. For example, it was discovered that thousands of bottles of water had been misused, while many Puerto Ricans’ were dying from illnesses and infections caused by the lack of clean water. Events such as these inflict trauma on an entire population, especially those who lack the most basic of material resources. Mendoza (2017) shared images of residents of Manatí gathering water from the rain to alleviate the absence of piped water. Since so many houses and buildings were destroyed, thousands of people spent countless nights in shelters away from their homes.

Hernández (2020) documented the anguish felt by people whose homes were still roofless and uninhabitable over two years after María. To make matters worse, at the end of 2019 and in early 2020, a series of earthquakes shook the southern coast of the island. Residents experienced crumbling infrastructure and crushed buildings. At the same time, the public was shocked by the repugnant discovery of a “warehouse full of unused disaster supplies including bottled water, cots, propane gas tanks and diapers.” (Hernández, 2020: par. 9). This event agitated citizens around Puerto Rico because it was not just another sign of disrespect, corruption and neglect on the part of the government, but it was also another encounter with traumatic memories.

Heredia Rodríguez (2019) states that about 1 in 14 Puerto Rican school children developed symptoms of PTSD (Post-traumatic stress disorder), citing a survey that indicates that five to nine months after hurricane María, public school students were still feeling

devastated (par. 3). Zenere notes that under such traumatic conditions, “Family units can break down through divorce or domestic violence [...] Young children can revert to thumb-sucking or wetting the bed. Teens sometimes try to exert control by acting out or turning to drugs to self-medicate.” (cited in Heredia Rodríguez, 2019: par. 11).

Healing

Larson (2017) explores medical, spiritual and other approaches to healing, stating that “Healing must be grounded in the understanding of the nature of human suffering” (1). Understanding the suffering that these hurricanes left behind is critical to determining appropriate healing methods. Traumatic events force those affected to embark on a journey most of them never dreamed of undergoing. Healing is defined as “to cause (an undesirable condition) to be overcome” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Healing after natural disasters has both individual and collective dimensions. Herman (1992) writes:

Commonality with other people carries with it all the meanings of the word common. It means belonging to a society, having a public role, being part of that which is universal. It means having a feeling of familiarity, of being known, of communion. It means taking part in the customary, the commonplace, the ordinary, and the everyday. (170)

Being a part of a society and engaging with it meaningfully creates a bond that promotes unity. This act of unity encourages people to share their traumas and experiences.

Klein (2019) asserts that:

the way to recover from that trauma of losing all control over one’s life is to have some control once again. To be empowered to exercise control. That is healing. Everyone who works in trauma recovery knows this: that the way to help is to give people agency again so that they are participants, not spectators in their own lives. It doesn’t erase the trauma, but there is a healing that happens. cited in Bonilla & LeBrón, 2019:(34)

After hurricane María hit Puerto Rico, thousands of citizens experienced traumatic loss, being torn from their families and their belongings. Despite this, people took on the responsibility of sheltering and assisting neighbors and family members both during the emergency and in its aftermath. These people have begun the process of healing properly as a community by acknowledging the commonality of the trauma, and by assuming control over their lives and the lives of other community members,.

Ujifusa (2018) explains that the Department of Education in Puerto Rico, while preparing a team of thirty mental-health professionals for alleviating trauma among students in highly affected schools, also realized that the mental-health of the teachers and other members of staff needed urgent attention. In settings where teachers are expected to become responsible for students’ well-being, Ujifusa explains that they must address their own mental health first. (2018: par. 6) As Zenere comments “When the oxygen

masks drop during a flight, you must put your own mask on first before helping a child with his or hers” (cited in Ujifusa, 2018: par. 27).

One of the most heart-wrenching, maddening and frustrating aspects of the months after María was the fluctuating assessment of casualties caused by the storm. While both the US Federal and local governments deliberately falsified the number of deaths to make sure that they never exceeded 100, a study carried out by Harvard’s T. H. Chan School of Public Health in 2018 estimated that 4,645 people died directly as a result of the storm and indirectly in the aftermath (Bonilla & LeBrón, 2019: 151). An impromptu memorial was held soon after that study was published in which artists Rafael Acevedo, Nelson Rivera and Gloribel Delgado Esquilín asked Puerto Ricans to bring the shoes of loved ones that they had lost to María to the square across from the capitol building in San Juan. “The act, scheduled for June 1st, 2018, lasted forty-eight hours and was the first place where people had been able to meet for a time of collective mourning” (Ramírez-Aponte, cited in Bonilla & LeBrón, 2019: 170). Almost 3,000 pairs of shoes were collected for the event, where people shared stories about the victims.

It is within such acts as sharing stories that healing begins. Actor, Alan Rickman contends that:

It’s a human need to be told stories. The more we’re governed by idiots and have no control over our destinies, the more we need to tell stories to each other about who we are, why we are, where we come from, and what might be possible. (cited in Hillis, 2008: par. 10)

As people gathered in their driveways, on their balconies, and along their sidewalks, the first attempts at communicating revolved around telling their stories. Their ways of reaching out for comfort from neighbors and family members stemmed from the need to have some control over the narratives concerning the event, since the official narrative had been completely falsified.

Apart from storytelling, other forms of creative expression also became a major source of healing. Santiago (2019) reports that: “Heartbroken doesn’t begin to describe how I felt, and still feel, after the hurricane. That devastation fueled the artwork I’ve been doing since” (cited in Bonilla & LeBrón, 2019: 196). Carbonell (2019) recounts how she tells her friend and theater director Maritza Pérez Otero that she wants to:

create a show about the hurricane and present it all over Puerto Rico, using theater to relieve some of the population’s anguish and trauma through entertainment. [...] In the end, five actors showed up for our first meeting, and what was supposed to be a brainstorming session became something more like group therapy. (cited in Bonilla & LeBrón, 2019: 39-40)

The mobilization of artistic minds for the purpose of overcoming trauma was not limited to individual initiatives. After María, the island’s historic Museum of the Americas made a call for artists of all mediums to create works to “purge, purify and liberate their feelings” about their post-hurricane experiences (Rivera Santana, cited in Bonilla &

LeBrón, 2019: 178). The event, held on December 10, 2017, hosted over fifty artists who facilitated workshops on performance, visual arts, theater, poetry, music, etc. The event was called “Catharsis: Re/constructing after María” and underscored the urgency of using art as a vehicle for catharsis across the island.

Each of these artists opened the path to their own recovery in various ways. Rosaura Rodríguez (2019) produced ink and watercolor illustrations to narrate her experiences after María. She recorded her daily life from both a social and a landscape perspective: “These stories [...] document the various states of emotion experienced both individually and collectively as the days dragged on: restlessness, frustration, grief” (cited in Bonilla & LeBrón 2019: 166). Sofía Gallisá Muriente (2019) composed a diary titled “Another Haphazard Gesture” within which, she captured the losses she experienced along with some positive gains, as in the section of the work that she aptly titled “Things I’m Happy María Took.” There she lists things like fences, billboards, stoplights, her schedule, the idea of “normality”, and “The shame in being sad” (cited in Bonilla & LeBrón, 2019: 104). Artists have responded with various works that portray the devastation, natural and psychological, caused by meteorological events like Hurricane María. To quote Ramírez-Aponte (2019), “[they] also make visible circumstances, conditions, racial and economic legacies, and communities that have long been invisible or silent” (162). “All this points to the importance of seeing art—as it engages, informs, and activates people—as a vehicle for resilience and resistance in Puerto Rico” (cited in Bonilla & LeBrón 2019, 164).

This next testimony does not demonstrate personal healing, but instead shows the process through which one can help another to begin their own. Patricia Noboa Ortega, a psychologist with a background in psychoanalysis and participant in the post-María disaster health brigades, “tried to provide a space in which residents could talk about their experiences and thus give them the opportunity to calm their anguish and discomfort.” (cited in Bonilla & LeBrón, 2019: 272) Psychoanalysis is concerned with the individual response to suffering. Two human beings may lose the same object in the same natural disaster and yet react to each loss differently. We can see this in Noboa Ortega’s testimony to meeting a woman taking part in organizing an activity to help people access the doctors of the health brigade that came to her community:

She told me how difficult the hurricane had been for her. She named all the things she had lost. “I lost my clothes, my shoes, my washing machine, my dryer, my car, my fish for sale, and the refrigerator where I put the fish,” she said. Right away, she added, “Those are material things. They do not matter. At least we are alive.” I answered, “Is that so?” This question seemed to trigger something in her, and she started to cry. Immediately, she said, “I cannot cry. Here they need me. I must be strong. I cannot become lost. I cannot lose my mind.” (Noboa Ortega, cited in Bonilla & LeBrón 2019: 273)

Noboa Ortega goes on to highlight the importance of having asked first, to open a space for the woman to expunge the pain and suffering she was going through. In order for the woman in question to mourn, she had to also address the stress beyond her losses, the responsibility that now rests on her shoulders, further denying her the time and the care to heal.

There are also the stories of those who cannot acknowledge their trauma and therefore reject the opportunity to heal. Torres Gotay (2019) interviewed a man in his home in one of the many ravaged communities in Puerto Rico six weeks after hurricane María:

But when I asked him how he was coping with the dire situation, how he felt, what he expected from the authorities, if he did in fact feel abandoned, how he expected to provide for his son and for his mother, he always gave the same answer: “Estoy bastante cómodo” [“I’m quite comfortable”] he said. (cited in Bonilla & LeBrón, 2019: 83)

This man saw himself in a better position than others, who were suffering even more than he was, despite the fact that he was unemployed with a family to take care of. He mistakenly believed that the US government was attending to the problem and therefore there was no acknowledgement of individual trauma, no understanding of shared trauma with others, and no assumption of control on his part.

One of the themes that generally united people in recovering from the trauma of disaster was inaction by the government. Speaking of the artists who were mobilized after the hurricane, Ramírez-Aponte (2019) states that:

Central to the work of these creators are issues associated with the slow and ineffective handling of the disaster by local and federal authorities; a colonial system *in extremis* and government corruption; the financial crisis and poverty; the fragmentation of families caused by migration; the transformation of the landscape and the potential loss of our cultural patrimony; climate change, dependency on fossil fuels, and environmental justice; and the disarticulation of the public patrimony, including an education system threatened by dismantling, among so many others. (cited in Bonilla & LeBrón, 2019: 163)

Massol-Deyá (2019) reports that:

Since the storm [María], PREPA [the public power utility in Puerto Rico at the time, which has since been privatized] has resorted to subcontracting recovery operations to private, mostly US-based companies. There is no longer a local-public potential to respond because it has been dismantled. Fiscal austerity measures have led to the elimination of maintenance brigades and response bodies, such as *Defensa Civil* which used to be in each municipality ready to respond immediately after the passage of a hurricane or storm. (cited in Bonilla & LeBrón, 2019: 302)

Brusi and Godreau (2019) write that “The storm also provided a convenient excuse for accelerating and intensifying the process of shrinking and weakening the public sector

in ways that benefit private and corporate interests” (cited in Bonilla & LeBrón, 2019: 234). As people worked together to recover from trauma that was left after the hurricane, private companies from the US, like opportunistic vultures, descended on Puerto Rico to gorge themselves on the systematically misallocated funds and resources which were supposed to address the needs of the sick and the poor.

Conclusion

McKay (2018) observes that “Recovery is a long, arduous process, even for those eligible for some assistance, [...] But for some, [...] the process is even worse and many never fully recover” (par. 5). After confronting strong winds and long bursts of rain, after losing homes and loved ones, and after suffering scarcities of food and drinking water, any attempt by Puerto Ricans at reaching out to begin a process of healing is much more challenging than people imagine. Not only must the traumatized come forward the begin to heal, but their families, neighbors and communities must also be willing to contribute and assist in the process of healing, especially when government at all levels serves the interests of the kleptocratic elites in the US and their local cronies, rather than the interests of the people of Puerto Rico.

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LA ZOMBIFICACIÓN Y EL LENGUAJE-NACIÓN DE REPÚBLICA DOMINICANA EN LA MUCAMA DE OMICUNLÉ

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La mucama de omicunlé (Hernández, 2015), cuarta novela de la escritora y cantante dominicana Rita Indiana Hernández, recrea un mundo distópico en un futuro cercano de la República Dominicana donde impera la deshumanización y donde existe una profundización de la situación de conflicto entre una sociedad con escasos recursos y otra que goza de muchos privilegios en un mismo lugar (dominicanos ricos con pobres, dominicanos con inmigrantes haitianos). Esa realidad se presenta en un tono realista, crudo y descarnado acompañado de su aceptación, sin negación y sin evasión. Hay un deseo de confrontar esa realidad, de asumirla por más dura que parezca. Esta perspectiva es recurrente en su obra. Fernanda Bustamante (2013), por ejemplo, desarrolla el tema de la recreación distópica de la realidad y lo monstruoso en *Acteón parte 2* y *Papi*. En su trabajo concluye que esas obras rehúyen la exotización del Caribe apelando a lo abyecto, a la crítica y a la denuncia social.

Esta novela de Rita Indiana está atravesada por preocupaciones de la vida contemporánea como la deconstrucción de la noción tradicional de los géneros, la depredación de los recursos naturales por parte de la economía capitalista y la inmigración, entre otros. De igual forma, existe una gran recurrencia de referencias a la historia antigua y reciente de la nación cuya incidencia es palpable en el imaginario social de los dominicanos. Lo que resalta de la obra, sin embargo, es la óptica desde la cual esos acontecimientos son filtrados al lector. La narración no es lineal, ni tampoco tiene flashbacks o flashforwards sino que está construida con base en una estructura temporal superpuesta, es decir, existe una convivencia de temporalidades disímiles que conviven sin reñir. Es la estructura cronotópica del mar coagulado tan común en escritores antillanos como Walcott o Brathwaite. Rita Indiana parece sugerir que no es posible entender la realidad de su país sin mirar el legado de los orígenes, la cruenta realidad de las dictaduras y sus consecuencias aún palpables al igual que la relación con los inmigrantes haitianos. El lenguaje de la novela está construido de la misma forma. La autora hace uso de diferentes lenguajes y jergas que se conjugan de manera armónica para intentar hablar de la República Dominicana mostrando la pluridiscursividad de su sociedad. Es el lenguaje-nación

(como lo acuñó Brathwaite y lo llevó a su máxima expresión Walcott en su obra)¹ que guarda los ecos de las historias de la isla que intentan mostrar las voces silenciadas de la Historia dominicana.

Asimismo, *La mucama de omicunlé* nos presenta la forma en que los medios de comunicación masiva reemplazan formas de vida tradicionales, formas de pensamiento y patrones culturales por formas de vida independientes de la realidad “real”, autónomas (lo presentado en los medios se basa en la creación de una realidad propia) que son replicadas en esa realidad. Es lo que Umberto Eco (1986) denominó la ‘Neo televisión’ o una autorreferencialidad los discursos emitidos en ella. En *La mucama de omicunlé* la influencia de los medios en la sociedad dominicana está relacionada con la manipulación de las masas iletradas (como lo afirmaron Horkheimer y Adorno, 1988, en su ya célebre ensayo al teorizar sobre la industria cultural) y sobre todo con los efectos de la industria cultural en los sujetos subalternos dominicanos. Rita Indiana se centra en dos de esos efectos: la zombificación y la deshumanización y en la puesta en escena de la forma como esos medios impactan la sociedad dominicana.

La República Dominicana contemporánea: una sociedad de zombis

El zombi es quizá el significante más relevante de la época posmoderna. Ha sido una figura recurrente en el cine y la literatura de fin de siglo y de las dos décadas del XXI. Su significado original es el del “muerto viviente, un ente que vuelve a la vida después de haber muerto” (Ikeda, 2015: 6). Sin embargo, la imagen del zombi se ha convertido más en una caracterización relacionada con la despersonalización y la deculturación de los rasgos locales en favor de la aculturación transnacional orientada por las industrias culturales a través de los medios de comunicación masiva. El énfasis está, en la mayoría de los casos, en el proceso de transformación de un sujeto autónomo y consciente a uno sin personalidad (que imita lo que los medios le presentan) guiado como marioneta. Llamaré a este proceso zombificación. En *La mucama de omicunlé* hay tres personajes que resaltan por su caracterización como tal: Yararí, la hija de Ananí y Nenuco, dueños de una playa en Sosúa y practicantes de la santería, Malagueta, uno de los artistas del proyecto de Sosúa de Linda, la mecenas preocupada por el medio ambiente y por el arte y Acilde, la protagonista del relato.

En Yararí se enfatiza la faceta de la pérdida de identidad del individuo en la sociedad manejada por los medios y la falta de empatía por sus semejantes. Yararí es la hija rebelde de Nenuco y Ananí. Ella no se identifica con uno de los aspectos de la “dominicanía” que sus padres representan: la práctica de una religión como elemento esencial

¹¹ Brathwaite introduce el concepto de Lenguaje nación en una conversación que sostuvo con Édouard Glissant en una universidad en Estados Unidos y que fue grabada por Iñeke Phaf-Rheinberger (2008) y luego publicada en diferentes medios académicos. Walcott ha estructurado su apuesta lingüística en la puesta en escena del lenguaje nación de Santa Lucía. En Omeros el uso de los diferentes creoles y el inglés estándar para ilustrar ecos de la historia de las Antillas que el poema patentiza es el punto máximo de la construcción de ese lenguaje nación.

de su modo de vida. Esas creencias, expectativas y formas de relacionarse con la realidad no hacen parte de la visión de mundo de Yararí. El narrador(a) nos dice al respecto: “Yararí tenía catorce años y estaba harta de tanta ceremonia y tanta vaina rara. No quería pertenecer a aquel mundo de misterios y habladera en susurros de sus padres y había convencido a Ananí de que se quedara con un televisor Sony Trinitron que le había mandado Balaguer la última navidad” (Hernández, 2015: 106).

Ella es la única en su familia que no habla taíno, pues sus padres y su hermano sí saben esa lengua que los conecta directamente con la historia y la realidad dominicana. Nada que tenga que ver con su cultura o su gente le interesa, todo lo extranjero le atrae. Por eso va a la escuela, porque su profesor de inglés es “un sacerdote gringo de ojos azules” (Hernández, 2015: 106). Además de hacer parte de un mundo diferente al de su familia y del dominicano de su clase, ella siente absoluta antipatía por sus familiares. Por esta razón, maldice a su madre porque había regalado una lavadora enviada por Balaguer y a ella le tocaba lavar ropa a mano y también por esta razón se escapa con Willito, un habitante del pueblo que está enamorado de ella, pero a quien ella ni siquiera mira cuando pasa por su casa. Yararí es descrita como un zombi creado por la televisión cuando tiene sexo con Acilde, ya convertida en hombre, luego de que Nenuco lo había traído a su casa con la convicción de que era el elegido por los dioses de su culto religioso. En el texto leemos:

Sin dejar de ver la película, Yarari cerró su mano alrededor del pene color aceituna y la movía con diestra cadencia; cuando estuvo duro se sacó los pantaloncitos y se le sentó encima sin dejar de mirar hacia la tele, ayudándose con la mano para metérselo ella misma de una y luego subiendo y bajando mientras él la guiaba con las manos en su cintura. En unos minutos la llenó de leche. (Hernández, 2015: 109)

Nótese la repetición del narrador(a) de la frase “sin dejar de ver la tele” para indicar que ella no se encuentra en ese mundo sino en el creado por la televisión convirtiéndose en una especie de muerta en vida. Recordemos además que la mayoría del tiempo ella está viendo la tele. Además, al final del coito que ha tenido con Acilde, se sube los pantalones y cambia de canal ratificando que ha estado inmersa todo el tiempo en el mundo de allá y no en el de acá.

Por otro lado, Malagueta, el artista local, es caracterizado como el sujeto que carece de autoconciencia e imita los comportamientos y modelos que ve en la televisión. Este zombi se caracteriza, como señala Rebecca Romdhani (2015), por “lack of autonomy and the ability to think clearly and feel complex emotions” (Hernández, 2015: 74). Malagueta es uno de los artistas invitados a la aventura de Linda en Sosúa. Se supone que es un artista escénico pero Argenis, el pintor más reconocido del grupo, siempre está dudado de su idoneidad como artista. Malagueta tiene poco conocimiento acerca de la teoría del arte y está bajo la tutela de Iván, su maestro. De manera similar, sigue y de-

fiende ciegamente a Giorgio y a Linda. Pero lo que más lo define como ente sin conciencia no es tanto el hecho de que sigue lo que se le imponga, sino su obsesión con el personaje Gokú de una serie de televisión de origen japonés a partir del cual moldea su cuerpo y sus reacciones. Él pinta su cabello de naranja como uno de los personajes de la serie y levanta pesas para conseguir los músculos de Gokú. Cuando Argenis ataca a Giorgio, él lo toma de la forma en que este personaje lo hace con sus oponentes.

El tercer ejemplo de zombificación se da en Acilde, protagonista de la novela. Ella ejerce la prostitución asumiendo la performance de un niño que hace sexo oral a hombres ricos. Su deseo es realizarse un cambio de sexo. Luego de que lo logra, toda su vida se convierte en una distorsión. No existe certeza (ni en él [ella] o en el lector) acerca de en qué realidad y en qué temporalidad vive, pues aparece como preso en la cárcel en un tiempo posterior a la empresa artística ambiental en Sosúa, está en la casa de Nenuco en Sosúa en un momento anterior a esa empresa y aparece como Giorgio durante toda la empresa. Sin embargo, solo el Acilde de la cárcel parece, en primera instancia, corresponder a una realidad verosímil o una en donde él tenga autonomía, piense de manera clara, sienta emociones complejas y posea autoconciencia de ocupar un lugar en el espacio de manera física. En el caso de la realidad de Giorgio, él sabe que es producto de desvaríos oníricos. Así se puede intuir al final del relato cuando declara: “Podía sacrificar todos menos esa vida, la vida de Giorgio Menicucci, la compañía de su mujer, la galería, el laboratorio” (Hernández, 2015: 180-181). De igual forma, el/la narrador(a) nos presenta esta perspectiva cuando Acilde es apresado y llevado a la cárcel: “Pensó que tal vez esa vida en la Sosúa de fin de siglo XX que se desarrollaba en su cabeza era un efecto secundario de la Rainbow Bright” (Hernández, 2015: 111). La focalización en esa temporalidad-espacialidad también apunta a lo mismo. Esta es siempre externa a Giorgio por lo que no conocemos sus sentimientos o pensamientos lo que hace menos verosímil que esa subjetividad tenga una concreción en la realidad fáctica. En cuanto a la vida que Acilde lleva en la casa de Nenuco, hay que señalar que es en ella en la que la zombificación es más patente. De nuevo la focalización aquí es externa, pero con el propósito de mostrar la absoluta falta de autonomía, la imposibilidad de sentir emociones de algún tipo o de expresar algún pensamiento. Nenuco le habla, pero él no responde, de hecho, no articula palabra alguna. Cuando Nenuco le dice que es el elegido, el narrador(a) señala: “El tipo no decía nada. Parecía asustado, confundido, movía los ojos en muchas direcciones, como si viera cosas que no estaban en la habitación con ellos” (Hernández, 2015: 107). Yararí cree que es un turista borracho que su papá rescató de las olas, condición que lo emparenta con el andar zombi. Además, en la descripción del encuentro sexual que ella tiene con él y que reseñé arriba, él no muestra ninguna clase de emoción cuando normalmente en ese tipo de acciones estas afloran de manera natural. Su papel se resume en ayudarla a subir y bajar. Se podría entender que realmente Acilde está muerta en vida luego de haber tomado el medicamento que debe

convertirla en hombre y que esta realidad es la “real” y anula aquella en la que Acilde, ya transformado, es llevado a la cárcel.

El lenguaje-nación de República Dominicana

Edward Kamau Brathwaite señala que el lenguaje-nación del Caribe es “una energía / cosmos / lengua que transporta la memoria y el bagaje de los ancestros y conjuga tanto elementos antiguos como nuevos” (Phaf-Rheinberger, 2008: 313). El lenguaje-nación conjuga entonces, las lenguas y dialectos heredados de las culturas ancestrales y las recombinaciones surgidas del largo período de colonización y de las influencias de los vectores neocoloniales. Brathwaite piensa en las connotaciones originales del léxico tomado por los creoles y que son portadoras de la memoria ancestral de los creoles mismos, así como las jergas que se crean por las interacciones de esos con los lenguajes metropolitanos. De igual forma, el poeta de Barbados ve el lenguaje como vehículo de la cultura y la identidad de los pueblos. Por eso, usar solo la lengua del colonizador no es suficiente para hablar de la nación y sus sujetos.

Rita Indiana quiere poner en escena al sujeto y la cultura contemporáneos de la República Dominicana en *La mucama de omicunlé* y solo empleando el lenguaje nación de su país puede conseguirlo. Por ello, apela al dialogismo y configura un pastiche lingüístico que refleje la manera en que lenguas y variantes lingüísticas interactúan en su realidad.

Cabe decir en este sentido que la *mucama de omicunlé* es una novela dialógica que intenta presentar las alteridades de la República Dominicana y dejar hablar a diferentes subjetividades, diferentes ethos y formas de entender la realidad. Hay un compromiso con la democratización de la palabra y las ideologías, pero también con elementos culturales residuales que se ven amenazados por formas contemporáneas de ser en el mundo vehiculados por las industrias culturales y la globalización. En eso difiere el concepto de dialogismo acuñado por Kristeva (1982) y adoptado por Bajtín (1986) de la idea de lenguaje-nación de Brathwaite. El dialogismo es visto por Bajtín como un rasgo intrínseco del habla pues considera que “Nuestro discurso cotidiano práctico está lleno de palabras ajenas: con algunas fundimos completamente nuestras voces olvidando su procedencia” (1986: 272). En este sentido, el dialogismo tiene un carácter sociolingüístico, muestra el horizonte axiológico de las otredades en las palabras y discursos.

El lenguaje-nación está más orientado hacia lo etnolingüístico, hacia los elementos culturales que se transmiten a través de las lenguas que se usaron y se usan en un lugar determinado y visibiliza la pervivencia de elementos residuales y la aparición en elementos culturales emergentes y las formas en que ellos interactúan. Aquí podemos reseñar las “modas” o “formas de vida” contemporáneas descritas en el apartado anterior como la de Malagueta de seguir el estilo de vida de Gokú que incluye la cultura de la apariencia física, el uso de la violencia física y la imitación de formas de vestir y usar

peinados, o la de Acilde quien levanta pesas en sus ratos de ocio, vive de vender su cuerpo, no tiene escrúpulos para robar a su jefa e intenta cambiar su sexo. Con eso, Hernández deja hablar a las nuevas subjetividades e individuos “otros” que ven la realidad a través de otros discursos. Pero al mismo tiempo, deja hablar a los sujetos en cuyos lenguajes resuenan ecos de las culturas ancestrales, los taínos y los afrodescendientes esclavizados con sus creencias religiosas como centro de su ser en el mundo colonial y poscolonial. Esther Escudero es así la bruja santera que adivina el futuro y que realiza diversos tipos de ritos de esa religión y Nenuco es alguien para quien la religión es la vida pues todos sus actos están guiados por sus creencias.

Asimismo, esta novela, siguiendo la argumentación de Silvestre Manuel Hernández sobre la noción de dialogismo en la literatura, “acoge en su seno la estratificación de una lengua nacional en sus distintos dialectos, en sus variadas formas lingüísticas referidas a las generaciones, las edades o a expresiones sociales y políticas” (2011: 26). En el principio de la obra, por ejemplo, percibimos la axiología de los dominicanos con ideología “tradicional” caracterizada por el machismo, el respeto de ciertas tradiciones y el recato, entre otras cosas. El narrador nos dice: “Sus compañeros eran niños ricos con Macs y cámaras digitales que hablaban de Fluxus, video arte, videoacción, arte contemporáneo. Usaban mochilas con Hello Kitty, hablaban inglés y francés y no se sabía si eran maricones o no” (Hernández, 2015: 37). Aquí apreciamos el horizonte ideológico del “otro” dominicano cuyo discurso se ve opacado, subalternado por los discursos emergentes de las subjetividades dominantes más cercanas a las concepciones del mundo emparentadas con la tecnología y con las nuevas formas de vida asociadas a ella. Esa voz subalterna recurre al insulto propio de una sociedad machista donde lo homosexual es considerado como lo abyecto y por eso lo asocia al sujeto que se posiciona como dominante en la sociedad para desacreditarlo y luchar contra su pretensión de convertirse en subjetividad hegemónica.

Similarmente, la novela nos presenta el lenguaje de los que se ven obligados a ejercer la prostitución y a los que todos pretenden ocultar. La autora busca entonces traer a la luz a esos sujetos cuya vida se mantiene subterránea. Cuando Acilde logra que un vendedor de crack la lleve a su casa a cambio de unos pesos, la hermana de éste le dice: “no voy a mamar huevo Joel, toy cenando” (Hernández, 2015: 62). Este también es el caso de Acilde misma antes de trabajar para Esther Escudero, pues pertenece a ese submundo y maneja ese “subdiscurso”. Así se aprecia en su diálogo con Erik cuando tienen un intercambio sexual por dinero: “dame mis cuartos, maricón” “soy hembra coño” (Hernández, 2015: 1). La intención de la autora es llevar al lector a ese “submundo” que usualmente ve como otredad y reconstruir el mosaico de las alteridades y la pluridiscursividad de la sociedad dominicana.

De igual forma, en Acilde encontramos el discurso del “otro” femenino que clama por reivindicaciones de género, por autonomía, por no estar sujeto a los patrones de la sociedad heteronormativa. Acilde, por ejemplo, le contesta a Eric: “no quiero un marido

que me mantenga” (Hernández, 2015: 16), cuando este le ofrece buscar a alguien que la necesite. Ese mundo-discurso alternativo representado en Acilde surge como forma de rebelión ante el mundo-discurso patriarcal vehiculado por sus abuelos cuando descubren que ella es poco femenina. En el texto leemos: “Los viejos aborrecían sus aires masculinos. El abuelo César buscó una cura para la enfermedad de la nieta, y le trajo a un vecinito para que la arreglara mientras él y la abuela la inmovilizaban y una tía le tapaba la boca” (Hernández, 2015: 18). Aquí escuchamos al mundo que no tolera lo que se sale de los patrones establecidos y lo considera como anormal, como algo dañado que se debe arreglar.

El lenguaje-nación se expresa con mayor énfasis a través de las menciones a la lengua taína, a la lengua usada para los ritos de santería y al dialecto hablado en la región del Cibao. En primera instancia, en la familia de Nenuco encontramos una de las historias centrales de la novela que se entronca con las otras a través de su relación con Acilde y el personaje en que se convierte: Giorgio. Su importancia radica, sin embargo, en que le permite a Rita Indiana mostrar parte del lenguaje-nación de la República Dominicana en la raíz taína que exhibe a través de ellos. Recordemos que ellos siguen los ritos de la religión de esa etnia y hablan su lengua. Nenuco y su suegra alababan a Yocahú, divinidad central del panteón taíno y Nenuco creía que el elegido de sus dioses se encontraba en la poceta que estaba en Playa Bo y que él era el elegido para cuidarlo. Todos en su familia, excepto Anahí, hablan taíno. Sus nombres mismos son de origen taíno. El hecho de que la autora recurra a la lengua taína intenta mostrar una presencia de prácticas y elementos culturales residuales que, aunque invisibilizados por la cultura dominante, son elementos integrales del dominicano contemporáneo. Es innegable la influencia lingüística de los taínos en el español hablado en el Caribe y en Latinoamérica. Jesús Serna Moreno (2009), referencia una gran cantidad de investigaciones sobre la supervivencia del arahuaca taíno en las Antillas Mayores y afirma que “existe una presencia de elementos etnoculturales indígenas mayor al hasta ahora aceptado” (123). Marcos González Díaz (2019) argumenta que al ser los taínos los primeros indígenas con los que los conquistadores interactúan por primera vez, tomaron muchas palabras para nombrar la nueva realidad y cuando fueron a otros territorios de América, los pueblos indígenas de esas tierras adoptaron vocablos taínos. Rita Indiana le otorga gran importancia a la lengua taína porque su inclusión vehicula parte de la memoria de los ancestros y porque representa un llamado de atención a los dominicanos que les recuerda que puede haber más de taíno en ellos de lo que ellos creen. También quiere mostrar que no solo hay un legado lingüístico sino otro muy fuerte relacionado con ciertas creencias religiosas, un cúmulo de vocablos que fueron prestados de la lengua taína al español y que aún se utilizan, además de un conjunto de ritos, creencias y manifestaciones de orden religioso que también podrían estar en el sustrato de formas de trascendencias o espirituales de los individuos de la nación en la actualidad. Cabe señalar que Rita Indiana muestra ese elemento del lenguaje nación como algo latente pues

el narrador nos informa que ellos hablan el taíno, pero no los pone a dialogar usándola. De igual forma, la llama como “lengua rara” (Hernández, 2015: 74) para mostrar cómo el pueblo dominicano está alejado de esta herencia lingüística y cultural.

Lo que sí transcribe en la novela es el lenguaje usado para los ritos de santería: el *lucumí*, una derivación de la lengua yoruba y que es usada por Omicunlé y por Eric, el médico cubano amigo de Acilde, de manera repetitiva en la novela. En el texto leemos desde una sesión entera de santería con todos sus pasos:

Primero pidió frescura: «Omi tuto, ona tuto, tuto ile, tuto owo, tuto omo, tuto laroye, tuto ariku babawa». Luego alabó a las deidades que rigen a todas las otras: «Moyugba Olofin, moyugba Olodumare, Moyugba Olo~n ...». Rindió homenaje a los muertos de la religión: «lbae bayen tonu Oluwo, babalosha, iyalosha, iworó». Colabba to' esa ciencia, colabba to' esos muertos. Rindió homenaje a sus maestros muertos: «lbae bayen tonu Lucila Figueroa Oyafunke Ibae, Mamalala Yeyewe Ibae, Bélgica Soriano Adache Ibae ...». Y rindió tributo a quienes la habían iniciado: «Kinkamanche, a mi padrino Belarminio Brito Omidina, a mi oyugbona Ruben Millan Baba Latye, Kinkamanche Oluwo Pablo Torres Casellas, Oddi Sa, Kinkamanche O luwo Oyugbona Henry Alvarez ...» (Hernández, 2015: 23-24).

Hasta rezos para diversos propósitos como el que hace Eric para terminar la transformación de Acilde en hombre: Olokun nuni osi oki elu reye toray. Olokun ni'ka le. Moyugba, Ache. Soltó al animal y se arrodilló junto a la cara de Acilde diciendo «Olokun, aquí está su hijo Eric Vitier, Omioloyu, Omo Yemaya, Okana Di en su Awofaka, rindiéndole *moforibale* y pidiéndole su bendición» (Hernández, 2015: 69-70). En este sentido, el *lucumí* usado en la santería se nos muestra como un elemento del lenguaje nación que pervive hasta el futuro distópico recreado en la novela y que se percibe como algo reconocido por todos.

La mención del dialecto del Cibao nos muestra la existencia de la variedad lingüística del español dominicano y revela “clear divisions between high and low prestige forms” (Bullock & Toribio, 2009: 50). En la obra se usa para mostrar un registro lingüístico soez y de baja consideración: “‘vago, bolsa triste, mojón de agosto’ entre otros insultos por el estilo, todos cibaños” (Hernández, 2015: 46). La novela nos muestra en este caso un imaginario del dominicano promedio en relación con los grupos sociales que conforman su nación. Este dialecto se asocia a los campesinos del norte del país, a individuos con baja educación e inferior estatus. Esto tiene su origen en la existencia de la idea de una nación estratificada donde hay unos ciudadanos que se consideran por encima de otros en estatus pues la región del Cibao conforma una región cultural y lingüística diferenciada de las otras del país y su forma de hablar es marcadamente diferente a la de los que habitan la región del sur caracterizada por ser más urbana y a la de los del este, donde se encuentra el desarrollo turístico de la nación.

Conclusión

El dialogismo y el lenguaje-nación que recrean las alteridades de República Dominicana y lo residual cultural convertido en otredad, tienen su paralelo en la construcción “negativa” del personaje de Acilde, en el sentido en que no se afirma nada sobre su ser, no existe ninguna certeza sobre su condición de existencia pues no se sabe si está muerta o viva luego de la inyección, de sexo pues no sabemos si es él o ella o in-between. En ella conviven los ‘otros’ culturales silenciados (la religión de origen africano) y los otros sociales emergentes (los géneros que rompen el binarismo sexual patriarcal y los sujetos femeninos que reclaman autonomía frente a los sujetos masculinos). En otras palabras, Acilde es símbolo del sujeto dominicano, un no sujeto, un sujeto ‘opaco’, siguiendo a Glissant (2010), uno que no afirma unos rasgos particulares perfectamente identificables. Es un sujeto que condensa la pluridiscursividad y el multilingüismo que define la cultura y la historia de los grupos humanos que conforman la nación.

Bajo la perspectiva de análisis que asumí en este trabajo, se puede afirmar que la autora sugiere que el dominicano contemporáneo es zombificado o, dicho de otra forma, se despersonaliza, pierde autonomía, autoconciencia, se desconecta de la realidad, debido al influjo de los medios de comunicación masiva que crean una realidad autónoma que coloniza la realidad “real” entrando en conflicto con los elementos de la cultura y la sociedad tradicional. El nuevo sujeto de la nación es entonces, uno que vive en diferentes temporalidades y espacios al mismo tiempo (el creado por los medios, el heredado de su pasado colonial y el heredado de las dictaduras recientes).

De igual forma, la novela registra el pluralismo dialectal y lingüístico de la nación para mostrar la diversidad de grupos sociales, la irrupción de los discursos de los medios de comunicación masiva, de la tecnología y las variantes dialectales regionales. Aquí son clave la inclusión del lenguaje de la santería como una presencia latente, del lenguaje de los taínos como uno de los ejes centrales de la “dominicanía” y del dialecto del Cibao como parte de una formación social de la nación.

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**CARIBBEAN WITHOUT BORDERS 2020:
VOICES OF CHANGE AND RESISTANCE
IN CARIBBEAN EDUCATION**

INNOVATIVE METHODS FOR TEACHING ENTREPRENEURSHIP: A FOCUS ON GAMES IN THE PUERTO RICAN CONTEXT

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Board games, video games, and online games have received significant attention in recent years due to their impact on educational outcomes. One of the main interests of the present author is the transfer of knowledge using game rules and behaviors that are typical of game settings (Peppler, Danish, & Phelps, 2013). Research in the area of games and education suggest that participants in observation of and reflection on game-related exercises obtain better scores on post-tests than on pretests and obtain better results in business simulations than participants who do not engage in game-related activities. Ahn (2008) for example, found that there was a positive relationship between simulation games and learning, as well as between simulation and the application of knowledge. In this article, I argue that business and entrepreneurship students at a rural university in Puerto Rico can benefit from game playing and simulation experiences. The literature review and preliminary pilot study upon which this article is based is part of a larger project that is being carried out at the Inter American University of Puerto Rico, San Germán, titled: "Placing games in the teaching toolbox for entrepreneurship education in Puerto Rico." My purpose here is to stress the need for innovative and effective methods for teaching business and entrepreneurship in Puerto Rico given the island's current economic and social crises.

The economy of Puerto Rico has been in decline for many years, and since 2006, it has been in recession. Puerto Ricans are leaving the island in record numbers in search of better economic opportunities in the mainland US (Serra, 2018). This exodus has resulted in professional shortages and a decrease in the tax base. This situation has been further aggravated by natural disasters, such as Hurricane Maria in 2017. According to The Institute of Statistics of Puerto Rico (2018), the population has been in decline for more than a decade. While the island's population had reached 3,721,525 in 2010, after Hurricane María, the population declined to 3,193,354 in 2018. The data indicates that many Puerto Rican students tend to leave the island upon finishing their studies, exacerbating economic stagnation. The 2017 government report on employment and unemployment among youth shows that in that year, the participation rate of young people

between 16 and 24 years old in the labor force was only 24.8%. (Department of Labor and Human Resources of Puerto Rico, 2017).

Given these numbers, universities on the island have an urgent responsibility to educate young people so that they can create their own businesses. To help meet this need, the Inter American University of Puerto Rico at San Germán offers a course in its General Studies Program focusing on entrepreneurship. With an eye on this existing resource, I contend that educators must begin to maximize student learning in such courses by implementing maximally effective strategies to teach concepts in business management, specifically by using interactive games in which students learn by having fun. In this article, I first provide a general overview of some of literature on games in education, and then I look more closely at how the findings from those studies could be used to develop pedagogical games designed to educate students and community members in rural areas of Puerto Rico about entrepreneurship.

Games hold great potential and will play an essential role and in education in the coming years, as gaming is the platform preferred by many people to socialize, play, or perform professional activities. In order to be maximally effective, games should have reasonable objectives with simple graduated levels. Games hold great promise in encouraging students to build on their own existing knowledge base, which is an indispensable tool for addressing diversity and inclusion in the classroom. During cooperative play, students who have difficulty understanding can benefit from the help of their peers, who may have a greater knowledge base in the particular area addressed by the game.

Royce and Newton (2007) finds that using games is an innovative teaching strategy which has proven to be effective in increasing learning outcomes of nursing students. Specifically, by making learning more exciting and replicating real-life scenarios, games promote active learning, foster critical thinking, improve knowledge retention, promote problem-based learning, and motivate students to become more involved in their learning. Sayers (2011) explores the educational use of computer games and concludes that games and simulations are beneficial and should be incorporated into the curriculum because they provide immediate assessment, increase students' critical thinking skills while having fun, and improve students' technological capabilities. Lewis (1989) concludes that educational games are favorable for teaching, but they need to extend the acquired knowledge to real-life scenarios.

Learning by playing is not only for students. Games help teachers familiarize themselves with lesson material. Teaching through games lessens both resistance to the use of new technology and insistence on assessment via exams on the part of teachers. The use of games can free up teachers to move freely around the room, encouraging and paying attention to higher-risk students. However, the lack of teacher training in the field of non-traditional teaching methods such as games is an important reason why this method is not used more frequently. Vázquez-Alonzo and Manassero-Mas (2017) interviewed 511 Spanish primary school teachers and found that 31% of the teachers had

used video games in the previous year, of which 94% claimed that they were educational, with 43% of teachers saying they used games because they motivate students to learn.

Delfín Pozos and Acosta Márquez (2016) contend that a focus on games in business training has proven to be an effective way of simulating best business practices. A study by La Guardia et al. (2014) shows that game playing helps the acquisition of skills and knowledge that are crucial for the development of an entrepreneurial mindset. They describe a model that incorporates experiential learning, and provides students an opportunity to move seamlessly from the simplest games to the more complex ones, all of which are focused on the main concepts of business management with the objective of improving decision making and general business outcomes. These games are conducted in a guided manner, with students enjoying themselves as much as possible while learning. Another important aspect of games is their stimulation of creativity, which is a central element in successful entrepreneurship (Gardner, 2001).

The empirical studies cited above provide support to the argument that traditional teaching methods need to be supplemented with games to boost student learning. The research questions that I eventually aim to address in the larger project are the following: 1) How do students perceive games as a way to learn entrepreneurial concepts? and 2) To what extent do games help combat resistance in entrepreneurship learning? To explain how I will go about answering these research questions, I will now discuss the version of an Emprendo Game (Montañez Orengo, unpublished) that I have developed as an alternative method for teaching students of business and entrepreneurship at Inter American University of Puerto Rico at San Germán. I will share testimonial experience about student-learning outcomes that have been observed to date through the use of the game in trial runs in university business courses in the General Education program and in outreach programs moderated by the researcher.

The Emprendo Game is a board game with a pop-up system with 16 pegs. The game has four teams with four pegs for each team, dice, and question cards. These question cards present questions to the players at three different levels of difficulty, from closed questions that have multiple choice answers, to open questions that require discussion at the highest level. The general rules of the Emprendo Game adapted to entrepreneurship are as follows: each player starts moving by rolling the dice and getting a 1. In every subsequent move, the dice is rolled, a card is drawn and the peg is moved according to how the player answers a question related to entrepreneurship, marketing, or theoretical concepts of business management. If the answer is correct, the player moves forward. If the answer is wrong, the player moves backward. The player who wins is the one with their pegs in the finish zone.

This Emprendo Game was used in university and community outreach contexts in two pilot studies. First, the game was presented in a seminar for teachers of the Department of Education of Puerto Rico as part of their training to teach entrepreneurship in public

schools. The teachers played the Emprendo Game themselves, as part of the appraisal of their knowledge base related to entrepreneurship, marketing, and theoretical concepts of business management. The game created great enthusiasm among the participating teachers, as they realized how much playing can be a meaningful and relevant way to learn new concepts. Of the 20 participating teachers, all agreed that the game was an attractive teaching tool and that they would use the game in their classrooms to teach concepts about entrepreneurship, marketing, and business management. Many teachers saw promise in this game's adaptability to other subjects as well.

Dr. Caroline Ayala of the Inter American University of Puerto Rico, San Germán, used this Emprendo Game as a review tool in one week of her graduate-level entrepreneurship class. The professor's evaluation of the game was excellent, and was especially impressed by the ways in which it promoted team work and cooperative learning. Ayala indicated that students were so enthusiastic about how the game allowed them to share knowledge about their different business experiences that they insisted on playing the following week. Students also evaluated the game as being both entertaining and educational.

As part of a community outreach program, this Emprendo Game was also tested with two groups of unemployed adults who were learning to start their own businesses by participating in a business training program. One group of trainees was from rural areas of Puerto Rico and the other from an urban area. All of the participants evaluated the game positively and stressed that it helped them to learn about entrepreneurship in enjoyable ways, as well as to think critically about putting what they learned into practice in their future businesses. Two people from the groups went on to create their own businesses, and testified as to how the game had motivated them to be masters of their time and their lives, which is the objective of this Emprendo Game.

Games not only develop students' cognitive skills, but also their psychomotor and personal skills. Games can create positive commitments between learner and educator. Learning through the use of games is the result of something natural: play serves as a motivator for student learning, where the greatest rewards include fun itself and moving from success to success. Added to this are the social rewards and skills that students acquire through play, which include cooperation, controlled competition, teamwork, and learning how to lose. Video games have gained popularity in recent years, and this is one of the reasons why games are thought to be widely accepted by students. Johnson et al. (2011), predict that games will become one of the primary methods of teaching and learning in the classrooms of the future.

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CONSUMING ST. JOHN: THE FIGHT FOR A PUBLIC SCHOOL ON AMERICA'S PLAYGROUND

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Introduction

St. John is a jewel of the Caribbean. Some 20 square miles in size and sitting between the Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea, the US colonized island ranks among the top destinations to visit in the region (Ascher-Walsh, 2019). The island's lush woodlands, exotic wildlife, precious coral reefs, and ancient petroglyphs have made it an emblem of ecological tourism. Covering more than two-thirds of its terrestrial and submerged lands, the Virgin Islands National Park (VINP) has helped to further crystallize St. John as a "perpetual Garden of Eden" for those who visit (Fog Olwig, 1985: 162-163; Sheller, 2003: 13; Winks, 1997: 64). Tourists in search of remote, tropical relaxation find St. John an ideal location due to the charm of its natural beauty and small population of approximately 4,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Since the early 1950s, travelers from all parts of the continental US and various countries around the world have found respite in this lush conservancy (Fog Olwig, 1985: 160-162; Winks, 1997: 63). Though it is the smallest and least populated of the three major US Virgin Islands, St. John touts the highest income per capita, highest median household income and highest median home sale prices in the territory (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). An enclave for the rich and famous, homes on the island average well above \$1 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014; Bell, 2016).

Despite the preponderance of capital—both environmental and financial—on the island, residents of St. John have struggled to access quality public goods.¹ Over the years, local St. Johnians have fought to construct a K-12 public institution of learning. While

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¹ There is no hospital on St. John except for two clinics. One is located in mid-island and has been operating out of modular containers since Hurricane Irma devastated its original building in 2017. The other sits in the heart of downtown Cruz Bay. Both offer limited treatment capacities and regularly refer patients to St. Thomas by ambulance boat in case of serious emergency. Access to public safety personnel is often impeded because 911 calls generally redirect callers to the island of St. Croix. Getting law enforcement to someone's home in a timely fashion is nearly impossible and the lag in communication has resulted in the death of those in need of emergency assistance. Judi Shimel, "St. John Emergency Responder Dies After Nine Calls to 911 Go Unanswered," *St. Thomas Source*, September 2, 2018, <https://stthomassource.com/content/2018/09/02/st-john-emergency-responder-dies-after-nine-calls-to-911-go-unanswered/>.

one public elementary school now remains on the island, the only place for secondary learning on St. John is private (Tradewinds staff, 2014). For generations, rain or shine, youth on St. John have had to make a near 1-hour roundtrip commute by ferry for a public high school education. That a public high school has never existed on the island in spite of persistent efforts to establish one raises critical questions about the people of St. John and our relationships to systems of domination.²² How does a resource-rich island like St. John fail to accommodate a single public facility for secondary learning? I argue that this failure results from a confluence of wealth, race, imperialism, and the prioritization of environmental conservation (embedded in an extractive tourism industry) over human rights.

Drawing from scholarship that delineates the history of the National Park Service as a venture largely led by wealthy white men invested in capital, travel, and leisure, I put conservation in conversation with consumption to denote the processes of extraction entrenched in American environmental preservation practices. Meant to be “scenic wonderlands” and the “nation’s playground[s],” national parks, when mapped onto the geopolitical condition of modern-day colonialism in the Caribbean, fit neatly with processes of tourism that objectify people and commodify places. An “Eden” and “Wonderland,” St. John is America’s *ultimate* paradise. Because national parks were created to promote domestic travel among continental Americans, a “park island” like St. John leads to the exacerbation of extractive tourism as well as the entangling of conservation objectives with consumptive practices (Purdy, 2012: 199-203; Taylor, 2016: 330; Tyrrell, 2015: 165-166).

The Caribbean as a region is marked by a history of European and American consumption of products, people, and property. When entwined with the history of disenfranchisement, restricted citizenship, and land dispossession that characterizes the US Virgin Islands, the theory of travel that helps promote the National Park brand creates a predicament wherein people and place become products in economies based on legacies of domination. Prior to the 20th century, consuming the Caribbean meant literally eating and digesting exotic products made on tropical plantations (Mintz, 1986; Sheller, 2003). However, through the continuities of colonial domination into the 21st century in the form of territoriality and neocolonialism, consumption has come to signify experiencing the Caribbean in “pre-packaged, easily digestible form” (Sheller, 2003: 68). Tourism, which enables the physical movement of bodies, makes this development possible. Following Mimi Sheller’s framework of consumption in the Caribbean, my work introduces the concept of *consumptive conservation* to describe the project of environmental

²² Here, I use “our” to situate myself as an Afro-Caribbean woman and US Virgin Islander who grew up on St. John. As a graduate of the sole private secondary facility on the island, I am acutely aware of the disparities between my educational experience and that of other local schoolchildren. This work, then, is an auto-ethnographic interrogation of the structures of wealth, philanthropy, and tokenization that have not only made my access to quality education different from that of my public-school-attending peers but also reinforced St. John’s positionality as a contested, colonized space.

conservation, enacted by US national parks, that preserves land for the tourist's gaze while simultaneously obscuring the lived realities of local residents who surround conservation sites. A tourism economy propped up by the US National Park Service's call to gaze and dwell in the "nation's playgrounds" enables visitors to move through St. John and take away images and experiences without ever having to contend with the needs of the locals who inhabit the space.

Opportunities for work and play

In 1952, while cruising the Caribbean with his wife Mary, Laurance Rockefeller made a day trip to a rural, sleepy island just east of St. Thomas where he had been staying. The grandson of John D. Rockefeller, America's first billionaire and founder of Standard Oil, Laurance Rockefeller had cultivated an interest in commercial development. However, like his father, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Laurance Rockefeller was also invested in environmental conservation. Having helped to establish Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming, Rockefeller meant to endeavor his own independent environmental project. At the time of his visit, St. John had been virtually without electric power, fresh water, or even paved roads. Charmed by the little island's quaintness and seemingly unremarkable Afro-Caribbean population, Rockefeller saw an opportunity to embark upon a resort venture that would merge his family's competing interests of philanthropy and mega-business. In St. John, Rockefeller could create a vacation experience that would be "a modern alliance between commerce and conservation" (Winks, 1997: 63). With the help of his colleagues and business partners from the mainland, as well as a few local politicians from throughout the territory, Rockefeller purchased the Caneel Bay Plantation property (an old sugarcane plantation of 550 acres that would later become known as Rockefeller Resort and gain tremendous popularity) along with twelve beachfront lots and several cottages (Promotional Outline Caneel Bay Plantation, c.1955-56). Yet, his efforts did not stop there. In order to secure the amount of acreage that would make the eco-park-resort a success, Rockefeller donated \$1.75 million to his nonprofit organization, Jackson Hole Reserve Inc., through which he was able to buy the more than 5,000 acres of land he would eventually deed to the US National Park Service (Boyer, 2010: 250-252; Fog Olwig, 1985: 163; Winks, 1997: 63).³³

By 1956, the Virgin Islands National Park was established. Since its creation, the park has been a valued treasure to the United States Department of the Interior and Bureau of the National Park Service for its "scenic quality, plant life, and setting...in the protected channels of the Virgin Islands." It continues to be "totally different from anything set apart in the United States or its territories for national park purposes."⁴⁴Over the

³ U.S. Congress. (1956, April 9). Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs. *An Act to Authorize the Establishment of the Virgin Islands National Park*. HR 5299.

⁴ See National Park Service Director (c. 1954-1956). Memorandum from Director of NPS to Secretary of Interior, Subject "Proposed Virgin Islands National Park", undated., circa 1954-1956, RG 112E, Box 94, Folder 803 Office of Messrs. Rockefellers Records, Rockefeller Archive Center.

years, the VINP relentlessly pursued land that fell within the boundaries of the National Park but had not been originally sold during its establishment. In no time, most of the surrounding property owners eventually sold their share and allowed the park to incorporate more land into its jurisdiction. By 1962, the VINP had acquired 5,650 acres of undersea land, bringing its total boundaries to nearly 75% of St. John (National Geographic Society, 2016).

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, the US Virgin Islands had begun to attract outside investors and businesses drawn to the incentives provided under the Virgin Islands Tax Incentive Act that granted ten-year, non-taxable subsidies. The economic boom stimulated by the establishment of Hess Oil Virgin Islands Company (HOVIC) and Harvey Alumina led to an influx of eastern Caribbean islanders and US mainlanders to the territory (Samuel, 2013). The massive wave of immigration to the territory caused an increase in the overall population and brought with it the attendant need for expanded public goods. Chief among them was the provision of quality public education. The pressure to create an education experience that would adequately meet the needs of all students quickly rose for members of the Virgin Islands (VI) community. It became increasingly difficult to provide quality education to the immigrant students that now swarmed the small and limited VI public school system (Boyer, 2010).⁵⁵ On St. John, parents, students, and community activists began to envision a more complete educational experience offered on their island beyond elementary learning. These stakeholders along with Virgin Islands government officials began to petition administrators of the Virgin Islands National Park and legislators of US Congress for a parcel of Park land upon which they could construct a comprehensive public educational complex. Aware of the scarcity of affordable land on St. John, local advocates looked to the VINP to help facilitate the attainment of a complete and quality public school education for children of the island of St. John. By the 1990s and early 2000s, local politicians had held several hearings and proposed legislation that would allow the VI government to swap and/or lease land with the Virgin Islands National Park for the construction of a K-12 school.⁶⁶

Not good enough to be a public good

In 2007, the US House of Representatives passed H.R. 53 -Virgin Islands National Park School Lease Act, which finally authorized the Secretary of the Department of the Interior to enter into a long-term land lease with the Virgin Islands government. This lease would last 99 years and allow the National Park to allot 10 acres of VINP land for the

⁵ Janet Burton, interview by author, October 9, 2019; James Provost, interview by author, December 13 2019.

⁶ Donna Christensen, interview by author, Zoom, November 13, 2019; Brian, Modeste, interview by author, phone, December 19, 2019.

educational complex.⁷⁷ Over a decade later, there is still no public high school on the island. While local residents of St. John overwhelmingly supported the prospect of leasing National Park land, administrators and supporters of the National Park adopted a less enthusiastic position on the 2007 House resolution. When interviewed by the *St. Croix Source*, the local newspaper based on the sister island of St. Croix, Friends of the Park then-President, Joe Kessler, conveyed that such a lease set a dangerous precedent. Rather than simply accepting the terms of the lease, Kessler advocated for an equitable swap of land if “land could not be found outside the park boundaries for the school.” While not explicitly concerned with the need for a secondary public school, Kessler did believe that the existing K-8 Julius E. Sprauve School should be moved from the congested downtown area. Even then, however, he still questioned whether the school should relocate to the area belonging to the National Park.⁸⁸

Then-superintendent of the National Park, Mark Hardgrove, responded just as skeptically to H.R. 53 by putting into question the Park’s authority to even lease land. Despite his skepticism, Hardgrove confirmed that he would “do whatever Congress says to do.” And although he, too, rejected the notion of using Park land for the school complex, Hardgrove expressed interest in having the National Park develop more “programs that targeted school children” as a substitute.⁹⁹ What those programs were meant to be and exactly how they were meant to serve as an alternative to an entire educational complex has yet to be made known.

By the spring 2008, H.R. 53 died in the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. Testimony from a variety of conservation stakeholders helped to dissuade committee members from voting in favor of the school. Most notable among them is a written statement by former Deputy Director of the National Park Service Daniel Wenk. Citing the provisions and stipulations of the Land and Water Conservation Act as well as the National Historic Preservation Act, Wenk argued that while public education is not in conflict with the purpose of Virgin Islands National Park, “the construction of a complex of buildings is in conflict with the direction given by the park’s authorizing legislation, which states that the park ‘shall be administered and preserved by the Secretary of the Interior in its natural state’.” To Wenk and his colleagues the “natural state” most suitable for conservation did not include a public educational facility that would serve a majority Afro-Caribbean population because such a project “would not insure that the historic character of the land in question is preserved.” (H.R. 53, 2008). Given the fact that many other US National Parks exist in locations that similarly lack reason-

⁷ US Congress, House, Committee on Natural Resources, *Virgin Islands National Park School Lease Act (to Accompany H.R. 53)* 110th Congress, 1st sess., 2007 H. Rep. 110-399, 1-3, <https://www.congress.gov/110/crpt/hrpt399/CRPT-110hrpt399.pdf>.

⁸ See Source Staff (2007) US House moves bill to lease National Park Land for school, in the *St. Croix Source*.

⁹ Ibid.

ably-priced surrounding land, Wenk foresaw H.R. 53 as having the potential to embolden other communities to demand public goods be fashioned out of National Park property. For Wenk, this kind of proposal would “set a dangerous precedent for other units of the National Park Service system” (H.R. 53, 2008).

That Kessler, Hardgrove and Wenk were among some of the National Park Service administrators who found the parceling of Park land for a school dangerous is not only telling of the imposition of conservationist priorities that do not reflect the desires of local populations, but also of the limited capacity for self-determination Virgin Islands people experience. In its current state, the Virgin Islands National Park’s hawkish regulation of land precludes educational development and intellectual investment on the island of St. John. The National Park Service’s inability to facilitate a successful release of land to the Virgin Islands government for the purpose of predominantly Black local children’s education points to the National Park Service’s relationship to broader histories of American capitalism and colonialism.¹⁰¹⁰

An unincorporated territory of the United States, the US Virgin Islands is a colony that has “not yet attained a full measure of self-government” (Non-self-governing territories, 2020). Accordingly, people of the Virgin Islands do not vote in national elections and are allotted only one non-voting delegate to Congress. Deemed “foreign in a domestic sense,” territories such as the US Virgin Islands lack the benefit of full inclusion under the US flag while still having to bear the burden of adopting US regulations and policies even when those policies do not profit them.¹¹¹¹ Within this problematic political context, local efforts to lease Park land for an educational public good clash with a federally-directed conservation mission. More than that, the proposed K-12 school for St. John threatens the imperial-capitalist project of cultural and aesthetic consumption upon which National Park legitimizes its very existence. Certainly, the Park’s symbiotic relationship with a vibrant tourism industry necessarily competes with the demands of a growing local base.

Patterns of domination

For the US Virgin Islands, patterns of leisure, extraction, and exotification in the Caribbean are entangled with the territory’s portrayal as “America’s Paradise.” Not only does this label help obstruct local processes of political self-determination and educational sovereignty by reducing the land and its people to mere objects for of play and relaxation, it also illuminates the islands’ contentious political status as an unincorporated territory (colony) of the US. In their work, *Foreign in a domestic sense*, Christina Duffy Burnett and Burke Marshall (2001) provide a nuanced examination of the United

¹⁰ Wenk’s testimony is found in H.R. 53 (2008). A bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to enter into a long-term lease with the Government of the United States Virgin Islands, and for other purposes.

¹¹ Duffy Burnett and Marshall (2001:12-17), *Foreign in a Domestic Sense*, (Durham: Duke University Press). Also see the 2017 Hurricane season FEMA after-action-report (FEMA, 2018) for examples of some of the inequalities imbedded in US policies that pertain to US territories.

States' theory of territorial expansion as well as the political concept of "foreign in a domestic sense," which helped to justify the relegation of US colonial possessions to the margins of the American political system. Duffy Burnett and Marshall argue that the legal definition of "territorial status" intrinsically renders the subjects of places so designated inferior in the eyes of the law (2001: 12-17).

According to the "extension theory," it is ultimately left to the discretion of Congress to determine whether or not to "extend" the constitution to the territories as places not *part of* but rather *belonging to* the US. Thus, only Congress can decide the future political status of islands such as St. John, particularly whether they should ever achieve statehood or independence (Burnett & Marshall, 2001: 8-9). Indeed, the political liminality of islands like Puerto Rico, Guam, and the US Virgin Islands comes as a result of the "doctrine of incorporation" asserted through the 1901 *Insular Cases* (ibid.: 10-13).¹² Although Guam and Puerto Rico were acquired together at the end of 1898 Spanish-American War, the judicial proceedings from the case of *Downes v. Bidwell* which clarified their identities as "possessions" of the United States rather than *members* of the United States, applied in the same way to the US Virgin Islands when they were acquired in 1917 (ibid.: 12-17).¹³ This distinction has had profound implications for the degree to which Virgin Islanders experience American citizenship. Furthering this point, Daniel Immerwahr delineates how popular US perceptions of US holdings matter for how these holdings might be politically regarded (2019: 22). Thus, agencies like the National Park Service that fall under the Department of the Interior operationalize the politics of neglect and marginalization that has defined US law towards its territories. Because of their geographic distance, the invisibility and obfuscation of their positionality becomes necessary for their administration by the federal government. Being Caribbean people with American status means that there are limitations to the degree to which Virgin Islanders can claim full political autonomy. In the territory, then, educational pursuits are sandwiched between the political condition of Americanness and cultural context of Caribbeanness.

An unincorporated territory of the United States, the islands' predominantly Black population situates within a historicity of colonial encounters first shaped by the Danish and then, since 1917, by the Americans. The continuation of the Virgin Islands' colonial predicament under US empire has meant that educational equity is both a project of

¹² The doctrine of incorporation created a distinction between incorporated and unincorporated territories of the US to ultimately assert that the US Constitution does not follow the flag and does not inherently extend to unincorporated territories.

¹³ In Puerto Rico, the controversial Foraker Act of 1900, which imposed a duty on goods shipped from Puerto Rico to the mainland US, spiraled into an existential deliberation about both the fate and nature of island territories in the greater scheme of US Empire. Decidedly, Puerto Rico was not a foreign country and, thus, should not be subject to foreign duties. However, the courts also found that it was, indeed, foreign to the United States but in a "domestic sense" thus requiring that it be treated specially and taxed uniquely. This ruling laid the framework for the theory through which governance in other US territories would be interpreted.

self-determination *and* decolonization. Virgin Islanders' inability to secure a comprehensive public educational facility on St. John results from a compound colonization of physical and mental space(s). The settlement and hoarding of land on the island function as structural modes of control. Practices of landholding severely limit the degree to which local island people can physically exercise ownership of their (learning) environment and develop radical decolonial imaginaries through a robust education. While the VINP is by no means solely responsible for the lack of a public high school on St. John, local Black Virgin Islanders consistently frame it as the most significant barrier to developing public educational infrastructure.¹⁴¹⁴ Due to limitations in the island's size and offerings of affordable non-Park land, Virgin Islanders' understanding of who or what is culpable for the island's public education deficit necessitates a critical engagement with local contestations over land, power, and their relationships to the longing for improved educational options on the island.

National parks and island paradises are premised on the commodification of scenery and landscape. And while environmental conservationists believe US National Parks to be the solution to a non-extractive relationship to the vast American land mass, when situated within colonial geographies, these parks themselves induce extractive behaviors from the tourists for which they exist. In turn, national parks like the Virgin Islands National Park consume the possibilities of viable human futures. Embedded within the US National Park Service's mission is the assumption that leisure and travel are the desirable and achievable pursuits of *all* Americans. Excluded from such a mission is the realization that many Americans living in close proximity to national parks have inequitable relationships to power and place—that they are subjected to park realities that limit their input and visions for a future that represents their public interests and needs.

Qualifying appropriate use of space

In his article, *The trouble with wilderness; or, getting back to the wrong nature*, environmental historian William Cronon (1996) delineates the historical and categorical trouble of the concept “wilderness.” He highlights the ways in which “wilderness” paradoxically makes sacred *and* public both nature and human being's exploration and experience of it. Identifying the ways in which Frederick Jackson Turner's “Frontier Thesis” preempts the closing of the American frontier, Cronon points us to a fatalistic quality of the natural environment. Anxieties about the end of the frontier dating all the

¹⁴ Alvis Christian, interviewed by author, February 5, 2020; David Knight, Jr., interview by author, February 12, 2020; Janet Burton, interview by author, October 9, 2019; James Provost, interview by author, December 13, 2019; Leona Smith, interviewed by author, November 12, 2019; Lorelei Monsanto, interviewed by author, September 16, 2019; Theodora Moorehead, interviewed by author, September 18, 2019. These observations are based on composite knowledge gathered through oral history work conducted on St. John between September 2019 and April 2020 as well as the ethnographic work carried out in my undergraduate honors thesis. See Samuel (2013) “*Unalterably opposed*”: *constituting decolonization the U.S. Virgin Islands* for more information as well as selected interviews in the References section.

way back to the late 19th century set the foundation for the establishment of the National Park Service by the beginning of the 20th century, in 1916 to be exact (Cronon, 1996; Purdy, 2012; Taylor, 2016; Tyrrell, 2015). When juxtaposed with the United States' acquisition of the Danish West Indies, now US Virgin Islands, a year later in 1917, a perverse relationship between conservation and conquest becomes particularly apparent.¹⁵

The American frontier myth has had profound implications for the lands belonging to Native Americans of continental North America as well as for inhabitants of the Caribbean and Pacific Islands. A guide for how to encounter and engage the unknown, the American frontier myth set the parameters by which constructions of individualism could be pursued and attained. Imagining unspoiled land as inherently and perpetually in danger creates a dynamic wherein exploitation and safeguarding become indistinguishable activities. In fact, there is an insidious way in which consumption—the very thing which environmental conservation seems to protect against—becomes a sort of obvious mechanism for maintaining the serenity and sacredness of wilderness, as the more one is able to enjoy the natural environment—stolen and all—the closer one arrives at a spiritual awakening.

Yet, if wilderness is where conquest meets consecration, how can we understand the *nature* of the island of St. John when two-thirds of it is administered by the National Park Service? In particular reference to the category of education, what is to be made of the unmet petitions for spaces of intellectual development? The representations of spaces—natural spaces included—determine who participates in environmentally-related activities and who does not (Finney, 2014; Taylor, 2016). This determination of participation has implications for the definition of “participation” in environmental concerns, what are constituted “concerns”, and thus, whose voice and associated needs are heard or unheard, met, or unmet. Narratives about the “natural environment” inform our environmental interactions and shape the institutions concerned with environmental issues. The narrative of conservation, as expressed through the school dilemma involving the Virgin Islands National Park, not only shapes the way the natural environment is represented, constructed, and perceived in the everyday lives of St. Johnians, but also informs and is informed by constructions of national identity and race that pertain to them. Carolyn Finney (2014) argues that missing from American environmental narratives is an African American perspective grounded in the legacy of African American experiences in the United States. I take her argument even further by complicating this omission with the political conditions of territoriality and colonialism.

The United States Virgin Islands are a peculiar set. Their liminal positionality, which renders US imperialism simultaneously alive and incomplete, makes for a particular

¹⁵ Richard Grove in *Green imperialism* (2013) discusses the history of environmentalism as embedded in colonial expansion and encounters with the tropical islands of the Caribbean. Keeping this history in mind helps us in recognizing the ways in which US expansionism is linked to increased attention to preserving the environment.

sociopolitical conundrum. The United States' histories of imperialism and conservation when projected unto the US Virgin Islands make the territory an extraordinary site for and object of consumption. By extending Finney's category of "African American" to include those Black folks born outside of the continental United States but who hold a similar relationship to the metropole US as continental Blacks do, I liken Virgin Islands people's relationship to the environment and the ways in which the environment is meant to be utilized on their behalf as definitionally different than the way predominantly white, European Americans conceptualize their relationship to the environment. Indeed, White Americans' museumization of wilderness, premised on hyper-modern anxieties around scarcity and fatality, provide them with limited frameworks through which they can engage and understand the purpose of the natural landscape. Such an analysis rings true when one assesses the rhetoric surrounding land allocation for the building of the educational complex on St. John. According to Park officials like Keller, Hardgrove, and Wenk (H.R. 53, 2008), appropriateness, rather than feasibility, emerges as the primary reason for their aversion to the school proposal. Park officials' preference to swap requested land for already-shrinking Virgin Island government land holdings testifies to the dismissive response federal agents have had to local concerns about economic and cultural sustainability. Given the rate at which the island of St. John, in particular, has been experiencing population growth and urban congestion, swapping land registers is more than simply unfeasible; it is unjust. The question remains: *for whom* does the National Park wish to maintain appropriate use of space? The lackluster tone with which administrators of the Park alongside their fundraising group Friends of the Park responded to H.R. 53 perfectly illustrates where the Park's priorities lie. Largely led by white men, the National Park on St. John and its subsidiary groups have failed to represent the interest of local St. Johnians for over sixty years (Fog Olwig, 1985: 162-172; Moorehead & Fortwangler, 2019).

Given the US Virgin Islands' colonial status as well as the United States' unfinished project of Empire and territorial expansion in the Caribbean, the VINP's aversion to H.R. 53 cannot be simply read as benign environmentalist fear. Rather, local demands for a public good, such as the existence of a public high school on the island, highlight a particular struggle for educational sovereignty and political self-determination. The island's *third-class* (for the ways we are discriminated against because of our lying outside of the state rather than within it) colonial position enables Park paternalism on matters regarding the islands' environment. David Harvey tells us that "conceptions of space and time depend equally upon cultural, metaphorical and intellectual skills" revealing how the very conceptualization of the environment, its definition, and its purpose, is rooted in the identities of the people who engage it (1996: 211). He posits that diverse values instantiate in nature and that any search for an environmental ethic necessarily evokes community and cultural politics (Harvey, 1996: 173). In other words,

there is no divorcing our subjectivities from works of environmentalism and conservation. In fact, doing so only obscures the acute ways in which projects of environmental concern tend to work against the interests of those who lack political power (think environmental racism, toxic waste disposal, etc.). In fact, this heterogeneity in how humans appraise the environment is embedded in relations of power that contextualize distinctive discourses on the environment. The Virgin Islands National Park, then, reflects the priorities and subjectivities of individuals unfamiliar with the particularities of life on an island but also uninvested in the local interests of a predominantly Black local population, especially as those interests seem incommensurable with Park priorities. Eurocentric renditions of “honoring the environment” come to bear upon the actualization of alternative uses for the environment, even when and if those uses honor the people instead—a people consistently relegated to the margins of land space due to gentrification and Park occupation.

Fixing the imagination

Environmental conservation on the island of St. John cannot be divorced from the neo-liberal capitalist economy that privileges individualistic and consumptive practices. As a primetime luxury destination in the Caribbean, St. John serves as a bastion of tourist dreams and yet these dreams, by definition, do not and cannot include the lived needs of local residents. Despite the many ways in which the US Virgin Islands local government has aimed to invoke tourism as the territory’s principal, if not singular saving grace, the incommensurability between the natural environment (especially when devastated by tropical disaster) and the voyeuristic desires of strangers, render the space nothing less than conflicted. White encounters with the region predicated on notions of “otherness” require a re-orientation of the Caribbean as a crystallized gem meant to never change. The changing-ness of an island territory would otherwise defeat its island-ness—the thing that stands in the middle of an incessantly-modernizing and defective world. Here is where I wish for us to consider the implications of consumption more deeply. Tourism and consumption necessitate a fixed imaginary. In order for the consumer to be continually satisfied that which he attempts to consume must meet his expectations in the same ways each time. Visiting the islands means living out the imaginations that have informed the “unconscious” of the tourist’s mind. The landscape then becomes defined by s/he who mobilizes it or is mobile in it.

For the island of St. John, the conservation of the natural environment as well as its contingent representation as a landscape of leisure, provides for a context wherein tourists from the mainland and elsewhere can expect to engage in otherness at a constant rate. As the Virgin Islands National Park attracts millions of visitors on an annual basis to the island of St. John, the eco-capitalist vision originally enabled by Laurance Rockefeller has become more and more real. Sheller (2003) argues that tourists consume local bodies by the very act of touring. I interject that they can do much more than that.

Supported by the imperial-capitalist economic regime, tourists and the institutions that support them consume spaces as much as they consume people.

In particular, the project of consumption on the island of St. John includes the devouring of physical land as well as mental land. Indeed, the National Park's minding of land, its safeguarding and hoarding of it, restricts the degree to which spaces of liberation can exist. This includes the physical structure of a school—a place of knowledge production and potential liberation. The very apparent colonial context of education throughout the United States, and especially within the territories, mean that schools represent the physical symbol of mind cultivation. Where a school is dilapidated or unkempt, either in a curricular sense or physically, the pupils meant to learn from within it are rendered too undeserving of investment. Thus, where a school ceases to exist altogether, the lack of investment in comprehensive learning is total.

Where education might mean the viability of Black life within a strictly American context, for the territory it carries the additional weight of geopolitical liberation. Virgin Islanders are characterized by their lack of representation in US federal government. In this regard, every project of education, whether public or private, situates within the greater project of empire and, thus, either resists colonial rule or acquiesces to it. Where educational opportunities are totally lacking, the situation becomes even more strained. In other words, if schools are the emblem of Black life and Black progress, then the very lack of a school testifies and contributes to a Black existence at risk. Social space is contested space, and, for local St. Johnians, the National Park functions to encroach on the social and political making of Black island people. The congested downtown location where the last remaining elementary public school can be found along with the utter lack of any public high school on the island illustrates the status of Black Caribbean island life.

Afro-pessimist and Afro-futurist scholars have discussed the importance of Black radical imagination and intellectual fugitivity. Delineating what they perceive as the impossibilities of Eurocentric regimes of domination, they call on Black people to create alternative modes of imagination and existence (Harney & Moten, 2013). While the stakes for accessing physical capital in order to ensure Black intellectual progress do not permit Black stakeholders to dismiss these regimes altogether, the notion of the escape still holds value. Constructing alternative means for learning and education are important processes to the project of Black liberation. Thus, educational spaces well-facilitated to engage Black minds and enable Black freedom and agency are potential sources for liberation and, thus, entwined with fugitivity as a project. However, the prospect for said liberation is all together negated wherever schooling for Black children does not exist. On the island of St. John, Black fugitivity is precluded by contestations over Black spaces and the resignification of historically and culturally Black spaces as sites of imperial domination.

In the shadows of US empire, the people of St. John confront barriers to self-construction and political realization. Agents of American empire in the form of both institutions and individuals continue to reinscribe meaning to the Black landscape in order to devoid it of its political and spiritual potential. An attendant weapon to this practice, consumptive conservation competes with Afro-Caribbean St. Johnians' rights to a free and quality education. Because education enables mobility, the project of a K-12 educational complex necessarily contradicts the aims of a "Park Island" experience on an island paradise reliant upon fixed bodies to service mobile, white tourist dreams. An invented landscape, the Caribbean has been dehumanized and over-naturalized to enable the processes of consumption that link touring to political and social subjugation.

Concluding thoughts

Despite the overwhelming occupation of land and resources by the Virgin Islands National Park, present-day St. Johnians have an inherited a disposition of resistance and activism. The site of the earliest recorded slave insurrection in the Caribbean—the St. John Rebellion of 1733—St. John's inflammatory roots run deep. Yet, tourist-driven developments coupled with a voracious conservationist project on the island has made it difficult for many ancestral St. Johnians to attain and live a quality of life that is representative of their collective needs and desires. St. Johnians' process for acquiring a school is a process of resistance because of the ways it objects to the denial of complete education to its young people. That it has been so difficult to gain political investment in a public institution of learning illustrates the immense value and importance of such an initiative in the first place. I argue that the struggle to establish a K-12 educational complex on the island is perhaps one of the most important processes of resistance on the island for the ways it centers the needs of one of the most vulnerable segments of St. John's population: young people.

The K-12 school initiative highlights the significance and implications of learning as a strategy for resistance. Indeed, the acquisition of knowledge equips one to contextualize the present with information from the past through the utilization of cognitive tools for critical engagement. When considered for its liberatory and decolonizing potential, public education (as in free and accessible education) represents an epicenter of Black resistance and political development. It is no wonder then that locally-based financial and conservationist stakeholders find it difficult to support the initiative. These entities are invested in keeping "paradise" a palatable "playground" to a primarily white tourist demographic in ways that overshadow any projects perceived to be in competition with those aims. This type of investment in tourism inevitably undermines locally-driven projects that aim to elevate the standard of living of a primarily Black ancestral St. Johnian population and is a manifestation of anti-resistance strategizing. Thus, wherever local St. Johnians continue the fight for comprehensive public education, they necessarily continue the fight for self-determination.

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ETHICS, VALUES, PLAGIARISM AND THE NEED FOR A MORE INTEGRAL AND BALANCED APPROACH TO EDUCATION IN PUERT RICO

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Curricula developed hundreds of years ago can no longer meet many of society's demands today. A century ago, while one of the major aims of education was to educate people in their ethical and civic traditions, this occurred through a rigid and 'fixed' course of study designed for the acquisition of dominant discourses and values, with the intent of creating an integrated society from the top down, rather than from the bottom up. Ostensibly, the primary objective of education was to "teach students how to use their ... education to live a good and ethical life, both as individuals and as members of society" (Schwartz, 2004: 15). Today, curriculum scholars find themselves debating what should be taught in the classroom and how it should be taught. The academic community has yet to decide which specific competencies students must develop in order to participate actively and meaningfully in the 21st century workforce.

In this article, I discuss the relevance of teaching specific values and skills such as critical thinking, creativity, academic integrity and ethics. More progressive contemporary educational theories differ from the more dominant theories in stressing that the last thing that we need to teach students is more content/information, and instead, we must equip our students with skills that allow them to formulate and articulate their arguments and values.

One serious side effect of increased access to information online which intersects with students' ethics and values is the rise of plagiarism. In this article, I also address problems of academic dishonesty in Puerto Rico and suggest different strategies and approaches for dealing with plagiarism, in such a way as to engage students and faculty in interdisciplinary debates and reflections concerning which specific skills must be included in a 21st century curriculum to help students cope in a rapidly changing world. Plagiarism is a familiar concept to the general public and to those studying and teaching in academia. Nevertheless, the data suggest that many students today largely lack a specific knowledge of what exactly constitutes plagiarism (Witherspoon, Maldonado & Lacey, 2010). After a review of the literature on current problems of academic dishonesty in Puerto Rico and elsewhere, it becomes apparent that, compared to research on

this issue in the United States, there are relatively few investigations regarding academic dishonesty in Puerto Rico (Pérez, 2008). My perusal of the literature also suggests that Miguel Roig's (1997) instrument, which he calls the Plagiarism Knowledge Survey, would be an ideal tool to be used for future studies on academic dishonesty in Puerto Rico. Even as such studies are carried out, I propose that courses be established immediately at the university level in Puerto Rico on teaching how to prevent plagiarism and other academic offenses, in order to solve growing problems of academic dishonesty on the island.

The specialized literature on curriculum development all too often remains relatively silent on topics such as educating students on ethics, honesty, integrity, and about how social inequality can influence or corrode values (Hodges, 2009). Some scholars complain that formal education does not do a satisfactory job in teaching students about how they might approach ethical issues in a critical way. Gardner (2008) asserts that "Education is inherently and inevitably an issue of human goals and human values" (13). As educators, we are often told that we should maintain an almost exclusive focus on training our students to satisfy the immediate needs of a rapidly changing economy, and that time should not be 'wasted' on subjects that focus on values, critical thinking, and creativity. One manifestation of this tendency is the ever-greater focus on, and investment in, STEM-related (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) disciplines at the expense of Humanities-related disciplines.

This might lead one to ask such questions as: What kind of a society are we creating if we are only teaching students how to master technical skills instead of creating spaces for them to also reflect on how they might put those skills to use in an ethically informed way for the long-term betterment of society, rather than just the short-term economic advantages that might accrue to the individual student once they graduate and enter the workforce? It could be argued that the rise in academic dishonesty reflects this increasing marginalization in formal education at all levels of subjects and experiences related to ethics, values, critical thinking and creativity. The increasingly myopic focus on technical education is not only detrimental to the moral development of individual students (as evidenced in growing rates of plagiarism) and corrosive to the equitable and socially just wellbeing of the communities where our students live, it is also counterproductive to the longer-term health of the economy itself, since critical thinking and creativity are the root of the originality and the capacity for discovery upon which technical innovation depends.

I therefore claim that our 21st century curricula must be re-evaluated if we aspire to have a creative, honest, and integral society. Jacobs (2010) observes that "curriculum should not only focus on the tools necessary to develop reasoned and logical construction of new knowledge in our various fields of study, but also should aggressively cultivate a culture that nurtures creativity in all of our learners" (17). According to Dewey (as quoted in Albrecht, 1986) "The object of education... lies not in communicating the

values of the past, but in creating new values of the future” (2). Our job as educators and curriculum specialists in the 21st century is to make sure that both the short-term and long-term needs of our students, our societies and the economy are all addressed in our classrooms. Unfortunately, the dominant discourses in education discourage such a balanced and integrated approach. Therefore, Callahan (2004: 1-27) contends that it should come as no surprise that instances of blatant academic dishonesty have been increasing in recent years.

Subtle plagiarism and other academic offenses are becoming common and ubiquitous issues in formal educational systems (Koss, 2011). One of the major factors that future investigations should consider is widespread misunderstanding of the definition of plagiarism itself (Witherspoon, Maldonado & Lacey, 2010). Such high levels of misunderstanding may be due to the fact that assessment in our often antiquated education systems is still based more on tests, where cheating in the form of copying is a more clear-cut issue, and less on writing, where cheating in the form of copying, i.e. plagiarism, is less clear-cut, and more nuanced and subtle, especially with the advent of the internet. Few students clearly understand or are able to distinguish different types of plagiarism (Pecorari, 2013). Paraphrasing, for example, is a difficult writing skill that many students have not really mastered. Roig (2018) investigated students’ understanding of academic dishonesty and the distinction between paraphrasing and plagiarism, and found that most students do not realize that, in order to paraphrase correctly, they must write in their own words without resorting to strategies such as merely substituting synonyms for keywords or altering the order of words from in original sources.

Compared to the United States, there are relatively few investigations that have been carried out on academic dishonesty and its influence on student achievement in Puerto Rico’s educational system. Noteworthy among the relatively few studies on this issue in Puerto Rico are Medina Díaz and Verdejo Carrión (2016) and Pérez (2008). Medina Díaz & Verdejo Carrión (2016) conducted a survey of 791 undergraduate students at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras. Using a translation and adaptation of McCabe and Butterfield’s (2012) Academic Integrity Survey, they found that the most common behaviors associated with academic dishonesty included: allowing other students to copy answers from a test (76% at least once, and 22% four times or more), writing down answers on a desk (76% at least once, and 22% four times or more), and copying information from another student on a test with the consent of the other student (Medina Díaz & Verdejo Carrión, 2016: 5). Some years earlier, Pérez (2008) found that, at the University of Puerto Rico in Mayagüez, 41% of students reported that academic dishonesty is a common behavior among students, 33% reported that it occurs on a regular basis, and 26% reported that it occurs very rarely (Pérez, 2008: 133). The most common behaviors associated with academic dishonesty in Perez’ study included cop-

ying answers on a test, submitting work produced by someone else as one's own, making up or devising data, and copy-pasting information directly from the internet (Pérez, 2008: 129).

In order to remedy the lack in plagiarism research in Puerto Rico, more studies must be carried out using methodologies other than the self-report surveys utilized in the past. The Cochrane Review (Marusic et al. 2016) found Miguel Roig's (1997) Plagiarism Knowledge Survey (PKS) to be an optimal instrument for effective empirical measurement of students' knowledge about plagiarism. Other advantages of the PKS include the fact that it was designed to minimize the social desirability bias (Edwards, 1957), which is one of the issues that has caused inconsistency in the results reported in the literature. In our attempts to do more research on academic dishonesty and plagiarism in Puerto Rico, the PKS might be an ideal methodological point of departure.

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**CARIBBEAN WITHOUT BORDERS 2020:
VOICES OF CHANGE AND RESISTANCE
IN CARIBBEAN MUSIC**

GUADELOUPE AND BLACK IDENTITIES IN “*NÈG LA*”

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Introduction: Music, politics and the uprising of 2009 in Guadeloupe

In this article, I will examine the 2009 hit song “*Nèg la*” performed in Afro-Caribbean French lexifier Creole by Guadeloupean artist Jocelyn Labyllle, with an eye to connecting current social activism with historic oppression. The song reflects the conflictual climate in the aftermath of the general Liyannaj Kont Pwofitasyon (LKP) strikes that took place in Guadeloupe from 20 January to 5 March of 2009 and echoes a sentiment of injustice inherited from centuries past. In her comments on the militant musical group Kan'nida with whom she sings the song, Labyllle puts aside social outrage to shed light upon the deeper problematics of identity in Guadeloupe. I will analyze the different aspects of this musical piece, including the lyrics, the instrumentation, and the tonality of the singer to reveal deeper social and political issues entrenched Guadeloupean society. In the song, Labyllle sings: “*An pa mandé koulè nwè la/ An pa mandé chivé gréné/.... Ah Nèg la ou ja pwan an djèl a malpalan*” [“I didn’t ask for the black skin, ... I didn’t ask for the nappy hair, ... Ah, nèg, you’ve been through so much because of the scornful togues”] (all translations in this article are by the present author) (Labyllle, 2009, “*Nèg la*”). In the Appendix at the end of this article can be found a transcription of the lyrics of the song in Guadeloupean Afro-Caribbean French lexifier Creole, alongside a translation of the lyrics into English.

In “*Nèg la*”, Labyllle re-appropriates pejorative terms that have been used for centuries to refer to stereotypical features assigned to African descended people by racist society, such as big lips, a dark complexion, and ‘nappy’ hair. In fact, Labyllle’s use of the term ‘*nèg*’ itself also constitutes a re-appropriation of a French lexifier Creole term has been used to assign blackness to people from the onset of the racialized system of chattel enslavement until today. Her unabashed reclaiming of *nèg* represents a celebration of blackness already engaged by Césaire during the *négritude* movement of the 1930s, and later on in the literary movements of *antillanité* and *créolité*. Labyllle’s use of the Guadeloupean Afro-Caribbean musical genre *gwo-ka* for the instrumentation in the song is a direct nod to the island’s deep rooted African heritage, while the ubiquity of Guadeloupean Afro-Caribbean French lexifier Creole in her lyrics emphasizes the emergence

of contestatory cultural, political and social identities on the island. All these powerful symbolic devices help Labyllé to denounce oppressive neo-colonial and postcolonial systems of domination and inequality and to reaffirm a legitimacy for the intricate tapestry of Guadeloupean blackness.

In 2009, a rise in gas taxes in particular, and a steep rise in the cost of living in the French Caribbean in general, triggered the largest uprising in the history of Guadeloupe. For 44 days, a massive general strike paralyzed the French overseas territory. Schools and universities closed, administration and commerce were suspended, public transportation was paralyzed, and motorists became pedestrians as gasoline distribution was interrupted. Even without gasoline, the fire kept spreading. More than sixty thousand protesters, that is, a considerable proportion of the total territorial population of 400,000, marched in the streets.

The voice of the people became louder, as they used every platform they had to attract people's attention to their demands. Since all cultural events were interrupted, protests became the venue for the merger of the cultural and political. Protests took on the character of both political marches and Carnival marches at the same time, with musicians playing the traditional Guadeloupean *gwo-ka* in the rear, while protesters in the front would chant politically-charged slogans. One song that was ubiquitous at that time and captured my attention was "*Nèg la*". Why? Its eloquent title spoke volumes, and the impactful lyrics matched the contestatory climate, expressing a history laden with problems of identity specific to the people of Guadeloupe.

"*Nèg la*" was performed in the same year of 2009 by Jocelyne Labyllé, a popular female Zouk singer. However, the lyrics were penned by Zagalo (aka Francky Geoffroy), a member of the militant band Kan'nida. One aspect of the power in the song lies in the fact that it was not written in 2009, but ten years before. The lyrics consequently were not a direct response to the LKP strikes, as commonly thought, but were originally written instead to uncover the deeper issues of identity in Guadeloupe. As of today, it constitutes one of the creative texts that best encapsulates Guadeloupe's social, political, and cultural dynamics. In any case, since the strikes in 2009, "*Nèg la*" has proven to be an artistic work that both accurately reflects and powerfully impacts island society. I contend that popular music genres such as *gwo-ka* can address the continuing violence of historically rooted oppression and help to shape new social realities more effectively than other genres such as political pamphlets, newsreels, or literature.

Questions of dispossession

Nèg la, the very title of the song is eloquent as it deals with a word which is so historically charged. In this perspective, the symbolism of the word helps understand the motive behind Labyllé's choice for such a striking title. Signifiers build landscapes made of visions, perceptions and conceptions. True or not, the resulting systems of knowledge

become part of popular consciousness. Thus, *nèg* has become weighted down with connotation. ‘*Nèg la*’ in Guadeloupean Creole is an expression often used to designate an African descended male, but can also be derogatory depending on the context. Originating in the colonial era, the word ‘*nègre*’ came to be when the symbolic elites (often masquerading as ‘scientists’) constructed the totally artificial category of ‘race’ around a [+white] vs. [-white] binary and assigned the term *nègre* in French to those that they raced as [-white] and thus inferior, especially people of African origin. In the case of Labyllé, *nèg* is more than an umbrella term for individuals raced as [-white] or Black. The *nèg* that Labyllé sings about can be found deep inside of each Guadeloupean whose ancestors were enslaved, and evokes a multiplex fabric of echoes and resonances that include not only derogatory connotations, but also elements of reminiscence of Africa despite the processes of slavery and neo-/post-colonization. In this way, it represents a common history, territory and conscience. Labyllé uses the pejorative connotation of the word to throw light upon the objectification and dehumanization processes that occurred during slavery. As she does, she engages and confronts this objectification. First, she depicts herself as part of the *nèg* dichotomy and lists of all the negative connotations that have been hurtful to black men and women. She starts with ‘*An pa mande koule nwe la*’ [“I didn’t ask for the black skin/ (color)”] (Labyllé, 2009, “*Nèg la*”).

Here, as she engages her skin tone, she echoes the color paradigm that complicates binary racialized identities that categorize the people of the Atlantic World into two mutually exclusive and conjunctively exhaustive sets: [+white] or White and [-white] or Black. Indeed, during slavery, Guadeloupe resembled a great pyramid hierarchized by the color of skin. At the top, the white European-descended planters, lower down the mulattos descended from mixed unions, and all the way down at the bottom, the mainly African-descended enslaved. Under these conditions, skin color became a social stratifier which was harmful to people with darker complexions. Besides, Labyllé also describes her hair as nappy, her mouth as thick, and her nose as flat and attests that these are features she is being judged upon even though she did not choose them. As she depicts her features, she presents herself as a painting, existing only to be judged by people according to racialized and colorized norms.

Labyllé’s references to her body echo the case of Sarah Baartman (aka Saartje), also known as the ‘Venus Hottentot’, whose body was exposed at the great exhibition of Paris in 1815 so that people could observe and judge her features, especially her large buttocks, according to the racializing and gender assigning colonial gaze. The purpose of the singer’s words in this case is doubly important as she has not only been raced as black ([-white]), but she has also been sexed and gendered as a woman ([-male]). Through this intersectionality of racial and gender assignment, Labyllé deliberately puts herself in the position of the object in order to expose and challenge the oppressive imagery. Feminist thinkers like Kimberley Crenshaw (2013) have unpacked the hegemonic images assigned to black women in the US that simultaneously and inextricably

perpetuate racist and sexist ideologies. These images are also pervasive in Guadeloupe and allow for the subordination and exclusion of the black subject, and even more so of the black female subject.

This subordination is dramatized by Labyllle in her choice of verbs: “*Yo pran mwen Yo chayé mwen Yo sime mwen*”; [“they took me, they brought me, they spread me”]. (Labyllle, 2009, “*Nèg la*”). The singular use of these action verbs emphasizes the symbolism of the black object not belonging to him or herself, but only existing for the purpose of others. The ubiquity of negative sentences in the song reinforces this double and intersectional objectification. “*An pa mande*” [“I didn’t ask”] (Labyllle, 2009, “*Nèg la*”) is repeated ten times in the song to re-iterate the inability of enslaved people of African descent, neither to have a choice nor a voice. Through the story of her dispossession, she repossesses her body, just as the protesters in 2009 reclaimed and repositioned themselves as historical agents.

Politics of violence

Even though the objectification that accompanied enslavement was designed to deprive the black subject of a voice, the resistive histories of peoples of African descent in the Caribbean and the rest of the Americas made it possible for the enslaved to find and express their voices, despite the pervasive and systematic violence inflicted on them. Violence in many ways served as the ignition for the fire through which black people refused their assigned status as objects. Within the depiction of her pain and anger, Labyllle allows the *nèg* to feel emotion, thus removing *nèg* from the realm of objects to the realm of the human. In this regard, Labyllle emphasizes certain words during her rendering of the song, one of which ‘*djel*’ ‘mouth’, had a big impact. *Djel* is also close to the French word *gueule*, which is associated with the mouth of non-human animals, as opposed to *bouche*, which refers to the human mouth. As Labyllle uses the word to refer to the mouths and discourses of those who oppress the *nèg*, she becomes the one who objectifies and dehumanizes the people judging the *nèg*, causing a powerful and important shift within the narrative of the song. As she blazes this trail, her grave tone betrays feelings of anger and exhaustion, recalling the repetitive nature of the violence perpetrated by the colonial gaze and the *djel* that articulates it.

Repetition is a consequent device and theme to be found throughout the song. Not only in its lyrics, but also in its musicality and performance. The numerous exchanges of call and response between Labyllle and her background singers in which the female vocalists repeat “*Neg la ou ja pwan*” [“Ah, nèg you’ve been through so much”] (Labyllle, 2009, “*Nèg la*”) not only deliver a sense of emotion through the female voice, but also install a rhythm, repeated so many times that it stays in memory, and becomes a chant known by heart, just as repeated violence left an imprint on black conscience. For the black enslaved people, violence became a daily routine. Therefore, to forget their hardships, many started to use the drum to ease their pain. This is the same drum Labyllle uses in

this song as she sings: “*Konnye, konnye, konnye-y pou malpalan*” [“Hit it, hit it, hit the drum for the scornful ones”] (Labyllé, 2009, “*Nèg la*”). The very act of playing the drum becomes symbolic. To get a sound, one literally must hit the drum, liberating a loud, harsh noise proper to *gwo-ka*. It is a violent act, comparable to the acts to which Guadeloupeans were subjected during slavery.

The hit of the drum is a translation of the pain of the enslaved and their descendants and what makes it so powerful up until today is how it constitutes an element of connection between the past and the present. Labyllé recalls traces some of this pain to the fact that she lost everything but the dream as she sings: “*Man ja jou pèd fanmi an mwen. Sèl biten ka rété mwen.*” [“I lost my family, the only thing I have left.”] (Labyllé, 2009, “*Nèg la*”).

The drum also embodies the ongoing development and expression of our identity through culture. On numerous occasions, *gwo-ka* has been affiliated with political contestation on the island. Initially brought from Africa to the colonies during slavery, the *gwo-ka* grew into a movement that characterizes Guadeloupe as an entity. Its main instrument, the ‘*ka*’ drum (‘quarter drum’, in English), describes the big (*gwo*) barrels used by slaves to communicate with each other once they ran away from the plantations. Today, it remains an essential link to African roots and ancestry on the island, just as does the Guadeloupean Afro-Caribbean French lexifier Creole present throughout the song. Another performative reflection of the slave era, Guadeloupean Creole primarily developed as an empowering mode of communication between the enslaved, who were taken from various regions of Africa. Not intelligible to the slave masters, it progressively embodied an idea of union among the Guadeloupean people through resistance and survival. Mostly oral, it has grown to become a written language recognized worldwide. Today, elements like the *gwo-ka* and Creole both participate in the common heritage that defines us as Guadeloupeans.

Identity and culture as products of translation and transition

Today, the wounds caused by the burns of colonization put us face to face with a new challenge: a quest for identity. As we attempt to reconstruct the broken, to be reborn from the ashes, we no longer are deprived of freedom in the same way as was the case under the system of chattel enslavement. However, for so many years since slavery was abolished and the choice of identity was ostensibly given to us, we have not been able to decide: Are we African? Are we French? This song and the LKP movement, has revived the debates over identity in Guadeloupe.

Césaire (1994) inspired the *négritude* movement in the 1930s as a form of “humanism positioning the black people in the global community of equals”, by focusing on the “specificity and unity of black people” as “derived from the transatlantic slave trade”. (281) In this sense, African heritage and the ethnicity of the ancestors was centered,

leading us to look to Africa as the motherland from which everything started. *Antil-lanité*, however, focuses on more liminal spaces of relation. From this perspective the French West Indies constitutes a flux of people in physical and discursive translation involving the displacement of Europeans, South Asians, and Africans that built the population of Guadeloupe and that Labyille mentions in the song as “*blanc Malaba neg*” (Labyille, 2009, “*Nèg la*”). The merging of these peoples and cultures has contributed to political inflection points such as the 1946 *départementalisation* of Guadeloupe which complicated the creation of a common understanding of what it means to be Guadeloupean and opened the door for self-questioning. Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant (1989) insist that the violence of colonization was interiorized by the colonized and this resulted in the many divisions among the people of the island. Therefore, the constant confrontation of contradictory yet cohabitant processes has resulted in the diverse character of the island.

The fact that since the colonial era, Guadeloupe has always existed in relation to another place (Africa by the people and France by the elites), has resulted in the creation of a middle space, problematizing the formation of a monolithic and ‘authentic’ cultural designation. This ongoing dance between the self and the other explains why many traditional elements like *gwo-ka* and Creole are still rejected by part of the population. While *gwo-ka* is often seen as ‘*mizik a vie neg*’, [‘music played by men of a bad reputation’], Guadeloupean Creole is still an element of conflict between generations. Parents often forbid their children to speak Creole inside the house, as it is somehow considered to be disrespectful.

I would like to mention my own case as an example of this confusion and the internal conflicts resulting from the ambiguous middle space that prevails in Guadeloupe. For instance, when I moved to Paris, the first thing I wanted to do was erase was my Guadeloupean accent, as if it were an element preventing me from being French. In this sense, the practice of my ‘Africanness’ could not occur without a negation of my ‘Frenchness’. However, as monolithic single entities, neither of these elements are valid. While I am French by nationality, I cannot ignore the geographical and historical specificities that allowed a space for the emergence of different traditions. As well, I am not African in the sense that, if I were to go to Africa, I wouldn’t speak the languages, and would not feel ‘at home’.

In her novel *Traversée de la mangrove*, Maryse Condé (1992) depicted our origins as a blurry mangrove. I argue that, in the colonization of Guadeloupe, the translations were so abrupt and the transformations so enormous that the roots merged and broke, and these broken pieces of wood have fed the fires of resistance. Rejection of assimilation as well as radical opposition to binary identities have enhanced the heated confusion of the flames. My questions remain: Do we have to know? Do we have to choose? Do we have to name? I look at Guadeloupe as its own cradle, in which history, politics and geography merged to give rise to a territory with a disparate population sharing a diverse

set of symbols of tradition, belonging and ‘being’.

Of course, the fires of resistance has not achieved all of their emancipatory goals, as Labyllé demonstrates in her song which bemoans the circle of racial and color-coded oppression that is still being repeated on the island. However, in comparison to other societies, that of Guadeloupe could be seen as ‘avant-garde’ in a real sense, in terms of its lack of illusions that anything approaching monolithic notions of language, culture and identity could ever exist. The deconstruction of the subject position performed by Labyllé lights up a path for the celebration of a diverse array of Creole identities originating from the rhizomatic merging and entangling of languages, cultures, migrations and displacements on the island. These identities are still in construction, and this uncertainty is what keeps the fire going.

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Appendix “Nèg la” performed by Jocelyne Labyllle and the musical group Kan’nida (2009, lyrics by Francky “Zagalo” Geoffroy; English translation by Coraline Kandassamy) (Labyllle, 2009, “Nèg la”).

Original lyrics of “Nèg la” in Guadeloupean Afro-Caribbean French lexifier Creole

An pa mandé koulè nwè-la
 An pa mandé dan blan an mwen
 An pa mandé chivé gréné
 An pa mandé né plat an mwen
 An pa mandé on djèl épé
 Tout sé moun-la dèy' do an mwen
 Komsidiré man s'on tablo manman

Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
 Ou ja pran, ou ja pran,
 ou ja pran onlo manman
 Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
 Nèg-la ou ja pran an djèl a malpalan
 Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
 Nèg-la ou ja pran an djèl a méprizan
 Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
 Nèg-la ja pran onlo an djèl a blan
 Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
 Nèg-la ou ja pran an djèl a malaba
 Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
 Nèg-la ou ja pran an djèl a nèg-la menm
 Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
 An pa mandé koulè nwè-la
 An pa mandé dan blan an mwen
 An pa mandé chivé gréné
 An pa mandé né plat an mwen
 An pa mandé on djèl épé
 Tout sé moun-la dèy' do an mwen
 Komsidiré man s'on tablo manman

Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
 Ou ja pran, ou ja pran,
 ou ja pran onlo manman
 Ay nèg-la ou ja pran

Translation of “Nèg la” from Guadeloupean Afro-Caribbean French lexifier Creole into English by the present author

I didn't ask for black skin
 I didn't ask for my white teeth
 I didn't ask for nappy hair
 I didn't ask for my flat nose
 I didn't ask for a thick mouth
 Everyone is on my back
 As if I was a painting oh mama

Ah, nèg you've been through so much
 Been through, been through,
 been through so much oh mama
 Ah nèg , you've been through so much
 So much because of the scornful tongues
 Ah nèg, you've been through so much
 So much because of the despising tongues
 Ah nèg, you've been through so much
 So much because of white mouths
 Ah nèg, you've been through so much
 So much because of MalabasX
 Ah nèg, you've been through so much
 So much because of black mouths themselves
 Ah nèg, you've been through so much
 I didn't ask for black skin
 I didn't ask for my white teeth
 I didn't ask for nappy hair
 I didn't ask for my flat nose
 I didn't ask for a thick mouth
 Everyone is on my back
 As if I was a painting mama

Ah nèg, you've been through so much
 Been through, been through,
 been through so much oh mama
 Ah nèg, you've been through so much

Nèg-la ou ja pran an djèl a malpalan
 Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
 Man di nèg-la ou ja pran
 an djèl a méprizan
 Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
 Nèg-la ja pran onlo an djèl a blan
 Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
 Man di nèg-la ou ja pran an djèl a ma-
 laba
 Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
 Nèg-la ou ja pran an djèl a nèg-la menm
 Ay nèg-la ou ja pran

Yo pran mwen si tè dafrik
 Yo chayé mwen an amérik
 Simé mwen an tout izin
 Man ja jou pèd fanmi an mwen
 Sèl biten ka rété mwen
 Oh tanbou-la an ka jouwé la manman

Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
 Ou ja pran, ou ja pran,
 ou ja pran onlo manman
 Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
 Nèg-la ou ja pran an djèl a malpalan
 Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
 Nèg-la ou ja pran an djèl a méprizan
 Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
 Nèg-la ja pran onlo an djèl a blan
 Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
 Nèg-la ou ja pran an djèl a malaba
 Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
 Nèg-la ou ja pran an djèl a nèg-la menm
 Ay nèg-la ou ja pran

Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
 Ou ja pran, ou ja pran,
 ou ja pran onlo manman
 Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
 Man di nèg-la ja pran
 nèg-la lésé atè

So much because of the scornful tongues
 Ah nèg, you've been through so much
 So much
 because of the despising tongues
 Ah nèg, you've been through so much
 So much because of white mouths
 Ah nèg, you've been through so much
 So much because of Malabas*
 Ah nèg, you've been through so much
 So much because of black mouths themselves
 Ah nèg, you've been through so much

They took me from the African land
 Brought me to America
 Spread me in all the factories
 I even lost my family
 The only thing I have left
 Is the big drum I am playing oh mama

Ah nèg, you've been through so much
 Been through, been through,
 been through so much oh mama
 Ah nèg, you've been through so much
 So much because of the scornful tongues
 Ah nèg, you've been through so much
 So much because of the despising tongues
 Ah nèg, you've been through so much
 So much because of white mouths
 Ah nèg, you've been through so much
 So much because of Malabas
 Ah nèg, you've been through so much
 So much because of black mouths themselves
 Ah nèg, you've been through so much

Ah nèg, you've been through so much
 Been through, been through,
 been through so much oh mama
 Ah nèg, you've been through so much
 I said nèg took so much,
 he left some on the floor,

Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
 Man di nèg-la ja pran
 nèg-la lésé atè
 Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
 Kongné kongné kongné ka-la ban mwen
 Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
 Kongné kongné kongné pou malpalan
 Ay nèg-la ou ja pran

Ah nèg, you've been through so much
 I said nèg took so much,
 he left some on the floor,
 Ah nèg, you've been through so much
 Hit it, hit it, hit the drum for me
 Ah nèg, you've been through so much
 Hit it, hit it, hit the drum for the scornful
 Ah nèg, you've been through so much

Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
 Man di nèg-la ja pran
 nèg-la lésé atè
 Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
 Man di nèg-la ja pran
 nèg-la lésé atè
 Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
 Kongné kongné kongné ka-la ban mwen
 Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
 Kongné kongné kongné ka-la ban mwen
 Ay nèg-la ou ja pran

Ah nèg, you've been through so much
 I said nèg took so much,
 he left some on the floor,
 Ah nèg, you've been through so much
 I said nèg took so much,
 he left some on the floor,
 Ah nèg, you've been through so much
 Hit it, hit it, hit the drum for me
 Ah nèg, you've been through so much
 Hit it, hit it, hit the drum for me
 Ah nèg, you've been through so much

Lè mwen té si ban lékòl
 Mwen té ka kouté Kan'nida
 Lè mwen tann mòso-lasa
 An pé di zòt i travay mwen
 Pas adan ti péyi-la
 Nou tout ka pran
 an djèl a malpalan

When I was in school
 I was listening to Kan'nida
 When I heard this track
 I can tell you it shook me
 Because in this small country
 We all go through so much
 because of the scornful ones

Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
 Ou ja pran, ou ja pran,
 ou ja pran onlo manman
 Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
 Man di nèg-la ja pran
 nèg-la lésé atè
 Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
 Man di nèg-la ou ja pran
 an djèl a malpalan
 Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
 Nèg-la ja pran onlo an djèl a blan
 Ay nèg-la ou ja pran

Ah nèg, you've been through so much
 Been through, been through,
 been through so much oh mama
 Ah nèg, you've been through so much
 I said nèg took so much,
 he left some on the floor,
 Ah nèg, you've been through so much
 So much
 because of the despising tongues
 Ah nèg, you've been through so much
 So much because of white mouths
 Ah nèg, you've been through so much

Man di nèg-la ja pran
nèg-la lésé atè
Ay nèg-la ou ja pran

I said nèg took so much,
he left some on the floor,
Ah nèg, you've been through so much

Si latè a Bondyé-la
On ti moman nou ka pasé
Fouté moun lapé tibwen
Kité yo viv ti vi a-yo
Pas adan ti péyi-la
Nèg-la ka pran
an djèl a malpalan

On God's earth
We only spend small amount of time
Leave people the fuck alone
Let them leave their lives
Because in this small country
Nèg goes through so much
under the mouths of the scornful ones

Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
Man di nèg-la ou ja pran
an djèl a nèg-la menm
Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
Man di nèg-la ou ja pran
an djèl a malpalan
Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
Kongné kongné kongné ka-la ban mwen
Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
Kongné kongné kongné ka-la ban mwen
Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
Man di Jocelyne Labille ja pran
an djèl a zòt

Ah nèg, you've been through so much
I said you took so much
because of black mouths themselves
Ah nèg, you've been through so much
I said you took so much
because of the scornful tongues
Ah nèg, you've been through so much
Hit it, hit it, hit the drum for me
Ah nèg, you've been through so much
Hit it, hit it, hit the drum for me
Ah nèg, you've been through so much
I said Jocelyne Labille has been through
so much because of the scornful tongues

Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
Man di Jocelyne Labille
ja pran lésé atè
Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
Kongné kongné kongné ka-la ban mwen
Ay nèg-la ou ja pran
Kongné kongné kongné pou malpalan
Ay nèg-la ou ja pran

Ah nèg, you've been through so much
I said Jocelyne Labille took so much,
she left some on the floor
Ah nèg, you've been through so much
Hit it, hit it, hit the drum for me
Ah nèg, you've been through so much
Hit it, hit it, hit the drum for the scornful ones
Ah nèg, you've been through so much

*Malabas = people of South Asian descent

REGGAE REVOLUTIONARY DISCOURSE: A LYRICAL ANALYSIS

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Introduction

In the 1970s, African identity—an undercurrent among the lowest classes of Jamaican society—found a loud voice in reggae singers, microphones and amplifiers: *sound-systems* were “blowing at full watts” (Bob Marley & The Wailers, 1979 “One drop”) ideas which had long been kept *sotto voce* (Brodber, 1987). Rastafari was then a local, marginalized and often persecuted Afro-centric movement, the latest in a long tradition of resistance and subversion. Its blending with the newly emerging reggae *beat*—another fully Jamaican creation—is recognized as a turning point both in reggae and in Rastafari scholarship (Barnett, 2012; Barrow & Dalton, 2001). In the 1970s, Rastafari-reggae artists introduced to their country and to the wider world the expression of an oppressed people, that western cultural imperialism had considered culturally and artistically inferior (Campbell, 2007: 134). But how did Rastafari artists structure ideas of resistance and revolution within this new genre?

Attention has been drawn to the relationship between reggae, Rastafari, social criticism and political discourse (see Waters, 1989; King, Bayes & Foster, 2002; Mordecai, 2014) often within the limits of Bob Marley’s work (Bamikole, 2016; Nangwaya & Onuora, 2018; Lindsay & Lindsay, 2003). However, in my opinion, lyrics have often been used to support and/or complement scholars’ arguments more than being the central focus of their attention. Whatever the case may be, the intrinsic merits of reggae’s revolutionary discourse still need to be fully explored in detail by means of a systematic lyrical analysis. Moreover, possibly because of its international dimension, reggae’s strong connection with Jamaican culture and oral tradition has often been overlooked and remains in need of further research, both musically and lyrically (Bilby, 1995; Cooper, 2004: 1).

I maintain that reggae’s revolutionary discourse or system of thought is both a reflection on its own times as well as the expression of a wider Afro-Jamaican tradition. Based on a systematic lyrical analysis, this article aims to explore some of the core elements of reggae’s revolutionary discourse. I will start by presenting a brief overview of Jamaican histories of resistance and “spiritual battle”; then I will clarify my meth-

odology, introducing the work of Gordon K. Lewis (1983) and explaining its relevance to my analysis, which will constitute the main focus of the article.

As mentioned above, lyrics represent only one element of the genre under study, for sound and performance are equally important, and have a strong subversive power: ideally, the study of the lyrics in the silence of the written page should be accompanied by a study of their performative and musical dimensions. Finally, it is important to note that reggae is defined as a particular *beat* (Chang & Chen, 1998) which can vehicle any kind of lyrical content. The corpus considered in this analysis is based on Jamaican artists who openly embraced the Rastafari movement during the 1970s: this particular corpus is often called *roots reggae* (Barrow & Dalton 2001: 143-223), and it is marked by a strong Rastafari consciousness (Campbell, 2007: 134).

Revival, Rastafari, resistance

Africa is the root and the heartbeat of reggae and the identification with Africa is at the core of the Rastafari movement (Bilby, 2010). Notwithstanding the heterogeneity and changes over time that have characterized their movement (Barnett, 2012), Rastafari have always claimed the African identity of Jamaicans and of the people of the Diaspora; their exile into ‘Babylon’—the western world; their desire to reunite with ‘Zion,’ that is, Africa, the land of the ancestors; and finally, the divinity of His Imperial Majesty, the Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, whose coronation in 1930 marks the beginning of the movement, which was named after the pre-coronation title and name of the Emperor, Ras Tafari. His Imperial Majesty is also referred to as ‘Jah’ the Rasta name for ‘God’ (Chevannes, 1994a).¹ Importantly, as Chevannes explains, Rastafari focus on Africa is:

kindred to a lineage of ideas and forms of action four hundred years old. They arose first in response to European slavery and then, following Emancipation, in response to the system of social, cultural, and economic oppression on which modern Jamaica was built. (1994a: 1)

As I shall state in the analysis of the lyrics, Rastafari’s battle against oppression continues the struggle of other great revolutionaries as: Nanny and Tacky the Maroons in the 18th century (Thompson, 2006); Sam Sharpe, leader of the slave rebellion of 1830-1; and Paul Bogle and William Gordon, protagonists of the Morant Bay Uprising in 1865 (Bryan, 2000). Significantly, in the 19th century, resistance had merged with the local Christian experience, entwining biblical narrative with African tradi-

¹ “Jah” is identified by Cassidy (2007: 237) as the form of “Jeova” used in the English Bible from 1539 to 1758, and already used to indicate the divinity by the Maroons of St. Thomas and Portland. However, it is also significant that a Nigerian ruler named JaJa King of Opobo, struck the Caribbean popular imagination by his resistance to British colonialism at the end of the XIX century, giving rise to popular songs, see Campbell, 2007: 90; Merritt, 2017: 285; and The Singers of The National Dance Theatre Company of Jamaica, 1979 “King JaJa”).

tions: Sharpe and Bogle were both part of the Native Baptist Church, embodying both the revolutionary and the spiritual leadership, a match to be seen elsewhere in the African experience in the Americas. Similarly, Alexander Bedward, during the Great Religious Revival of the 1860s, preached the beauty and power of blackness, a message so subversive that the preacher was confined to a mental asylum (Bryan, 2000), a fate later to be met by several Rastafari people (Hutton et al., 2015). In an English colony where the majority of the people were the “slave descendants of the African race” (Abyssinians, 1979 “African race”) any public affirmation of African pride was a direct challenge to the Eurocentric establishment (Campbell, 2007).

Still, the authorities could not prevent these leaders from becoming heroes and prophets of the popular imagination: when Marcus Garvey shook the African consciousness of the continent with a new powerful identity, preaching black pride and self-reliance, he became the Black Moses of the people, leading the children of Israel out of captivity (Chevannes, 1994a: 39). More than 50 years later, his speeches, charisma and biblical references were still vividly remembered by Jamaicans, much more than other historically praised political leaders (Brodber, 2013: 25).

Thus, given the significance of the spiritual element throughout the Jamaican experience of creation and resistance, Barry Chevannes (1994a) has used the word Revival to “describe not only the rituals generally associated with the Revival religion, but also the complex of beliefs and values that underlie it” (22). The Rastafari worldview was deeply informed by this Revival sensibility, blending the African identity, Biblical narrative and the spiritual and political leadership in yet another movement, which in the 1930s started to preach the divinity of the newly elected Emperor of Ethiopia, thus refusing the legitimacy of the British Queen as the rightful ruler of the Jamaican people.

The borrowings and cross influences between Rastafari and the Revival tradition are clearly visible in song lyrics: for example, “Let the power fall” (Max Romeo, 1971), an old Revival song, after becoming a Rasta chant, found a new life in the reggae beat (Chevannes, 1994b). The lyrics exclaim:

Oh, let the power fall on I, Far I
 Oh, let the power fall on I
 Oh, let the power from Zion fall on I
 Let the power fall on I
 [...]

 Oh, give I justice, peace and love, Far I
 Give I justice, peace and love
Tell I, how long will the wicked reign, Far I?
Give I justice, peace and love

(Max Romeo, 1971, “Let the power fall”)²

The “spiritual battle” and the African memory embedded in the Revival tradition was radicalized in the new Rastafari militancy that took over in the 1960s and 1970s with the emergence of ‘the Dreadlocks—an urban expression of the movement. Both in appearance, language and tones, the Dreadlocks were more aggressive and outspoken in addressing the evils of the establishment than their Rasta elders and Revival predecessors (Chevannes, 1994a: 208; Barnett, 2012: 19). Max Romeo’s album *Let the Power Fall* (1971) exemplifies this transition as it starts with a Revival oriented song (above) and ends with a cry for Black Power:

Black man, get up stand up,
Find your foot,
And give Black God the glory!

(Max Romeo, 1971, “Maccabee version”)

The message in the music was becoming more militant, in accordance with the general mobilization that characterized the 1970s all over the world: significantly, Erna Brodber (2012) would refer to this trend in the genre as a “Black Space” for an increasingly African-conscious generation.

Gordon K. Lewis and the ideology of slave rebellions

Thus, reggae connects with a wider Jamaican tradition of resistance—with slave revolutions, Revival, Marcus Garvey and Rastafari; this is part of “the history of Caribbean culture” which is “the history of forms created by the masses” (Lewis, 1983: 20). This is the history Gordon K. Lewis had in mind when, in a chapter of *Main currents in Caribbean thought* (1983), he attempted to describe the ideology of slave rebellions through an analysis of slave culture. According to him, antislavery ideology could be found not only in the parliamentary debates of the metropolis but first and foremost in the culture of those who rebelled. Moreover, if Abolitionist discourse—for many years the central focus of historians—had claimed all the merits for Emancipation, Lewis (1983: 172) was among those wiser scholars who affirmed that “it is to the report of the slave experience itself that we must go if we are to understand the antislavery ideology in its full sense.” I am here introducing the work of Gordon Lewis because his analysis of slave revolutions has been a framework for my analysis of reggae revolutionary discourse. Embedded in the culture of the slaves, Lewis found four identifiable revolutionary components, which formed “not only a praxis but also a theory of revolution”:

² The lyrics presented in this article are a mix of personal transcriptions, LP or CD booklets (when available) and transcriptions posted in jah-lyrics.com (and then further verified). All italics are added for emphasis. Further work still needs to be done as far as reggae’s transcriptions and lyrical anthologies are concerned. All the lyrics here quoted are copyrighted by their rightful owner(s) and this author in no way takes copyright or claims pertaining to the lyrics. This article is meant for academic purposes only and the author gains zero profit from its publication.

1. the blending of African cultural forms and revolutionary activity
2. black self-confidence
3. ethnonationalism
4. unity of the oppressed (1983: 225)

Even if, at times, Lewis' analysis seems to leave space for further historical inquiry, his 'theory of revolution' and his four ideological elements provided me with a useful starting point to explore reggae's revolutionary discourse, and I used them as starting points to organize my analysis. But, before reaching that argumentation, there is one last premise worth addressing.

The context of revolution in reggae lyrics

The first thing that Lewis carefully explains in his analysis of slave revolutions are the causes which provoked them, that is the physical and psycho-emotional brutality suffered by the enslaved. As Lewis stresses, this must be a necessary premise to any speculation on the slave experience. Suffering is a necessary condition which preceded and gave rise to any idea of social change, repatriation, African identity, etc. This is the basic context for slave revolutions. What about reggae lyrics? In what context does the word 'revolution' appear? In reggae lyrics, revolution is presented both in an explicit and in an implicit way: on the one hand there are several lyrics openly dedicated to the theme of revolution; on the other hand, there are many lyrics which do not address this theme in an explicit way, but are clearly revolutionary in character (e.g. The Wailers, 1973, "Get up stand up").

It is for this latter group of lyrics that Lewis's analysis will become very useful, but I shall begin by making comments on those lyrics where the word 'revolution' is explicitly mentioned. I consider the following as examples:

Do you know what it means to have a revolution?
And what it takes to make a solution?
Fighting against oppression
Battering down depression
(Dennis Brown, 1985, "Revolution")

Revelation reveal the truth a revolution
It takes a revolution to make a solution
Too much oppression too much confusion
(Bob Marley & The Wailers, 1974, "Revolution")

A hungry nation is a angry one,
And it is bound to cause a revolution.
Power struggle a bubble it a bubble
(Bunny Wailer, 1988, "Ready when you ready")

Cost of living reach the sky and no one knows why
It's just revolution time
(Black Uhuru, 1981 "Carbine")

See them coming with their temptation
They are here to tax and command the nation (don't wanna be in their
direction)
They say they trying to solve the situation
But if we only leads one way to our revolution (revolution)
You got the *raises and increases of the prices all around*
And the people are protesting against the situation thereof
People's mind going up and down
See them walking in the streets
Their minds just can't be at ease
(Israel Vibration, 1979 "Mr tax man")

As shown by the italicized parts of the texts, every time the word 'revolution' is mentioned it is immediately contextualized within a material condition of oppression (hunger, cost of living, taxes) and it is related to psychological pressure (confusion, their minds can't be at ease, no one knows why). In a corpus of several hundred lyrics from 1970s Rastafari artists, 24 use the word 'revolution': the majority of them (14 lyrics) openly link it with hard times, as in the examples above, while the remaining ones with an idea of spiritual fight or with the activities of freedom fighters. This conclusion is very much like the one arrived at by Lewis (1983: 223): the immediate context of revolution, both in reggae lyrics and in slave revolts, is suffering (or 'sufferation'). Indeed, reggae artists in the 1970s were rebelling against the slavery of their times: "Today you say that we are free/ only to be *chained in poverty*" (The Wailers, 1973, "Slave driver"); "I have seen poverty beyond compare/ and I know that *slave drivers* just don't care" (Peter Tosh, 1983, "Not gonna give it up"). This is what we can observe in songs that openly use the word 'revolution'. For the others, I will now move on to the detail of the four elements that Gordon K. Lewis (1983) identifies in slave revolutions, and will use them to detect some core features of reggae revolutionary discourse within a variety of different lyrical contents.

The blending of African cultural forms and revolutionary activity

Culture meant resistance to the oppressive and depersonalizing experience of slavery. The continuity and magnitude of revolutionary activity in Jamaica is proof of a vital and syncretic African-derived culture. As Lewis underlines, without culture, no revolution could have been possible. It is important to remember that constant importations of labor kept infusing new African traditions into the region and for much of

Caribbean colonial history African-born people were dominant in the population (Lovejoy & Trotman, 2002: 68). Slave families, provision grounds, town markets, dissenting churches, the symbolic and practical role of religion, all these elements almost constituted a submerged African-oriented political state, creating the institutional base without which no rebellion could ever have been organized (Lewis, 1983: 224). Connecting culture, power and revolution in his analysis of slave ideology, Gordon K. Lewis expresses a wider anti-colonial consciousness, which is also found in the work of other great authors (and revolutionaries) of the time, such as Walter Rodney (e.g. 2001, [1968]) and Amilcar Cabral (e.g. 1974).

Importantly, Rastafari culture is also inextricably connected with power and resistance, as it is claimed that the control of the white man over the black man is maintained through the former's control over culture and knowledge (Chevannes, 1994b):

You gave I King James Version
King James was a white man
You built I dangerous weapon
To kill I own black man
You sold the land God gave I
And taught I to be covetous
[...]
Bring back Macabee Version
That God gave to black man
Give back King James Version
Belongs to the white man
(Max Romeo, 1971, "Macabee version")

In reggae lyrics, culture is therefore associated with power because it represents something stolen by the oppressor, as well as something the oppressed need to regain to advance:

You take away me roots
You take away me culture
Fly down like a scavenger
Acting like a vulture
(Israel Vibration, 1998, "Pay the piper")

You stole my history
Destroyed my culture
Cut out my tongue
So I can't communicate
Then you mediate
And you separate
Hide my whole way of life

So my self I should hate
Brother what a price I've paid
(Jimmy Cliff, 1973, "The price of peace")

My culture is growing stronger
And I hope I never surrender
(Black Uhuru, 1981, "Leaving Zion")

Thus, the connection between culture, power, and resistance and the necessity to move away from dominating cultural models and to 'seek your culture' is a central element of reggae lyrics. It is therefore significant that African-derived cultural forms are to be found within the lyrics in a "fusion of African cultural forms and revolutionary activity" (Lewis, 1983: 225). Rastafari has a slogan that says "Word Sound Power": the word is a sound and it has the power to modify reality. Indeed, this perspective is quite different from the European written tradition,³ where the word is considered a symbol, an abstraction, a convention and – differently than an action – does not have power over reality (Ong, 2002). In Africa, on the other hand, as it is explained by the Ghanaian musicologist and composer J. H. Kwabena Nketia (1974), music is an event designed for action more than contemplation and for active more than passive responses; words are deeply embedded in this logic, as speech is an essential element in musical communication, especially in *tone languages*. This sensibility for the inner connection between words, music and action might of course have been preserved in Jamaican oral tradition (in the *kumina* for example), and I think it remains an identifiable element also in reggae's lyrics. Let us consider the following examples:

Mi ready when you ready fi go *chant down* Babylon, *dutty*⁴ system.
Mi ready when you ready fi go *lick down* Babylon, in a rhythm.
Mi ready when you ready fi go *tear down* Babylon.
Mi ready when you ready fi go *mash down* Babylon
(Bunny Wailer, 1988, "Ready when you ready")

We *chant down* Babylon, right now
Beat down wicked man, right now
Chant down wicked man, right now
Fight down wickedness

³ As with all generalizations, this view should be taken with caution: as Foley (2002) explains, under the umbrella term "oral traditions" we find a huge variety of different cultural phenomena. Moreover, the borders between 'scribal' and 'oral' are not neat but part of a continuum. However, what must also be kept in mind is that 'oral tradition' does not simply mean 'the absence of writing' but it implies a worldview, a logic, and a system of thought with its own logic and merits.

⁴ *Dutty* from Twi *dóte* means dirt or ground (Cassidy, 2007: 397). The transcription of the lyrics is another issue in need of further work which could not be properly addressed here; it involves the wider issue of the (long stigmatized) Jamaican language, which is often unjustly and inappropriately anglicized (see Devonish & Carpenter, 2007).

(Culture, 1997, “Chant down Babylon”)

Word that speaketh from I mouth
It bringeth *earthquake and thunder*
(Gladiators, 1978, “Fly away”)

In the lyrics quoted above, *word power* is a subversive action on reality: “Chant down” is associated with a sequel of verbs expressing *physical* actions (lick down, tear down, mash down, beat down, fight down), all of them perceived as having the same effect over reality. “Chant down” is thus not a metaphor: it is a weapon that the singer brandishes against oppression. Importantly, this idea of music as a weapon is confirmed by interviews in documentaries: “I man a revolutionary, who don’t know no help and fight single handed with music” (Bob Marley, cited in Hiles, Baldock & Taite, 1979); “Word sound and power ... that’s what we use amongst Babylon, we do not use sticks nor a stone nor a gun” (Peter Tosh, cited in Jobson, Egger & Campbell, 1993). Significantly “Music is the Weapon of the future” was a central idea in the poetic of Nigerian artist Fela Kuti (cited in the documentary by Courtois, Courtois, Flori & Tchalgadjieff, 1982). Within this logic, the words of reggae discourse are revolutionary not only because they convey a message but also because they act on reality; if words and music can stimulate activity, why can’t a definite line really be traced between sound and action?

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Black self-confidence

Gordon K. Lewis (1983) introduces black self-confidence as a psychological necessity in revolutionary activity. In order to gain strength and courage, the slave had to purge himself/herself from white bias, overcoming the psychological oppression of his/her position in society and feel equal or superior to his/her oppressors. The issue with this particular point in Lewis’ analysis is the appropriateness of the use of the word ‘black’ to define a self-perceived identity among enslaved people in the Americas; were slaves in the Caribbean perceiving themselves as ‘black people’? What is exactly the connection between black and Africa as identity markers and how did it develop? These questions, of course, are way beyond the limits of this article, but they emphasize the fact that words such as “black” and “Africa” are multi-vocal, as they started to mean different things to different people at different times, as Michael Banton (2001) has extensively explained in his analysis of “the idiom of race”. Africa, in particular, is quite a recent identity construction and the African agency in the transatlantic slave trade derives in no small part from the multiplicity of identities to be found along the West African coast (Eltis & Richardson, 2008: 2; Eltis, 2006). Behrendt, Latham and Northrup explain:

Wolof, Jola, Baga, Kru, Akan, Ijaw, Fang, Beti ... could be both slave and slave traders exactly because they did not perceive themselves as one people.

For example, the Efik traders in Old Calabar referred to their captives as “country slaves”. (2010: 103)

Therefore, a more complete analysis should take into consideration the formation and meaning of such basic discursive units, as ‘Africa’, ‘black(ness)’, ‘race’ etc. But if Lewis’s (1983) idea of “black” self-confidence as applied to the enslaved people in the Caribbean might require further historical exploration, it remains very appropriate in the analysis of reggae lyrics from the 1970s. If by “black self-confidence” we mean the contemporary idea of a pan-African identity, solidarity, and pride (and I will further clarify this idea in the next section) this is surely a crucial element in reggae discourse. Rastafari was born on the flagship of the Pan-African movement, Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association. The pride and celebration of being African/ of African descent is a core theme of reggae lyrics:

No care where you come from
As long as you are a Black man
You are an African
[...]
No matter your complexion
There is no rejection
You are an African
(Peter Tosh, 1977, “African”)

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We are the slave descendants of the *African race*
The African Race, the African Race,
We are the slave descendants of the African Race,
Where proud is and not disgrace
(Abyssinians, 1979, “African race”)⁵

Even more interesting is the fact that reggae artists also attempt to define what it means to be African and, in doing so, they create a lineage, a tradition within which their African identity could be retraced. This process is evident in the following example:

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, a one a we
Messiah Marcus Garvey, a one a we
Malcolm X as you know him, a one a we
Man like Paul Bogle the same one, a one a we
I and I keep fighting for our rights
(Culture, 1986, “One a we”)

⁵ Erna Brodber (1987) remembers these songs as a providing relief for her generation; African identity was not something one spoke about publicly, but it was always there, and when reggae artists proclaimed it from the loudness of the stage, their words had a cathartic effect on the youth of the time.

Biblical characters and historical figures are evoked to portray a tradition of resistance and “spiritual fight” (Chevannes, 1994b). Remembering this tradition becomes a central tool for self-confidence and identity construction, as Sarah Daynes (2010) demonstrated in her sociological analysis of reggae lyrics:

Reggae music claims a role of transmission—specifically, of a history that was broken by slavery and falsified by the slave masters, and of a memory both to be conserved and built—and *articulates the question of collective identity in relation to the construction of the African Diaspora*. (7, emphasis added)

Significantly, the construction of an ancestral genealogy—both with Biblical and historical figures—and its use as a guide and inspiration is to be found also in other musical genres, especially in West Africa: among the Òyó Yoruba, for example, the *oríkì* can be described as lineage poetry, evoking the deeds of the ancestors and becoming a meditation on the spiritual inheritance of an individual, as well as an inspiration for all the members of the lineage (Ture, 2005; Adéèkó, 2001). As Babalola explains:

We may ask what is it in lineage *oríkì* that inspires its addressee. It seems that thing is the history, the history of ancient times that fills the addressee with pride that *great blood flows in him; that he is related to accomplished heroes; a pride that makes the addressee himself feel very important*. (cited in Adéèkó, 2001: 182) emphasis added)

The listing of genealogies and the role of the ancestors as inspiring and guiding figures is quite explicit in several reggae lyrics and, notably, revolutionary leaders are very well represented:

What about the future
This generation
They should have a plan
This generation
A direction
What about your daughter daughters
What about your son sons
Lets follow some footstep
Paul Bogle footstep
Marcus Garvey footstep
Nanny footstep
We can make it if we try
Yes, we can clean it up
(Burning Spear, 1997, “Clean it up”)

If I had to fight for emancipation.
Then I shall resist for my liberation.
And with truth and right I shall win my liberty.

We shall unite to secure the victory.
 Cudjoe and Nanny, *their courage and their bravery*.
 Cuffy and Quashy,⁶ delivered their race from slavery.
 Marcus Garvey and His Imperial Majesty.
 Luther King and Marley, voices the oppression of humanity.
So mi ready when you ready fi go chant down Babylon, dutty system.
 (Bunny Wailer, 1988, "Ready when you ready")

Among the Yoruba, only slaves don't have an *oriki* (Vidal, 1969: 56), and the genealogical fracture operated by slavery has been a problematic memory in Africa, as well as in the Americas. Therefore, it is important to underline, and more research in this direction is needed, that in praising the deeds of Maroon leaders, reggae lyrics set the foundation for an alternative and empowering reading of this painful past, as well as constructing a new genealogy of ancestors to replace the ones that were lost in centuries of slavery and deportations. Thus, "black self-confidence" derives from knowledge and pride in this reshaped history, "the history of ancient times that fills the addressee with pride that *great blood flows in him*". It is the history of revolutionary heroes and, importantly, Bob Marley, a reggae artist, is among them.

Ethnonationalism (or African Nationalism)

In slave revolts, Lewis finds elements of "black national consciousness", an "ideology of national independence, founded and rooted in a sense of ethnonationalism" (1983: 226). I have the impression that some elements of Lewis' theory might prove less problematic for the analysis of reggae lyrics than for the analysis of slave revolutions. Even though the author is always precise in using his historical sources, addressing issues of identity within earlier Caribbean societies is a quite a complex matter. As mentioned above, what Lewis calls a "black national consciousness" is very much a contemporary notion that we find throughout the Pan-African movement (Appiah, 1992). Moreover, the "idiom of race" is a multi-vocal and constantly evolving mode of classification, which has escaped any attempt at a proper definition (Banton, 2013: 3) and in the 1970s, it had become the main focus of political discourse (Banton, 2001). Therefore, every time issues of 'race' are mentioned, it would be appropriate to provide a qualifying definition to the word, as in Alleyne (2002) "Race, then, is the socialized perception of phenotypical characteristics" (2). In Jamaica, the 'racial issue' has been extremely important, as a mulatto-white minority has struggled to control the masses. In 1865, after Paul Bogle's mobilization of the peasants and their brutal repression, the Jamaican Assembly gave up its legislative powers and remitted itself to the Crown in order to avoid what was becoming inevitable: the emergence of a 'black' ruling class (Campbell, 2007; Bryan, 2000).

⁶ Nanny, Cudjoe (Kojo) and Cuffee (Kofi) in Jamaica and Quashie in Dominica were all Maroon leaders (Thompson, 2006: 213, 282).

A century later, the newly independent Jamaican government made a deliberate effort to minimize the predominant African identity of the island, in order to cover with national unity the burning issues of a race-based class division: hence the national slogan (“out of many one people”) and the substitution of Emancipation Day with Independence Day celebrations (Cooper & Donnell, 2004; Campbell, 2007; Paul, 2009). Heirs of Marcus Garvey’s Pan-African (and race centered) nationalism, in the 1970s, Rasta artists were shouting their loyalty to Africa and ‘blackness’ was a central part of their discourse (even if not a totalizing one):

No matter where you come from
as long as you are a *black man* you are an African
[...]
No mind your nationality
You got the identity of an African
(Peter Tosh, 1977, “African”)

Why don't you take us onward to Africa
Where we can sit and eat and chat
For it is no use dying in Jamaica
'Cause we can't afford a burial spot
Remember Marcus Garvey predicted that day
When all black people shall be going away
To the land of our forefathers, and our mothers
Right here in Ethiopia
(Bunny Wailer, 1994, “Here in Jamaica”)

Refusing Jamaican national identity could be seen as a revolutionary gesture, as it sets the Rastafari movement in direct conflict with the establishment. If the Jamaican government was asking people to forget their African origins and be Jamaicans, reggae artists did not agree at all. Shouting aloud their African origins, reggae artists were expressing a popular consciousness that had been stigmatized, ignored, and downplayed by the ruling class for a long time. The Rastafari idea of an African-centered nationalism is often accompanied by the will for Repatriation, a cornerstone in Rastafari worldview (Chevannes, 1994a), and numberless are the lyrics expressing this heartfelt desire:⁷

Africa... is the land of home,
Africa... is the land where I and I come from

⁷ To “Fly our way home”—a Rasta Chant made famous by Bob Marley and the Wailers—is perhaps one of the most direct connections between reggae artists and their enslaved ancestors (and later indentured servants) who believed that at death they would fly back to Africa (Stewart, 2005: 233). Repatriation is indeed a longtime dream of the diaspora, even if it is not necessarily physical but always connected with issues of identity.

Africa, our fathers land is calling us home
So long we a been a slave and no more will we roam
(Mighty Diamonds, 1976, “Africa”)

Emancipation,
Men freedom out of slavery,
Repatriation yes, will bring about liberation.
(Bunny Wailer, 1979, “Free Jah children”)

I and I the happy warrior slave
Returning with good news today
From my Jamaican people, to my African nation.
(Black Uhuru, 1981, “Leaving Zion”)

Therefore, reggae artists echoed a Pan-African ideal, resisting contemporary local nationalism with a transnational call for African Unity. Indeed, in doing so, they were influenced by Marcus Garvey as well as by the Pan-African discourse of contemporary African leaders (e.g. H.I.M. Haile Selassie; Kwame Nkrumah). Their call for unity and African identity was both the product of a tradition (the idea of Africa among the Jamaican peasants, see Brodber, 1987; Chevannes, 1994a) as well as an open solidarity with African Liberation movements.

If all my wishes and dreams could come true
Here is one a wish I so like would do
The unification of African nations
(Israel Vibration, 2000, “African unification”)

These examples are evidence of the extent to which reggae artists were resisting the imposition of a western created nationalism, which was felt as a divisive force in the revolution against oppression.

Unity of the oppressed

Interestingly, the call for a revolution under a newly found African unity is accompanied by a strong awareness of dis-unity and betrayal, a sense of inner division that itself has a long history. The unification of different peoples under a Pan-Africanist solidarity is a very recent—and surely still in progress—process. As Lewis clarifies—expressing his awareness of the problems raised by previous notions of collective identity—unity was a major issue in slave revolutions, which were often nipped in the bud by informers. Garvey the prophet was betrayed by the infamous “bag o wire” (Chevannes, 1994a; Burning Spear, 1975, “Old Marcus Garvey”) and gossips and false friends are a main feature of Jamaican community life (e.g. Gladiators, 1990, “Chatty chatty mouth”; Bob Marley & The Wailers, 1976, “Who the cap fit”). All

these themes are found in reggae lyrics, where a very specific *formula*⁸ is used to address division within the community, namely “fussing and fighting”.

Fussing and fighting, among ourselves
Nothing to achieve this way, it's worser than hell, I say
Stand up and fight for your rights my brothers
Stand up and fight for your rights my sisters
(Abyssinians, 1979, “Declaration of Rights”)

Brothers, brothers, brothers!
Stop the fussing and fighting, brothers
Stop the fussing and fighting, brothers
It's time to unite
Said it's time to live upright
(Dennis Brown, 1992, “Together brothers”)

“Fussing and fighting” expresses confrontation and disunity within the community, representing a primary obstacle on the road to revolution and a weapon of “black and white downpressors/ Apartheid dividers and rulers” (Bunny Wailer, 1979, “Got to move”).

They don't want to see *us* unite:
All they want *us* to do is *keep on fussing and fighting*.
They don't want to see us live together:
All they want us to do is keep on killing one another.
(Bob Marley & The Wailers, 1979, “Top rankin”)

The united front of the oppressed is here expressed in poetic terms by the opposition of “they” and “we” (Daynes, 2010). Interestingly, the dichotomy “they” vs. “we” is not presented as a black and white issue, but as an oppressor vs. oppressed one. Therefore, the idea of Pan-African unity and solidarity is often matched by the necessity to overcome all sorts of divisions: in the community, among the African nations and throughout humanity, the righteous are called and the Rastafari message is open to everyone, their African roots notwithstanding. As Israel Vibration and Culture sing:

Jah say teach the people well, unite *them righteous*
No time to argue or debate
Love and unity will trod from state to state
Teach your children black, brown and white
So when they grow up, they love and unite
[...]
We a Jah bless children,

⁸ Daynes (2010: 81) notes the repetitive character of reggae versification. Interestingly, in oral traditions repetitions are a ubiquitous verbal technique, and they are often structured in formulas: a group of words which is regularly employed in the same metrical conditions to express a given key idea (see Foley, 2002). Further research needs to be done on reggae formulaic *style*.

Throw away *racial fuss and fighting*,
 'Cause when we irie, we fit so tightly
 And there's no one who can come between we
 (Israel Vibration, 1993, "Babylon by bus")

Trod on, do you hear?
 Trod on, *Coolie man, Chiney man*
Indian and Syrian too
 Trod on, Jah Jah call you
 Trod on, yes
 This is the time when I and I should be free
 Keep forwarding on to Jahovia's throne
 Forward to Addis Ababa in the east
 To meet Jah Jah wedding feast
 (Culture, 1993, "Trod on")

The unity of the oppressed is part of a revolution, which is no more a matter of Africans and non-Africans, but of wickedness and righteousness, of oppressors and oppressed. Rastafari revolutionary message, far from being ethnocentric, aims to create a situation where the very premises of racism and disunity might be overcome (Chevannes, 1994a) because: "The whole world is Africa, but it divided in continents and states" (Black Uhuru, 2012, "Whole world is Africa").

Conclusion

As I have demonstrated in this article, reggae revolutionary discourse reconnects with a specific tradition and articulates a complex and rich system of knowledge. In my analysis, I have tried to describe some of the central features of reggae revolutionary discourse/ knowledge production. The ideological elements identified by Gordon K. Lewis (1983) in his analysis of slave revolts have proven to be a useful starting point; African derived cultural forms, self-confidence, nationalism and unity are central issues discussed in reggae lyrics. However, this analysis is only the beginning, and several other revolutionary themes are to be found and examined in reggae lyrics, performances, and sound-scapes. The most important thing in this process is to be mindful of the worldview, the system of beliefs and values, and the historical experience from which these lyrics emerged, in order to understand their inner logic and their distinctive discursive manifestations.

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CARIBBEAN MUSIC ABROAD: THE EXPANSION OF REGGAE MUSIC IN JAPAN SINCE THE 1970S TO THE PRESENT

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If music is really a universal language, it should be accessible to everyone. Reggae music originated in Jamaica in the 1960s and arrived in Japan during the 1970s. Following the lead of key Japanese underground figures, such as DJ Daiky and Itak Tojo, reggae has gained widespread popularity throughout youth communities in Japan, from urban punk rock bars to rural taverns in scenic villages (Kay, 2004; Fischer, 2010). In this article, I will discuss reggae music as an underground phenomenon among the youth of Japan, and the various ways in which young people have associated themselves with reggae music, focusing on instances where hybridity and resistance are prominent. In Japan, young people who embraced reggae were often ridiculed for adopting elements from a culture that was not their own. Many of them were considered rude for ignoring traditional Japanese customs and treated as outcasts in their communities (Roberts, 2015). Over time, however, reggae has become more widely appreciated and accepted in Japan, so much so, that J-reggae and other hybrid genres that fuse elements of Jamaican and Japanese music and culture have emerged, well-known Japanese studios, such as Channel One and Tuff Gong Studio have recorded albums like *Pecker Power*, and *Instant Rasta* since the 1980s, and Yokohama Reggae Sai and other major Japanese reggae festivals have been celebrated since the 1990s.

What drives young people to listen to certain types of music? Is it a specific artist, genre, or a mood that they are pursuing? Where do young people turn for relief from the standard “top 40 songs of the month” concocted and spewed out by the commercial music industry to maximize profits for their shareholders and bonuses for their CEOs? In the 1960s and 1970s, reggae not only became the newest craze on the streets, but also a more lasting genre that would have a profound influence on music everywhere. First emerging in the 1960s in Jamaica and later popularized worldwide with the release of Perry Henzell’s film *The harder they come* (1972) reggae became a new sound that has made a strong and lasting impression on young people over several generations and which DJs across the globe have welcomed into their arsenal of preferred tracks that continue to move millions of bodies across dance floors every weekend all the way up until the present day.

Some of the reasons for the initial popularity of reggae as well as for its remarkable staying power over the decades is its association with struggles against social injustice, its celebration of love and its ethos of open and relaxed sociality, all of which have proved to be particularly attractive to Japanese youth (Levine, 2007: 46). Japanese have traditionally been raised to abide by societal norms that frown upon open expressions of affection; they are instead required to maintain a respectful and formal distance in social settings, even with friends and family (Angloinfo Japan, 2020). For young people in Japan, reggae has symbolized freedom from these constraints and a less rigid approach to social relations. Levine (2007) observes that:

Visits by Marley...to Japan in the 1970's exported the stimulus. Japanese youth resonated to the rebellious message and pounding rhythms of reggae [...] Thousands of young people attended Marley's concerts in Japan and identified with him, his message, his lifestyle, and his look. In the 1980s homegrown Japanese reggae took root and flourished. (44)

Social pressure to be in control of their bodies and their surroundings has been a major factor that has contributed to the growing mental and emotional exhaustion felt by most Japanese students and workers. For example, hugging in public and eating while walking are frowned upon. The very fear of not living up to societal expectations has led, in extreme cases, to death by overwork or *karoshi*, a term coined in 1978 by the Japanese government. Among the messages transmitted through reggae music that have resonated most with young Japanese audiences are the idea that it is not wrong to openly and freely express feelings such as love and happiness in public, and the idea that, in the face of socially tolerated injustice and hypocrisy, it is not wrong to express frustration and rebellion. Thus, reggae artists have found an eager and welcoming youth audience in Japan. As more and more reggae concerts were organized, some unscrupulous rock and rap artists marketed themselves in Japan as reggae artists, to the disappointment of many young fans (Roberts, 2015). However, this phenomenon had some up-sides as well, since it exposed Japanese audiences to new artists and genres of music, giving way to the formation of home grown Japanese bands such as No Kaze and Fireball, who would make a name for themselves with their fusion of reggae, hip-hop and jazz.

Levine (2007) asserts that "While Japan made large strides in the areas of political unification, occupational specialization, cultural rationalization, and personal discipline, it lagged in the areas of social egalitarianism and individualism" (47), with the collective identity and collective good being valued over the expression of individuality. According to Kay (2004), reggae musicians joined the ranks of the surge of Japanese artists who were breaking with the norms of society in order to proclaim the message "be who you wish to be" beginning in the 1960s, just before the arrival of reggae to Japan. This trend toward the celebration of individuality and diversity accelerated rapidly during the 1980s and 1990s, just as reggae was taking Japan by storm. Japanese youth who

listen to reggae claim that it teaches them to be themselves (Roberts, 2015). This audience varies from high school students to young working adults who rely on, and find themselves at the mercy of, the judgement of their parents, teachers and bosses. It is thanks to reggae, however, that they can relax and share jovial moments with themselves and their friends.

As early as grade school, Japanese youth feel immense pressure both to conform to societal norms as well as to make plans and take responsibility for their future. The social and familial obligation to be a good student or a good employee and never behave disobediently towards superiors can be suffocating. It is therefore not uncommon for young people in Japan to develop severe anxiety and depression, often leading to attempts at suicide (Weller, 2017). In search of an escape, the two most common options pursued by young people are music and literature (Allen & Ingulsrud, 2003: 676). Reggae music strikes a particularly relevant chord with the youth of Japan, because, given the nexus between reggae and Rastafarianism, one of the fundamental messages of reggae is to rebel and fight for what one believes is right.

Levine (2007) traces the emergence and development of Rastafarianism in Jamaica from the 1930s up to the dawn of the 21st century through four stages; as a religion that provided spiritual support and inspiration for the downtrodden in the first stage in the 1930s and 1940s, as an explicitly political and anti-imperialist force for the liberation of Jamaica from colonial rule in the 1950s and 1960s in the second stage; as a revolutionary force for the liberation of all peoples from all forms of domination in the 1970s and 1980s in the third stage; and as a more musically and culturally mediated force for change in the fourth stage which has lasted up until the present. Just as there is Japanese reggae, so are there Japanese Rastas, who embrace the Rasta philosophy and follow its teachings, such as the importance and power of speech, the enjoyment of the freedom to express oneself, the respect for all of nature and creation, and the supremacy of life and humanity (Levine, 2007: 47).

When comparing the two cultures, Japanese and Jamaican, one could argue there are countless dissimilarities, and it could be said that the Japanese are the antithesis of the Jamaicans (Levine, 2007: 46). This may, in fact, be part of the appeal of reggae to Japanese youth, as asserted by Levine:

Perhaps reggae's most direct and immediate appeal was what it offered on behalf of individualism, especially in the sense of self-expression. Reggae provides a means for Japanese youth to resist the 'straight jacket society' in which they live, where their life plans are already determined by the time they reach thirteen years. (2007: 47)

In spite of—or perhaps because of—these differences, a vibrant, enduring and rich tradition of fusion between Jamaican reggae and Japanese performance genres has emerged.

One of these fusion genres is J-reggae or Japanese reggae, which normally uses rhythms from Jamaican reggae with Japanese lyrics. Some J-reggae artists, however, have actually learned Jamaican English lexifier Creole and have incorporated it in their lyrics as an element of ‘authenticity’ and a nod to the original creators of the reggae genre (Kay, 2004). Artist DJ RANKIN’ TAXI coined the term ‘J-reggae’ during the late 1980s when his popularity was gaining momentum in rural areas and he launched Controller, a Japanese label which catered to reggae aficionados. This community of ordinary people with little funding forged a grassroots movement in the 1980s that would have a substantial impact on the future of Japanese music (Kay, 2004). These artists enjoy instilling a sense of legacy in their receptive audiences and have managed to participate in local festivals with other more socially accepted artists. In an attempt to connect with their elders, most of these artists play in local festivals near shrines and reminisce about a return to the simplicity of early Japanese life, in its more rustic and rural forms. Later, other local musicians decided to branch out and embrace the reggae aesthetic and sound to expand their musical repertoire.

There have been instances in which some J-reggae artists have gone on pilgrimages to Jamaica or to Jamaican communities in the diaspora in order to truly immerse themselves in the culture. An example is DJ Daiky, who lived his entire early life in Japan, but later moved to Canada to learn English and get acquainted with the vibrant diasporic Jamaican music scene there. Garnering a cult following in Canada, he was able to go to Jamaica for some years, and then move on to London where he slowly established himself in the underground scene. Other influential J-reggae artists include Joe Yamanaka and his group Mute Beat. Mute Beat gained international fame in the genre of dubstep and have inspired other dub-electronic artists to pursue their aspirations in the music industry (Fischer, 2010).

J-reggae also carries over into other styles of music, such as dancehall. Just as Jamaican dancehall music has strong roots in Jamaican reggae, the connections between dancehall and J-reggae are extensive in Japan. Dancehall has literally swept Japan by storm, to the point where it has produced a world champion in dancehall. In 2002, Batty Bom Bom became the first non-Jamaican woman to win the competition (Roberts, 2015). Last, but not least, is the famous Mighty Crown collective who won the 1999 World Clash DJ tournament in Brooklyn and have become an internationally recognized powerhouse for motivating other Japanese artists who otherwise might not have been confident enough to pursue dancehall music in Japan. The Yokohama based Mighty Crown collective are best known throughout the community as pioneers of mixing electronica with reggae, as well as for their dancehall music. The success of this group is so impressive that they have been invited to tournaments and festivals in New York, London, and Jamaica to perform. Mighty Crown celebrated their 20th anniversary in 2011 and the festivities included many J-reggae artists (Kay, 2004).

What was once a niche reggae subculture in Japan, halfway around the world from Jamaica, has grown into a formidable new musical movement. And what can be said for Japan can also be said for countless other countries worldwide where reggae has connected with people whose voices have been silenced and are searching for music that can articulate what is in their minds, hearts and souls. In this article, I have demonstrated how loud the voices of the Caribbean truly are. The musical and cultural resonances between Jamaican and Japan discussed here open up a panorama of fascinating possibilities which have the potential to connect all of the peoples of the world in the struggle for, and celebration of, social justice, love and inclusive conviviality.

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BUCKING THE TREND: RHIZOMATIC AND CONTESTATORY AFROATLANTIC RESONANCES IN SKA

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In the underwater and underground depths, roots scatter wherever their growth leads them, a rhizomatic expansion similar to that of the once-enslaved African descended peoples of the Caribbean, which has established an impressive array of intertwined Afro-Caribbean musical genres throughout the region, many of which have taken the world by storm with their immense popularity and influence over the musical repertoires of the entire globe. In his recent book titled *Más ramas que raíces: diálogos musicales entre el Caribe y el continente africano*, Puerto Rican author and radio show host Errol Montes Pizarro (2018), constructs a metaphorical tree with *Africanidad* [African-ness] (all translations are by the author, unless otherwise specified) as a base, and a variety of musical genres that flow from it in multidirectional paths. Among these genres can be found more popular and frequently researched sounds, such as Trinidadian calypso, and those which by comparison are understudied such as ska, which coalesced from calypso, mento, and rhythm and blues in Jamaica in the late 1950s and contributed in a significant way to other genres that emerged in the 1960s, such as reggae. As is the case for calypso, ska's consistency in sound and lyrics ensured its popularity over several decades.

In this article, I take a closer look at ska. Much has been said of ska, but not enough. This relative scarcity of attention to ska in the literature can be attributed to its constant treatment as a transitory musical genre and precursor to rocksteady and reggae, instead of considering it on its own merits. The 'trans' nature of ska is perhaps harder to deny than that of other better studied genres that can more easily be compartmentalized into well-defined and commodified musical repertoires. But, in the final analysis, all living music is by its very nature 'trans' in the sense of being liminal, contradictory, ambiguous, moving in multiple directions, tapping into multiple sources, disappearing and then resurfacing, being in two places at the same time or nowhere and everywhere, incorporating 'traces of traces' of multiple words, sounds, musicians, performances. The denial of this 'trans' nature of music is most evident in those genres that have been the most commercially successful, and therefore domesticated to the point that they can be sold to a mass audience. From this point of view, Frankfurt School philosopher Theodor

Adorno's (1998, [1941]) critique of the standardization, commodification and commercialization of popular music has some merit.

But here it is important to remember that Adorno's critique was aimed primarily at the popular music genres of the Minority World (Europe and the US), including jazz—genres which had already become significantly commodified and commercialized by the 1940s and 1950s. This was not the case, however, with most Afro-Caribbean popular musical genres before the 1970s, with the exception, perhaps, of calypso. And just as Adorno's critique of Afro-American jazz which emerged in the late 19th century, can be considered one of the weakest aspects of his otherwise quite valid analysis (Lewandowski, 1996), it is of limited use in helping us to understand Afro-Caribbean music before the explosion of reggae onto the world market in the 1970s and 1980s, after which Adorno's analysis becomes more relevant, but remains nonetheless to some degree problematic in its Minority World-focused Eurocentrism. In any case, by the time the 1970s arrived, first wave ska had given rise to the rocksteady and reggae genres that eventually largely replaced it in Jamaica, and thereafter ska migrated to Britain where second wave ska (or 2 Tone ska) took root in the 1970s, as well as to the US, where third wave ska (or punk-ska) emerged in the 1980s. If Adorno's analysis applies at all to ska, it is less relevant to the first wave than it is to these second and third waves, which emerged in Europe and North America, the Minority World geo-ideological-economic spaces that constituted the focus of Adorno's research.

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Given the fact that, among all of the pre-1970s Afro-Caribbean musical repertoires, it is calypso that underwent the greatest degree of domestication and commercialization, it should come as no surprise that other genres, such as mento and ska are eclipsed by it in terms of scholarly study. By the time mento emerged, Trinidadian calypso was also well established in Jamaica. Although there is a dearth of studies about the influence that one genre had upon the other, it is mentioned that mento was often referred to as calypso by Jamaicans starting in the early 1950s, when Jamaicans began to have wider access to the technologies that allowed both calypso and mento music to reach mass audiences. In any case, both mento and calypso music was being cut at the time in many of the same Jamaican recording studios. In this way, both genres crossed paths in the ears of Jamaicans, especially in terms of their lyrics. While mento and calypso are rhythmically different, both played an important role in the development of ska.

Jamaicans did not only gain mass access to mento and calypso at this time, they also gained mass access to recordings of the extremely popular Afro-American rhythm & blues genre that had emerged in the US in the 1940s. Rhythm & blues can be traced back to the jazz genre that had originated in the US from the late 19th century onward, and it was in the early 1950s that jazz music also reached the ears of mass audiences in Jamaica and the rest of the Caribbean. All of these musical genres, whether Afro-Caribbean (calypso, mento, ska, reggae, etc.) or Afro-American (jazz, rhythm and blues,

etc.) have deep roots in West African musical traditions and are the product of a multi-directional cross-pollination process that resonates among and through all of them.

In the late 1950s, the music scene in Jamaica was moving full speed ahead, fueled by all four genres: calypso, mento, rhythm and blues, and jazz. Although rhythm and blues and jazz were popular in Jamaica for a time, Jamaicans began to experiment, and ultimately created their own versions and styles. By 1962, when every Jamaican was in the streets shouting ska lyrics by the writer Derrick Morgan: “Forward march!” Jamaica had not only achieved independence, but had also created a new musical genre, ska, whose rhythms and instrumentation have clear roots in mento, calypso, jazz and rhythm and blues.

When it comes to lyrics, however, the story becomes more complicated, reflecting biases, even among academics, toward more commodified and commercialized genres such as calypso, at the expense of less domesticated genres such as mento. One of the key ingredients in ska is its socially-engaged lyrics, that speak of critique, resistance and liberation. This aspect of ska lyrics is customarily traced back to calypso in the literature, rather than to mento, but the roots of socially critical and contestatory lyrics in ska should probably be traced back to both calypso and mento. Mento is usually brushed off as a politically innocuous Jamaican ‘folkloric’ musical genre, music to kill time, with lyrics filled with sexual references and humor. But while the lyrics of mento may not be so overtly critical of the status quo and may not take aim at politicians and the public institutions of political life, mento lyrics often have a more covert contestatory message that focus on the politics of survival and making ends meet from day to day and that embody perhaps a deeper and much more systemic critique of social inequality than many calypso lyrics do.

Calypso’s more overt, but perhaps less profound, and certainly more elite-oriented protest lyrics are exemplified in the work of the famous Trinidadian artiste Mighty Sparrow, who, in a song called “You must pay tax” (1959), explains how there is nothing one can do to escape from taxes. In the song “Present government” (1961) from Mighty Sparrow’s album *Sparrow the conqueror* (1961) he directly addresses Dr. Eric Williams, the first prime minister of Trinidad after independence, and questions his policies with complains about their effects on Trinidad. Because of lyrics such as these, Mighty Sparrow in particular, and calypso in general, have been referred to as ‘the voice of the people’.

Mento artiste Louise Bennett, on the other hand, in her album *Jamaican folk songs* (1954) renders “Dry weather houses,” (1954) about overpriced homes, and “Linstead market,” (1954) about not being able to earn enough money to survive by selling in the market. The chorus to “Linstead market” is: “Lawd wat a night, not a bite, / Wat a Satiday night” (1954, lines 7-9), a mild lament to God after a slow day in the market. While these mento lyrics that center on daily life issues might seem limited to personal and private struggles at the surface, for their audiences under suffocatingly repressive

British colonial rule in the 1940s and 1950s, they articulated a powerful covert message of protest and resistance.

Ska, drawing from both its mento and calypso roots, in many ways bridges the gap between them, by bringing calypso 'down to earth' and making it less narrowly focused on the government and other elite institutions on the one hand, while making mento more explicit in its messages of protest and the targets of those messages. For example, ska artiste Prince Buster in the song "They got to go" (1962, written by Derrick Morgan) sings explicitly about socio-economic inequality: "The rich man got money, / The poor man got nothin'" (1962, lines 5-6). Here, Buster concisely goes to the systemic root issues that are often skirted around in calypso lyrics or cryptically inferred in mento lyrics, such as the obscene inequalities in Jamaican society. Ska also picks up where both calypso and mento leave off, by actually rallying the people to directly challenge and eliminate these systemic inequalities. Later in the song, Buster warns the monied classes that: "You've had your fun / Your time has come." (1962, 15-16). Another example of a similarly clear and direct message can be found in the song "Simmer down" (1962) by The Wailers, an exhortation to gangs of 'rude boys' armed and paid the US and British secret services, with the intention of causing social havoc and thwarting any progressive impulses on the part of the newly independent government of Jamaica. The Wailers sing: "Simmer down, you lickin' too hot so / Simmer down, and you know soon you'll get dropped so" (1962, lines 1-2) referring to possible popular retaliation against the rude boys' actions.

During this first wave of ska, artistes and groups started experimenting with their lyrics. For example, Lee "Scratch" Perry experimented in covering topics such as popular mobilizations in the song "Man to man (hand to hand)" (1965), while Justin Hinds and the Dominoes use fiery words to support social justice and repudiate those who perpetuate it "Fight for the rights" (1966) and "Fight too much" (1967). After helping to give rise to both the rocksteady and reggae genres in the 1960s, by 1970 ska had reached the United Kingdom, the United States, Japan and (highlighting the reciprocal exchange and resonances of musical influences between the Caribbean and Africa) South Africa. When, via Jamaican migration, ska reached Great Britain, it assumed its second wave articulation, also known as Two-tone or 2 tone. Second wave ska is typified by a high energy style resulting from the interaction between the animated rhythms of both punk-rock and ska, and represents a unique combination and cultural clash between two genres that both position themselves in defiance of systems of domination, but in radically different ways. Artists and groups like Madness and The Specials were able to commercialize second wave ska, and at the same time utilize it to deliver social criticism. Although this phase of ska was commercially successful to an extent, its imagery was still associated with the fandom surrounding the underground punk-rock scene. Madness, for example commented on topics outside of the United Kingdom in the song "(Waiting for the) ghost train" (1992) which focused on *apartheid* in South Africa. In lyrics such

as: “This town (town) is coming like a ghost town / Why must the youth fight against themselves? / Government leaving the youth on the shelf” (1992, lines 8-10) they address the systemic damage done by racism.

In the 1980s, third wave ska started to emerge in the United States. Also called punk-ska, it combines elements of both first and second wave ska. Moving away from the less commercialized and commodified music scenes of Jamaica in the 1950 and 1960s and the UK underground in the 1970s, this wave achieved world-wide popularity, but at the cost of its resistant and contestatory lyrics, becoming a transmutation of pop, and therefore much more relevant to Adorno’s critique. The third wave of ska was initially led by The Toasters who were strongly influenced by punk-rock and were responsible for its initial success throughout the US. Afterwards, The Mighty Mighty Bosstones and Reel Big Fish would take the genre to the mainstream and, in the process, to the rest of the world—but at the cost of its purpose. Lyrically, the popularization of the genre pushed it to become standardized and politically neutralized. The goal was now to create the catchiest songs and an ever-growing share of the globalizing music market. While the vast majority of third wave ska groups were focused on commercialization, a few groups in the United States, like Reel Big Fish maintained the thematic of resistance by incorporating satire into their music, with songs like “Sell out” (1996) that pokes fun at the pop music industry itself. Third wave ska was commercially successful in Europe and the US the 1990s, but, as is inevitable given the nature of pop music, its popularity in the Minority World declined somewhat during the 2000s.

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While, in the US and the rest of the Minority World, third wave ska was moving away from lyrics of liberation and toward the tired formulas of pop music, the opposite was happening in Latin America and the rest of the Majority World, where ska has reclaimed its traditional place as the voice of the oppressed. This is recognized from Mexico to Argentina in the work of groups like La Maldita Vecindad y los Hijos del 5to Patio, Los Fabulosos Cadillacs, and La Vela Puerca, as well as in other regions such as South Asia and the Middle East, and even Spain, with a group called Ska-P.

In his essay titled *On popular music* (1998, [1941]) Adorno developed a critique of the commodification, standardization and commercialization of European and US popular music that forces music to conform to a pre-established formulaic structure, at the expense of the creativity and imagination typical of less commercialized compositions, transforming music into a voided shell without meaning or message. During the first wave of ska in 1950s and 1960s Jamaica, the main production dynamic involved supplying local businesses and clubs with the latest records, cut to attract locals. Producers were so focused on exploring this new genre and competing against other producers, that this gave artists the freedom to sing about topics that might upset the dominant symbolic elites and the ruling classes. This was especially true during the heady days of independence of the 1960s, when the repressive shackles of British colonial rule were being cast aside, opening up spaces for more overt challenges to systems of domination.

Although production at this time could be said to have been aimed more at quantity than at quality, the songs that sold best were those that resonated with the revolutionary spirit of the time. So, the same market forces that tend to drive pop music in the Majority World away from meaningful content with a message, were driving first wave ska in the opposite direction toward more profound meaning and more engaged messaging. Second wave ska in the 1970s UK was even more commercialized than first wave ska, by virtue of the fact that: 1) it was a primarily Minority World phenomenon; and 2) it took place several decades later, during a more intense, more concentrated form of capitalist control over the music industry. That said, because of the ‘underground’ nature of its audience, market pressures on second wave ska tended to demand more continuity with first wave ska and a greater emphasis on contestatory meaning and messaging than otherwise would have been the case. Third wave ska was the most commercialized, commodified and standardized of the three waves, not only because it emerged during the era of fast, globalized capitalism, but also because multinational corporate monopolies began to exert a complete stranglehold over all of the media, including the music industry. Despite this fact, while the trajectory of third wave ska in the Minority World of the US and Europe conforms largely to that projected by Adorno’s theory, in the Majority World, popular demand and market forces have, once again insisted on more continuity with first wave ska and a greater emphasis on contestatory meaning and messaging, so much so, that ska has become, not just ‘the voice of the people’ but ‘the voice of the oppressed’ in the Global South.

Throughout the past 60 or 70 years, ska and other Afro-Atlantic musical genres have often bucked the trend that Adorno accurately and insightfully identified for popular music in Europe, the US and the rest of the Minority World. This problematizes the ‘universality’ claimed by European and US academics when they advance their theories regarding how the cultural, social and natural worlds function. We, the academics of the Majority World, need to take our cues from such thinkers as Errol Montes Pizarro, and critically question such claims to universality. In the process, we also need to open up spaces for new understandings concerning how music trans-plants, trans-lates, trans-poses, and trans-forms itself and ourselves, as it trans-its across the Afro-Atlantic and across the world.

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**CARIBBEAN WITHOUT BORDERS 2020:
VOICES OF CHANGE AND RESISTANCE
IN CARIBBEAN LITERATURE**

CUERPOS QUE SE REVELAN/REBELAN: SOBRE LA ENFERMEDAD, LA VEJEZ Y LA ESCRITURA

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I

Este trabajo se define a partir del vínculo entre la escritura y el cuerpo. Vocación de escritura, de escribir con palabras, de hacer transcurrir el paso y el peso de los días mediante la entrega a un ejercicio perenne, aunque novedoso, que es, también, un hacerse con y en la experiencia más inmediata y visceral del propio cuerpo. Reconocido éste como límite y fundamento de la continuidad y percepción de la vida en lo que de breve y perecedera tiene la existencia de eso que uno piensa que es, partiendo desde la concepción de sí que una persona sea capaz de tener; y, a su vez, del lugar desde donde uno no puede llevar a cabo otra cosa que no sea estar. Con esta apertura de rasgo filosófico, no pretendo decir que todos o todas seamos iguales; me refiero a algo más simple: que, en principio, todas y todos cuando nacemos, vivimos con y en nuestro cuerpo, y que su desarrollo y paulatino, aunque en ocasiones, truncado envejecimiento, es una experiencia en común que tenemos los seres humanos con las plantas, los animales, los planetas, las ideas, los estados nacionales, etc. Lo que, por otro lado, no cancela la amplia variedad de formas en las que el cuerpo de cada cual, al menos entendido biológica, social y políticamente, y, en este caso en particular, desde lo “humano”, pueda ser sentido, vivido e imaginado.

Me pregunto, pues, si como parte de la vinculación entre la escritura y el cuerpo, este, que es aquello desde lo cual se escribe, y que, consecuentemente, condiciona y limita el acto de escribir, como a toda otra acción, puede, y cómo, ser constituido por medio de la escritura. ¿Pueden ser las palabras, por ejemplo, órganos y herramientas que compongan un cuerpo? ¿Puede la escritura, en su discurrir, hablar del cuerpo y ser cuerpo, que se hace sentir cuando quien escribe y quien lee, afrontan la experiencia física de sí, del objeto en sus manos, del material inmediato que son las palabras conformadas en una especie de todo, el cual, no por ello, deja de ser organizado desde su fragmentariedad? ¿Puede, por último, escribirse *sobre* el cuerpo como se escribe *sobre* la pantalla del teléfono o el papel?

Al hablar de escritura, incluso cuando se trate de su manifestación alfabética, valdría la pena recordar dos cosas. Primero: que el vocablo griego *graphein*, si bien no es la

palabra que etimológicamente indicaría un ‘origen exacto’ para ‘escribir’ y ‘escritura’, permite, y por ello la rescato, entender el acto de manera más rica y amplia porque, además de escribir, se trata de pintar, dibujar, grabar, etc. ¿Hay o habrá diferencias que supongan, y hasta justifiquen, una jerarquización entre estas formas aparentemente distintas de inscripción, en las que, por razones complejas, se ha tendido a separar la escritura colocándola en un nivel por encima del resto? Lo segundo, que más o menos da cuenta de lo anterior y ayuda a esbozar respuestas a mi pregunta, es un breve texto titulado “Cromoterapia”, en el que afirma Severo Sarduy: “Escribir es pintar. Lo último que queda, una vez terminada la página laboriosa, ajustados los sucesivos párrafos, las frases rápidas, las palabras, corriendo como en la cresta de su propio oleaje, es una imagen” (2002: 95).

Pienso que también es oír y bailar; y es acuñar la vitalidad de las sensaciones que se presentan a través de todos los sentidos, incluyendo la mente, para volverlas visibles, palpables, audibles, lo que a su vez convoca y exige un ejercicio de pensamiento. Esto que dice Sarduy me hace recordar los versos de un corto poema de Octavio Paz (2014), a quien tanto aquel admiraba. Son versos, de un poema titulado “Escritura”, que coinciden y que vale la pena traer aquí: “Yo dibujo estas letras / como el día dibuja sus imágenes / y sopla sobre ellas y no vuelve” (Paz, 2014: 213).

Pero, ¿por qué me preocupa la relación entre el cuerpo y la escritura, así como las formas desde las cuales escribir podría definirse? Por el hecho mismo de que escribir con palabras, líneas, o dibujos, evoca lo que se marca, lo que se graba, lo que se recoge, lo que se concreta. Se trata del fenómeno de una inscripción en el cuerpo físico de la escritura; y, por momentos y simultáneamente, de la inscripción en y desde el cuerpo social, político y biológico de los seres humanos. La inscripción, sea escrita o pintada, sea que se trate de lo que se inscribe *en* o de lo que es inscrito *por*, es lo que queda o pretende quedar, lo que hace huella, o cicatriz, o marca, o palabra, o imagen. Entonces, hablamos de unos cuerpos físicos y de su idea y su concepción.

¿Pero, qué ocurre cuando aparece la enfermedad y otras situaciones semejantes, y estas también trazan sus líneas sobre la superficie y la interioridad de un cuerpo? ¿Y qué, cuando junto a la enfermedad la vejez se hace próxima?

II

En parte, porque la inquietud ya antecedió, lo anterior y lo que sigue ha sido y será posible gracias a las palabras de dos escritores cubanos. Uno, Virgilio Piñera, que al decir de Antón Arrufat en el prólogo de su *Cuentos completos*, vivió como un “marginado” (en Piñera, 1999: 12), y quien, desde la década de los cincuenta del siglo XX, después de haber pasado unos años en Argentina, regresara a Cuba para permanecer allí hasta su muerte. El otro, quien desde la década de los sesenta viviera en el exilio y muriera bajo esa condición y a consecuencia de los efectos del SIDA, es Severo Sarduy.

Por lo general, se habla del tema de la carne y la mutilación de ésta, y de cierto erotismo violento en la obra de Piñera. En cuanto a Sarduy, se destacan los elementos barrocos de sus trabajos y sus reflexiones sobre el arte, la escritura, el budismo y hasta la ciencia. Sin embargo, la lectura de los cuentos de Virgilio Piñera, “El que vino a salvarme” (2008) y “El caso del señor Madrigal” (1978), me ha permitido acercarme al tema de la carne, o mejor, al del cuerpo partiendo del elemento de la enfermedad y, sobre todo en estos relatos, del de la vejez. Esta sería otra manera, además, de entrelazar el tema de la escritura y el cuerpo por cuanto que se trata, pues, de figuras que pertenecen a la literatura, y es en virtud de ello que lo escrito, al conformarlas, las atraviesa y las coloca junto a las ruinas de sus cuerpos envejecidos y enfermos.

Con *Pájaros de la playa* de Severo Sarduy (1993), el vínculo entre escritura y cuerpo alcanza otra dimensión. En esta novela, que es la última que escribió estando ya enfermo, ciertamente el tema de la enfermedad y la vejez, producida ésta tempranamente por los estragos de aquella, aparece y es central. Pero, para propósitos del enfoque que propongo, quiero limitarme a un personaje: El Cosmólogo. Hay en el libro varios capítulos titulados “Diario del Cosmólogo”. Entre tanto, algo que resalta y que me interesa especialmente es que esta figura – enferma también – se dedica, en dichos capítulos, a “observar” y “estudiar” los efectos de esa enfermedad llamada “el mal”. Mientras, escribe, y en ello, reflexiona sobre el cuerpo, ahora convaleciente, y sobre sus incidencias en el acto de escribir. En condiciones de padecimiento de una enfermedad terminal o de las limitaciones que impone la vejez física y mental, ¿qué implica y qué exige el trazo de la inscripción de la escritura?

III

Este es el título de un libro de Sarduy: *Escrito sobre un cuerpo* (1999). Se tome o no en consideración el contenido de los ensayos que son parte de este texto, ya el nombre es sugerente y ayuda a esclarecer la compleja hazaña aquí propuesta. Puede tratarse, al mismo tiempo, de lo que se ha escrito teniendo como tema el cuerpo, y de lo que se escribe como un inscribir que marca, pinta o hace huella en la piel de un cuerpo dado, siendo éste también el papel que, desde entonces, como si fuera otra superficie dérmica, concede, al recibir sobre sí las palabras, el constituir de una imagen, o una serie de imágenes en las que el elemento léxico, pictórico y corpóreo coinciden.

Ahora, pienso que este acto de escritura que inscribe puede aludir a un aspecto que no necesariamente se halla, con plena claridad, en Piñera y en Sarduy, y que ayudaría a acercar la escritura, el cuerpo y la enfermedad ya no solo desde la literatura. Me parece que la singularidad de un cuerpo humano, así como la de un colectivo que formula, desde el reconocimiento de los individuos que lo componen, una noción de sí más o menos en común, puede sufrir el peso de una escritura violenta que, a modo de una inscripción que delimita y circunscribe, conformaría una marca específica. Tal vez el sujeto enfermo y la manera en la que es tratado, sean ejemplo de ello.

Quiero, para ahondar en este problema, citar unas palabras de Elizabeth Grosz (1994) que se encuentran en su libro *Volatile Bodies*. Es una cita extensa, pero, puesto que contiene elementos muy importantes, vale la pena compartirla. A propósito de ‘social inscriptions’, afirma:

These modes of scarification are no less permanent or more removable than tattooing or epidermic or muscular lesions although they may be less readily observed or directly readable. The civilized body is marked more or less permanently and impermeably. In our own culture, inscriptions occur both violently and in more subtle forms. In the first case, violence is demonstrable in social institutions of correction and training, prisons, juvenile homes, hospitals, psychiatric institutions, keeping the body confined, constrained, supervised, and regimented, marked by implements such as handcuffs, the traversing of neural pathways by charges of electricity in shock therapy, the straitjacket, the regimen of drug habituation and rehabilitation [...] Less openly violent but no less coercive are the inscriptions of cultural and personal values, norms, and commitments according to the morphology and categorization of the body into socially significant groups... (Grosz, 1994: 141-142)

Me asalta la imagen del “civilized body” ya que, cuando Grosz lo coloca dentro del embate de las violentas formas de inscripción social, da qué pensar, precisamente, sobre si lo que sucede es que el cuerpo sometido lo es en tanto que es civilizado por parámetros e instituciones civilizatorias de una sociedad y una cultura *x*; o si puede haber cuerpos, civilizados en otro sentido, que resistan el ímpetu violento de cierta aproximación de lo civilizatorio. Es decir, ¿qué significa lo ‘civilized’ del cuerpo? ¿Es una previa condición de posibilidad de este para ser en sociedad o es el resultado de un proceso de imposiciones, constreñimientos y amoldamientos sobre ese cuerpo? Entonces, ¿qué supondría, por ejemplo, un cuerpo, un grupo de individuos y unas concepciones estéticas cuyas características engendraran, desde su diferencia, un rasgo de incomodidad en las instancias reguladoras y de autoridad por ser transgresoras de la inscripción supuestamente civilizatoria?

El exiliado, que es un marginado al exterior de su sociedad, cultura y país de origen; y el marginado, que es un exiliado en el interior, tal vez son sujetos cuyos cuerpos quedan inscritos fuera del cuerpo civilizado, pero como se les exige ser algo definible, desde su misma posición, que es otra, aparece la ‘necesidad’ de su marca. No es casual que Grosz hable de modos diversos de confinamiento, así también de normas y valores que sirven para categorizar, para encerrar y para controlar. Ello me ha hecho pensar, de acuerdo con las condiciones de vida política de Sarduy y Piñera respecto a la realidad cubana, en lo que ocurriera con los sujetos homosexuales tan reprimidos y violentados en Cuba: “The idea that homosexuality was closely related to crime, drug addiction, venereal disease, and gender inversion became widespread ...” (Bejel, 2001: 99).

Aquí, en una primera instancia, la homosexualidad fue ubicada dentro de la esfera de lo criminal. Primera forma de definición y encerramiento: son criminales, faltan a la moral: hay que encerrarlos, reformarlos; de ahí proyectos como las Unidades Militares de Ayuda a la Producción (UMAP). En suma, existe ya una dimensión “sanitaria”: las enfermedades venéreas. Esto anticipa un aparente cambio en la visión de la sociedad cubana sobre la homosexualidad. Afirma Bejel: “Homosexuality went from being a crime even in private to being principally a psychological or medical problem” (Bejel, 2001: 106). Ahora son enfermos a los que hay que tratar y para quienes habrá de buscarse una ‘cura’:

Among the arguments that served as the foundation for the homophobia of the UMAPs, I have noted the following: homosexuality is corrupt and immoral practice; homosexuals must be forced to do hard agricultural labor so that the redeeming qualities of the rural atmosphere could *cure their ills*... (Bejel, 2001: 101-102, mi énfasis)

Lo que quiero con esto es, en primer lugar, exponer una forma de escritura sobre determinados cuerpos en la que el diagnóstico criminal y clínico les condiciona vital y socialmente; y, en segundo lugar, dejar claro que, según entiendo, aunque salvando las diferencias, sí creo que la experiencia de marginación y exilio de uno y otro escritor, que, de hecho, guardan semejanza con el confinamiento, tiene mucho que ver con esa forma brutal de inscripción, y que ello quizás podría llegar a incidir en la experiencia literaria de cada uno y en sus visiones sobre lo enfermo.

Como antes conversáramos acerca de los sentidos diversos, comunicables y chocantes de la escritura y del cuerpo, quisiera proponer otra lectura de la enfermedad. Antes enumero: la primera es la enfermedad biológica, que como tal es inevitable y es algo común a los seres vivos. La segunda, es la del significado de aquella enfermedad, mediante la cual el cuerpo comienza a ser tratado como algo a lo que debe recluirse o atenderse para hallarle una cura. La tercera, se trata de la patologización de la experiencia humana, como la homosexualidad o la vejez, a partir de la cual se formula un diagnóstico sostenido en prejuicios o en los supuestos de una autoridad clínica, con el que se instaura una inscripción que define y controla, al grado de implicar la marginación o el exilio, o algún otro mecanismo de encierro y ‘reformación’. Pero ¿por qué la enfermedad y el enfermo no podrían responder y resistir? De Ferrari explica:

A body that is ill – not unlike a skin that is too dark, or a person that is too old – is a body that calls attention to itself, thus breaking the cultural code of distinction: the ill body is depreciated [...] Ill people, old people, handicapped people, crazy people are subversive bodies in that they make visible the social codes that specifically condemn them. (2007: 81)

Aunque, inicialmente, estaría de acuerdo con lo que Ferrari comenta, en el fondo desconfío de su aseveración. Aunque el cuerpo enfermo o viejo puede proponer un desajuste, habría que cuestionar cuál sería el alcance verdadero, y dentro de cuáles condiciones, de ese elemento que ella llama subversivo. ¿Son realmente los cuerpos enfermos, los cuerpos excedentes, manifestaciones de una insubordinación sociopolítica que, en profundidad, pondría en desequilibrio el sistema de valores con el que se busca delimitarlos y controlarlos?

Este registro visual, que por otro lado es importantísimo, en el que el cuerpo obliga a ser mirado y atendido, y en el que “hace visible” los “códigos sociales” a partir de los cuales se le constituye, no me parece, sin embargo, que, como propuesta política, sea suficiente ni plenamente subversiva. Al menos, tal y como está planteado ahí. Porque, ¿hasta dónde ese mostrar de los cuerpos enfermos reforzaría la imagen que se tiene de ellos, y, por otro lado, hasta dónde habrían de incidir, de forma contraria, en esa misma imagen desde donde son definidos y clasificados? ¿Cuál sería el fin de esta subversión? ¿Incomodar, cuestionar, llamar la atención en tanto que recordatorio de *unos otros* que merecen ser atendidos y no marginados? Mas, ¿dónde se encuentra la posibilidad de un cuestionamiento radical de esas normas y de la escritura que los inscribe? ¿Se halla en reconocerse enfermos, viejos, pacientes mentales, etc., y en el mostrarse como tales, aun a riesgo de ser siempre reabsorbidos bajo otra definición?; ¿o en la creación de unos parámetros propios sobre las condiciones de vida de estos cuerpos que mantengan alguna autonomía, desde su ‘enfermedad’, respecto a la marca, a la inscripción de las fuerzas que les violentan? Por ejemplo, una escritura otra: entonces, ¿se puede vivir sin ser marcado, sin que la fuerza de la escritura oprima, mientras se marca y escribe sobre lo opresor? No estoy seguro, pues tal vez podría ser cierto que: “Each body is marked by the history and specificity of its existence. It is possible to construct a biography, a history of the body, for each individual and social body” (Grosz, 1994: 142).

En suma, cuál sería el sentido de esta dinámica y cómo entender el registro visual del cuerpo enfermo que se muestra si fuera cierto lo siguiente: “The various procedures for inscribing bodies, marking out different bodies, categories, types, norms, are not simply imposed on the individual from outside; they do not function coercively but are sought out” (Grosz, 1994: 143). Aún así, Ferrari tiene razón en lo siguiente: a veces se desprecia y se trata distinto al cuerpo enfermo y al que se clasifica como tal. ¿Será porque participa aquí un elemento de abyección? ¿Serán el viejo, el enfermo y el homosexual sujetos abyectos?

Pero, al decir de Kristeva (1982): “It is thus not a lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite” (4).

De modo que, si estuviéramos de acuerdo, el problema no sería tanto el cuerpo enfermo o el que es ‘enfermado’, sino lo que ese cuerpo representa, lo que su imagen y su contacto son en potencia, por cuanto su irrupción es desestabilizadora de un orden *x*. En

este sentido, regresando a lo que comenta Ferrari, quizás el registro visual del cuerpo que invade y trastoca, se entienda mejor, o se sostenga con mayor firmeza. Sin embargo, habría que preguntarse, hasta dónde da de sí esa intervención desbordada de lo abyecto – si es que es tal – y, en nuestro caso, del cuerpo que sufre, o al que se le hace sufrir, una enfermedad, cuando, encima, para volver a la cita anterior de Grosz, parece haber una especie de complicidad y responsabilidad del sujeto que es marcado sobre su inscripción.

IV

Pregunto: ¿cabría entender la escritura literaria como un tipo de enfermedad no tanto para quien escribe, sino para el cuerpo social que constriñe la singularidad de la escritura o de una persona ‘inadecuada’ por su orientación sexual o su posicionamiento político, de acuerdo con los parámetros normalizadores de un grupo social, del gobierno de una nación estado, o hasta de un sistema de salud?

Quisiera compartir dos citas respecto a la escritura que, según entiendo, tienen extraña incidencia en lo que se pregunta. Una es de Piñera y aparece en un breve texto titulado desde un tono muy sugerente e irónico como “Plumas respetuosas”, publicado el 13 de julio de 1959. La otra, es de Sarduy, y se encuentra en la célebre entrevista que diera durante los años setenta en el programa “A Fondo” de la *Televisión española*:

a esta literatura respetuosa le faltan dos cosas sin las cuales no es posible que un escritor sea reputado por tal y que se sobreviva: la primera, el respeto de sí mismo y de su propia obra; la segunda, valentía y coraje para arriesgar incluso la propia vida [...] El sacrificio de la vida radica en sufrir mil y una privaciones desde el hambre hasta el exilio voluntario, a fin de defender las ideas, de mantener una línea de conducta inquebrantable. (Piñera, 1959 en *Ensayos selectos*, Piñera, 2015: 213)

La literatura es una especie de transgresión muy grande [...] En definitiva, se amenaza mucho al escribir, se manejan conceptos simbólicos para el cuerpo de uno y para el cuerpo de otros. Se ejerce una especie de violencia somática, de violencia corporal muy grande. La escritura es como la danza, es un ejercicio puramente corporal y el cuerpo lo siente. (véase Sleeper Awake (2009, [1977])

Las palabras de Piñera no aluden directamente al cuerpo ni a la enfermedad, pero exponen una ética literaria y vital que es contundente. Quien escribe tiene que dar su vida a esa vocación y asumir hasta las últimas consecuencias su entrega a la escritura. Piñera está escribiendo aquí en julio 1959, momento en el que el grupo de revolucionarios cubanos ha vencido, lo que haría pensar que se encuentra dentro de un discurso vinculable a tales circunstancias. No obstante, las complejidades de la vida de Piñera, en parte comprensibles desde su posicionamiento como escritor, anteceden a la victoria de la Revolución cubana y, además, tiempo después de esta, será un sujeto que sufrirá,

precisamente, los estragos de la ceguera del peso ideológico: “Piñera was victimized by the virilization of the new man of the Cuban Revolution” (Bejel, 2001: 99).

En la entrevista por Joaquin Soler Serrano, (véase *Sleeper Awake* 2009, [1977]), en cambio, alude directamente a la violencia de la escritura, que también está en Piñera, aunque, con otras palabras, y la emparenta a los efectos que esta tiene en el cuerpo. La escritura literaria, entonces, es para ambos un acto corpóreo y transgresivo permanente. Y ello me lleva a recuperar los tres rasgos con los que Kristeva describía lo abyecto: “The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite” (Kristeva, 1982: 4). Esto no implica que quiera yo decir y definir lo literario y la escritura solamente desde dicho concepto. Aun así, son muy sugerentes y de alguna cercanía a estos escritores.

De esta manera, concluyo, al respecto, lo siguiente: la criminalización y patologización de la homosexualidad en Cuba es un tipo de marca y de escritura sobre los cuerpos y las vidas de personas que, como Piñera, dentro de Cuba, y aun Sarduy, fuera de la isla, habrían de ser víctimas de maltratos físicos, sociales, psicológicos, etc. (¿Con esto se debilita la idea de Grosz respecto a la ‘participación’ del sujeto marcado en lo que le es inscrito?) Luego, otra razón para marginar es el peligro que representa el trabajo literario de escritores como los que me ocupan; y, por último, cosa que se desprende de lo anterior, que la escritura, en este caso la literaria, así también las nociones que tienen de la misma Sarduy y Piñera, y que suponen planteamientos éticos, estéticos y políticos, habrían y han de suscitar fisuras e incómodas irrupciones dentro de un sistema y de un orden que no puede dar cuenta de un discurso literario en tensa oposición; y puesto que, como bien reconoce Sarduy, toda escritura es violenta, de ello, la de ambos sería una marca, una inscripción, ya no solo en la superficie del papel, ya no solo como confección del cuerpo de un texto literario, sino, que, por ejemplo, en el cuerpo político de un estado nación y en sus fundamentos ideológicos.

V

A diferencia de otros muchos de los textos de Piñera, los relatos en “El caso del señor Madrigal” (1978) y “El que vino a salvarme” (2008), se enfocan en personas ancianas cerca del momento de su muerte. Aquí faltan, en términos generales y en la mayoría de los detalles, la presencia abrumadora de imágenes concertadas dentro del tema de la mutilación de la carne; y, con ello, la manifestación más corpórea, plástica, palpable y violenta de la experiencia erótica y homoerótica, que se da en otros de sus cuentos. En lugar, pues, de mutilar el cuerpo, lo que se describe es su envejecimiento y su debilidad. Así se ve en el inicio de “El caso del señor Madrigal”:

Si el señor Madrigal comenzó un crecimiento a los ochenta años, no deberá pensarse en un crecimiento físico. A tal edad puede decirse propiamente que se ‘decrece’: el cuerpo se va encorvando como si tirara hacia la tierra ... Esos huesos, crecidos hasta su extrema magnitud, irán decreciendo y se harán polvo. Pulvis eris et pulvis reverteris. (Piñera, 1999: 271)

Dos elementos claves aquí: se presenta la imagen del crecimiento, la cual, desde la lectura del título y, una vez conociendo que se trata de un hombre viejo, despierta curiosidad, aunque también permite un grado de anticipación para responder qué es lo que crece y de qué forma; lo otro, el contrarrestar aquella imagen con la del decrecimiento y la proximidad de la muerte. Luego, el narrador aclara qué es lo que esto significa:

En su organismo, ya en total decadencia, en vías de descomposición y, finalmente, de putrefacción, algo se había engendrado, y, de acuerdo con todo proceso de gestación, tenía forzosamente que crecer. El señor Madrigal estaba, para expresarnos en términos de ginecología, ‘embarazado.’ (Piñera, 1999: 271)

Claro que este embarazo, no sería otro que el de un crecimiento para ir a morir. Un dato interesante es que descubre su “estado” en un momento en el que tomaba leche. Este hecho es rico porque da pie a pensar en las posibilidades de esa imagen y da entrada a uno de los pocos rasgos relativamente eróticos, cuando menos sexuales, del cuento. La leche puede ser tanto un elemento seminal y fecundador, así también el alimento que nace del cuerpo fecundado cuya función es dar de comer al cuerpo que de ahí ha nacido. Paradójicamente, será la leche, en una segunda ocasión, la que abrirá paso a la pérdida de “la ilusión de la vida” (Piñera, 1999: 273) y así al vaciamiento de sentido del mundo, que bien podría aludir a un vaciamiento de su consciencia y al desgaste de la memoria para preparar el momento previo a su muerte: “Tuvo un parto feliz: dos o tres boqueadas y el estertor final. Lo mismo que el recién nacido en su cuna, un cadáver – producto acabado del crecimiento del señor Madrigal – yacía en la cama” (Piñera, 1999: 274).

“El que vino a salvarme” (2008), cuyo protagonista es un hombre de 90 años, se estructura a través de la evocación de dos recuerdos. El primero: el haber sido obligado por el padre a despedirse de la madre agonizante en su lecho de muerte, y en ello ya hay una diferencia con el relato anterior en tanto que, los padres, aquí presentes, prefiguran la relación con la muerte, mientras allá un solo cuerpo recoge la imagen materna-paterna, aunque también sea, como en este segundo cuento, imagen dibujada desde las líneas de lo perezoso e ineludible. El otro recuerdo, es el haber presenciado, ya siendo adulto, un asesinato en un baño público, lo cual, desde entonces, habría de despertarle un padecimiento psicológico: la necesidad de saber a qué hora, en qué momento exacto habría de morir: “...Imaginemos a un viejo de ochenta años, listo ya para enfrentarse a la muerte; pienso que su idea fija no puede ser otra que preguntarse: ¿será esta noche?... (Piñera, 1999: 261-262).

Ambos recuerdos, regresan al final del cuento pues el hombre muere degollado –que junto al crimen del que es testigo es de los pocos detalles de mutilación – mientras, antes, su mirada había transitado entre una fotografía del padre, que se distorsiona, y la imagen de un hombre joven en el espejo, que sería su asesino y salvador. Aquí, por otro lado, no solo la vejez y la enfermedad son elementos importantes de la historia, también

lo es la reflexión en torno a la salud; reflexión que podría hacerse eco de las nociones que el filósofo Emile Cioran explora en un ensayo titulado “Sobre la enfermedad” (1986). Cito a Piñera (1999): “Cuando se está lleno de vida sólo se tiene tiempo para vivir y ‘vivirse’. Uno ‘se vive’ y se dice: ‘¡Qué saludable estoy, respiro salud por todos mis poros, soy capaz de comerme un buey, copular cinco veces por día, trabajar sin desfallecer veinte horas seguidas! ...’, y entonces uno no puede tener noción de lo que es morir y ‘morirse’” (Piñera, 1999: 262).

No puede olvidarse que esto es dicho por un hombre muy viejo que, deseoso y desesperado, espera que su vida termine. Esta conciencia sobre el cuerpo sano, falta, en gran medida, en la figura del señor Madrigal, quien, pese a admitir que “Lo que crece en mi ser no es una vida nueva” (Piñera, 1999: 273), no acierta a convocar concreta y abiertamente la imagen de la muerte con la misma consciencia y claridad que el otro. En su caso, todo ocurre por medio del narrador, quien posee un tono, como ya se ha visto, de médico que lleva a cabo un trabajo de observación y diagnóstico. De hecho, en algún momento le recomienda al señor Madrigal visitar un psiquiatra. Esto no es un detalle menor: se está tratando con textos literarios, textos escritos. Ello implica, en términos de la relación del cuerpo con la escritura y la enfermedad, o en este caso, la vejez, que no puede desatenderse el acto de escritura de Piñera, siendo este y la narración y los narradores, que a su vez se constituyen desde ahí, aquello a partir de lo cual con las palabras se forman tanto a los cuerpos envejecidos y mortuorios de ambos personajes; el espacio de encierro donde se hallan (el texto como límite y lo que parecerían ser sus hogares, luego sus camas y sus limitaciones físicas); así como el cuerpo mismo de cada relato. Es, pues, un efecto múltiple de creación e inscripción de y en cuerpos varios lo que ocurre. Aunque no podría afirmar si los textos por sí son cuerpos capaces de padecer algún tipo de enfermedad más allá de lo que su contenido pueda provocar en el lector. Para volver a “El que vino a salvarme” (2008) y recuperar así el comentario sobre la salud y el hecho de que cuando se goza de un buen estado físico no se piensa en la enfermedad ni en la muerte – aseveración que podría ser puesta en duda – acudo, pues, a Cioran. Es de notar, la cercanía, que no equivalencia, de las ideas. Cioran explica:

Cualesquiera que sean sus méritos, un hombre¹ saludable decepciona siempre. [...] No posee *la experiencia de lo terrible* que es la única que les confiere un cierto espesor a nuestros actos; y tampoco posee *la imaginación de la desgracia* sin la cual nadie podría *comunicarse* con esos *seres separados* que son los enfermos (1986: 89, mi énfasis).

A mi modo de ver, siendo, con sus diferencias, entre sí evocables, este enunciado y el comentario del cuento de Piñera, traen de vuelta el problema de la enfermedad y la posibilidad del enfermo y de los señalados bajo enfermedades aparentes, de poner en

¹Habría que preguntarse si por hombre entiende Cioran al ser humano. Esta podría ser un punto primario para otra lectura crítica.

tela de juicio la significación de la escritura con la que se inscribe la marca de lo enfermo en sus cuerpos, frente a la inconciencia de la salud o del cuerpo saludable. (¿Se encuentra en bienestar físico quien graba sobre otro la enfermedad o la definición de lo enfermo, o sólo puede inscribir lo enfermo quien también padece, o solo quien padece la marca puede ser capaz de señalarla?) Asimismo, visto desde la enfermedad, pueden alterarse las nociones que definen qué es, precisamente, un cuerpo en estado convaleciente, cosa que no implica la falta de un problema físico, sino el trato y concepción de ese fenómeno; y, por último, la capacidad del sujeto, cuyo cuerpo sufre, de asumir su enfermedad como otra forma de escritura o la escritura como otra marca que responde a su estado físico. “Carne que se emancipa, que se rebela y no quiere ya servir, la enfermedad es la apostasía de los órganos [...] Sanos los ignoramos; es la enfermedad quien los revela, nos hace comprender su importancia y su fragilidad y nuestra dependencia” (Cioran, 1986: 89).

Hay, para Cioran, una potencialidad emancipadora en la rebeldía del cuerpo enfermo.² Y esto es ya, junto a la escritura que pregunta e incómoda, otro escribir que ofrece una forma más de enfrentar las inscripciones sobre el cuerpo.

VI

En *Pájaros de la playa* (Sarduy, 1993) aparece este encuentro o desencuentro en el que, por un lado, la imagen de cuerpos jóvenes y sanos que se halla en los inicios de la novela, contrasta con la de los enfermos, los cuales, por otro lado, a diferencia de aquellos que están al aire libre, en la playa y bajo el sol, están confinados a vivir en un sanatorio del cual probablemente la mayoría no saldrá con vida y en el que sus cuerpos son utilizados para experimentos. Pero la vejez de estos cuerpos es, por lo general, efecto de una enfermedad, ‘el mal’, que bien podría hacer pensar en el SIDA, de acuerdo con algunos de los ‘tratamientos’ y síntomas descritos. De todas formas, yo preferiría no ser absolutamente concluyente con ello por respeto a la imagen que Sarduy eligiera y porque creo que su clarificación y establecimiento como una sola cosa, cuando en realidad el SIDA no sería el único mal en la narración, le restaría ambigüedad y riqueza a una imagen que por mucho es poderosa. Entonces, son viejos jóvenes o jóvenes envejecidos, son simulacros de ancianos encerrados en la espera de la muerte y como tales son todo cuanto su presencia y su visibilidad exponen y permiten percibir.

²Existen otros cuentos del mismo autor que por su tema y sus elementos habrían sido textos para traer a discusión, pero por razones de espacio tuve que dejarlos afuera. Igualmente, vale recordar el motivo central de la trama y colocarla frente a lo que se viene trabajando: Se les invita (o se les obliga) a las personas sanas a ingresar al hospital y fingir que están enfermos. Mientras que los enfermos reales, algunos terminales y moribundos, habrían de visitarlos cada tanto y fingir que estaban bien de salud. Con el tiempo, enfermos reales y fingidos terminan por confundirse. Además, es interesante la idea de que el hospital es un espacio que empeora la salud del paciente y de que se trata de un lugar donde este pierde el derecho a decidir sobre su cuerpo.

Uno de ellos, como ya comentara, es el Cosmólogo quien escribe como parte de la escritura misma de la novela, un diario, el cual, evidentemente, se puede leer, mirar y tocar. Y lo que escribe es, primero, lo que ve, los efectos de la enfermedad en otros, el paso repentino de la salud, en la que no se pensaba, a la atención total de la centralidad del cuerpo en la vida: “Llegamos a olvidar la vida [...] Así hasta que de repente, un día cualquiera, nos damos cuenta que el don, la gratuidad de que disfrutábamos nos van a ser retirados... (Sarduy, 1993: 154). Luego, trata las consecuencias del cuerpo enfermo en su escritura:

Nuestra escritura, por ejemplo, antes equilibrada y uniforme, en la que el pensamiento se encadenaba sin esfuerzo, legible, como la partitura en el fraseo de un gran pianista, hoy se desvía de la línea, tiembla, exagera puntos, acentos, banderines y tildes. Todo es borrón, tachonazo incongruente, sanguinaria ballesta. [...] Un pájaro de presa, ávido de nuestro propio desperdicio, se esconde en cada trazo. (Sarduy, 1993: 134-135) ³

Esto me parece central. Sarduy, con la textura, plasticidad y ritmo de sus palabras, logra que el lector pueda ver, pensar y sentir, cómo en la figura del Cosmólogo – y así posiblemente en la de él – la experiencia de la enfermedad se reúne con la experiencia de la escritura. Doble inscripción en un solo cuerpo porque el Cosmólogo se sustenta en tanto que es figura escrita por Sarduy; en tanto que, casi como un desdoblamiento ficticio, Sarduy hecho el Cosmólogo, o éste, en su plenitud de ficción literaria, se escribe y describe o es descrito y escrito; y en tanto que lo que condiciona todo ello, y a su vez se está escribiendo y describiendo, y que, como consecuencia, es narrado y construido con la inscripción del dibujo de las palabras, es la enfermedad que los ha empujado a posar sus imágenes-cuerpo sobre el cuerpo-papel.

La literatura es [...] un arte del tatuaje: inscribe, cifra en la masa amorfa del lenguaje informativo los verdaderos signos de la significación. Pero esta inscripción no es posible sin herida, sin pérdida. Para que la masa informativa se convierta en texto, para que la palabra comunique, el escritor tiene que tatuarla, que insertar en ella sus pictogramas. La escritura sería el arte de esos *grafos*, de lo que pictural asumido por el discurso, pero también el arte de la proliferación. La plasticidad del signo escrito y su carácter barroco están presentes en toda literatura que no olvide su naturaleza de *inscripción*, eso que podía llamarse *escripturalidad*. (Sarduy, 1999: 1154)

Estas palabras de Sarduy, que son parte de un fragmento titulado “Autor: Tatuador” de *Escrito sobre un cuerpo* (1999), recogen y aclaran, en gran medida, cuál ha sido lo que aquí he intentado hacer. También ayudan a entender algo de lo que ocurre con y a través

³ Acá otro conmovedor ejemplo: “Me tiemblan las manos. Cuando escribo, y en cualquier posición que me ponga, las letras son pataleantes garrapatas” (Sarduy, 1993: 165).

de la figura del Cosmólogo. En lugar de tomar distancia en el sentido de negación del estado físico en el que la enfermedad no se reconoce como propia; toma distancia en el sentido de volverse una especie de observador, – y más que eso, pues se encuentra paradójica e ineludiblemente integrado a lo que (le) sucede –; para que, en el desarrollo de sus reflexiones sobre la enfermedad y los enfermos, éstas revelen un cuerpo múltiple – el del personaje y el *de su* escritura – que va hacia una dirección distinta: la de unirse y emparentarse a su enfermedad por medio de la escritura y, desde ahí, renunciar a la vida y aceptar que habrá de morir: “Asumir la fatiga hasta el máximo: hasta dejar de escribir, de respirar. Abandonarse. Dar paso libre al dejar de ser” (Sarduy, 1993: 129). Y, por último, ser capaz de comprender que: “Detrás de las apariencias – las de las personas y las cosas – no hay nada” (Sarduy, 1993: 164).

Cuando Sarduy (1999) afirma que la inscripción, el tatuaje de la escritura, tiene un costo y que este supone la herida sobre el cuerpo y la pérdida de “algo”, para, que, convocados los “verdaderos signos de la significación” (1154) incidan y posibilitan lo que llama la “*escripturalidad*”, puedo pensar (y sentir) a la escritura desde las condiciones que sus consecuencias proponen en cuanto forma de generar, marcar y percibir al cuerpo, al trazo y a la enfermedad; o mejor, concebir la experiencia de escribir como lo que exige, recordando a Piñera, una entrega completa de la existencia que bien puede llevar a un cuestionamiento radical en el que el sujeto que pinta con palabras sobre los cuerpos, sanos o no, se encuentra ejerciendo una forma de violencia profundamente inquietante. Violencia tal vez emancipadora como los órganos enfermos que se resisten a la brutalidad de la vida. ¿Escritura que enferma? ¿Escribir para enfermar, escribir para sanar? ¿O para desde sí, desde el cuerpo marcado, promulgar una resistencia? “La palabra se hace un cuerpo y el cuerpo mío se hace una palabra” (Sarduy entrevistado por Joaquín Soler Serrano, véase *Sleeper Awake* (2009, [1977])).

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EMBERS RISING FROM THE ASHES: THE IMPACT OF NEOCOLONIALISM IN THE CARIBBEAN IN OONYA KEMPADOO'S *ALL DECENT ANIMALS*

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There is some debate as to whether the term ‘post-colonial’ can have any meaning whatsoever, given that the mechanisms of colonialism cannot by any stretch of the imagination be considered to have ceased to operate anywhere in the world up until the present. This is where the term ‘neocolonialism’ becomes useful. Consuela Bennett (2010: 81) notes that “the tides of neocolonialism will continue to flow, however. In fact, the process has just begun—a stubborn reality.” Considering that neocolonialism saturates then prevailing economic, political, and social systems of domination in our region, Oonya Kempadoo’s novel *All decent animals* (2013) brings into conversation the Caribbean as a marketplace for wealthy investors and multinational corporations to purchase land and gentrify property in order to increase their already excessive profit margins, displacing impoverished communities in the process. In the novel, such neocolonial tensions are in evidence in the relationship between Pierre, a European United Nations (UN) bureaucrat who is raced as white and gendered as male, and Atalanta, or Ata, an Afro-Caribbean Carnival designer who is raced as black and gendered as female. An array of themes run through *All decent animals*, including Pierre’s association with the United Nations, his involvement in land ‘development’ schemes in Trinidad, his sexualizing perception of Ata as a black Caribbean woman, his Eurocentric mindset, and his condescending attitude toward Ata’s career and her appreciation for Trinidadian nature and landscapes. Reading this literary work within a decolonial framework, it becomes evident that *All decent animals* opens up a space for the discussion of neocolonialist practices reflected in hegemonic understandings of ‘economics’, ‘development’ and ‘progress’ and their impact on Ata as a Caribbean artist and writer.

Kempadoo’s and Ata’s experiences seem analogous. Inspired by her own experiences with Carnival in Trinidad, Kempadoo left Guyana to study the arts in Europe in search of an art form that might correspond to her gaze and voice, but eventually returning to the Caribbean to “find what that art form might be”; she ended up involving herself in the many-faceted art forms connected to Carnival (Kempadoo, interviewed by Martin, 2013). Similarly, Ata’s journey to find her artistic medium is traced throughout the text,

as she grows both mentally and spiritually into her roles as a creator of Carnival costumes, as a graphic designer, and as a writer.

All decent animals focuses on the interconnection between time and place. Kempadoo never reveals where Ata is from, given that she arrives in Trinidad as if she is both in limbo and in an ongoing search for her roots. In an interview, Kempadoo states that Ata's understanding of herself to be "Caribbean and not an island national contributes to her seeming rootlessness, to help portray her trying to find her place in a globalized world" (*Washington Independent*, 2013). Later in the same interview, Kempadoo mentions that "when heritage involves more than one island/country/region, national identity seems irrelevant" (*Washington Independent*, 2013).

Upon her arrival in Trinidad, Ata is struck by the huge disparities that contrast the airport, the fast food establishments, the lavish, upper-class neighborhoods of Port of Spain, and other 'tourist-friendly' areas on the one hand, with the rural, marginalized, and neglected spaces on the other, such as the La Basse dump "that leaks human scavengers and corbeau vultures, heading over the hills," where her taxi driver comments that many people "don't like passing this way [...] 'cause of what them fellas used to do up so" (Kempadoo, 2013: 5). Tourists are exposed to the aesthetically appealing areas of Trinidad, rather than places that have been targeted for gentrification. As she travels, Ata shifts from being a spectator to becoming a part of nature, as she personifies the hills that she admires on her way:

They talk. Incessant, annoying, fanning and waving and calling. They laugh, they mock the radio, echoing whatever they hear. They are part of it, she knows. Plumage of the peacock island. How to live with the ugliness of the beauty we love? Or die with it? (Kempadoo, 2013: 5)

Ata is in a state of constant shifting, transitioning from the admiring esteem of an outsider to the spiritual connection of an insider with the natural scenery that encircles her. The hills might not reside in the tourists' area, but Ata recognizes they are a part of her own identities. She creates a spiritual relationship between her soul, her ancestry, and the nature that surrounds her.

Ata's train of thought lingers on Carnival culture and the displacement of beggars. As she passes Ma Pau Casino, Ariapita Avenue, and the police station, she notices a neglected place where Woodbrook vagrants reside. It is then that she asks herself "where do the vagrants go for Carnival? The places they rest in are taken over" (Kempadoo, 2013: 12). The same area they reside in for most of the year is the same area where Carnival-goers don their costumes and enjoy themselves. Ata, then, realizes the vagrants are marginalized, "pushed aside, ridiculed, and pitied" (ibid.). She reflects deeply on how neocolonial domination is reflected in her surroundings when she deduces that "while rich folks prance in their home square, the few brave homeless who dare to dance in their everyday costume are given a wide berth, out of fear or scorn –

‘respect’ – in the once-a-year show of equality” (Kempadoo. 2013: 12). As Ata observes these conditions, she contemplates how Carnival can also be manipulated and transformed from an event directed toward the all sectors of Trinidadian society into an event directed toward tourists and the propertied classes, marginalizing the most impoverished sectors of Trinidadian society in the process, despite the fact that they had grown up in Carnival culture.

Fraser, Ata’s friend who returns to Trinidad, is aware of schemes sponsored by international agencies such as the United Nations to ‘develop’ Port of Spain, thus gentrifying Trinidad’s metropolis and displacing impoverished communities. He observes how gentrification drives working class people to migrate to other countries in hopes of a financially stable future:

Is either you working in service—servitude for imported millionaires, building luxury villas for them—can’t pay yuh bills ‘cause yuh pay is shit, *or* you sell yuh piece’a heritage for U.S. dollars and get the hell out’a there. Is colonialism all over again, yuh understand? But dis time the owner not responsible for de slave. Whereas, long ago, the owner had to feed, clothe, give house and land, make sure they don’t get too sick – or else is his loss and fire in he skin. Now the government self, the blasted politicians, only selling out every last piece’s crown land, and is every man for theyself. (Kempadoo, 2013: 25)

Fraser emphasizes the government’s interest in attracting more investors to acquire more land for the ‘development’ of more resorts. He stresses how many people have no other choice but to migrate to Europe or the US because the food is less expensive there than in their homelands. Other members of these communities have no other choice but to join the military to survive and “to migrate again” (Kempadoo, 2013: 25) in order to provide for their families.

Neocolonial Eurocentrism, racism and sexism also manifest themselves in *All decent animals*, particularly through the character of Pierre, an expatriate working for the UN, who is smitten with lust the instant he meets Ata. When Pierre asks her what she does for a living, he seems “less interested in the answer than in the detail of her collarbone and sharp bare shoulders” (Kempadoo, 2013: 25). Pierre does not have any interest in what Ata wants to say to him; his eyes focus on her physique. Pierre stares at Ata as if she were a coveted object.

Ata is not the only Afro-Caribbean woman who Pierre exoticizes. Nzunghi Stuart, president of the National Organization of Women of Trinidad and Tobago, delivers a presentation in one of Pierre’s work meetings. Rather than listening to her speech, Pierre merely gazes at her, as he exclaims “Jesus, she has a presentation” and, bewildered, goes over her appearance and African dress (Kempadoo, 2013: 95). As Nzunghi discusses the UN *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*, Pierre daydreams about Ata’s body. The author uses imagery devices that

allude to the senses, especially the senses of taste and feeling, as Pierre imagines Ata's skin, hair, and features:

Atalanta, burning in the sun to darker shades of brown. Her moisture sometimes tastes of garlic and turmeric and sharp lemons mixed with salt. Hair, wiry like the springy questions she snaps. Skin, softest that slides around you, slips into your arms, heart, mouth. (Kempadoo 2013: 96)

Pierre's behavior indicates that his interest in Ata is predominantly carnal. His colonizing mentality makes him think of himself as the conqueror of Ata's beauty. For Pierre, Ata is the ideal trophy woman, a token for his own appreciation. His role as a romantic companion is more of a spectator than a lover. Clearly, Pierre's Eurocentric behavior blinds him from realizing that his inclination towards Afro-Caribbean women is dehumanizing. Several times, Pierre barely pays attention to Ata's words, for his mind is geared exclusively towards her body. Harvey Neptune (2001), in his article, titled "White lies: race and sexuality in occupied Trinidad," discusses the entitlement and control white hegemony attempts to exert over racialized bodies. Neptune questions "who can claim to distinguish confidently between their desire to act out fantastic sexual experiences with exoticized nonwhite women and what could have been their real romantic attachment to individual local women?" (2001: 8). This quest to govern non-white bodies is a pattern that not only advances neo-colonial hegemonies, but also dehumanizes and deprives people raced as non-white from autonomy and control over their own bodies.

The distance that Pierre insists on maintaining from anything that he considers to be non-European is quite evident in his Eurocentric gestures, ideological lenses, and perceptions towards cultures, landscapes, and people. He cannot comprehend the fascination that Ata has with the Caribbean, as well as the profound connection that she feels with Caribbean nature. There is no understanding on his part of how Ata moves with nature to reach out to her ancestors, through her love for the colors and textures of the rich flora and fauna of Trinidad, as when Ata asks Pierre to park the car to "stop for fresh cocoa flesh" (Kempadoo, 2013: 138). Her senses awaken with the taste and feeling of the cocoa flesh in her mouth, while Pierre remains dumbfounded by her enchantment with: "the jewel pods [that] have been catching the sun, warming sweet white pulp in their thick autumn-color cases. Pierre doesn't like the stuff. He watches her savoring it, but still stays silent" (ibid.).

Pierre's silence and Ata's fascination with the sensation of cocoa flesh illustrate how, even after centuries of European colonial and neo-colonial hegemonic rule, cultural resistance among marginalized Caribbean populations still constitutes a viable response to projects of invasion, such as gentrification. This is a concept that those who, like Pierre, take their white privilege and Eurocentrism for granted as 'natural' or 'universal', cannot seem to comprehend because they have never questioned the colonizing

agendas behind Western binaries, such as ‘civilization’ versus ‘savagery,’ and ‘culture’ versus ‘nature’. Pierre, therefore, fails to grasp Ata’s enthusiasm because her worldview differs from his.

It is important to remember, however, that Ata’s demeanor is that of “‘a nonbelonger’ of either Europe or the Caribbean, while [being] ‘unretractably entwined’ in all of these places” (Shade, 2019). Ata experiences constant movement from place to place in her wanderlust in search of a place to call home. She encounters a sort of rootedness in Trinidad, but she constantly shifts between the position of observer and the position of full partaker in the Caribbean experience. It is a situation many people from the Caribbean diaspora face when they return to the Caribbean. Kempadoo sympathizes with Ata to the extent that she also claims to be Caribbean, and with that, she becomes “an outsider wherever [she] live[s] in the Caribbean, but [she is] a believer at the same time” an ambivalent stance which she considers helpful to her as a writer (Kempadoo, interviewed by Martin, 2013).

Ata reflects on her artistic projects and their connections with her Caribbean identity, questioning her purposes and intentions: “She looks and tries to listen to her heart and mind, and what she could tell her about where she should be, what she should be doing, creating, making, mas, design, what? All she hears is landscape whispers” (Kempadoo, 2013: 137). In the same vein as her encounter with cocoa flesh, Ata is digesting Trinidadian landscape and nurturing her soul, appreciating not just the aesthetic of Caribbean beauty within nature, but also creating an ancestral connection with the land, trees, flowers, rain dew, and everything else that Trinidadian nature embraces.

In one passage, Ata is sitting despondently by the swimming pool, thinking about her friend Fraser who has been diagnosed with AIDS. Pierre notices her suffering but has nothing to say to her. Even in difficult times, Pierre reminds himself that, as a European man, he regards Fraser and Ata as inferior to him. There are many instances in which Pierre thinks Fraser comprehends that he “feels his empathy” and Pierre intends to “re-assure himself that because of Fraser’s understanding of British ways, he knows he is there for him from a distance. Ata sometimes helps him to remember this” (Kempadoo, 2013: 205-206). As much as Pierre would like to comfort Ata, he insists on maintaining his distance to avoid being ‘corrupted’. Whenever Pierre remains in his Eurocentric comfort zone, he feels safe and ‘uncontaminated’ by outside influences. His behavior also creates emotional distance between himself and Ata and a lack of commitment in their relationship. Pierre does not think that his position as a United Nations administrator contributes to gentrification; rather, Pierre envisions this project as a tool for the ‘modernization’ and ‘development’ of Port of Spain to increase tourism and encourage business activity, contrasting his efforts with what he considers to be the ‘wasteful’ and unnecessary’ activities related to Carnival, including Ata’s own work in costume design:

Who has the space to keep the [Carnival] costume remnants, anyway? And what if half of this effort could be channeled into less waste, more necessary things? But wasn't this temporariness and constant change the very essence of this island's history and culture? (Kempadoo, 2013: 204)

Examining neocolonial practices in *All decent animals* makes me reflect upon how neocolonialism operates on Puerto Rico. Being a US colony which is effectively ruled by a *junta* of US bankers and their cronies appointed by the government in Washington DC, Puerto Rico has also become a target for investors who are purchasing the island's land and beaches, turning them into expensive resorts for tourists, while displacing impoverished and racially marginalized communities. Gentrification is visibly present in San Juan and other municipalities, such as Rincón, where local communities have been transmogrified into touristic playgrounds.

However, unlike Ata, Puerto Ricans' identities are much more focused on Puerto Rico in particular, rather than on the Caribbean in a more general sense. Puerto Rican nationalist discourses and nostalgic colonial Hispanocentric discourses, both aggressively propagated by the island's symbolic elites, prevent Puerto Ricans from identifying themselves as Caribbean first, Puerto Rican second. These discourses have led to stale and paralyzing debates as to what constitutes a 'real Puerto Rican.' For example, many Puerto Ricans do not consider Nuyoricans (Puerto Rican descended people residing in New York) to be 'fully Puerto Rican' because of linguistic, regional, and cultural differences. This is a particularly divisive and debilitating manifestation of neo-colonialist deception, since there are now more Puerto Ricans living in the US than on the island itself.

Although the writing style in Kempadoo's novel is a "sensory experience: textures, fabrics, costumes, drum rhythms, colors of all vibrancies, tastes, heat, samba, sweat, sex" (Shade, 2019), *All decent animals* also conveys a powerful battery of more cerebral messages and reflections concerning the intersecting and oppressive dynamics of race, class and gender assignment in the Caribbean and beyond. The live embers in the ashes of the foundry of colonialism are being used to forge an innovative line of neo-colonial weapons to be wielded in the hands of the new explorers, conquerors and slave masters who are currently invading our region in the name of 'development', 'modernization', and 'establishing a business-friendly climate'. Under the auspices of transnational corporations, the bilateral and multilateral agencies that serve their interests, and our own corrupt national governments, gentrification and other forms of neocolonial invasion are rapidly intensifying. But, just as was the case under older paradigms of colonization, this intensification in neocolonial domination has been met by an intensification in resistance as well, giving rise to popular uprisings, from the LPK strike and protests in Guadeloupe in 2009 to the #RickyRenuncia mobilization in Puerto Rico in 2019.

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JÍBARA OR SPIK?: LANGUAGE AS A CREATOR OF PUERTO RICAN REALITY IN ESMERALDA SANTIAGO'S CUANDO ERA PUERTORRIQUEÑA

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Language has the power to educate, transform, inspire, and manipulate collective thinking. Born and raised Puerto Rican, the issue of national identity and pride has gone hand in hand with my ability to speak Spanish and English. I am the product of a shared reality where Spanish represents my pride and English represents my prospects. In this short article, I plan to share a brief history of the English language's fight for supremacy over the Spanish language in Puerto Rico. I will also give an example of how this is represented in literature through the work of author Esmeralda Santiago's *Cuando era puertorriqueña* (1994), and how the struggle of its main character, Negi, to master both languages mirrors my own reality today.

After US troops landed in Guánica in the southwest of the island on July 25, 1898, an acculturation campaign began by dehumanizing Hispanic culture through education programs. In his essay *Una cuestión de idioma: la lengua y la identidad nacional puertorriqueña*, Isidro Sepúlveda (1998) explains how English was essential to the planned assimilation of the island's population to the new colonial power, while Spanish became a symbol of resistance by Puerto Ricans:

Para Estados Unidos la imposición del inglés era el camino más rápido para acometer la asimilación de la isla al mundo anglosajón [...] Por otra parte, para los independentistas y nacionalistas puertorriqueños la defensa del español era el medio más seguro de preservación de una cultura y un pasado que los hacía esencialmente diferentes de la potencia colonial. (Sepúlveda, 1998: 32)

Puerto Rico went through some radical changes in the year 1899. After four centuries of Spanish rule, the US military and civil authorities brought to Puerto Rico different orientations and adversarial feelings towards Spain, remnants of the Spanish-American War. After the armed conflict, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines were transferred from territories of Spain to territories of the United States. The new US regime in Puerto Rico immediately imposed an agenda aimed at transforming their new colony and at

assimilating it culturally, in order to establish a firm base from which to project their economic and military power over Central America and the Caribbean.

Part of their plan was to educate Puerto Ricans with the cultural tools that they would need to be incorporated to US society and norms. This process of cultural assimilation was called Americanization. The first two educators sent on this endeavor were Dr. John Eaton and Dr. Victor S. Clark. These men understood that it was necessary to eradicate deeply rooted habits and beliefs among the citizenry of Puerto Rico if the English language and a US outlook on life were to dominate the sociopolitical mindset of future generations. Clark's 1899 opinion of Puerto Rican society was low, and in his view, it would be easy to re-educate Puerto Rico, whose people, in his view, had no national pride to begin with:

There does not seem to be among the masses the same devotion to their native tongue or any national ideal that animates the Frenchman, for instance, in Canada or the Rhine provinces. Another important fact that must not be overlooked, is that the majority of the people on this island do not speak pure Spanish. Their language is a patois almost unintelligible to the natives of Barcelona and Madrid. It possesses no literature and has little value as an intellectual medium. (Clark, 2015, [1899])

In his article "The Americanization of Puerto Rico," Pablo Samuel Torres (2016) reveals how most Americans viewed this perceived lack of national identity on the part of Puerto Ricans:

However, for the majority of Americans, especially the dominant classes, Puerto Ricans were not considered capable of governing themselves, much less assuming the rights and duties of U.S. citizens. From the imperial perspective of white, Protestant supremacy, Puerto Rico was inhabited by a racially, mixed population of Spanish background with Catholicism as their religion and an aristocratic government. To them, the island was not fertile ground for developing a civilized culture. From this perspective of material and cultural superiority, Puerto Ricans had to go through a long process of "Americanization" that would "civilize" them until they were capable of assuming the responsibilities of citizenship. (Torres, 2016: 1)

The United States, as the invading power, viewed Puerto Rican heritage as something that could be dismissed in favor of something that they considered better: the American way. Therefore, in the beginning of the twentieth century, Puerto Rico was bombarded by a great number of commissions, laws, and reforms with the goal of Americanizing the island via the English language.

After the invasion of Puerto Rico, the U S entertained the notion that any territory that was previously under Spain could be assimilated easily. In Puerto Rico's case, it was

important to consider that, to most of the political leadership, the arrival of the US meant hope for social, economic, and political reforms that were non-existent under Spain. The United States feared that if the island's education system retained its Spanish influence, it would become much harder to sway the population's sympathies in favor of the new government. On May 1, 1900, the Foraker Act was established, creating *el Departamento de Instrucción Pública*, [the Department for Public Instruction] (all translations are by the author, unless specified otherwise). Its first commissioner was Martin Grove Brumbaugh, who was charged with implementing an American-style educational system. He dissolved the Education Ministry which had been in place for the past four centuries. Then, Brumbaugh had the entire public-school faculty, most of whom were trained professors of either Antillean or Peninsular Spanish origins, fired and deported. He brought in a great number of Anglophone schoolteachers considered more 'friendly to the American cause.' The problem with this was that these schoolteachers only spoke English, and the island's main language was Spanish, and there were also great numbers of French and Italian speakers. In less than 18 months, after Brumbaugh took over, school absenteeism shot up to 98% as a result of the population speaking one language, and the teachers another. Those few children who did go to school were punished for speaking Spanish. The next thing Brumbaugh did, with the backing of the US Military Government, was to change each subject's curriculum, in order to 'Americanize' them. He rewrote the Puerto Rican history curriculum, sanitized it, and purged from it any data criticizing the US. In addition, he began to edit and doctor data, so as to exaggerate anything negative about the former Spanish authorities, as part of a national humiliation process which caused tremendous public outrage and prompted protests.

The next commissioner, Samuel McCune Lindsay, served from 1902 to 1904, and continued with Brumbaugh's policies by introducing English textbooks. In his opinion, as soon as the teachers were properly trained, teaching would be only in English. He sent some 540 teachers to the United States to study at Cornell and Harvard during the summer of 1904, and an exam was given to teachers with the purpose of selecting those who had best mastered English as the main criterion for hiring.

Roland P. Falkner, Lindsay's successor, further enforced the use of the English in schools by drawing up a plan in which weekly English preparation courses were taught by North American professors to Puerto Rican teachers over a 4 to 6 week period during the summer months. Attendance was mandatory and teachers who qualified to teach in English received a substantial raise in pay. Another part of the plan was a battery of examinations in English as well as other subjects. Teachers were obligated, by law, to take a yearly English examination, with the stipulation that anyone who failed would be dismissed. Teachers who failed would have two calendar years to retake the examination. Failure to pass the examination during the allotted time would entail the revocation of licenses and the invalidation of diplomas. It was under Commissioner Falkner that English was institutionalized as the official language of instruction in Puerto Rico's

public schools. Falkner's successor was Edwin Grant Dexter, who served from 1904 to 1907, and ordered the teaching of reading in Spanish to be postponed until the third grade and English instruction to begin in the first grade. He emphasized the process of Americanization in rural areas, where most of the population lived.

Commissioner Edward M. Bainter, who occupied the post from 1912 to 1915, had to face the consequences of the misguided decisions and policies of his predecessors, as the so-called *problema del idioma* [the language problem] mobilized great numbers of concerned parents and teachers who had become aware of how imposed Anglicization was displacing the Spanish language. These concerns were articulated thanks to the rise of the Teachers Association, which was founded in May of 1911. On December 27, 1912, at an assembly held in Arecibo, the Teachers Association demanded that all lessons in the first grade be taught in Spanish, and that until the eighth grade, some lessons could be given in Spanish while others could be given in English. The Teachers Association also recommended that rural primary schools should keep their curricula in Spanish, while secondary schools could incorporate English. On the basis of this petition, Law No. 35 was passed by the island's House of Delegates in 1913, but it was vetoed by the Upper House.

When Bainter resigned, Paul G. Miller took his place from 1915 to 1921. He proposed that instruction from first to fourth grade be in Spanish. Then, beginning in the fifth grade, teaching would take place in English, except for one subject class in Spanish language. This pattern of instruction would continue until 1934. It is worth mentioning that the first Puerto Rican born commissioner, Juan B. Huyke, who served from 1921 to 1929, was a man of strong pro-American sentiments. During his tenure, researchers from Colombia University conducted a study and results were presented during the summer of 1926. They recommended that children from first to fourth grade should be taught in Spanish. The study also concluded that there were no justifications to make English the language of instruction. Huyke, however, argued that children should learn English from an early age, because he thought that it would be easier for them to learn than it would be for older students. Huyke's ideas of language and education generated strong opposition from Puerto Rican thinkers, such as Juan J. Osuna, Epifanio Fernández Varga, Francisco Vicenty who rose up in defense of the Spanish language. Huyke's successor, José Padín Rodríguez, who held the position from 1930 to 1936, reestablished Spanish as the main instructional language in the primary grades and positioned English as an additional subject to be taught by those teachers who had mastered the language.

Under the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt, the pressure to make English the official language intensified. Roosevelt ordered the new Commissioner, José M. Gallardo, who served from 1937 to 1945, to make English the only language used in Puerto Rican schools. Meanwhile, there were efforts in the legislature to institutionalize Spanish as the language of the classroom. Senator Rafael Arjona Siaca proposed Bill 51, to make

Spanish the language of instruction in the education system, but the bill was vetoed by President Harry S. Truman. In 1946, the newly appointed Commissioner Mariano Villaronga declared his intention to make Spanish the language of instruction on all academic levels, which caused the US Senate to delay his confirmation as commissioner, thus forcing him to resign in 1947. His temporary replacement, Francisco Collazo, who occupied the post until 1948, conducted a survey of various high schools across the island that determined that Spanish was the better vehicle of instruction. Therefore, it was decreed that Spanish would be the official language used in schools until students reached middle school. Once in high school, English would be the main language.

Something important, however, happened in Puerto Rico by the end of 1948. For the first time, the people were allowed to elect their own governor: Luis Muñoz Marín. The new governor re-appointed Villaronga as Commissioner, and, under his tenure from 1949 to 1957, he finally decreed that Spanish would be the official language of instruction for the entire system of public education in Puerto Rico. There was to be legal equality in education between the two languages, with Spanish having preeminence. Nonetheless, after two generations of US domination, the idea had already taken hold in the minds of most Puerto Ricans that the acquisition of English and American life-ways represented the best avenues to the achievement of prosperity.

In *Cuando era puertorriqueña* Esmeralda Santiago (1994) explores the reality lived, not just by herself and her family, but also by countless other Puerto Rican families who seek better opportunities in the US. Her novel is a memoir about the experiences of a young girl growing up during the 1950s and 1960s and illustrates the ideological struggles of many Puerto Ricans who come face to face with American culture for the first time. In this memoir, we see Esmeralda, nicknamed Negi, struggling to find an identity between Puerto Rico, the country of her birth, and the US, the place she is now expected to call home at the age of thirteen. First, she tries to understand the differences between Puerto Ricans and Americans. This can be seen in a conversation between Negi and her father, where she asks him why Americans are called ‘gringos.’ Her father replies that Puerto Ricans gave them that nickname while the Americans call Puerto Ricans ‘spiks.’ Negi asks her father what the word ‘spik’ means and her father explains:

Father: *Bueno...hay muchos puertorriqueños en Nueva York, y cuando un Americano les habla, dicen: ‘Ay no spik inglis’ en vez de ‘Ay dont spik inglish.’ Se burlan de nuestro acento.*

Negi: *Pero los americanos tienen acento cuando hablan español.*

Father: *Si, es verdad. Los que no se preocupan de aprender el idioma bien....Eso es ser parte de un imperialista. Ellos quieren que se hagan las cosas a su manera, aún en nuestro propio país.*

Negi: *Pero eso no es justo.* (Santiago, 1994: 80)

Here, we see a young Negi learning about the conflicts between Puerto Ricans and Americans. Both have nicknames for each other and these nicknames reflect the stereotypes that each culture has of the other. With this exchange, our protagonist learns that she will always be seen by Americans as being an uneducated person for being born in Puerto Rico.

However, this does not mean that Negi will allow such stereotypes to shape her identity. And as a young child in Puerto Rico, she decides that her identity is that of a *jibara*. As a child, Negi wishes to be a *jibara* because that identity, portrayed through songs and poems, is a positive one. Those songs and poems are about how hard the *jibaro* has to work and, no matter how difficult life might be, the *jibaro* will always be rewarded with a respectable life, an independent livelihood and great national pride. What she saw as a child in Puerto Rico was the depiction of a proud country, whose imagery is celebrated through arts, music, and poetry. Negi mentions how, in Puerto Rico, stories and poems about *jibaros* are required reading in all grades at school and how every day her family listens to the radio show called 'The day breaker's club,' which plays traditional Puerto Rican music and poems. Negi tells her mother that she wants to be a *jibara* and her mother, who Negi calls Mami, replies that this cannot be, for she was not living in the rural areas of the island. Indeed, once the family moves to Santurce in the capital city of San Juan, Negi learns that being called and branded as a *jibaro* is an insult. City-dwelling people see the *jibaro* as an uneducated simpleton. We can understand why young Negi finds this confusing: how can we celebrate something while calling it inferior in the same breath? Negi recognizes the hypocrisy of looking down on real *jibaros* while celebrating them in many forms of art. Her family life is that of a *jibaro*, and her grandparents are real *jibaros*, but she knows better than to argue with her mother.

When Negi turns thirteen, her family moves to New York. At her new school, it is decided that Negi will have to repeat the seventh grade. Negi had been learning English at school in Puerto Rico, though obviously not enough to be considered fluent. She had to negotiate a deal with Mr. Grant, who works at the office of Negi's first school in Brooklyn, who decides that if she learns English by Christmas, she can stay in eighth grade. Negi knows that her success in New York depends on her ability to learn the language and impress the adults in charge at school. Negi works hard and becomes fluent enough. Once she graduates, she applies to the Performing Arts High School in Manhattan. She struggles during her audition, as she forgets the language and this fuels her fear of never getting out of Brooklyn.

We learn that this particularly bad experience did not deter Negi from pursuing her goals. She returned to the Performing Arts High School after graduating from Harvard, hoping to be featured on the bulletin board of successful former students. Negi had become, like the *jibaros* she used to admire as a child, resilient, hardworking, and proud. She was forced to leave her home and became accustomed to a new language and culture. Still, the rules at home remained the same, meaning that Puerto Rican culture and

ideals were still part of her daily life. There were times when Negi felt like a traitor for speaking English and getting used to an American way of life. Negi became a hybrid, able to navigate both cultures. Negi's pride in being a Puerto Rican motivated her to work harder to show that she is more than a stereotype. Her Puerto Rican identity allowed her to reinvent herself by adopting another language and culture to create a reality where she could thrive.

My own experience with the English language in Puerto Rico has been a pleasant one. I grew up watching Disney films, and I learned to imitate the sounds and follow the story through the images. When I went to third grade, my school established a pilot program in which all lessons, with the exception of Spanish and History, were to be given in English. Gradually, I started connecting words to my favorite movies and songs, until it became normal to take classes in English while speaking with my friends and family in Spanish. However, as time passed, I found myself thinking in English and felt that English was displacing my mother tongue. When I entered university, I had to relearn Spanish, not only because I lacked grammar skills, but also because my thinking process was atrophied by the two languages' fight for dominance. My degree in literature helped immensely, for I learned not just about authors and their body of work, but how, in their dominance of language, they were able to reflect realities and create messages that have become timeless.

I have come to realize what a gift it is to know more than one language, but at the same time how damaging it can be when one's mother tongue is displaced. Today, I teach English to a distrustful population. My students feel that learning English is an imposition. All of those decades of putting down Puerto Ricans for their Spanish language and Hispanic culture have sown their bitter harvest of resentment and fear of English and US culture. There is resentment at having to learn someone else's language to join the workforce, and fear of not mastering that language and being the object of ridicule. No matter how often I make my classroom a safe space for my students, there is always the anxiety of what happens once they are out there trying to find work and being forced to move to the US. I try to reassure my students that mistakes are part of the learning process, but there seems to be an unconscious understanding that being Puerto Rican is a disadvantage. So, before teaching English, I have to teach my students the advantage they already have in speaking Spanish, and the personal and professional benefits of being bilingual. They are amazed to know that even though I have never lived in the US, I feel comfortable with American pop culture.

Like Negi, I feel like a traitor. Despite my parents' best efforts, there was a time when I was more familiar with English-speaking artists than I was with Spanish-speaking ones. Still, the more I learn, the more I see the negative consequences of the displacement of one culture by another. For example, many Puerto Ricans of today love to celebrate Puerto Rican artists that achieve international fame. We dress our children as *jibaros* during *La semana de la puertorriqueñidad* [Puerto Rican identity week] and

sing our songs of old during Christmas. That said, we still look at people from rural areas as inferior and needing to learn more about the American ways of living that have ever greater influence on how we lead our lives. Our political leaders' desire to maintain good relations with the US has led to the continued devaluation of Puerto Rican culture. Many Puerto Ricans may know who Alexander Hamilton is, but do not know about important figures such as Francisco Oller, José de Diego, Eugenio María de Hostos, Luisa Capetillo, Mariana Bracetti, Julia de Burgos, Ana Roque de Duprey, and Lola Rodríguez de Tió. The exclusive use of English has caused gaps in our knowledge of the history and culture of Puerto Rico. Scholar and cultural anthropologist Ricardo E. Alegría stated in a 1966 report on the status of Puerto Rico that:

La historia de Puerto Rico y la vida de nuestros hombres ilustres era ignorada en nuestras escuelas, donde eran temas obligados de estudio la historia de los Estados Unidos y la vida de las grandes figuras norteamericanas, y donde nuestros estudiantes debían celebrar con actos apropiados las fiestas tradicionales de Estados Unidos (Alegría, 1998, [1966])

Nonetheless, there is something that remains essential to the Puerto Rican identity: the Spanish language. As Joaquín Bosque Maurel (1998) states in his essay “El español y la cultura hispánica en Puerto Rico (1898-1998),” the English and Spanish languages have specific roles in Puerto Rican lives:

lo singular de Puerto Rico es que, en esta atmósfera ‘americana’ y globalizadora, el inglés es un mero instrumento de trabajo de uso normal y diario sólo por una parte muy limitada de la población de la isla [...] el español [...] se ha convertido en la bandera de la puertorriqueñidad y de la Isla del Encanto. (Bosque Maurel, 1998: 38)

Bosque Maurel goes on to say that this has created a set of social and cultural realities in Puerto Rico that has found support and means of expression in academic institutions like the University of Puerto Rico. Even though it was founded in 1903, “en el momento de máxima presión anglosajona y como un instrumento que facilite la penetración cultural americana, ha sido – y es – el fundamento del uso literario y científico del español” (Bosque Maurel, 1998: 381). It was thanks to this institution that I was able to learn the rich history of both languages, to be aware and careful of not letting one language displace the other. Both are the reality of Puerto Rico, but Spanish is our mother tongue and it is rich and beautiful. We have made Spanish unique with our songs, literature, idioms, and yes, even memes. As María Vaquero and Amparo Morales contend, Puerto Rico has a language of its own:

[La] situación geográfica de Puerto Rico, favorable a todo tipo de influencias lingüísticas desde la época colonial, explica la riqueza léxica de su español caribeño. Desarrollada a lo largo de los siglos, esta variedad regional es el

resultado de sucesivas convivencias étnico-culturales que, integrándose en una realidad social compleja, motivaron su perfil actual... El léxico peninsular trasplantado a Puerto Rico, no sólo fue adoptando palabras de las lenguas autóctonas –los indigenismos–, de las lenguas africanas –los afronegrismos–, y del inglés y otras lenguas –anglicismos, galicismos–, sino que, de forma paralela al acriollamiento de los hablantes, fue adaptándose, con la lengua misma, a la nueva realidad del mundo antillano. (Vaquero & Morales, 2005: 9)

It is thanks to the Spanish language that we have not disappeared and dissolved into the ‘melting pot’ of US culture. Thus, the Spanish language is at the core of our Puerto Rican identity and our everyday reality.

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***CORAZÓN QUE RÍE, CORAZÓN QUE LLORA:* UN DIÁLOGO CON EL PENSAMIENTO CARIBEÑO**

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Corazón que ríe, corazón que llora (Condé, 2019, [1999]), relato autobiográfico de Maryse Condé originalmente publicado en 1999, es una reflexión sobre la forma de entender la realidad de los antillanos de su Caribe francófono enmascarada en la ficcionalización de hechos de la vida de la autora. Condé plantea en este texto que la vida de los caribeños necesariamente está ligada a un compromiso con la reflexión sobre los preceptos epistemológicos que pensadores de la región han creado para exponer las formas en que los habitantes de la región entienden su realidad, su historia y su cultura. Existe un desplazamiento desde la cuestión de la identidad como preocupación central de muchos escritores del Caribe hacia la preocupación por la cuestión del pensamiento, de la conceptualización y la narración de la realidad y sus actores. De la mano con ese debate, el texto de Condé trabaja el problema de la descolonización mental y artística y su angustia frente a la imitación o rechazo de las formas estéticas de los antiguos colonizadores.

Es necesario señalar que la crítica sobre la obra de Condé se ha centrado en la revisión de la historia y del rol del legado cultural de los afroantillanos que ella plantea (véase Cremades Cano, 2013), en la resignificación de los roles y patrones heteronormativos impuestos por la sociedad patriarcal colonial y poscolonial (véase Vidal Sierra, 2013) y en menor medida, en los aspectos de la vida de la autora que programa el universo simbólico de sus textos (véase Asunción Alonso, 2018).

La revisión de su diálogo con el pensamiento afroantillano en sus obras no ha merecido tanta atención por parte de esa crítica. Asimismo, obras como *Yo Tituba, la bruja negra de Salem* (Condé, 1999, [1986]) ha recibido gran parte de la atención, mientras que el resto de su producción ha sido casi ignorada por los académicos interesados en la producción literaria de la región. Este trabajo analizará la propuesta estética de Condé en esa aproximación filosófica-biográfica en relación con el pensamiento de la intelligentsia afroantillana del siglo XX y con las formas de lidiar con la preocupación por la oposición originalidad/ imitación en relación con la estética de las metrópolis.

Diálogo, reflexión y crítica del pensamiento caribeño

Es necesario en este punto esbozar algunas consideraciones en relación con el pensamiento caribeño. En primer lugar, cabe señalar que en el Caribe existe un grupo de trabajos de *performers* y académicos de la región que en un intento por descentrar el conocimiento occidental y de descolonizar la mente de sus habitantes, plantean formas de aprehender el ser, la realidad y la historia haciendo uso de saberes heredados de las culturas que confluyeron en la construcción del Caribe. La cuestión central alrededor de la cual ha girado la mayoría de las propuestas de pensamiento de la región es la de identidad. Estas propuestas tienen su punto de partida en las posiciones esencialistas como la negritud y que corresponde a la literatura de reconexión, continúan con las teorías basadas en la noción del sincretismo cultural y racial como el criollismo y culminan con planteamientos que superan los binarismos coloniales como la criollización y la relación propuestas por Glissant, al igual que la noción de bastardía construida por Walcott.

En este artículo, propongo una segunda línea de pensamiento caribeño en la que se inscribe Condé y que se basa en la revisión de esa construcción epistemológica para reevaluar algunos de los postulados tomados como incuestionables por la intelligentsia caribeña misma. Se trata de una reflexión que involucra un auto cuestionamiento y un rastreo cuidadoso de esos postulados a partir de la experiencia personal que los lleva a conclusiones que son producto de esos procesos intuitivos y no de la conceptualización y la aplicación de teorías a objetos culturales siguiendo procesos deductivos.

Condé propone una conversación con diferentes planteamientos epistemológicos producidos “acá” (el Caribe antillano) en varias de sus obras, *Yo Tituba* (Condé, 1999, [1986]) y *Traversée de la mangrove* (Condé, 1989) son ejemplo de eso, pero es en *Corazón que ríe, corazón que llora* donde esto se constituye en tema central pues la exposición de los hechos de su vida sirve al propósito de exponerlos y reflexionar sobre ellos. Condé usa un tono y un lenguaje acre, mordaz y directo, en algunos casos; en otros, emplea el sarcasmo y la ironía para criticar a los exponentes de ese pensamiento y a sus ideas. Pero, sobre todo, su efecto esencial es la *performance* como práctica social. Como lo propuse arriba, se trata de cambiar del ‘being’ (identidad) al ‘doing’ (actuar). Condé entiende, como lo teorizó Richard Schechner (2013), que “people are increasingly finding the world not a book to be read but a performance to participate in” (25). Véase *performance* en el Caribe afroantillano responde a las dinámicas de la epistemología occidental frente a los procesos de descolonización mental liderados por la intelligentsia caribeña.

Evidentemente, la teoría que más concentra su atención es la propuesta de Fanon sobre los sentimientos de inferioridad cultural racial de los afrodescendientes de las Antillas frente a los blancos de las metrópolis expuestos en su libro *Pieles negras, máscaras blancas* (Fanon, 2009 [1952]). Aunque Condé rechaza el hecho de que esos sentimientos conlleven la adopción de *performances* imitadas de estos últimos, como lo palpa en

su propia familia, particularmente, en sus padres, ella no lo acepta sin antes ‘rumiarlo’, sin reflexionar profunda y cuidadosamente acerca de esta afirmación. Cuando describe a sus padres como los “Supernegros” por no sentirse inferiores por su color, por pensar que la cultura occidental era lo único que valía y agradecer a Francia por haberles permitido acceder a ella, se pregunta “¿Es esto vivir “alienado?” (Condé, 2019, [1999]: 29). Esta es su reflexión cuando narra los primeros días de su vida. Su propuesta es procesar esa conceptualización a partir de revisar los acontecimientos de su vida a lo largo de un período de tiempo extenso. Su respuesta vendrá cuando ya es adolescente. En ese momento de su vida se da cuenta de que París “era una ciudad sin sol, una celda de áridas piedras, un ir y venir en meros autobuses donde los desconocidos comentaban sin disimulo” (Condé, 2019, [1999]: 126). París se convierte aquí en el *locus eremus* muy común en otros escritores del Caribe que deben emigrar a los centros metropolitanos y que deben dejar atrás su Caribe, su *locus amoenus*.

Como en el caso del García Márquez de *Doce cuentos peregrinos* (1992) la visión del paisaje europeo se construye a partir de una contraposición con el paisaje de acá (el Caribe). En la escuela de París a la que asistía, Condé tiene una epifanía luego de leer sobre la literatura de sus Antillas y sobre su historia:

la clase a la que pertenecía no tenía nada que ofrecer y empecé a cogerle tirria. Por su culpa era yo una sosainas, una mala copia de los francesitos que me ro deaban, tenía “piel negra, máscara blanca” como escribiría Franz Fanon pensando en mí (Condé, 2019, [1999]: 133).

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También, empieza a rebelarse contra los que los oprimen usando sus propios insultos, verbigracia, el uso del diminutivo que le aplicaban a ella cuando le decían “negrita”. En varias ocasiones, ella usa ese diminutivo cuando llama a los franceses “francesitos” como una forma de rebajamiento como se evidencia en una de las citas anteriores.

Lenguaje, tono y autocrítica

Asimismo, Condé descubre que solo a través de un lenguaje y un tono directo esos sentimientos de inferioridad de los afroantillanos frente a la cultura metropolitana asumida como máscara puede ser desenmascarada para que se adquiera conciencia de la impostura que se está adoptando. Por eso no tiene problemas en llamar a su padre “pedante” (Condé, 2019, [1999]: 51) y considera que su familia “iba por ahí como si su mierda no olierá, una familia de negros que se las daban de blancos” (54). Nótese el uso de palabras coloquiales con connotación negativa como “mierda” o “negros” que demuestran que no está interesada en ser políticamente correcta.

Asimismo, emplea un tono despiadado para revelar verdades que se quieren mantener ocultas para evitar ser señalados. Así se observa cuando habla de su abuela y su madre: “una foto sobre el piano de cola mostraba a una mulata con la cabeza cubierta, frágil, víctima de toda una vida de exclusión y de cabeza gacha: “Sí, señor. Sí, señora”. Mi

madre, pues, creció soportando las humillaciones de los señoritos, entre las cacerolas de las cocinas burguesas” (Condé, 2019, [1999]: 91). En este caso el tono despiadado se usa contra los miembros de su propia familia, y más aún contra su propia madre, con el fin de exhibir su capacidad de autocrítica y al mismo tiempo mostrar cómo algunos sujetos del Caribe pueden haber abandonado la capacidad de mirar sus debilidades y defectos al situarse en la posición contestataria que desplazaba la jerarquía del binario colonial del sujeto blanco al negro y que solo mostraba sus aspectos positivos, sus herencias no blancas y ocultaba lo negativo y la herencia occidental.

En otros casos Condé usa la ironía y el sarcasmo. Su uso implica un acto de habla perlocutivo que busca motivar una reacción de cualquier índole en el lector. Como ha teorizado Hutcheon (2005) “irony has an evaluative edge and manages to provoke emotional responses in those who “get it” and those who don’t, as well as in targets and in what some people call its ‘victims’” (2)¹. Los objetivos primordiales de Condé al emplear la ironía son, en este sentido, desvirtuar lo que las pieles negras ven de positivo en las máscaras blancas y mostrar la mecanización que estas implican. Un ejemplo de esto lo encontramos en la descripción que Maryse, la protagonista de *Corazón que ríe, corazón que llora*, hace de un oficio religioso en la isla usando un tono marcadamente irónico:

Blancos a diestro y siniestro. Blancos en el banco delante de nosotros. Venidos de todos los rincones de La Pointe. Hombres, mujeres, niños. Viejos, jóvenes, bebés de teta. Nunca había visto tantos blancos juntos como en la misa de doce. Se diría que la catedral les pertenecía. Qué Dios era blanco. (Condé, 2019, [1999]: 102-103)

Nótese cómo la ironía muestra la falsedad de los negros que imitan la forma de vestir y los hábitos de los blancos. Incluso la figura de Dios tampoco escapa a la ironía y su uso persigue mostrar cómo la máscara blanca los lleva al extremo de racializar a Dios. En este sentido, la ironía intenta sacarlos del automatismo que la adopción de máscaras ha ocasionado. Sarah E. Barbour (2004) lo describe de la siguiente manera cuando analiza este recurso en *Yo Tituba, la bruja negra de Salem*: “they also contain elements of irony and parody that challenge the expectations a reader might bring to all her fiction. Though perhaps less obvious in Conde's early novels, a certain ambivalence characterizes all of Conde's work” (1)². Barbour (2004) sugiere aquí que la ironía en Condé es un recurso que se va madurando con el tiempo y acentuándose en sus últimos trabajos. En *Corazón que ríe corazón que llora*, Condé insiste en ese tipo de tono a lo largo del texto: “Al llegar a nuestro banco, teníamos que persignarnos, como una autómatas, o

¹ “la ironía tiene una faceta evaluativa y se las arregla para provocar respuestas emotivas en aquellos que “consiguen” y aquellos que no, al igual que en objetivos y en lo que la gente llama sus víctimas”.

² Ellos también contienen elementos de ironía y parodia que retan las expectativas que un lector pueda traer a toda su ficción. Aunque quizás menos obvio en las primeras novelas de Condé, una cierta ambivalencia caracteriza toda la obra de Condé.

trataba de imitar el gesto solemne de mi madre” (2019, [1999]: 100), “tenías que ponerte un sombrero que te arrancaba los pelos, zapatos de charol que te apretaban, leotardos de algodón que daban calor” (101). Pero no estamos aquí frente a un comportamiento fruto de la alienación, sino uno enseñado, una *performance* inculcada desde el hogar y guiada por el convencimiento de la necesidad de la máscara blanca. Toda la sociedad afroantillana de *Corazón que ríe, corazón que llora* sigue esa *performance*: “las viudas, invisibles tras sus velos oscuros, los hombres, con aquellos brazaletes negros cosidos en las mangas de las camisas, los niños pequeños autómatas, caminando mecánicamente.” (Condé, 2019, [1999]: 66). Todo parece ser parte de un libreto aprendido que responde a una interiorización de esos sentimientos de inferioridad, de necesidad de imitación de lo que consideraban más ‘civilizado’.

Performance y deconstrucción de automatismos

La Maryse del texto propone una solución: una ‘*performance* desviada’, uno que no acepte pasivamente ni los patrones culturales foráneos ni los originados desde acá sin antes reflexionar acerca de ellos. Esa Maryse permite que una niña blanca llamada Anne Marie, la golpee y la ultraje y señala la necesidad de que los miedos antiguos cicatricen (Condé, 2019, [1999]: 64), para evitar repetir la historia del negro y el negrero y evitar replicar el binario de opresión/ rechazo, imposición/ rebeldía. En otras palabras, rompe la *performance* de abusar, tratar como inferior (actuada por el blanco), rebelarse/ mostrarse como no inferior (actuada por el negro). Algo similar ocurre con su *performance* en el sepelio de su nana la Tata Julie. La norma es no mostrar sentimiento alguno, quizá para no demostrar debilidad y con ello inferioridad. Maryse, contrario a eso, llora e hipa y, en consecuencia, es reprendida por su madre.

Pero es a través de una *mise en abyme* como Condé expone su estrategia de deconstrucción de esa *performance*. En el cumpleaños de su mamá, Maryse realiza una *performance* para halagar a su madre. Se trata de un sainete en el que representa a su madre convirtiéndose en una de las hermanas Gorgonas. Eso genera la desaprobación de los miembros de su familia y la decepción de su madre y su llanto. Maryse comenta cuando eso sucede que ella “había conseguido amansar la fiera” “domesticar al monstruo” (Condé, 2019, [1999]: 97) para luego arrepentirse de lo hecho y señalar que “No hay que decir la verdad. Nunca nunca. No a los seres queridos” (97). Lo remarcable en este punto es que ella con una *performance* en la que se rehúsa a usar la máscara de seguir lo que se le ha inculcado, deconstruye la norma basada en el uso de esa máscara. Esto enfatiza su propuesta de que la realidad “real” es solo *performance* y además expone su rechazo a las nociones de identidad basadas en un esquema contestatario de rechazo a todo lo que tenga que ver con la cultura del colonizador y de entronizar la cultura del colonizado. De ahí su desaprobación a la noción de negritud propuesta por Césaire (1969) y su adhesión a la idea del bastardo construida por Walcott en toda su obra pero particularmente en los poemas *La goleta el vuelo* (1996) y *Un lejano grito del África*

(2012). Para ilustrar este planteamiento baste reseñar que al final del texto la narradora afirma: “La poesía de Césaire no me revolucionó como la prosa transparente de Zobel lo hiciera un par de años antes. Tras la primera lectura, juzgué que no estaba a la altura de la poesía de mis ídolos ingleses” (Condé, 2019, [1999]: 16).

Al colocar a los ingleses como ídolos, por encima de un escritor local de gran reputación como Césaire, plantea un giro de la adopción del arte de los caribeños y los preceptos epistemológicos que generó hacia lo occidental rompiendo la matriz rechazo de lo heredado/ adopción exclusiva de lo propio que valida ese esquema binario característico de la colonialidad del poder. La Maryse de esta autobiografía se convierte, por ese motivo, en una bastarda que acepta lo occidental que hay en ella y que no tiene problemas en mostrarlo. Tampoco exhibe temor al rechazo por hacer eso. Es la bastarda que acepta que una mujer blanca representa su ideal de belleza “con arrobo y voz apasionada” (Condé, 2019, [1999]: 106) y hace caso omiso a la cara de desaprobación de su madre; aunque intuye que su madre tiene razón al recriminar su actitud, “Al mismo tiempo, no me sentía culpable” (106). Su aceptación de que ha recibido una educación ‘negrista’ (167) cuando en una discusión sobre Haití siente simpatía por François Duvalier solo porque es más negro que sus contrincantes mulatos, sugiere su despertar hacia la ‘bastardía’, hacia perder o ir en contra de lo que se considera son sus características originales. Cuando ya es adulta, Maryse se da cuenta de que el esencialismo negrista que se constituyó en el pilar del pensamiento afroantillano no puede ser el fundamento teórico para entender su ser en el mundo. Es solo aceptando y procesando lo que se le ha legado por el colonizador, así sea ‘indeseado’, poniéndolo a dialogar con legados más aceptados y abriéndose a la influencia de otras culturas y formas de pensar (la anglosajona, por ejemplo, como lo sugiere la Maryse escolar) como puede acercarse a la Relación como la entendió Glissant (2010).

Conclusiones

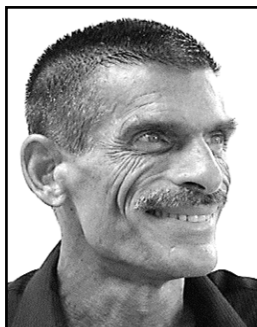
Maryse Condé madura reflexiones expuestas en novelas anteriores y se decide a exponerlas y procesarlas en *Corazón que ríe, corazón que llora*, un texto “filosófico” y autobiográfico. Condé reflexiona sobre la propuesta de Fanon acerca de los sentimientos de inferioridad de los afroantillanos frente a los antiguos colonizadores para analizar los conceptos de identidad y de comprensión de las formas en que el caribeño debe interactuar con las demás culturas del orbe y los sujetos “otros”. Condé se inclina por la bastardía, por alejarse de una idealización purista del ser caribeño, por aceptar y procesar la herencia de la cultura occidental, así como por la influencia recíproca de las culturas que se encontraron a partir del ‘descubrimiento’ y la colonización de América, África y Asia. Ella encuentra en la *performance* una estrategia para desenmascarar esa visión esencialista y las máscaras blancas asumidas por sus semejantes. Al mismo tiempo, muestra cómo sus prácticas sociales son enseñadas desde el hogar y convertidas en rituales, en automatismos. El lenguaje directo, descarnado y políticamente incorrecto

y la ironía también le sirven al propósito de desenmascarar la no autenticidad de esas *performances* inculcadas y motivar una reacción de los lectores ideales. La ironía busca desnudar lo ‘falso’ de los comportamientos de los miembros de su comunidad y llevar a estos a ser conscientes de esa característica y a abandonar esas formas de actuar como resultado de esa concientización.

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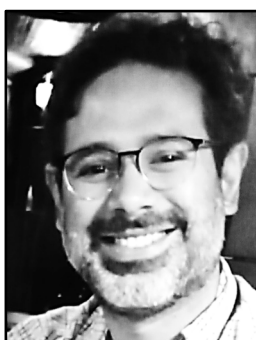
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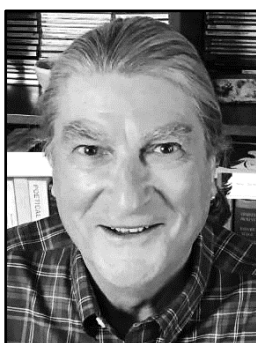
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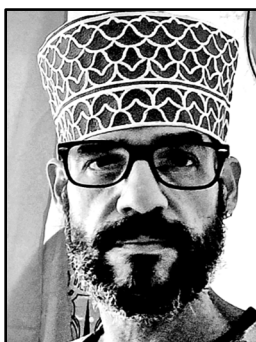
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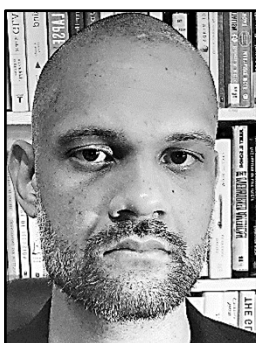
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