

This volume, *Southern Resonances: Southern Epistemologies, Southern Praxes and the Languages, Literatures and Cultures of the Greater Caribbean and Beyond*, is a collection of peer reviewed articles that present a critical perspective on the languages, literatures, and cultures of the Greater Caribbean and beyond. The book is part of a two-volume set published annually since 2009, which provides a platform for recent writing from and about the Greater Caribbean in general in one volume and about the Dutch Caribbean in particular in the other. The contributing authors include a wide range of voices old and new from the Caribbean and beyond. The online versions of the 30 volumes published in this series between 2009 and 2024, all versions of the 30 volumes published in this series between 2009 and 2024, all the covers of which are shown here, 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>



Southern Resonances

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Delgado | Rutgers

Southern Resonances: Southern Epistemologies, Southern Praxes and the Languages, Literatures and Cultures of the Greater Caribbean and Beyond



Edited by
Nicholas Faraclas
Ronald Severing
Elisabeth Echteld
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UNIVERSITY
OF CURAÇAO
DR. MOISES DA COSTA GOMEZ



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Literatures and Cultures of the Greater Caribbean and Beyond

**Southern Resonances:
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Literatures and Cultures of the Greater Caribbean and Beyond**

Volume 2

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Volume 2

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Cover: An overview of the covers of the 30 volumes published over a 15-year period (2009-2024) which contain a wide range of articles including the proceedings of the Eastern Caribbean Islands Cultures Conference, ECICC, or the Islands in Between Conference, organized by the University of Puerto Rico at Río Piedras, the University of West Indies, UWI, the Fundashon pa Planifikashon di Idioma, and the University of Curaçao, UoC.

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Introduction and acknowledgements

In 2004, the Fundashon pa Planifikashon di Idioma (the Language Planning Institute of Curaçao) organized the Curaçao Creoles Conference (CCC2004), an international conference on Creole languages. At CCC2004, three of the world's leading associations for the study of Creole languages, the Society for Pidgin and Creole Linguistics (SPCL), the Society for Caribbean Linguistics (SCL), and the Association of Portuguese and Spanish Lexically Based Creole Languages (ACBLPE), came together for the first time. The participating researchers responded to the CCC2004 call for papers to present and publish the results of their work, which resulted in the publication titled *Linguistic Studies on Papiamentu* (Faraclas, Severing & Weijer (Eds.), 2008). This fruitful collaboration led to the start of a series of publications that became linked to the already existing annual meetings of the Eastern Caribbean Islands Cultures Conference or The Islands in Between Conference on the Languages, Literatures and Cultures of the Eastern Caribbean, which held its 11th meeting in Curaçao in 2008. The very first volumes had the guiding titles *Leeward voices* and *Re-centering the 'Islands in Between'* (Faraclas, Severing, Weijer & Echteld (Eds.), 2009).

We now celebrate the joyful fact that the collaboration that was initiated earlier (2004) has now yielded 15 years of uninterrupted publications. The collaboration that started between the Fundashon pa Planifikashon di Idioma (FPI), University of the Netherlands Antilles (UNA), and the University of Puerto Rico at Río Piedras (UPR) was expanded with the participation of the University of West Indies, Barbados (UWI). The books are currently published by the University of Curaçao and the University of Puerto Rico at Río Piedras.

The two publications: *Southern Resonances: Southern Epistemologies, Southern Praxes and the Languages, Literatures and Cultures of the Greater Caribbean and Beyond*, together with *Southern Entanglements: Southern Epistemologies, Southern Praxes and the Languages, Literatures and Cultures of the Dutch 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 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 28 volumes, together a total of 30 volumes published in this series between 2009 and 2024, 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

**SOUTHERN EPISTEMOLOGIES,
SOUTHERN PRAXES AND LANGUAGE
IN THE CARIBBEAN AND BEYOND**

FRENCH LEXICAL ITEMS IN KRIO, WITH NOTES ON WEST AFRICAN PIDGIN FRENCH (WAPF)

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Abstract

While the finer details of his account have been questioned by some historians, we know that in 1366 AD the Frenchman Jean de Rouen sailed to the Sierra Leone coast in his ship the *Notre Dame de Bon Voyage*, nearly a century before the arrival of Portuguese. In this article we consider the possible influences of French on Krio, the variety of West African Pidgin English/West African English lexifier Creole spoken in Sierra Leone. We also include some notes on West African Pidgin French.

Key terms: Krio, West African Pidgin French, West African Pidgin English, English lexifier Creoles, French lexifier Creoles

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Introduction: The French presence on the Upper Guinea Coast

Of the 26 items attributed to French that are discussed here, however, fewer than half are likely to have come directly from that language. That Krio contains a significant amount of French in its makeup was thought to be the case by a number of writers; in 1885, one journalist listed it second only to English in its composition (Anon., 1885, p. 7). In 1888, Cole wrote “... our vernacular ... has already allied to it, at least three European languages, English, French and German” (p. 2). Reynolds (1897, p. 3) believed that Krio had “an introduction of the French and German jargons,” and Kup (1975, p. 156) placed it ahead of Yoruba in his own list, writing that Krio was “mainly a mixture of English, German, French, Yoruba, Ibo, Portuguese and local languages.” Most recently, Johnson (2018, p. 80) saw Krio as “a fascinating mix of English, African, Portuguese, French and other languages.” It scarcely needs pointing out that English is considerably more “mixed” than Krio. English has retained less than 30% of its core of direct retention, compared with Krio’s ±85%.

While the finer details of his account have been questioned by some historians, we know that in 1366 AD the Frenchman Jean de Rouen sailed to the Sierra Leone coast in his

ship the *Notre Dame de Bon Voyage*, nearly a century before the arrival of Portuguese. His account named his anchorage the Baie de France, which may have been what the English first called Frenchman's Bay, later St. George's Bay, and now Kru Bay. On returning to France he formed the company of "Norman Merchants of Dieppe and Rouen," which then sent four ships back to Sierra Leone, establishing claim to what is now Gambia Island at the mouth of the Bunce River, and naming it Petit Dieppe (Brown, 1892, pp. 133-139).

In 1639, the explorer Claude Jannequin, Sieur de Rochfort, visited the Sierra Leone River and reclaimed the island as French territory and establishing a settlement at Burré on the nearby coast, de Rouen's earlier claim evidently having been forgotten. But "visiting French ships, unless sufficiently well-armed, were loath to call upon their countrymen there, because it was too close to the English at Bunce Island who regarded all Frenchmen as interlopers" (Kup, 1962, p. 48). Forty years later Jean Barbot of the French Trading Company visited and described the Sierra Leone River (Hair, Jones & Law, 1992, p. 226ff.), but until the eighteenth century, the French were not commercially involved in West Africa to the extent of posing a threat to other European nations; their exploration in Upper Guinea was carried out as far as the limits of Arab penetration from the east would allow, and attempts to establish inland trade ultimately proved unsuccessful in the face of competition from the already-established Manding and Fula merchants. The French slave trade, operating out of Gorée, St. Louis and the Senegal River, was small compared to that of the English and Portuguese, and eventually it shifted to the Grain and Ivory Coasts in Lower Guinea, and even further south to the Congo and Angola (Fage, 1969, p. 72).

In 1772 a French trader established a post on Gambia Island, but rivalry with the English created confusion over ownership; nearby Bunce Island was destroyed in 1779 but rebuilt by Richard Oswald and remained British; in 1785, two years before the creation of the Free Town Colony, the Temne Chief of Gambia Island Panaboure Forbana rented some land there to a French officer, who established a garrison in the name of France. This proved short-lived, and in 1793, starvation due to the British blockade during the Anglo-French War forced it to be abandoned.

In 1794 a serious repercussion from that war in Europe was felt in West Africa: in a three-week sortie, a French fleet completely sacked Free Town, plundering it and leaving it razed to the ground (Fyfe, 1962; Kup, 1975). Considerable perseverance on the part of the few remaining inhabitants, mostly the Settlers from Nova Scotia, saw reconstruction begin as soon as the French left. One French trader, Berauld, continued to live into the early 1800s near the old slave-trading town of Port Loko.

With the exception of Senegal, by the late 19th century French trade along the coast was practically non-existent, although a considerable foothold had been gained away from the coast. British trade in Gambia had already been severely limited by French activity in Senegal, and their penetration into neighbouring Guinea, which began in the 1860s,

was similarly threatening to disrupt Sierra Leonean trade. Because of this, the hinterland of the Colony was taken under British protection (becoming the Protectorate), after a series of treaties with local chiefs, most of whom were Mende, on August 31st 1896 (Little, 1951, pp. 45-46).

In 1755 Miles Barber, an agent for the African Company of Liverpool, had established a trading post on Factory Island (now known as Kassa), in the Iles de Los opposite Conakry north of Sierra Leone, where he engaged in the slave trade and ship repair. It was ceded to the French in 1904, but a number of the Krios that had settled there remained, only later trickling back to Freetown. Presumably some of them knew French, and possibly Susu and Baga, the languages of the islands.

Routes into Krio

The French language, and Africans from Francophone West Africa, are called *Faranse* in Krio. There are at least three possible sources for Krio's French-derived content: 1) French itself, learnt in school or in contact with speakers in or from neighbouring Guinea; 2) via French lexical adoptions in indigenous languages such as Susu or Mandinka, or 3) from West African Pidgin French (WAPF).

Direct contact in the classroom, or with speakers themselves

Metropolitan French came into contact with what is now Krio during the years prior to the establishment of the Colony, when traders or visitors visited or stayed in the area. It is also heard on radio and Internet broadcasts received from Francophone West Africa and further afield. The likeliest source for most of these items is probably the classroom, and students have introduced them into their Krio as wordplay or as an indication of their *savoir faire*. At time of writing (2023), French is not being taught in any of the government schools in Sierra Leone, though a few private schools teach it at both the primary and secondary levels, and there is one French-immersion school. The University of Makeni includes the language as part of their 1st year General Education programme.

Some words attributed to French may prove to have alternate origins, for example *ro* “to cook green vegetables lightly” (all translations are by the author, unless specified otherwise) may in fact reflect the general Krio reflex of [ɔ] to [o] and be from “raw” rather than French *roux* “a gravy” (Fyle & Jones, 1980, p. 316); Krio *bleti* “to lose at gambling” is unlikely to be from French *blettir* “to become overripe” (Fyle & Jones, 1980, p. 40); it is not found in either European or West African French nor the French lexifier African Creoles (FLACs). A comparison may be made with Scots *blatey* ‘restrained, inhibited.’ Rankin’s observation that “French words sometimes occur” in Freetown speech (1836, p. 295) was based entirely upon his misinterpretation of Krio *trowe* ‘throw away’ as French *trouvez*, in his reproduction of part of a song: “*Rose, dey come; young man, shake yourself. Trouvez, yonder*” (*trowe yanda* in Krio). Shreeve (1847, p. 15) similarly

attributed *sabi* ‘know’ to French *savez*, in “*White man savez (know) something past other man*,” and Poole (1850) has “*me no savez*” in his account.

Via French lexical adoptions in indigenous languages

Unlike the situation for Portuguese, French adoptions in the indigenous languages are not shared by Krio, as confirmed in studies by Flutre (1958, 1961) and Mauny (1952). According to the latter, French items that have been adopted by the languages of Guinea and Senegal are numerous, though without further explanation he adds that “par contre, peu d’expressions ‘petit nègre’ se sont glissées dans ce vocabulaire” and, not surprisingly for Susu at least, “les mots d’emprunt sont surtout d’origine anglaise” (Mauny, 1952, pp. 7-9).

From West African Pidgin French

West African Pidgin French, discussed in more detail below, is spoken in Francophone West Africa, and speakers have commonly found themselves in Freetown. Examples recorded by the present author from Guinean residents in Sierra Leone, include *u ti va?* ‘where are you going?’ *mwa kɔmprā pa franse* ‘I don’t understand French,’ *mwa se pati a sam* ‘I am going home.’

Nineteenth century Creole French-speaking inhabitants in Freetown from the West Indies do not seem to have been present in sufficient numbers to have made much linguistic impact; nevertheless, the Dominican and Trinidadian-born colonists may have introduced *jasapan* “a dipper” and—less likely—*lazhɔn* ([laʒɔ̃]) “money.” These, and perhaps others, were amongst the 13,000 West Africans who went to the Caribbean as part of a free labour force between 1838 and 1865 (Cruickshank, 1916, p. 4), some of whom eventually returned home.

Krio items attributed to French

No regular semantic pattern of adoption emerges from the small number of items of demonstrable French origin. Most of them reflect social contact—three are concerned with clothing, although two of these have been recorded in English as well, and the third may only tentatively be linked with the name of a Caribbean bird:

bando: a headtie. Cf. Fr *bandeau*. In English, a strip of cloth covering the bust.

bire: beret. The Krio pronunciation is closer to the French or American pronunciation than to the British ['beri].

kiskidi-ɛn-pɔmpadɔɔ: a style of hoop-framed skirt worn in the 19th century. Cf. French *qu'est-ce qu'il dit* “what does he say?” + (*Madame*) *Pompadour*, a lady whose name has been associated with extravagant fashion. The nickname “kiskee-dees” was also given to the French-speaking Creoles in Louisiana in the early 1800s (Tinker, 1932, p. 6). In Jamaica and Guyana *kiskidi* and *kisadi* respectively are the names given to a species of blackbird, supposedly because of its cry.

pantuf: Canvas-topped slippers with fibre soles. Cf. Fr *pantoufle*, “slipper.” Also Haitian and Mauritian Creole *pantuf*, but also earlier English *pantofle* (Halliwell, 1855, II p. 602).

Names of persons include general labels such as *kamarad* and *kosto*, and baptismal names which, although French-inspired, seem to have been acquired from the written, rather than from the spoken form, as reflected in their spelling-pronunciation.

Gaskoni: Cf. French *Gascoigne*.

Gavas: Cf. French *Gervaise*.

Other names pronounced according to their spelling may be compared similarly, such as *Banaysi* “Bernice” and *Yunaysi* “Eunice,” though these were possibly English pronunciations during the 19th century. The first vowel in *rendəvu* “rendez-vous” seems likewise to have been influenced by the written form. The “foreignness” of French pronunciation, and the fact that [ʒ] is not an original Krio phoneme, may underlie the name of a cryptic slang called *kuzhwalis tɔk* that was current in 1960s Freetown, and the sound of some of its words, e.g. *zhinyi* ([ʒ̩iyí]) “a dupe, one easily taken advantage of.”

edikɔng: aide-de-camp. While this is also English (as [eɪdəkæmp]), the Krio pronunciation more closely mirrors French [edəkã].

kamarad, kamarank: friend, companion, peer, cf. Fr *camarade*. The variant form with *-rank* may reflect convergence with English “rank” and have originated as military slang. Possibly also from German.

kosto: a big, tough fellow. Cf. French *costaud* “burly, brawny; a brawny man.”

Some are exhortations or greetings:

ale: ‘Clear off,’ to dogs, etc. Cf. Fr *allez* “go (away)!”

ankɔ: ‘Repeat,’ for example a favourite record being played at a party: *ankɔ ram* “play it again!” Cf. French *encore* “again,” whence English “Encore!” The Krio vowel follows French rather than English, which would have yielded *ɔnko.

bɔnswa: ‘Nothing (said),’ in the phrase *a nɔ se bɔnswa* “I didn’t (even) say a word.” Cf. French *bonsoir* “good evening,” though not with this meaning in Krio otherwise.

kivala: ‘Where are you going?’ thus a different application from French *qui va là?* “Who’s going there?”

kɔmsikɔmsa: ‘So so,’ in response to *aw di go de go?* “how’s it going?” Cf. French *comme ci comme ça*.

madamozel: ‘a haughty woman.’

orewa: ‘Goodbye,’ cf. French *au revoir*, “goodbye,” (Fyle & Jones, 1980, p. 268) has Yoruba *orewa* “goodbye,” though this has not been found in that language. The word’s final high tone further suggests French.

sefini: It’s concluded, e.g. with an agreement or bargain. Cf. French *c’est fini* “It’s finished.”

ufe: familiar with, cf. French ‘*au fait*’. *a nɔ ufe wit aw in kin luk am* “I’m not familiar with the way he sees it.”

jasapan: water-dipper, scoop, bailer, cf. French *chassepagne* “pot with a long handle” which is itself an adoption from English *saucepan*.

lazhɔn ([laʒɔ̃]): money. This is a slang term, and may have arrived from neighbouring Guinea. Cf. French *l’argent* “(the) money,” general Creole French *lažā*, Pitinègue *lažā, ladžā*, “money”.

In addition to *lazhɔn*, which could conceivably have gained currency amongst smugglers along the Guinea border, the term *bɔmbɔn* may have been similarly introduced:

bɔmbɔn: bribery. Cf. French *bon* “good,” *bonbon* “candy, tidbit” (as a euphemism).

bɔnfi: for nothing: *a get am bɔnfi*. Cf. French *bonification* “allowance, rebate, bonus.” The word is in English, with a more specific meaning, *viz.* “the betterment of housing conditions and farming practices in a particular area (such as a malarial area)” (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/bonification>).

bɔku: perhaps the most commonly-occurring item of French derivation in Krio is *bɔku* “plentiful,” and its reduplicated form *bɔkubɔku* “extremely plentiful,” cf. French *beaucoup* “much, many.” This item also exists as a verb in Krio, meaning “to be processed to the extent of ruin, to be overdone,” as *di res dɔn bɔku* “the rice is overcooked,” *di ashɔ dɔn bɔku* “the clothes are irrecoverable (too dirty ever to be worn again, etc.).” Cameroonian and Liberian both have *buku* “plentiful,” probably traceable to Krio. However, this word (like *sabi*) may have come via English. Wright (1905, p. 321) has *boco, bocoo* “a large quantity” in the Sussex dialect: “The Hastings fishermen have ‘bocoes’ of fish,” while (Cassidy & Hall, 1991, pp. 192-193) has *boocoo, bookoo* “an abundance (of)” as “mainly Southern,” and Major (1970, p. 30) has *boo koos* “a large quantity of anything” in his *Dictionary of Afro-American Slang*.

pitipiti, petepete: little by little, especially of liquids, etc. spilling out: *di wata de kɔmɔt pitipiti* “the water is trickling out.” If not an independent onomatopoeia, an ideophone of possible WAPF origin occurs in Krio, which may be compared with the apparently related form in Temne and which appears to be derived from metropolitan French, cf. French *petit* “little,” Pitinègue *pitipiti* “very small” (paralleled by Krio *smɔl-smɔl* “very small”). Temne has *pethipethi* with the same meaning.

A French-influenced maxim occurs in Krio coined, probably, by students: *man nɔ de manzhe ef i nɔ de travaye* “man doesn’t eat if he doesn’t work.” The two French items have the following forms: [mãʒe], [mũʒe], [mundʒe], [travaye], [travadʒe]. A Krio folk-etymologizing is apparent in the humorous greeting and response derived from *ça va bien?* “is it going well?” This is consciously taken to be Krio *sawa biyen* “sour behind,” to which the response *swit bifo* “sweet in front” is given.

West African Pidgin French (WAPF)

Called variously *Petit-Nègre* or *Pitinègue*, *Français de Charabia*, *Français-Tirailleur* (named for the soldiers who may have spoken it), or more recently *Zougloou* (named after a popular dance style originating in Cote D'Ivoire), WAPF is spoken in Ivory Coast and other former French colonies in West Africa. Traditionally a medium for merchants and the militia, its anti-establishment cachet has increasingly added to its appeal for young people, since in colonial times the French government was violently opposed to its use, and has even been known to deny its existence (included nevertheless in Hancock, 1970, p. 263).

As with West African Pidgin English (WAPE), it contains numbers of lexical items of regional French and nautical origin (*charabia* for example, meaning “style incompréhensible ou incorrect,” is from the dialect spoken in Auvergne; *maré* ‘haul’ and *miré* ‘look at’ are from *amarrer* ‘grab onto’ and *mirer* ‘look at,’ both ‘mots nautiques’).

There is still comparatively little literature available on WAPF; most references to it are in general treatments of French around the world, and focus mainly on pedagogy and local phonology and lexicon. An overview is provided by Childs (1999) and, as a resource for Caribbeanists, some works besides those mentioned in this article which are relevant to WAPF include: Calvet and Dumont (1969), Delafosse (1904, pp. 263-265; 1960), Duponchel (1979), Schipper-de Leeuw (1970), and Vonrospach (1969). More work in this direction is urgently needed.

It is possible that less attention has been paid to WAPF because it did not creolize as it did in the Americas—presumably because it never nativized as the means of communication in domestic (Euro-African) communities, as did West African Pidgin English and West African Pidgin Portuguese in Upper Guinea (Rodney, 1970; Hancock, 1986). Huber was right when he maintained that in Lower Guinea, “household unions between Africans and Europeans were uncommon and mixed children grew up in a purely African environment” (1999, p. 103). Manessy (1978) queried this, referring only to interference, such as the *Franlof* (Wolof-influenced French) spoken in Senegal. The “creolization” addressed by Bouquiaux (1969) deals rather with the same phenomenon in the Central African Republic.

The variety spoken on the Ivory Coast includes *mwa pati mezđ* ‘I’m going home,’ *mwa va pati apre la mezđ* ‘I will be going home,’ *mwa pati deza a la mezđ* ‘I went home,’ *lwi zoli* or *lwi e zoli* ‘she is pretty,’ *lwi zoli myø k el*, ‘she is prettier than her,’ *i gāye zoli figi* ‘she has a nice face,’ *mđ mezđ* or *mezđ pur mwa* ‘my house,’ and *yenapa di ri* ‘there’s no rice (left).’ Kokora (1980, p. 40) also provides *vu pati lekol demđ* “vous partirez a l’école demain,” *sakā-sakā i naka uvre kɔm i fo sɔ dø zorej* “que chacun prête une oreille attentive” and *verse figyr də famij par ter* “humilier un famille.” Berry (1971, p. 512) has a useful overview and provides this sentence from Dakar: “Toi pas demander

baksheesh a ce toubab [Wolof ‘white person’] là; cet homme la y’ a bon; toi aller prendre une table bélé et moi attendre toi; toi faire fissafissa [Arabic ‘quickly’].”

Tschiggfrey (1995) provides a short discussion of “Zougloou,” Ivory Coast French, and the French (but not the English) edition of Alexandre (1967, pp. 158-159) provides the following from Cameroon, the longest available text other than Metz (1939, p. 125ff.).

La chauve-souris et le recensement

Long, long time fo’ old, y a gouverneur pour tous les bêtes y dit tous les Commandants “Vous c’est faire ’censement pour tous les bêtes y courrent la forêt, la brousse. Small small beef, big beef, tout ya y court par terre, y grimpe les arbres, c’est payer l’impôt, one time!”

Commandant pour la forêt, c’est Panthère. He call for police, one time, y dit “Tous les bêtes y courrent, l’a pas ticket l’impôt, tu dem tu prends, tu fous la boîte, y portent l’eau pour Madame Commandant. Go!”

Police c’est Gorille. Y court la forêt, y monte les arbres, y tombe les marigots, y casse son gueule, y fatigue trop. Tous les big beef y zentend lui, y voit lui, c’est dem ... sauver, cacher la brousse, pas payer l’impôt. Y continue, continue, continue, jusqu’à fatiguer, y finit trouver Saussouris. Lui c’est pas sauver, pas courir, y reste, y dit Gorille “I see you, Gorille, comment ça va?” “plenty pass fine.”

Gorille y dit lui “No palaver! toi c’est montrer ticket l’impôt.”

Saussouris c’est dire “No life ticket l’impôt.” Gorille y dit “Quoi c’est? Tous les bêtes y courrent la forêt, small beef, big beef c’est faire ’censement, payer l’impôt.” Saussouris y dit “Moi c’est pas la bête y court la forêt, moi c’est l’oiseau.”

“C’est pas l’oiseau, y dit Gorille, c’est la bête, c’est payer l’impot tout suite, j’y fous la boîte!” Saussouris il ouvre les ailes, comme ça, il en vole même chose l’oiseau. Gorille il est c ... trop.

Quand c’est fini pleuvoir, Gouverneur y dit “Maintenant c’est faire ’censement tous les oiseaux, y a payer l’impôt one time!”

Panthère y call fo’ police pour z-oiseau, c’est Obam [Fang: épervier], y dit, “Toi c’est dem tous les oiseaux ya ticket l’impôt. Les oiseaux y a pas, tu fous la boîte!”

Obam y vole, y prend tous les petits l’oiseau, y fait ’censement, tous c’est payer l’impôt. Y va, y trouve Saussouris c’est manger les mangues, grand l’arbre, tout l’en haut, l’en haut. Obam y dit “Ou ça ticket l’impot. Les oiseaux y a pas, tu fous la boîte.”

Saussouris y dit “Ou ça ticket l’impôt?” Obam y dit “Faire ’censement, tous les oiseaux c’est pas payer l’impôt, j’y fous la boîte.” Saussouris y dit “Moi c’est pas l’oiseau, moi c’est la bête.” Y mont’e, ya le poil pour lui, full up, le ventre, le dos ... partout. Y mont’e bangala pour lui, même chose le

singe, y monte zoreilles pour lui, même chose le beef. Obam, y gueule un peu, un peu, y fout le camp. Saussouris c'est marrer trop.

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SUBSTRATE INFLUENCE IN NIGERIAN PIDGIN: A CLOSER LOOK AT REDUPLICATION IN IGBO

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Abstract

The goal of this article is to contribute to answering questions concerning the sources of creole features. Focusing on reduplication as a morphological strategy, it aims to investigate the extent to which its presence in Nigerian Pidgin can be attributed to transfer from ancestral languages, with specific focus on Igbo. The data collection and comparative analysis involved elicitation and discussion with two adult native informants who are proficient in both languages. The results reveal some formal and semantic similarities in some word classes, while showing no parallel in others. It is concluded that reduplication in Nigerian Pidgin is a result of multiple factors, including substrate influence and independent development.

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Key terms: Nigerian Pidgin, Igbo, Naija, reduplication, transfer

1. Introduction

The role of substrate influence on the structures found in creoles is a subject of immense interest to creolists. This is largely in response to Universalist accounts of creole genesis (Bickerton, 1981; 1984), which allows for little or no role for ancestral languages in creole formation. To support his hypothesis, Bickerton puts forward a list of core creole features including word order, determiners, TMA systems, and complementizers, which he argues cannot be accounted for by substratist explanations since they occur similarly in creoles with unrelated ancestry. Findings from investigations concerning substrate influence, therefore, have implications for theories of creole genesis, another aspect of pidgin and creole studies that enjoys significant scholarly attention. Some of Bickerton's features have been linked to substrate languages, e.g., tense-mood-aspect (Siegel, 2000; Winford & Migge, 2007), determiners (Mather, 2000), Complementizers (Migge & Winford, 2013), etc.

Reduplication involves a grammatically motivated reiteration of phonological material within one prosodic unit for the expression of new meaning. This phenomenon is widespread in expanded pidgins and creoles, and has garnered immense scholarly interest in general linguistics, and in creolistics. Reduplication may be total or partial. Total reduplication as in (1) is the type attested in Nigerian Pidgin, and is, therefore in focus in this present paper.

(1) *moto~moto*
car~RED
'many cars'

Among other lines of enquiry, of particular interest is the origin of reduplication in creoles, especially since it has been conjectured to be absent in incipient pidgins (Bakker, 2003; Bakker & Parkval, 2005). Evidence from previous studies has demonstrated that while iconicity and language-internal development cannot be discounted as plausible origins of reduplication in creoles, the influence of substrate languages in this regard cannot be ignored (e.g., Migge, 2003).

Reduplication has been acknowledged as "one of the hallmarks of creole morphology" (Kouwenberg & LaCharité, 2001 p. 59). The goal of the present study is to investigate the extent to which the existence and widespread use of reduplication in Nigerian Pidgin can be attributed to its presence in the ancestral languages spoken in Nigeria.

A brief discussion of the sociocultural background of Nigerian Pidgin is the subject of section 2, however, it is worthy of mention at this point that even though it has 'pidgin' in its name, Nigerian Pidgin is being studied with a creole profile in mind. That said, based on previous findings on the widespread use of reduplication in creoles and pidgincreoles, and its supposed absence in pidgins; I infer, then (in the absence of evidence to the contrary), that reduplication did not exist in Nigerian Pidgin in its rudimentary 'pidgin' stage, and that its presence in the language forms part of the linguistic repertoire of Nigerian Pidgin as an expanded pidgin or a pidgincreole.

Nigerian Pidgin emerged, developed, and is still spoken alongside the ancestral languages of its speakers, many of which employ reduplication as a morphological strategy; as does English, the lexifier-language, which is also Nigeria's official language, and an L2 for a significant number of Nigerians. It is curious that reduplication is ubiquitous in present day Nigerian Pidgin, whereas in the face of communicative pressure for which interlocutors relied on an incipient pidgin as the language of trade, reduplication was supposedly not to have been employed. While there is no question about its gradual development into a pidgincreole as opposed to abrupt creolization as proposed in Bickerton's Universalist theory, it is also rather curious that in the process of this gradual expansion motivated by the need to meet wider communication needs, reduplication is then employed for pluralisation, intensification, distribution, etc; such grammatical functions for which the more widely spoken and more 'prestigious' lexifier-language employs other morphological means (chiefly affixation). It is against this

background that this investigation into the extent of substrate influence on the presence of reduplication in Nigerian Pidgin is situated.

Even though Nigerian Pidgin exemplifies what is considered by some to be a ‘fort Creole’ (Bickerton, 1988, p. 269), findings regarding the influence of ancestral languages do have implications for theories of creole genesis, especially since Nigerian Pidgin most probably has a number of ‘pidgin’ ancestors which indicates an absence of a mutually intelligible language of communication in some situations. Following a comparative analysis of selected features found in Nigerian Pidgin and the Benue-Kwa languages of southern Nigeria (including Igbo), Faraclas (2012, p. 426) concludes that “evidence of ...the historical emergence of Nigerian Pidgin and the other Atlantic Creoles cannot be accounted for without clearly acknowledging and seriously exploring fundamental and substantial inputs from speakers of Niger-Congo languages.” The results herein will not only fill some gaps in the study of reduplication in Nigerian Pidgin viz-a-viz substrate influence, but also lends support to the proposition that creolization is a gradual, multi-generational process motivated and reinforced by functional parameters which involved children, as well as adult speakers.

There are about 500 ancestral languages spoken in Nigeria (Egbokhare, 2021 p.72). For limitations of time and space, in the present study reduplicative constructions in Nigerian Pidgin will be considered against evidence from just one ancestral language, Igbo. Most of the previous works on substrate influence are based on data from grammar textbooks and dictionaries of the relevant languages. A major limitation with this methodological approach is that the data sources, and by extension the analyses do not always capture the semantic complexity and other nuances of language use. In view of this, the data analyzed in this paper have been obtained through elicitation and discussion with two Igbo speaking adults who are also fluent in English and Nigerian Pidgin.

After this introduction, I present the socio-cultural background in section 2. Section 3 contains an overview of reduplication. In section 4, I carry out the analysis, and present my conclusions in section 5.

2. Socio-cultural background

Nigerian Pidgin, like other colonial era contact languages, is the result of meaning negotiation among linguistically diverse groups in the face of communicative pressure. Some accounts of the emergence of Nigerian Pidgin attribute it to European trade contacts with the natives of the Niger-Delta region (Elugbe & Omamor, 1991). The sporadic and short-term nature of these contacts among these linguistically diverse peoples left little room for adopting and learning any one of the languages as a lingua franca, and Nigerian Pidgin is the sociolinguistic outcome of this contact situation. On the other hand, “bilingualism and multilingualism have always been the norm rather than the exception in most parts of Nigeria” (Faraclas 1996, p.2). Hence, a slightly different account contends that precursors of Nigerian Pidgin in the form of local con-

tact languages had been in existence long before the arrival of the Europeans in the 15th century. Proponents of this view attribute the emergence of Nigerian Pidgin to the already multilingual situation in Nigeria, where the people were not deterred by their linguistic diversity, and where urban centers, inter-ethnic marriage, trading and extensive travel had always been a part of the social life and culture of the people. In a later study, Faraclas (2012, p. 418) summarizes that Nigerian Pidgin is a result of significant inputs from different languages, including: African languages, non-standard dialects of English, other Atlantic Creoles, as well as to other factors such as universals of second language use.

Despite apparent unanimous agreement that Nigerian Pidgin is no longer a ‘pidgin’, it falls among a group of languages that are not as easily classifiable as creoles as is the case for languages such as Jamaican and Haitian. This state of affairs is largely due to different theoretical perspectives as to what constitutes a creole, one being a formalist view for which nativization is a criterion; and the other, a functionalist approach, whose definition of creoles is tied to expansion in its use into the day to day affairs of the language community. For instance, Faraclas (2012) considers Nigerian Pidgin a creole on functional grounds. He adds that, in any case, the status of the language as a creole remains undisputable even if stricter definitions apply because “it is spoken as a first language by millions of speakers, and can even be said to be spoken as an ancestral language by millions in the Warri-Sapele area” (p. 417). Bakker (2008, p. 131) adopts a more graduated classification and proposes the term ‘pidgincreole’ for languages such as Nigerian Pidgin and Tok Pisin, which are not fully nativized, but have risen to the status of a lingua franca in the highly multilingual geographical regions where they are spoken.

Regardless of where one stands, the point of convergence lies in the apparent unanimous agreement that Nigerian Pidgin is not a typical pidgin but a full-fledged language with its own grammatical systems. The language has permeated many aspects of everyday life in Nigeria and its Diaspora, including sports, religion, entertainment, advertisement, social media, and mainstream media communication (see Mair, 2021; Babalola, 2021; Oyebode, 2021; Inyabri & Mensah, 2021). Some linguists have proposed that the language be referred to as Naija, after the ‘pidgin’ translation of the name Nigeria (Ofulue, 2010 p. 2, footnote 1). Among the about 500 languages spoken in Nigeria, including the major ancestral languages, and Standard Nigerian English (the official language); Nigerian Pidgin is the most widely spoken in the country with an estimated 112 million speakers (Faraclas, 2021). Reduplication is a major morphological tool in the language.

The Igbo language has been assigned to the Igboid sub-group within the Benue-Kwa branch of languages, within the larger Niger-Congo language family. It is the language of the Igbo people of the south-eastern part of Nigeria. Together with Hausa and Yoruba, the Igbo language is considered to be one of the nation’s three major ancestral

languages, and co-exists with hundreds of other ancestral, languages of the Igboid, Ijoid, Cross River, Edoid, and Idomoid groups of Niger-Congo. Like other ancestral languages, the Igbo language contributes, albeit sparingly, to the Nigerian Pidgin lexicon. With regard to morphology, Igbo employs strategies such as affixation, compounding and reduplication. Both total and partial reduplication are attested in the language. Whether or not the use of reduplication in languages such as Igbo is a reason for which it is also employed in Nigerian Pidgin is the question that motivates the present research. Before going into the analysis, an overview of reduplication is in order, especially in relation to iconicity.

3. Reduplication

Reduplication is considered a text-book example of iconicity; it conveys meanings that are undeniably iconic, such as intensification, plurality, and distribution, among others. Speaking of its iconic nature, Sapir (1921, p. 79) describes these readings as exhibiting “self evident symbolism.” Hence, when reduplicative constructions yield readings that cannot be readily interpreted as increase, like approximation and attenuation, such interpretations are often classified as ‘non-iconic’ or ‘counter-iconic’. However, I subscribe to Dingemanse’s (2015) careful analysis on the relationship between reduplication and ideophones (which are prototypically expressive, depictive and largely adverb-like in nature); and the extension of ideophones and their prototypical features, such as reduplication, into other less expressive, less descriptive and less adverb-like word classes. This line of reasoning finds further support in the literature, with previous studies showing that ideophones almost always have reduplication as part of their internal structure in the languages where they are found (see Voeltz & Kilian-Hatz, 2001; Williams, 2020). Based on Dingemanse’s work, I also adopt the ensuing hypothesis that reduplication has prototypical links to ideophones. Furthermore, I postulate that as opposed to being either ‘iconic’ or ‘non-iconic’, reduplicatives are inherently iconic, although to different degrees (see also Li & Ponsford, 2018).

Gradience in the iconicity expressed via reduplication in Nigerian Pidgin is dependent on the word class of the simplex form, based on the degree of its functional similarity to ideophones. In a previous study of reduplicative constructions in Nigerian Pidgin, the word classes that are functionally distant and dissimilar to ideophones (verbs and pronouns) were found to exhibit iconicity by motivation, and would be classified elsewhere as ‘non-iconic’ (Odiegwu & Romero-Trillo, 2023). Additionally, these word classes were more constrained in their amenability to reduplication, and their reduplicative outputs yield interpretations with secondary pragmatic undertones. This state of affairs is in direct opposition to what is obtainable with other word classes whose functional similarity to ideophones is substantial (adverbs, numerals, adjectives and nouns). In these cases, there is little or no constraint to the applicability of reduplication, and the readings of their reduplicative outputs exhibit a one-to-one (isomorphic)

iconicity, which I consider prototypical for reduplication. Interestingly, Kouwenberg and LaCharité’s (2004) analysis of reduplicative constructions in the Caribbean Creoles which is anchored on a theory of markedness shows a similar pattern of constraint, where processes which are semantically marked (understood as ‘non-iconic’) also tend to be less productive. Note, however, that unlike in our framework of gradience, Kouwenberg and LaCharité (2004) adopt the binary opposition of ‘iconic’ versus ‘non-iconic’ readings for reduplicative constructions.

The ‘unmarked’ reduplicatives, that is, those whose iconicity is isomorphic and iconic, are widespread in the world’s languages. This suggests a possibility of their independent development in language, a premise that has been invoked to arbitrarily exclude the possibility of substrate influence in favour of language universals for this phenomenon in creole languages (see Kouwenberg & LaCharité, 2004). Nonetheless, some authors, including Kouwenberg and LaCharité, submit that “this does not mean that an ‘unmarked’ property may not be transferred; it simply means that it does not provide convincing evidence for transfer” (2004, p. 303). These tendencies to glibly dismiss substrate influence has been criticised in Faraclas (2012). In any case, creolists have tended to assume the unlikelihood of substrate influence for these unmarked categories. Put differently, while a formal and functional parallel between ‘marked’ reduplicatives in the relevant languages is more likely to be accepted as evidence of substrate influence, a similar parallel observed with respect to ‘unmarked’ reduplicatives is likely to be dismissed as insufficient evidence for substrate influence.

Nevertheless, the present study covers reduplicatives from all syntactic categories regardless of whether their outputs fall within the ‘iconic’, and therefore ‘unmarked’ category (which I classify as exhibiting iconicity by isomorphism) or the so-called ‘non-iconic’ and therefore ‘marked’ category (which I classify as exhibiting iconicity by motivation). This decision is informed by the fact that I consider outputs of reduplication as constructions, that is, form-meaning pairings. Suffice it to say that reduplicative constructions in Nigerian Pidgin express a range of readings, where one reading is prototypical for each word class, with other peripheral readings related to the prototype by family resemblance. By this understanding, formal and functional equivalence of reduplication in Igbo and Nigerian Pidgin would evince substrate transfer, in which a constructional pattern from the source language, Igbo, have been transferred to the receiving language, Nigerian Pidgin, in the face of communicative pressure, with the hope of expressing the same range of central-peripheral meanings as they do in the source language (Siegel, 2008). Instead of the relatively wordy terminologies for my categories: ‘iconicity by isomorphism’ and ‘iconicity by motivation’, I will employ the corresponding terminologies: ‘unmarked’ and ‘marked,’ respectively, in the rest of this article.

In the following section, I compare reduplicative constructions in both languages, paying attention to:

- a) the word classes amenable to reduplication and their syntactic properties and constraints
- b) productivity, which is usually tied to the degree of iconicity of these constructions
- c) semantic equivalence of reduplicative constructions in both languages, taking into account their central-peripheral readings in relation to the word class of the simplex form
- d) the pragmatic readings expressed by the marked reduplicative constructions.

The fourth parameter is especially important because as earlier mentioned, similarities in these ‘marked categories’ are sometimes considered more convincing evidence of transfer, especially when we consider the fact that when meaning deviates from a one-to-one type of iconicity, the aspect of form to which meaning is iconic is usually determined by extra-linguistic factors that include but are not limited to the shared cultural background (including the L1) of the speech community. Hence, iconicity by motivation (for which they are considered marked) is a function of construal (Wilcox, 2004).

4. To what extent is reduplication in Nigerian Pidgin modelled on reduplication in Igbo?

While acknowledging that the singling out of one particular ancestral language as the ‘one and only’ substrate language has been a general problem that has plagued the study of the colonial era creoles of the Afro-Atlantic, in this article, I focus on data from Nigerian Pidgin and only one of its hundreds of substrate languages, Igbo. An important similarity between Nigerian Pidgin on the one hand and Igbo and most of the rest of its substrate languages on the other, is that, unlike in its superstrates or in any proposed set of language universals, reduplication is attested in words from a wide range of syntactic categories, including ideophones, adverbs, numerals, adjectives, nouns, verbs and pronouns. This section is devoted to further examining the degree of syntactic, semantic and pragmatic resemblance between reduplicative constructions from each word class in Nigerian Pidgin and Igbo in particular. The analysis is divided into two sub-sections. The first sub-section is concerned with those word classes that express a range of ‘unmarked’ readings with regard to their iconicity in Nigerian Pidgin and Igbo. These include ideophones, adverbs, numerals, adjectives and nouns. The second sub-section is devoted to verbs and pronouns, the word classes whose reduplicative outputs in Nigerian Pidgin and Igbo are ‘marked’ in terms of form-meaning resemblance.

The present analysis takes as a point of departure the assertion that, given their expressive nature, ideophones are the most amenable of all the lexical classes to reduplication. Of all the word classes, therefore, I consider ideophones as prototypical with regard to reduplication both in the formal component i.e., minimal constraints on ap-

plicability; and in the semantic component, i.e., the unmarked nature of the readings expressed (see Odiegwu, 2023). Hence, the present analysis begins with ideophones.

4.1 Reduplication in word classes with ‘unmarked’ output

4.1.1 Ideophones and adverbs

Ideophones play an important role in Nigerian Pidgin as well as in Igbo and most of the rest of Nigerian Pidgin’s substrate languages (Faraclas, 2012). They are usually, but not always onomatopoeic and reduplicated. Ideophones are inherently iconic, and by extension, depictive. When reduplicated, they prototypically express intensification, with other peripheral readings such as pluractionality and distributivity.

(2) *Ay slap am zaway~zaway (Nigerian Pidgin)*
1SG.SBJ slap 3SG.OBJ IDPH~RED
'I slapped him sharply (and all over the body).'

(3) *E ti-ri m ya gwoo~gwoo (Igbo)*
PTCL beat-PST 1SG.OBJ 3SG.OBJ IDPH~RED
'I beat him up (thoroughly).'

In both examples from both languages, the reduplicated ideophones not only serve to dramatize the events described by the verbs they modify (the slapping/ beating), but they also convey pluractionality and distributivity; that is, the fact that event was repeated multiple times, and all over the body. The peripheral readings are more obvious when we consider that the use of the simplex form in either case would still convey intensification, but of a single and punctual occurrence of the event described by the verb.

Conclusive evidence of substrate influence in Nigerian Pidgin includes many cases where specific ideophonic constructions (and by extension, reduplication) are carried over from source language Igbo into Nigerian Pidgin, as the receiving language, as in (4) and (5), in cases where speakers of English do not normally employ ideophones.

(4) *I dè draiv wa~wa~wa (Nigerian Pidgin)*
(5) *Q na agba wa~wa~wa (Igbo)*
3SG.SBJ IPFV drive IDPH~RED~RED
'S/he drives very recklessly.'

While, as is the case in (4) and (5), ideophonic words may be conventionalized in a language as a result of prolonged use among members of a speech community, it is important to note that ideophones can in many cases be *ad hoc* improvisational productions motivated by the speaker’s desire to ‘paint a linguistic picture’, hence the term ‘sound symbolism’ is often associated with ideophones. For these less conventionalized and more spontaneous occurrences, which are quite common in both Nigerian Pidgin and its substrate languages (Faraclas, 2012), the speakers exploit the depictive nature of ideophones, and in such cases reduplication would usually form part of

the improvisation if intensity and repetition form part of message being conveyed. With ideophones, therefore, meaning making does not always depend on existing and conventional form-meaning pairs, as with other word classes.

This particular feature of ideophones has rather paradoxical implications for substrate influence. On the one hand, under the conventional Eurocentric lens that often simply ignores ideophones altogether and tends to dismiss substrate influence in favour of universals, ideophones that are the output of improvisation cannot be linked in any mechanical way to conventionalized form-meaning pairs in any other language, since they are spontaneous creations. This posture completely ignores the fact the spontaneous, improvisational creation of ideophones is a deeply ingrained and communicatively central and consequential *language practice* of the speakers of Igbo and almost all of the rest of Nigerian Pidgin's hundreds of substrate languages (Faraclas, 2012), while it is relatively rare in the varieties of English that constitute its superstrates and as of yet has not been specifically identified as any sort of linguistic universal.

Thus, in the face of communicative pressure during creole formation, interlocutors are quite likely to have fallen back on language practices from their ancestral languages, including both the more conventionalized as well as the more spontaneous use of depictive forms such as ideophones and reduplication, in order to best approximate the meanings that they intend to communicate. The fact that reduplication and ideophones are more present and productive in some languages (including Igbo and many other African languages) than they are in others (including English, and many other heavily standardized languages of the West) is instructive, and indeed a form of evidence that such lexical, structural, and stylistic patterns and practices in ancestral languages have motivated their use in creole formation.

In sum, while it is a given that their use in language is generally attributable to their inherent iconicity; it could be argued that the presence of reduplication and ideophones in Nigerian Pidgin specifically is motivated by their widespread use in ancestral languages, because such language practices form part of the shared cultural background of Nigerian Pidgin's creators and speakers.

Ideophones prototypically occupy the post-verbal adverbial syntactic slot in Nigeria Pidgin, a feature it shares with Igbo and most of the rest of its substrate languages (Faraclas, 2012). Additionally in Nigerian Pidgin and Igbo, like ideophones, adverbs are also productively reduplicated to express intensification, as in (6) and (7). Unlike ideophones, however, adverbs are less likely to express any other meaning than intensification in both languages.

(6) *I* *sabi* *buk* *wel~wel* (Nigerian Pidgin)
(7) *Q* *ma* *akwukwo* *ofuma~ofuma.* (Igbo)
3SG.SBJ know book well~RED
'S/he is very intelligent'

As with ideophones, typical patterns of adverbial reduplication provides evidence of Igbo (and other substrate language) influence on Nigerian Pidgin, given the striking semantic and especially syntactic similarities in both languages, as demonstrated by the fact that in (6) and (7) above (as well as in (8) and (9), (25) through (30), and (33) and (39) below), only one gloss is necessary for both languages. But because such evidence does not reach the strict form-to-meaning bar set by Eurocentric creolists for demonstrating substrate influence as illustrated in (4) and (5) above, substrate influence in cases such as (6) through (9) tends to be automatically written off in favour of universally attested patterns of ‘unmarked’ reduplication.

4.1.2 Numerals

Cardinal numerals are adnominal modifiers in many languages, including English, Igbo, and Nigerian Pidgin. Unlike in English, where prototypical total reduplication of numerals is not attested, in Nigerian Pidgin and in Igbo (as well as in most of Nigerian Pidgin’s substrate languages, see Faraclas, 2012), numerals are reduplicated to express two types of distribution: ‘number by number’ and ‘number each’ (Bakker & Parkval, 2005).

For the ‘number by number’ distribution, numerals in both languages occupy a post-verbal adverbial slot, as in examples (8) and (9), and describe the manner in which the event denoted by the verb is to unfold.

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	(8)	<i>De</i>	<i>dè</i>	<i>enta</i>	<i>w<u>on</u>~w<u>on</u></i>	(Nigerian Pidgin)
	(9)	<i>Ha</i>	<i>na</i>	<i>abanye</i>	<i>ofu~ofu</i>	(Igbo)
		3PL	IPFV	enter	one~RED	

‘They are going in one by one.’

In addition to distribution, the reduplicated numeral in (8) and (9) also functions as a quantifying depictive secondary predicate. The fact that the numeral is reduplicated conveys the plurality of the referents and by implication, the iterative/ repetitive nature of the event denoted by the verb. In other words, the reduplication of ‘one’ in both examples additionally conveys pluractionality or event plurality. Up to this point, there is unequivocal similarity in the form and function of reduplicated numerals in Nigerian Pidgin and in Igbo and most of the rest of Nigerian Pidgin’s substrate languages (Faraclas, 2012).

Turning to the ‘number each’ interpretation of reduplicate numerals, we find a formal discrepancy between the two languages. In Nigerian Pidgin, only the numeral serves as the simplex form, so that we have reduplicative outputs such as in examples (10) and (11) with the interpretations ‘one song each’ and ‘one month each’.

	(10)	<i>De</i>	<i>sing-θ</i>	<i>w<u>on</u>~w<u>on</u></i>	<i>song</i>	(Nigerian Pidgin)
		3PL.SBJ	sing-PST	one~RED	song	

‘They sang one song each.’

	(11)	<i>De</i>	<i>get</i>	<i>w<u>on</u>~w<u>on</u></i>	<i>mont</i>	(Nigerian Pidgin)
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3PL.SBJ have one~RED month
 ‘They have one month each.’

In Igbo, the modifying numeral and the nominal which refers to the modified entity constitute a phrasal simplex form which is then reduplicated to convey ‘number each’ distribution, as shown in (12) and (13).

(12) *Ha* *gu-ru* *ofu egwu~ofu egwu* (Igbo)
 3PL.SBJ sing-PST one song~RED
 ‘They sang one song each.’

(13) *Ha* *nwere* *ofu ọnwa~ofu ọnwa* (Igbo)
 3PL.SBJ have one month~RED
 ‘They have one month each.’

With numbers greater than one, we observe another formal difference between Igbo and Nigerian Pidgin. Unlike in Nigerian Pidgin, where (reduplicated) cardinal numerals always occupy a prenominal slot, in Igbo, the numeral (simplex and reduplicated) occupies a post nominal slot as shown in (14) and (15).

(14) *Ha* *gu-ru* *egwu abụo~egwu abụo* (Igbo)
 3PL.SBJ sing-PST song two~RED
 ‘They sang two songs each.’

(15) *Ha* *nwere* *ọnwa abụo ~ ọnwa abụo* (Igbo)
 3PL.SBJ have month two~RED
 ‘They have two months each.’

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Apart from the fact that reduplicated numerals almost always convey distributivity across languages, their formal mismatch and the difference in their syntactic behaviour in Nigerian Pidgin and Igbo makes a specifically Igbo influence a less convincing explication.

4.1.3 Adjectives

With regard to distribution, adjective reduplication is quite productive in both Nigerian Pidgin and Igbo, as it is in most of the rest of Nigerian Pidgin’s substrate languages (Faraclas, 2012). Like numerals, adjectives are prenominal modifiers in Nigerian Pidgin, as in (16).

(16) *biutiful* *haus*
 beautiful house
 ‘a beautiful house’

(17) *nyu* *haus*
 new ouse
 ‘a new house’

In Igbo, on the other hand, adjectives may occupy a prenominal or post nominal slot as can be seen in (18) and (19) respectively. The factors that determine the syntactic slot that specific adjectives occupy in Igbo depends on a number of factors that need further study.

(18) *omalicha uno*
beautiful house
'a beautiful house'

(19) *uno ofuū*
house new
'a new house'

Cross-linguistically, reduplicated adjectives are known to express intensification of the attribute denoted by the simplex form. In Nigerian Pidgin, however, intensification, as well as distribution is usually a peripheral reading. In Nigerian Pidgin, adjectives prototypically convey plurality of the noun referents, as in (20), especially since morphological marking of plurality is not obligatory in the language. This is more obvious when one compares the meaning of (20) and (21). In the latter, a plural reading is not in evidence. While still peripherally signalling plurality, intensification becomes the central reading in cases where the plurality of the noun referent is otherwise signalled by any other means (morphological or syntactic) as in example (22) (Odiegwu, 2023).

(20) *Ay need di taini ~ taini rop*
1SG.SBJ need ART tiny~ RED ropes
'I need the tiny ropes.'

(21) *Ay need di taini rop*
1SG.SBJ need ART tiny rope
'I need the tiny rope.'

(22) *Ay nid ol di taini ~ taini rop*
1SG.SBJ need all ART tiny~ RED ropes
'I need all the (very) tiny ropes.'

In Igbo, reduplicated adjectives convey a similar range of meanings. Consider examples (23) and (24). An examination of the syntax, however, reveals some differences with Nigerian Pidgin. In Nigerian Pidgin, reduplicated adjectives always occupy a pronominal position (see examples 20 through 22 above). In Igbo, on the other hand, adjective reduplication may occur in a sentence in one of two forms: 1) adjectival simplex forms reduplicated contiguously in a prenominal slot (as in Nigerian Pidgin), see (23); and 2) the adjective and the modified entity constitute a phrasal simplex form, as in (24).

(23) *nnukwu~nnukwu ụno*
 big~ RED house
 ‘big houses’

(24) *ụno ofụụ~ ụno ofụụ*
 house new~ RED
 ‘new houses’

In sum, even though there are a significant level of semantic and distributional similarities between both languages, the degree of syntactic discrepancy casts reasonable doubts on the possibility of the Igbo language specifically serving as a major source for adjectival reduplication in Nigerian Pidgin. This leaves this syntactic category open to further exploration with other ancestral languages and with other factors in mind.

4.1.4 Nouns

Noun reduplication is attested in both Nigerian Pidgin and Igbo, as well as in most of the rest of Nigerian Pidgin’s substrate languages (Faraclas, 2012), and enjoys a significant level of distributional, semantic and syntactic similarities in both languages. Noun reduplication prototypically conveys plurality in both languages, as in example (25) and (26). However, our informants were hard pressed for examples, especially ones in which reduplication was the only, and a more natural choice than other plural marking strategies. The reduplication of ‘dog’ implies ‘many dogs’, but note that the use of *everywhere* in the sentence is not only a co-textual indicator of plurality already, it also seems to be the very stimulus that elicits the use of reduplication, hence, reduplication is somewhat redundant, and therefore, optional here.

(25) *dog~dog* *evriwia* (Nigerian Pidgin)
 (26) *nkita~ nkita* *ebe nine* (Igbo)
 dog~ RED place all
 ‘dogs, everywhere’

Noun reduplication exhibits a certain level of markedness. Apart from the fact that reduplication is not usually the most natural choice for plural marking of nominal entities; where it is otherwise employed, such as in (27) and (28), focus is usually an accompanying salient interpretation in both languages.

(27) *wi* *si* *dog~dog* (Nigerian Pidgin)
 (28) *anyi* *hụ-rụ* *nkita~ nkita* (Igbo)
 1PL.SBJ see-PST dog~ RED
 ‘we saw (only) dogs.’

Furthermore, in its most natural use, nominal reduplicative constructions appear to almost always be preceded by the focus marker *na* ‘it is’ (for Nigerian Pidgin), and *ọọ* or *ọkwa* ‘it is’ (for Igbo) as we see in example (29) and (30).

(29) *na* *dog~dog* (*wey*) *wi* *si* (Nigerian Pidgin)
 (30) *ọkwa* *nkita~ nkita* *ka* *anyi* *hụrụ* (Igbo)

FOC dog~ RED REL 1PL.SBJ see.PST
 ‘it is only dogs that we saw.’

In view of the above, distributional, semantic, syntactic parallels between Igbo and Nigerian Pidgin, it could be argued that noun reduplication in Nigerian Pidgin is reasonably influenced by similar processes in Igbo. This assertion finds additional support in the similarity of the constraints applicable to both languages.

4.2 Reduplication in word classes with ‘marked’ output

In the ‘marked’ category, we have reduplicative constructions with verbal and pronominal simplex forms. With these word classes, the reduplicative outputs tend towards derivation, and express meanings that go beyond the prototypical ‘one form one meaning’ function of reduplication. In the following sub-sections, I carry out a detailed comparative analysis of these categories in Nigerian Pidgin and Igbo.

4.2.1 Verbs

In Nigerian Pidgin, reduplication acts upon the verb simplex form to yield deverbal outputs, whose meanings most times bear secondary pragmatic interpretation. This is not to say, however, that constructions that remain and function as verbs post-reduplication are not attested in Nigerian Pidgin. But such occurrences are rare, and fall within the ‘unmarked’ category. For this present analysis, I will concentrate on the ‘marked’ readings of verbal reduplicative outputs, some of which are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Verb simplex forms and their reduplicative outputs

Simplex	Output	Unmarked readings	Marked readings
<i>tok</i> ‘to talk’	<i>tok~tok</i>	‘talking too much’	‘a talkative person’ OR ‘a gossip’
<i>chop</i> ‘to eat’	<i>chop~chop</i>	‘habitually/continuously eating’	‘food’ OR ‘glutton’
<i>waka</i> ‘to walk’	<i>waka~waka</i>	‘continuously walking about’	‘roamer’, ‘prostitute’

With verb reduplication, it appears that deverbal constructions are an end point in what seems to be a grammaticalization pathway beginning with the unmarked constructions, with the final interpretation showing a metonymic relationship EVENT FOR AGENT or EVENT FOR ENTITY (Odiegwu and Romero-Trillo, 2023). In addition to their derivational nature, which is obvious in the change of syntactic category, these constructions are also ‘marked’ in that they express secondary pragmatic readings, such as excessiveness of action and the speaker’s contempt for the referent, among others. At the most extreme point in the grammaticalization continuum, we have metaphoric iconicity as seen for instance with the interpretation of *tok~tok* as ‘gossip’ and the use of *waka~waka* to denote ‘prostitute’. The degree of productivity of verb reduplication also seems to follow a parallel continuum. Interpretations that express traces of isomorphism are usually more productive than readings where iconicity by motivation is more in evidence. For example, the interpretation of ‘glutton’ for *chop~chop* could be

extrapolated to other verb-based reduplicatives so that *krai~krai* would be understood as ‘crybaby’ or a person who cries too much. With the metaphorical extensions, such as *tok~tok* ‘gossip’ or *waka~waka* ‘prostitute’, verb reduplication seems to be unproductive.

Turning to the Igbo language, reduplication applies to verbs, and has indeed been identified as a possible substrate source for deverbal instrument nouns for Suriname Creoles (Kouwenberg & LaCharité, 2004). However, from the data presented by Kouwenberg and LaCharité, it appears that only partial reduplication applies in this case. In fact, based on my discussion with native informants and on my own native level knowledge of Igbo, partial reduplication seems to be the only reduplicative process attested for verbs. What looks like total reduplication of verbs in Igbo are actually cognate object constructions, such as in (31) and (32). In cognate object constructions the second nominal member of the construction is separate from the first verbal member, and serves as an object “with little or no semantic content” (Faraclas 1996, p.135). Such constructions are also common in Nigerian Pidgin and most of its substrate languages (Faraclas, 2012).

(31) *eli-(ghi)* *eli*
 eat-NEG eat
 ‘a miserly person’

(32) *ekwe-(ghi)* *ekwe*
 agree-NEG agree
 ‘a stubborn person’

Based on the evidence presented above, I conclude that verb reduplication in Nigerian Pidgin cannot be attributed to transfer from Igbo in particular, but this does not preclude influence from other substrate languages. While reduplication leads to deverbalization in both languages, in Igbo, the output does not denote an AGENT as it does in Nigerian Pidgin. A lack of formal and semantic parallels between verb reduplication in both languages leaves its presence in Nigerian Pidgin open for other explanations as regards its source. It could be considered to be an independent development, motivated by the iconic nature of reduplication, and resulting in outputs whose readings show isomorphism, which then serve as input for the initial stage of grammaticalization. The deverbalized reduplicative constructions whose readings exhibit iconicity by motivation could then be, as hypothesized elsewhere (Odiegwu and Romero-Trillo, 2023) the end result of a grammaticalization pathway, whereby the meaning of the output gets increasingly less transparently iconic.

4.2.2 Pronouns

Pronouns are also amenable to reduplication in Nigerian Pidgin, although with the highest degree of constraint. Only the first person plural (*wi* ‘we’) and the third person

plural (*dem* ‘them’) personal pronouns are reduplicated. More so, they can only be preceded by the focus marker *na*. See examples (33) and (34).

(33) *Na* *wi~wi*
 FOC we~RED
 ‘S/he’s one of us.’

(34) *Na* *dem~dem*
 FOC them~RED
 ‘S/he’s one of them.’

With regard to meaning, both constructions retain the usual deictic interpretation of pronouns, which is to point to referents that are already given by context. However, in addition to this prototypical pronominal function, these reduplicative constructions also convey pragmatic meanings that are not otherwise expressed by the simplex forms alone, with *wi~wi* ‘we/ us’ being used to convey solidarity and social belonging, where the speaker identifies and sympathizes with the referent group, and *dem~dem* ‘they/ them’ being used to express antipathy and social distancing, where the speaker clearly wants nothing to do with the referents of the *dem~dem* group. The markedness of these constructions is seen in the fact that: 1) they are highly grammatically constrained; 2) reduplication here does not imply the type of increase that is typical with the reduplication of nominal elements, especially since the simplex forms are already plural, in which case reduplication would be redundant; and 3) their interpretations are pragmatically charged in a way that neither pronouns nor prototypical reduplicative constructions are.

In Igbo, even though reduplication is also relatively constrained in its application to pronouns, more pronouns are amenable to reduplication than in Nigerian Pidgin. To the best of my knowledge, possible pronoun simplex forms in Igbo include: the first person singular and plural (*my* ‘me’ and *anyi* ‘we’), the second person singular (*gi* ‘you’), and the third person singular (*nya* ‘s/he’) pronouns as summarized in Table 2.

Table 2 Summary of pronouns amenable to reduplication in the Igbo language

	Singular	Plural
1st person	YES	YES
2nd person	YES	NO
3rd person	YES	NO

As in Nigerian Pidgin, pronoun reduplicative constructions in Igbo are ‘marked. The difference between the simplex forms and the reduplicative output is not conceptualized as increase; rather, reduplication is primarily used to mark (exclusive) focus. That is, by reduplicating any of these pronouns, as in example (35) to (38), the speaker as-

serts that the referent, and no one else, is involved in the event denoted by the predicate in the sentence.

(35) *Mụ~mụ* *zụ-rụ* *ụmụ* *anyị*
1SG.SBJ raise-PST children 1PL.POSS
'I (and no one else) raised our children.'

(36) *Anyị~ anyị* *zụ-rụ* *ụmụ* *anyị*
1PL.SBJ raise-PST Children 1PL.POSS
'We (and no one else) raised our children.'

(37) *Ngi~ngi* *zụ-rụ* *ụmụ* *anyị*
2SG.SBJ raise-PST children 1PL.POSS
'You (and no one else) raised our children.'

(38) *Nya~nya* *zụ-rụ* *ụmụ* *anyị*
3SG.SBJ raise-PST children 1PL.POSS
'S/he (and no one else) raised our children.'

A strikingly similar pattern shared by both Igbo and Nigerian Pidgin is exhibited by the pronominal reduplicative construction *anyị~ anyị* 'we/ us'. As in Nigerian Pidgin, *anyị~ anyị* can be used, not only for exclusive focus as in (36) above, but also, as in Nigerian Pidgin, to convey a sense of solidarity and social belonging as in (39) below. Interestingly, when used in this sense, it is also similarly constrained and can only be used after the focus particle *o* or *okwa* 'it is' (see also (33) above).

(39) *O* *anyị~ anyị*
FOC we~RED
'S/he's one of us.'

There is an undeniable similarity between (33) and (39) in their syntactic constraints and the semantic/ pragmatic interpretations. Recall that for marked categories, where iconicity goes beyond a 'one form one meaning' resemblance, iconicity is construed on the basis of context and conventions, which include the culture and worldview of the language community. The semantic/ pragmatic similarities of the meaning components of these constructions are, therefore, no surprise. As already observed elsewhere (Odiegwu and Romero-Trillo, 2003), the syntactic constraint in pronoun reduplication opens up the possibility that the entire phrase (focus particle + pronominal reduplicative) constitutes a distinct and larger construction pattern, especially since unlike what we have in (35) to (38), the particular pattern in (39) cannot take any further arguments. This hypothetical construction pattern, which seems to include noun reduplication as well deserves closer investigation, but falls outside the scope of the present study, and therefore, while it is worthy of mention for its relevance to this analysis, it will not be explored further here.

The unequivocal distributional, syntactic and semantic similarities between (33) and (39), bearing in mind the aforementioned hypothetical construction pattern, constitute substantial evidence of Igbo influence on Nigeran Pidgin. Consistent with what is known about contact-induced transfer, the lexical form here comes from the lexifier. The third person plural *dem* ‘them’ is reduplicated in Nigerian Pidgin, but the same cannot be said of its Igbo counterpart *ha* ‘them’. Nevertheless, this does not constitute a counter argument for transfer; rather, the constructional pattern (focus particle + pronominal reduplicative) provides a structure for the expression of augmented social distance in Nigerian Pidgin in counterposition to a pre-existing construction *na + wi~wi*, which expresses social belonging. In other words, we find the motivation for the construction *na dem~dem* in its counterpart *na wi~wi*, which is in turn motivated by the availability of the structure (with all the range of meanings it conveys) in the Igbo language.

5. Conclusion

While acknowledging that the singling out of one particular ancestral language as the ‘one and only’ substrate language has been a general problem that has plagued the study of the colonial era creoles of the Afro-Atlantic, in this article, I have focused on data from Nigerian Pidgin and only one of its hundreds of substrate languages, Igbo. Drawing on data from informants with native level proficiency in both languages, I have attempted to find parallels between reduplicative processes in Nigerian Pidgin and Igbo in order to determine which reduplicative processes might be attributable at least in part to Igbo, as a result of substrate transfer, and which ones require other explanations. In general, substantial similarities exist in the reduplication patterns found in the two languages, including: 1) the frequency of reduplication; 2) the fact that a wide range word classes, including ideophones, adverbs, numerals, adjectives, nouns, verbs and pronouns, can serve as simplex form input into reduplication; 3) the existence of identical form-meaning correspondences in both languages as in examples (4) and (5) above, and the existence of identical syntactic structures and constructions involving reduplication in both languages such that the same exact glosses can be used for the same sentence in both languages, as in examples (6) through (9), (25) through (30), and (33) and (39) above. All of these similarities are not only shared by Nigerian Pidgin and Igbo, but by most of Nigerian Pidgin’s substrate languages as well (Faraklas, 2012). Among the most ‘unmarked’ and thus prototypically more iconic and isomorphic types of reduplication which characterize reduplicated ideophones, adverbs and nouns, the substantial similarities between Nigerian Pidgin, Igbo and most of the other substrate languages suggest substantial influence of the latter over the former. Among the less ‘unmarked’ and thus less prototypically iconic and isomorphic types of reduplication which characterize reduplicated numerals and adjectives, a mixed picture emerges of some similarities and some differences, suggesting that Igbo alone

cannot be singled out as having had substantial influence over Nigerian Pidgin in this area, which does not preclude the possibility of greater influence from other substrate languages. Among the most ‘marked’ and thus least prototypically iconic and isomorphic types of reduplication which characterize reduplicated verbs and pronouns, a mixed picture also emerges, whereby while in a number of cases there are some major discrepancies between patterns found in Nigerian Pidgin and Igbo, there are also cases of strikingly similar patterns of pronominal reduplication in the two languages that seem to point to clear substrate influence.

In the case of ideophones, adverbs, nouns and pronouns in particular, we see ample evidence of substrate transfer that is consistent with psycholinguistic explanations offered in theoretical concepts such as relexification (Lefebvre, 1986), imposition (van Coestem, 1988; 2000) or functional transfer (Siegel, 2008, p. 138. Interestingly, pronoun reduplicative constructions are marked in terms of their iconicity, thus, they exhibit a feature that is considered *ipso facto*, evidence of substrate influence.

“Examining in detail one particular substrate language may account for the presence of some features in a creole but it cannot account for the absence of others” (Siegel, 2008 p. 234). This calls for further research involving other ancestral languages spoken in Nigeria. In conclusion, as opposed to a monocausal understanding that assumes a single source for creole features, my submission is that the presence of reduplication in Nigerian Pidgin is motivated to a large extent by a rich matrix of interwoven factors, including but not limited to its presence in the ancestral languages such as Igbo, and independent development involving grammaticalization, all motivated by the inherent and thus universal iconicity of the phenomenon in question.

Abbreviations

FOC – focus	PTCL – particle
IDPH – ideophones	RED – reduplicant
IPFV – imperfective	SBJ – subject
OBJ – object	1 – first person
PL – plural	2 – second person
POSS – possessive	3 – third person
PST – past	

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THE MULTIPLE MODALS IN AFRICAN AMERICAN ENGLISH, GULLAH, AND BAHAMIAN CREOLE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Zullo et al. suggest that a pan-Atlantic “multiple modal” belt exists throughout the wider Atlantic region, including North America and the Caribbean (2021, p. 1). While the use of multiple modals is found within numerous English-related languages, many of these have varying histories and origins relating to the development of multiple modal features. Furthermore, each language utilizes different combinations of multiple modals and uses these combinations for distinct purposes. This article covers African American English (AAE), Gullah, and Bahamian Creole (BC). Each of these utilize multiple modals, although they differ in frequency, form and purpose. In this way, the analysis of multiple modals to demonstrate mood can be used to provide a comparative analysis of the origins, linguistic features, and contextual meanings of some English-lexifier creoles.

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Key terms: TMA systems, multiple modals, creole languages, mood, African American English, Gullah English lexifier Creole, Bahamian English lexifier Creole

Multiple modals in English-lexifier creoles: A comparative analysis of mood

This article provides a comparative analysis of the use of multiple modals in African American English (AAE), Gullah, and Bahamian Creole (BC). These three languages are either related to or categorized as English-lexifier creoles, and all of them utilize multiple modals to some degree. In order to frame this treatment of multiple modalities in these languages, it is important to first have an understanding of how both modality and mood are being approached in this analysis. Most languages contain either a modal or mood system, although some do contain both (Palmer, 2001, p. 4). In the case of English, modality is used semantically to express the relation of a particular utterance

to reality and/or unreality, whereas mood is the “morphological means of expressing modality” (Khomutova, 2014, p. 400). Additionally, modality can be broken down further into more specific categories.

Modality can be divided into *propositional* and *event* modality, whereby propositional modality relates to the speaker’s attitude about the factual status of a particular statement, while event modality relates to potential events that have not taken place (Palmer, 2001, p. 8). Propositional modality can be further categorized as either epistemic or evidential. Epistemic modality is when a speaker expresses their judgements about the truth of a statement, whereas evidential modality refers to a speaker indicating “the evidence they have for its factual status” (Palmer, 2001, p. 8). Event modality can be further divided into either deontic or dynamic. Palmer explains that deontic modality refers to external factors, such as obligation or permission (2001, p. 9). On the other hand, dynamic modality refers to internal factors, such as ability or willingness (2001, p. 10).

Additional categories of modality can include presupposed modality, negative and interrogative modalities, expression of wishes/fears/etc., and past tense modality (Palmer, 2001). Past tense modality is the one most likely to be involved in the multiple modal constructions found in English-lexifier creole languages, whereas the others are less frequent and do not contribute significantly to the present analysis. Past tense modality refers to past tense forms of modals being used in combination with past time references, although the past time references are generally used to show “greater tentativeness” rather than being used specifically for expressing the past time reference (Palmer, 2001, p. 14).

Another important consideration for multiple modals in specific English-lexifier creoles is their origin. It is widely accepted that the use of multiple modals in Appalachian and Southern American English stemmed from the linguistic practices of settlers from the Scottish Lowlands and Northern England in the 17th and 18th centuries (Zullo et al., 2021, p. 5). These settlers originally settled in Pennsylvania, eventually moving throughout the Southeast region of the United States. However, alternative origins of multiple modal constructions have been proposed for North American and Caribbean English-lexifier Creoles, that account for the existence of such constructions in North American varieties (i.e., AAE and Gullah) can be attributed to a mixture of “Scottish/Ulster/Northern England donor varieties and restructured Caribbean Englishes that had inherited it from British ancestral varieties” (Butters, 1991; Fennell & Butters, 1996; and Bour, 2015, as cited in Zullo et al., 2021, pp. 5-6). Additionally, it has been suggested that Caribbean creoles also influenced the multiple modal system in emerging Southern American English (SAE) (Butters, 1991; Fennell & Butters, 1996; and Bour, 2015, as cited in Zullo et al., 2021, pp. 5-6). English-lexifier creoles in both North America and the Caribbean have historical and linguistic relationships to one another, although the extent of these relationships varies depending on which creoles are being

linked. Furthermore, it is crucial to consider that English may not be the sole contributor to shared linguistic features found among English-lexifier language varieties. The agency of Africans and African-descended people is often missing from historical, linguistic, and cultural studies, instead painting these people as “passive victims of capitalism and racism” (Faraclas & Bellido de Luna, 2012, p. 2). This indicates that contributions from both African and creolized language varieties may frequently be ignored in favor of Eurocentric explanations when analyzing creole language features.

African American English

It is worth noting that there is some debate about whether African American English (AAE) can be considered to be a creole. For the purposes of this paper, the categorization of AAE is not particularly relevant. However, there is significant evidence that at least some features of AAE may stem from creolized English-lexifier language varieties, which is why it is being included in a comparative analysis with English-lexifier creoles. Rickford claims that the appropriate socio-historical conditions were present for the development of creoles in the United States, as well as substantial evidence for the importation of English lexifier Creoles from the Caribbean up until the end of the 18th century (2015, p. 41). While there are undoubtedly shared characteristics between Southern White American English and African American English, including the use of double or multiple modals, variation is an important concept to bear in mind. From the colonial era onward, some Africans and African-descended people would likely have had more contact with indentured and immigrant Whites, while others would not, resulting in the use of African or creole varieties that could influence the language used by future generations (Rickford, 2015, p. 48).

Both urban and rural varieties of AAE utilize double modal constructions, although rural AAE utilizes a wider range of them (Wolfram, 2004, as cited in Zullo et al., 2021, p. 16). The most frequently used combinations of double modals in AAE are *might could*, *might better* and *useta could* (Labov et al., 1972, as cited in Zullo et al., 2021, p. 15). The constraints on double modals in AAE are interesting, as are these modals’ relationships to tense. Not all combinations of double modals are acceptable; for example, *should could*, never occurs (Martin & Wolfram, 2022, p. 35). There is, however, a level of open-endedness in terms of possible co-occurrences.

Additionally, the role of tense in AAE double modals has unique characteristics. The typical structure for modals in Standard English is that the modal carries the tense and is followed by the infinitive version of a main verb (Martin & Wolfram, 2022, p. 36). However, AAE utilizes double modals in a way that may mark tense at multiple sites. While tense matching is the preferred pattern (e.g., *might could*, *may can*), tense mixing does occur (e.g., *may could*, *might can*) (Di Paolo, 1989, as cited in Martin & Wolfram, 2022, p. 36). Consider the following examples:

A. I might could go to the store.

- B. I may could go to the store.
- C. She may can do that.
- D. She may could do that.
- E. You might better stay away from there.
- F. He useta could get up there.

Examples A and B clearly demonstrate event modality while examples C and D could demonstrate either event or propositional modality. In terms of event modality, these examples are interesting because it is impossible to know whether they are deontic or dynamic without more context. The first modals (i.e., might, may) demonstrate possibility, whereas the second modals (i.e., could, can) demonstrate ability. However, it is unclear whether this ability is related to an external factor, such as permission, or an internal factor, such as willingness. It could be argued that *may* is used to show deontic modality; however, it is important to note that *may* is frequently used in certain contexts to express possibility rather than permission. In terms of tense, there is not a significant difference in meaning between examples A and B since the function of both *might* and *may* are to express possibility. However, examples C and D do have a slight difference in tense. It seems that *can* in example C alludes to a present-tense situation, while *could* might refer to a theoretical situation, further affirming its categorization as event modality. Alternatively, examples C and D could be categorized as propositional modals. If the situation being discussed is theoretical, then these would naturally be categorized as event modals, however, if the situation being discussed has factual status, then these could be categorized as epistemic modals.

Example E is also fluid depending on the context. For example, this sentence could express deontic modality meaning, “*you should stay away from there*”. This could be deontic if it expresses a theoretical event (i.e., going “*there*”) and implies an obligation to stay away from “*there*”. On the other hand, this example could be epistemic if the action of going “*there*” is a real occurrence. In this case, the sentence would be making a judgment about going “*there*”. Example F is also interesting because the second modal, *could*, indicates ability, alluding to event modality. However, *useta* (i.e., *use to*) marks past tense, implying that the event is factual and has already occurred.

All of these examples serve to demonstrate the complexity of double modals in AAE, and the difficulty of placing their patterns of usage into only one category. This is not particularly surprising since Atlantic Creole grammars tend to contain lexical categories that are less specific than their Western European lexifier counterparts (Faraclas et al., 2014, p. 178). This suggests that “a given lexical item is more likely to be pluri-functional in an Atlantic Creole than a similar lexical item in its European lexifier language” (Faraclas et al., 2014, p. 178). While many linguists may not consider AAE a creole, there is strong evidence that creole influences have had an impact on the language, and the pluri-functionality of double modals could be an indication of this.

Gullah

Gullah is an English lexifier creole spoken primarily in coastal areas of South Carolina and Georgia. The exact origins of Gullah are still not completely known, although it has some connections to both AAE and other Atlantic English lexifier Creoles. The most frequently accepted theory about Gullah's origins is that it emerged as large numbers of Africans speaking different languages were brought together under extreme conditions due to the Atlantic slave trade (Weldon & Moody, 2015, p. 164). There thus would have been a need for a common language variety among Africans speaking numerous languages, as well as for interacting with English speakers. This could have created a variety that contained primarily English vocabulary, while grammatical structure and pronunciation underwent strong influences from numerous West African languages (Weldon & Moody, 2015, p. 164).

Mufwene has proposed a number of developmental phases of Gullah correlating with different periods of colonization in the Carolinas (1993, as cited in Weldon & Moody, 2015, p. 167). The initial phase would have occurred when settlers initially came to the Carolinas, from 1670 to around 1720. It is maintained that conditions during this period were not conducive to creole development, but rather the enslaved groups during this time would have likely spoken a second-language variety of English. Many of the enslaved people during this period would have been from Barbados or other areas of the Caribbean. The language spoken at this time would have been the “model and lexifier” for the eventual Gullah creole (Mufwene, 1993, as cited in Weldon & Moody, 2015, p. 167). From 1720 to 1750, as the rice industry grew, segregation became institutionalized, and Africans made up the majority on the plantations (Mufwene, 1993, as cited in Weldon & Moody, 2015, p. 168). Through a process of “basilectalization”, the earlier language varieties began to develop into a creole (Mufwene, 1993, as cited in Weldon & Moody, 2015, p. 167). From 1745-1760, the White population in the Carolinas grew via importation of European indentured labor. From approximately 1750 to 1862, the creole stabilized (Mufwene, 1993, as cited in Weldon & Moody, 2015, p. 167). The next phase coincided with the abolition of slavery, which likely promoted more regular interactions between Black people from various backgrounds (Mufwene, 1993, as cited in Weldon & Moody, 2015, p. 168). It is in this period that Gullah may have begun to absorb some AAE influences and it continues to do so today.

The use of double/multiple modals in Gullah is substantially more limited than in AAE in both inventory and permitted combinations (Zullo et al., 2021, p. 16). Some shared combinations with AAE are *may can*, *may could*, *may would*, *might could*, and *might can*. Significant differences are the Gullah constructions *must have fa (fuh)*, *must fa*, and *must be could* (Zullo et al., 2021, p. 17). The modal *fa* (meaning *should*), “relates Gullah to the Caribbean Creoles, where some form of this auxiliary is used, as e.g., *fi* or *fu*” (Zullo et al., 2021, p. 16). See the following examples:

A. Dem gata must be coulda go fast.
‘Those ‘gators must have been able to move fast’ (Mufwene, 2004, p. 365).

B. They may would do that for you.
‘They would probably do that for you’ (Cunningham, 1992, p. 47).

C. He might be can do that.
‘He probably can do that’ (Cunningham, 1992, p. 47).

One major difference between the double modal constructions in AAE and Gullah is the placement of the verb *be* between some modals, as demonstrated in examples A and C. In AAE, these double modal constructions would not include *be*, but instead would have the two modal verbs directly by each other in the sentence. It appears that this potentially changes the meaning as well, according to the translations by Cunningham (1992). For example, *might could* in AAE and *might be could* in Gullah both express probability. However, *might could* seems like the probability is neutral, while *might be could* is translated as having a higher probability of the action occurring. However, it is possible that Cunningham’s translations considered the context of the conversation(s) and may not account for all possible meanings. If this is the case, then Gullah, like AAE, also requires context for understanding how the double modals are expressing modality.

In example A, the double modal *must could(a)* can be interpreted as either epistemic or evidential propositional modality. If the alligator being discussed is a real alligator, then the speaker could be expressing a judgment about the truth behind whether the alligator moved quickly. For instance, if the speaker is listening to someone recount an experience with an alligator. The speaker could also be offering evidence to prove that the alligator did, in fact, move quickly. If there is evidence, such as a partially eaten deer, then the speaker could use this double modal to express that the alligator almost certainly moved quickly (in order to catch the deer). *Must could(a)* could also demonstrate event dynamic modality. If the alligator is not real, for example when telling a folktale, then the speaker could be discussing the alligator’s internal ability to move quickly.

Examples B and C also offer a variety of possible interpretations. As previously mentioned, both examples demonstrate probability through the use of *might*, although the exact level of probability is likely flexible depending on context. These examples are also expressing event modality since the event being discussed is theoretical and has not yet occurred. While example B clearly articulates dynamic modality through its use of *would*, example C could express either deontic or dynamic modality. The use of *would* indicates that the people performing the action have the ability to perform the action but must decide whether they are willing or able to do so. However, the use of *can* in example C could be interpreted to mean either external or internal ability. The speaker could be expressing that the people performing the action possibly have permission to realize the action, but the speaker could also be referring to the people’s ability or willingness to perform said action.

While Gullah does utilize fewer overall double modals than AAE, it is clear that the ones in use continue to rely on context for interpretation. Furthermore, it is currently unclear whether the use of *be* in between some double modals changes the meanings of these in comparison to the meanings found in AAE. Double modals in Gullah have not been extensively studied (Mufwene, 2004, p. 365), so there is still much to investigate in regard to their usage.

Bahamian Creole

It has previously been suggested that Bahamian Creole (BC) and Gullah were once ‘sister’ varieties sharing an immediate ancestor in the eighteenth-century creole English spoken on plantations in the American South (which would have eventually formed AAE) (Holm, 1983, as cited in Hackert & Hubert, 2007, p. 279). However, Hackert and Hubert claim that BC and Gullah share so much historically and linguistically that BC could potentially be considered a diaspora variety of Gullah rather than of AAE (2007, p. 280). After the Treaty of Versailles in 1783, some 7,300 British loyalists in North America left for the Bahamas. Out of these 7,300 people, 5,700 were African descended servants, slaves, and free loyalists, tripling the colony’s population and raising the population of African descent from half to three-fourths (Hackert & Hubert, 2007, p. 280).

Additionally, the Bahamas in the 18th century saw an increase in importation of enslaved people directly from Africa, although most African descended Bahamians have North American roots (Hackert & Hubert, 2007, p. 283-284). Because of this, some linguists have proposed that BC originated from early AAE, however, Hackert and Hubert contest this by asserting that AAE was never a full creole and therefore questioning why BC would have developed into a creole if it originated from AAE (2007, p. 284). It should also be noted there was a continuum between Gullah and AAE in some regions, rather than a clear distinction between the two. In any case, Hackert and Hubert’s argument for BC’s relationship to Gullah is supported by a few key points: Gullah would have been fully developed during the time that North American immigration to the Bahamas took place; there is significant evidence that many of those who immigrated to the Bahamas originated from South Carolina, Virginia, and Georgia; and there are hundreds of shared linguistic features between Gullah and BC (2007, p. 306-307).

Bahamian Creole, like both AAE and Gullah, allows for the use of double modals. For the sake of this analysis, I am only using examples from Bahamian Creole and not Bahamian English, although Bahamian English does allow for double modals as well (many of which closely resemble those used in AAE and Southern American English). Bahamian Creole has more known combinations of double modals than Gullah, but fewer than AAE. The majority of these double modals involve the word *mussy* (meaning *must be* or *must have*) (Holm & Shilling, 1982, as cited in Zullo et. al, 2021, p. 18).

Mussy is oftentimes used to “expresses a speaker’s notion of reality about an event or state” (McPhee, 2003, p. 40). Consider the following examples from McPhee (2003, pp. 41-42).

- A. She mussy mait come tomorrow.
She probably may come tomorrow.
- B. She mait mussy come tomorrow.
She may probably come tomorrow (or at some other time).
- C. A mussy go kuk let suppa.
I probably will cook a late supper.
- D. A go mussy kuk let suppa.
I will probably cook a late supper (or do something else).
- E. De mussy shuda fiks it.
They probably should have fixed it.

One key difference between BC’s use of double modals as compared to AAE and Gullah is that the order of the modals is much more flexible. However, changing the order of modals, particularly when *mussy* is involved, does slightly change the meaning of the sentence. This change in meaning seems to be mostly related to generality. For example, *mussy go* refers to one singular action, while *go mussy* refers to that same action, as well as the possibility of an unidentified alternative action. This change also applies to time references, with *mussy mait* expressing a singular time reference, while *mait mussy* expresses the same time reference, as well as an unidentified alternative time.

While the word order of BC’s modals do change the meaning of what is being expressed, it does not appear that this feature significantly impacts the categorization of modalities as being propositional or event. That being said, it is extremely difficult to determine which categories BC’s double modals fit into without situational context, similar to the situations in AAE and Gullah, perhaps even more so.

Examples A and B reflect event modality in terms of expressing a theoretical event that has not yet occurred. However, these sentences do not truly refer to deontic or dynamic features. While McPhee’s translation says *may* rather than *might*, I am assuming that BC’s *mait* is related to *might*, which expresses probability instead of permission or obligation. These sentences also do not indicate ability or willingness. However, examples A and B do contain epistemic and evidential features. Depending on context, the speaker may be expressing epistemic modality by speculating how probable it is that the subject will actually come at the discussed time(s). For example, if someone says that the subject will come, the speaker could express that the subject probably will come, thus sharing their feelings about the truth value of this statement. These same sentences can demonstrate evidential modality if the speaker is including evidence for their assertion of probability. For instance, if the speaker includes additional information explaining why they believe that the subject will likely come at the specified time(s).

C and D also express event modality by discussing situations that are theoretical and have not occurred. These examples have dynamic characteristics due to the use of *go*, which expresses an ability or willingness to cook a late supper (or do another, unidentified activity). Examples C and D can also express propositional modality through the use of *mussy*. These examples could also be expressing epistemic or evidential modality in ways similar to examples A and B. If the context involves speculating how probable it is that the subject will actually cook a late supper, this alludes to epistemic modality. If the speaker is including evidence for their assertion of probability, such as information explaining why they think they will likely cook a late supper, then this has evidential features.

Example E creates a complex situation regarding event modality by also including past tense modality. In this case, there is a theoretical situation at hand, but it is in the past tense, thus implying that the situation did not actually occur and has not yet occurred. This example also contains deontic features by stating that the subjects probably should have fixed something, which alludes to obligation. However, since we know that the subjects did not, in fact, fix the item being discussed, this sentence could also allude to propositional modality. The speaker could be making a judgment about an event that happened. *Should* or *shuda* can show obligation as previously mentioned, or be used to determine whether something occurred or not. For example, *de mussy shuda fiks it* could be expressing that the item should probably be fixed at this point in time. In other words, the action of fixing the item should be completed at this time. In this case, this example would be epistemic since the speaker is expressing a judgment about the factual status of the item being fixed. Like many previous examples, this could also refer to evidential modality if the speaker is including evidence to support their statement. For example, if the subjects fixing the item said that it would be completed by a certain time, the speaker might look at their watch and say “*de mussy shuda fiks it*” based on the hour indicated on the clockface.

While AAE and Gullah also demonstrated significant complexity when interpreting double modals, BC’s double modals are especially difficult to place into clear, definable categories of function and usage. AAE and Gullah’s double modals could be interpreted in several different ways, however, each individual interpretation could be labeled in a specific way. In the case of BC, many of the double modals contain characteristics across several categories, while not completely fulfilling the definitions put forth for each of the conventional (and Eurocentric) categories of modality. As mentioned earlier in this analysis, Atlantic Creole grammars tend to contain lexical categories that are less specific than their Western European lexifier counterparts (Faraclas et al., 2014, p. 178), and BC demonstrates this clearly.

Conclusion

This analysis was fairly restricted in its scope and largely depended on archival examples of double modals in the languages presented. Additionally, there is limited research available on the topic of double modals in English-lexifier creoles, including how these connect to one another historically and linguistically. However, the present study clearly demonstrates the complexity of double modals within the contexts of AAE, Gullah, and BC and emphasizes the need for contextual information pertaining to documented samples in order to accurately determine meaning. There is also evidence of historical connections between these languages, although many aspects of this remain unclear. Limitations imposed by conventional lexical categories also pose problems for accurate interpretations of meaning, particularly in the case of BC.

This does, however, leave plenty of room for future research. More current samples of double modals in these languages, as well as other creoles, would be extremely useful for future analyses. Additionally, the incorporation of social and/or linguistic context would help ensure that these samples are being interpreted accurately. Finally, the categories used to describe modality should be evaluated in order to better represent how both double modals and modality in creole languages are expressed.

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SOCIAL MEDIA AND LANGUAGE CHANGE

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Abstract

Internet jargon is a cover term that applies to a set of non-standardized linguistic varieties that, while they have no official sanction, can be found not only all-over social media, but increasingly in other forms of spoken and written language. This jargon consists mainly of content words that can often change their word class from nouns to adjectives to verbs, depending on their placement in a sentence. Some of the most commonly used terms that make up internet jargon have been so recently introduced that they have barely been subject to academic study. In order to begin to address this gap in our knowledge, a few such terms are exemplified and analyzed in the present study. This is done with the aim of suggesting how a lexicon of internet jargon terms might eventually be constructed. Although the examples provided in this work come from written representations on social media platforms where English and Spanish are the principal languages used, these and other internet jargon terms can also be found in other oral and written media as well as in other languages.

Key terms: internet jargon, language, social media, language change

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Introduction and background

Cimarusti (2013) asserts that internet slang has probably been seeping into our offline interactions since the very beginnings of online communication. As the years go by, the internet becomes more integrated into our daily lives, and by extension, so does social media. It is estimated that there are nearly 5 billion users of social media on the planet (Dean, 2023), and as a result, countless words have been created by users. This has come to pass for any number of reasons, such as coping with limitations on the number of characters per post, avoiding censorship, and other factors. In a number of cases, these terms have entered into the oral realm, becoming part of everyday conversation (Brooks, 2014). In this article, an initial attempt will be made to provide dictionary-type entries for specific internet jargon terms, based on contextualized exam-

ples of their use on social media. Due to the lack of recorded data before the advent of Myspace in 2003, the present research will be focused on the words or terms created on social media platforms thereafter.

Although the rise of social media began with the popular, yet short-lived Six Degrees.com website in 1997, it was not until a few years later that a significant number of commonly used and widely accepted internet jargon terms began appearing in the social media, on services such as LinkedIn, Myspace, and Facebook. These services provide the starting point for the present study of the jargon used on social media and in chat rooms. This jargon consists of terms and expressions, many of which have yet to be properly categorized and defined in an academic way. Because it functions as a professional networking website, we will exclude data found on LinkedIn from consideration here, while including some examples found on another trendy social media platform, Twitter.

The history of the sources of the jargon that functions as the target of our investigation began with the social networking service Myspace, created by co-founders Chris De-Wolfe and Tom Anderson, which in its prime had around 115 million users. Myspace provided users with the space to add friends to a list, customize their profile (Myspace page), and join chat rooms. Despite several redesigns aimed at continuing to attract an audience, around 2009 Myspace suffered a steady decline and was surpassed by other social media platforms. One of these was Facebook, the social media platform created by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004, which was to become the most popular and widely used platform in the world. Another was Twitter, a social media platform created to function as a blog in which a limited number of characters were allowed to be used in each post. Before its demise under the faulty leadership of Elon Musk, this platform was used as a site where people could express their feelings in a more open, informal, and uninhibited manner than on other sites, such as Facebook. Most of our data were sourced from Facebook and especially Twitter in the pre-Musk years, because the use of internet jargon tends to be positively correlated with informality. In fact, it can be said that Twitter in the pre-Musk era had historically played a key role in the emergence of internet jargon.

Before proceeding any further, we must establish a working definition for the term ‘internet jargon’ as the unofficial creation and use of language by people on the internet to communicate. By this definition, the form and use of any word, expression, acronym, abbreviation, etc. that originates on any social media platform can be considered internet jargon. It must be emphasized, however, that the form and use of internet jargon does not always follow all of the orthographic rules that apply in the language from which it is derived. Some examples of this can be found in items of internet jargon derived from both of the source languages considered in the present study: English and Spanish. For example, the commonly encountered internet acronym *lol* derived from English “laugh out loud” is always used without periods or full stops after any of

its letters, as is the case with the abbreviated form *bn* derived from Spanish *bien* ‘good’ (Fogarty, 2006; Fish, 2015). Additionally, both *lol* and *bn* can be written in either lower or upper case without necessarily affecting their meaning or interpretation. To observe how popular social media has impacted both written and spoken expression in English and Spanish, we must first consider some of the evidence that demonstrates that users of social media platforms have the capability to learn through their use of technological devices, and which describes and analyzes how such learning processes unfold. Connectivist Learning Theory, as initially formulated by Stephen Downes and George Siemens in 2005, is a useful point of reference here. This theory can be summed up as follows: “Connectivism presents a model of learning that acknowledges the tectonic shifts in society where learning is no longer an internal, individualistic activity. How people work and function is altered when new tools are utilized” (Siemens, 2018). Connectivism establishes that “learners construct their own personal learning environments that enable them to connect to ‘successful’ networks, with the assumption that learning will automatically occur as a result, through exposure to the flow of information and the individual’s autonomous reflection on its meaning.” (Siemens, 2017). In simpler terms, connectivism suggests that people can learn a great deal through the use of chat rooms, blogs, and other internet venues. In the present preliminary study, connectivist theory is applied to any instance where terms have been created in an online setting and then extended to the use of these terms in face-to-face conversations.

Although connectivism can describe some of the processes through which learning takes place, sociocultural interactionist theories developed by Lev Vygotsky further clarify how learning occurs. Such theories claim “that if our language ability develops out of a desire to communicate, then language is dependent upon whom we want to communicate with. This means the environment you grow up in will heavily affect how well and how quickly you learn to talk.” (Khan Academy, 2021). With these theories, we can provide the answers to where those words are used and why they are repeated and created as more years pass by. Another theory of relevance here is B. F. Skinner’s behaviorist theory, which states that language learning is based on the imitation of human role models and the positive and negative feedback or reinforcement received on each attempt at imitation. (Reutzel & Cooter, 2004). In relation to social media, positive reinforcement comes in the form of all the “likes”, “comments” and “shares” awarded to a given post and the jargon utilizes therein. Even though the resulting reward in terms of internet fame is short-lived, this positive feedback effectively encourages users to employ and even create more internet jargon in their following posts.

These questions that have guided this study thus far are the following:

1. How do individual words used as internet jargon behave in terms of grammatical categories such as noun, verb, adjective, etc.?

2. How does internet jargon move from online use to face-to-face conversation?

Preliminary data and discussion

An adaptation of the structures used in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary and the Cambridge Dictionary will be used below to list definitions, categories, and other collected data about internet jargon. Additionally, selected examples from social media will be provided.

bae - /beɪ/

noun/verb/adjective?

1. An acronym for the phrase “before anyone else” signifies the importance of the person in the speaker's life.
2. A term of endearment to address a loved one, commonly used to refer to boyfriends, girlfriends, and spouses.

The non-abbreviated form from which the term is derived implies that it should only be bestowed on one single person at a time, however, the pluralized form *baes* also occurs. The normal rules of marking for plural (1a and b) and possessive (1c) are followed when bae is used as a noun by adding the suffix /-s/ at the end, although the expected apostrophe written before the possessive /-s/ seems to be missing in (1c). (1a-c) were retrieved from different users of Twitter:

(1) (a) G FESTIVE ERA @GIANNADARK0 (deleted account)

Baes of the week (protected tweet)

(b) Babes_weHoney @Benhildah_16

What do people really do to get their *baes* to buy them phones and cars?

(c) lola @lostinrochefort

nearly *baes* birthday

In (1a) bae is clearly pluralized, since the post was accompanied by the images of Finn Wolfhard, Joe Keery and another male actor. This is also the case for (1b), where reference is being made to more than one past relationship. In (1c) bae was meant to be marked for the possessive, since the tweet clearly referred to a cat's birthday. The lack of apostrophe before the possessive /-s/ in the tweet may not necessarily be a mistake, since, in internet jargon, the apostrophe may be becoming optional, especially if possession can be readily inferred, based on the context of the sentence.

(2) Gintokioddjobs@Gintokioddjobs

Alphen salt *baeing* it up

Example (2) is a comment on the behavior of a particular character in game (named Alphen salt) who Gintokioddjobs observes will be changing their behavior in such a way as to become more likely to have the term bae used to refer to them. Although this

is the only example found while searching through Twitter for verbal uses of bae, this could be a glimpse of how this term is evolving to acquire verb-like properties.

sus - /sʌs/

noun/verb/adjective

1. An abbreviation of the term suspicious or suspect.
2. Someone that is acting in a mischievous and/or untrustworthy manner.

This internet jargon item was popularized by the famous “Among Us” social-deduction game that assigns either a “crewmate” or “impostor” role to each player, in which the crewmates must work together to eject the impostor from the ship before they are slain. In the game, when a crewmate’s death is reported, a meeting begins to determine the cause. The short time allowed for deliberation during meetings, requires a quick way to communicate, resulting in the abbreviation *sus* being adopted for the words suspicious and suspect, which are the most common words used when accusing members of being impostors. However, even though the jargon is an abbreviation of the word suspicious, in some cases it seems to mean suspecting or accusing.

(3) (a) PlayStation Europe @PlayStationEU

Keep an eye out for that one *sus* crewmate if you want to discover who did it.

(b) Dylan Keith (Facebook)

Are you *sus*? Do you like to play among us? Well, do we have the place for you!

(c) N. Koeh on Among Us Memes (Facebook group)

Sussing me? Sure, but I'm dead so that would be impressive if I managed to kill ...

(d) Danielle Jones (Facebook)

But then you get *sussed* for not stating why like ...

From examples (3a), and (3b) the jargon term is an abbreviation for suspicious, which like much of internet jargon does not require a period at the end. However, an oddity occurs when replacing the word sussing in example (3c) with its original meaning with the inflection included, the result would be:

(4) Alternative version of (3c)

(a) *suspiciousing* me? Sure, but I'm dead so that would be impressive if I managed to kill ...

After replacing the jargon term in example (4a) it becomes apparent that it no longer functions as an adjective in the sentence, but instead as a verb, and its meaning has shifted toward one of accusing or blaming. In a similar manner, sussed in example (3d) adopts the suffix *-ed/* which is not only used for past participle forms of verbs but also for adjectives.

cap - /kæp/

noun/verb/adjective?

1. (noun) an untrue statement
2. (verb) to make an untrue statement with intent to deceive
3. (adjective)??

Dating back to 1985, cap was first used to refer to an untrue statement by Too \$hort in his rap album Raw, Uncut, And X-Rated. Shortly thereafter in 1989, a new term ‘high cap’ was introduced, by Willie D. in his rap song “Put The F-in’ Gun Away” to mean the opposite of cap, that is, the truth or being truthful, as in example (5a) below. More recently, the term ‘no cap’ has also been used with the same meaning as high cap. Although, these terms are similar in pronunciation to kappa, popularized on the streaming platform Twitch. However, the term and emote kappa is used to convey sarcasm or irony mostly when making jokes.

(5) (a) Rangnick @RangnickEra1 (deleted account)

This succession finale might genuinely be the best of all time, no *cap*.

(b) Mickodo@offtheperkys

Why do i feel like he *capping* again?

(5b) demonstrates that cap can be used as a verb as do examples (6a-6c):

(6) Other sentences taken from now deleted accounts include the following:

(a) He always *caps* to them.

(b) They were *capped* by the team.

(c) You had *capped* for the last time.

In the following section, the research will focus on Spanish-derived terms being used on social media. Since all examples are in Spanish a translation is provided by the present author to best represent all terms within their context.

onvre ~ombre /ɔ̃mbre/

noun

1. A derogatory description of a self-centered man who has no concerns for others.

2. A male that with no connection to feelings outside of his sexual urges.

3. Men who lie and cheat in order to not take any responsibility for their own actions.

This internet term is abundantly used on social media. The mere mention of this term proves a strong negative reaction among male users, even though it is not meant to include all males. This preemptive assault on the part of men only further justifies the creation of this jargon term. The themes of lying and irresponsibility are illustrated in examples (7a-7c):

(7) From Twitter:

(a) Leila @leibringas_

lástima que es *onvre* y esos sólo saben mentir

[too bad he's an onvre and onvres do nothing but lie]

(b) Muriel @muri_allega

No caer mas en las mentiras de un **onvre**

[don't fall for an onvre's lies again]

(c) A@antoniaa_____

Onvres be like: tengo responsabilidad emocional, 5 minutos después:

ghosteada

[onvres are like: I take emotional responsibility, 5 minutes later you're ghosted]

Difficulties arise when determining whether and when this term might become used in face-to-face conversation, since it has a pronunciation identical to the commonly heard word "hombre," meaning that unless the speaker indicates somehow that they are using this term specifically there will not be an easy way to identify it in a normal conversation.

mano

noun

1. A person.
2. An informal way to address someone (vocative).

This internet term, which has long been used in informal conversation in Caribbean varieties of Spanish, can be considered to be the Spanish version of the word "dude" in English. Perhaps what is different about this term when used online is that it can refer to anyone regardless of whether it is an individual or a group of people and regardless how they are sexed or gendered:

(8) (a) Alberto J M. Cotto (Facebook)

La caída de Karol G a mi no me dió nada de risa, lo que me dió fue una pena **mano**.

[The downfall of Karol G didn't make me happy at all, it bothered me, mano.]

(b) Death Nation P.R (Facebook group)

Mano los boricuas perdieron, dieron un tremendo juego pero ...

[Mano, the Puerto Ricans lost, they played a good game but ...]

As a vocative, when **mano** is removed from the sentence, the literal information remains intact.

raitrú

affirmation, adverb

1. really
2. An expression that affirms or requests confirmation of a statement.

This term is believed by some to be derived from "the English 'Right [and] True' (to tell the truth as it is)" (Ríos Ramirez, 2006, p. 182), yet it can be debated that the term

might also have been derived from the words “right through” (see example 11a, but also 11b below) by some process of convergence. In Puerto Rico, the term is equivalent to the words ‘seriously’ and ‘really’ and ‘directly’ in English:

(10) (a) Andrea ☀️ @medinanatania

una vez me da el ick, there's no going back. **Raitrú**.

[as soon as it gives me ick, there's no going back. Raitru.]

(b) Tammy Swanson @_RitaOral

Si? **Raitrú?** **Raitrú** es que quiero serlo en verdad

[Yes? Really? Seriously, it's that I truly want to be that way.]

(11) (a) Lola @karinavaleeria7

Cabron a mi tú me tienes que decir las cosas **right thru** ...

[Motherfxxxer you have to tell me things directly ...]

(b) J a p y @kaaanela

uno no usa **raitrú** para decir **right through**

[you don't use raitrú to say right through]

Further research needs to be conducted on internet jargon terms, as older terms continue to take on new meanings, and as ever more new terms are being devised and adopted by users.

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**SOUTHERN EPISTEMOLOGIES,
SOUTHERN PRAXES AND DISCOURSE
IN THE CARIBBEAN AND BEYOND**

OBSERVATIONS ON LANGUAGE IN THE POLITICAL ARENA IN 21st CENTURY TOBAGO¹

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Abstract

This article is a brief evaluation of how Tobagonian political candidates use the English language when they do, and a reflection about what all of this means for governing Tobago. I argue that the context of seriousness and importance that drives the use of English to communicate ideas in the political arena, or clarify a particular political position or action, renders the use of English unclear, vague and often times inaccurate. Such problems in the use of English in politics influence a wide cross-section of Tobago society, given the importance of governmental politics in Tobago. In the final analysis, the problematic use of English can be seen as a major contributor to general problems of management on the island.

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Key terms: political discourse, Tobago, Caribbean English, governance, political campaigns

Every four or five years or so, Tobago conducts elections at the governmental level, ostensibly to select leaders to run the island's affairs. Involved in this process is a party-based selection of candidates. The selection committees, as they are called, which are created for this purpose do the very important work of identifying candidates who will

¹ Much of what is contained in this article might be applicable to Trinidad and Tobago, and by extension, the rest of the Caribbean. However, with an understanding that Tobago remains one of the most understudied Caribbean territories, the specific focus on Tobago here is a move to shed more light on the island, with the hope of generating further interest in and research on the island's history and evolution. Furthermore, the emphasis on the use of English is not meant by any means to suggest that English is to be given higher value than what Tobagonians colloquially call, 'Tobago dialect' (which, in more scientific terms, may be called Tobago English lexifier Creole or Tobagonian).

best represent party interests in the political arena, and thus hopefully convince the greatest number of people to join a particular team or to vote for a specific political party. In short, a selected candidate seems to be identified as having the best public persona for the winning of votes and for the success of any political party. One of the aspects of this public persona that is given immense emphasis by the candidates themselves, is the use of English. Having been selected, candidates quickly resort to using what they see to be English in the media and in debates as a way of representing themselves and their party. Our natural rhythm of code-switching becomes muzzled by what seems to be an attempt to equate political seriousness with English.

However, when one considers the use of English during election campaigns within the last 10 to 15 years or so, it becomes apparent that what is offered to the Tobago electorate is not quite the best example of clear communication and organisation or management of ideas meant to educate, clarify or convince. At the heart of this problem is, more specifically, the issue of language use in a twin context of importance and arrogance. From as early as nursery school, we are taught about the importance of government to the growth and success of a nation, so there is a general consensus that politicians are important, and politicians know that they are. But somehow, the importance of being in the service of citizens functions more as a performance of arrogance from the political stage or from within the frenzy and accessibility of modern media. It is not that candidates are inherently arrogant or even think about taking up political positions with an idea about being or becoming arrogant. By and large, individuals involved in politics believe that their involvement can change some situation in their country for the better, and this action on belief is an act of humility and civic duty in recognising their functional role in a larger entity called a country. They also offer themselves up in an act of incredible self-sacrifice, with the knowledge that for politicians, intense public scrutiny is a way of life.

But the nature of the political game is such that competition for public attention and the urgency to persuade drive a sense of self-importance, thereby subordinating the larger and more important work of service to people. In such a scenario of competition, self-importance replaces the importance of governance in the political arena, where competitors try their very best to show off their use of English in their attempts to explain or clarify party ideas. It is therefore precisely this business of use of English that has become a major problem in the political atmosphere in Tobago during the first two decades of the 21st century, a problem that in and of itself yields greater, more complex challenges as they pertain to governance and the shaping of Tobago society.

Typical of this English usage is political jargon with an excess of unclear statements as well as an excessive reliance on clichés as packaged and curated responses to the public. Take for instance, some common platform statements used over the last two Tobago House of Assembly elections to either underline or justify the importance of a particular administration's policy: 'having done our consultations, we believe that going forward

this is the best way to improve the lives of our citizens ... ' or, 'those on the other side, with their reckless management and wanton wastage, will put thousands of Tobagonians on the breadline. Our policy will address this' With these types of statements, there is never really any genuine clarity. They often come either as imprecise and repetitive utterances on the political platform, hopefully to become clearer as they leave the speakers' mouths, or they may also come as defensive verbal gestures hopefully to placate residents or to disguise larger more troubling scandals or more worrying aspects of their public life that cannot be easily explained away.

But any sustained examination of this kind of political language will show that it is at best vague and misleading. If, for example, one were to take some time on a statement such as: 'this policy will improve the lives of thousands of citizens ... ' one would realise that the vagueness is on account of verb choice and lack of fine explanation in terms that are meaningful to the majority of citizens. Assuming that an explanation of a specific policy is given, how does a candidate demonstrate or prove that such a policy will 'improve' lives? How is improvement of people's lives measured? Have these people, who are the residents of Tobago, been made part of the policy-making process? Is improvement understood to be the same thing when the lived experiences of the policy makers/candidates and the unaffiliated residents seem so far apart? Who are the 'thousands' that will benefit? What about the other excluded hundreds or thousands, if Tobago's resident population is around 60,000? And, has the policy been tried and tested for a certain period with rigorous assessments to determine more genuinely the value of the policy to people's lives?

Answers to any of these questions are bound to be problematic. For to throw at the public such unclear statements with very little consideration of their comprehensibility, is to assume that when English is used on the political stage it is error-free, effective or self-explanatory. Such an assumption is perhaps deepened by conflating the importance of the political arena with the idea that what one has to say is important and therefore clear, or perhaps by believing that once the use of English sounds 'political' or 'campaignish' enough, it is immediately clear to listeners. This kind of fallacy in thinking deeply reflects the arrogance and aloofness of political/ campaign language. When English is used or attempted, very little thought is put into ensuring that a majority of the Tobago population understands what any administration wants to do, is about to do, or has done.

And even if the word, 'improve' in our example above, is given clearer exposition, its truth value will still have to be measured by a more open and democratic process in which the majority of residents have attested to the effectiveness and value of the policy. The absence of this largescale democratic and open process thus creates for the politician a scenario in which s/he often resorts to and becomes reliant upon easy-to-use words, verbs and phrases that merely suggest actions, intentions and desires but that do not make explicit precisely what residents need to hear and know. Once uttered with the swing and dance of the political platform, once delivered with the tone of authority and

an imagined sense of seriousness, these easy-to-use words, verbs and phrases become tools for the shaping of a culture of arrogance. For their emptiness and vagueness is finely packaged in the glamour and posturing of the political stage, a domain that does the important work of showcasing would-be leaders to manage the island's affairs and where time and again, candidates fail to make the important connection between clarity of expression and service to people.

In addition to the excessive use of clichés, another area of immense challenge for the political candidate here in Tobago during an election campaign, and connected to the above point, is the deep dependence on wordiness. The verbose use of language on the political stage sets up a situation in which unclarity, redundancy and inaccuracies abound. Phrases such as 'strategic development', 'at this point in time', 'criminal elements', 'no child shall be left behind' and so forth, form part of the dominant political rhetoric, and are in and of themselves meaningless or at best vaguely suggestive. Nothing in them gives a precise indication of, or accurately identifies, anything. 'Strategic development', for instance, does not say anything about exactly how the word, 'strategic' is to be understood let alone applied; and neither does the word, 'development' indicate precisely how growth of any kind is supposed to actually happen. Similarly, 'at this point in time' says nothing about 'when': one does not know if the speaker is referring to the time in which s/he is speaking, or to another time that can also logically be interpreted as 'now', which is what the phrase seems to suggest.

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The expression, 'criminal elements,' also does not quite capture what is supposedly intended by its use. In other words, when used, it is often meant to refer to 'criminals', in a society where crime is politically mobilised largely to mean theft, physical violence, kidnapping, murder, rape, and 'drug-related activity'. But to the very many who see politicians and law enforcement personnel as quintessential examples of criminals living above the law, the term, 'criminal elements', will at best be a vague phrase, able to mean more than it is intended to mean, and thereby implicating the politicians who hastily resort to the phrase as a way of indicating their seriousness on crime. And to say, 'no child shall be left behind', to refer to a policy in education that ostensibly takes care of children in the education system is simply not true. 'Behind' where? Many children at school and parents before and more so during the COVID-19 pandemic will quickly and easily say that they are left behind in many of their classes, for many reasons. And what about those who cannot be at school? How are they not 'left behind' if left behind is to mean forgotten or ignored? With these types of ready-made and often wordy phrases, the problems of unclarity and inaccuracy persist. And given the importance and influence of the political platform in the determination of how the Tobago society is governed, such clichés and verbosities are imbibed by a larger cross-section of the society, thereby becoming entrenched as quick go-to phrases in the use of English in many quarters, thus circulating widely and going viral.

Perhaps the most glaring challenge that politicians face is the business of communicating past action clearly in English. This kind of communication problem makes it immensely difficult to properly track or understand what candidates say about the work their administration has done. The construction, ‘would have’ (plus a past participle), seems to have entirely displaced the simple past tense in English. Take for example the following: ‘last week, we would have discussed the issue with the Prime Minister, and he would have said that his administration is aware of the situation ...’ or, ‘we would have already acquired the equipment for the hospital and we would have also procured additional equipment ...’ No English grammar book teaches, ‘would have + past participle’ as the simple past tense, that is, to communicate definite past action. In fact, the construction, ‘would have + past participle’ may be referred to as a conditional perfect tense (or aspect). As the name implies, it is used to indicate the conditionality of a past action. For example, ‘if I had seen her, I would have told her to come with me’, or, ‘he would have been happier, had he stayed in Tobago’. Merle Hodge’s *The Knots in English* (2011) is one of several Caribbean grammar textbooks that provides us with very clear and detailed explanations of how these conditional sentences operate in English, and it may be a very good thing for politicians to have this text either for reference or for daily study.

What is called a conditional clause in the pluperfect tense is required (overtly or covertly) with the use of the conditional perfect: ‘If I had seen her (pluperfect conditional clause with the verb had [the past tense of have] and seen [the past participle of see]), I would have told her to come with me (main clause with the conditional perfect, *would have told*)’. But somehow, the conditional perfect has increasingly and confidently been replacing/ displacing the simple past, making it woefully unclear exactly what the speaker/ candidate is attempting to say. The logical question to ask, therefore, is: from where did this kind of confident inaccuracy come? What made them believe it was right to say, ‘would have done’ for ‘did’, especially knowing that none of them could have learnt this from any English grammar textbook?

If it is that the political platform is a site of aspiration for younger individuals, then what is transmitted to them from this place of political rhetoric are not quite the best illustrations of public expression in English, of management of ideas in English, or of consistency with and respect for formal education and the teaching of English. These problems are precisely some of the areas our formal education system is supposed to attend to. If political candidates as both exemplary graduates of our education system and eventual leaders on the island are so terribly challenged by clear and direct expression in English, what does this mean for the nature of our formal education system? What does the teaching of English look like at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels? How is the material in English text books interpreted and then delivered to students, and how are students who leave our institutions of higher learning set up to express themselves, their thoughts, their feelings, their ideas, on paper and in English, the apparent official

language of the country? Put another way, how do we get from, ‘yesterday it rained’ to, ‘yesterday it would have rained’ when supposedly effective schooling has taught us that the former, (not the latter) is the grammatically acceptable way to refer to past events in English? And what does all of this mean for the business of running of The Tobago House of Assembly?

Everyone has the capacity to be clear, and clarity does not belong to any one language. Clarity guides sensible action and restores confidence. But when candidates who are chosen by their respective parties so frequently resort to English as a way of demonstrating their electability, they often do not recognise that to be clear in English demands labour. When it comes to the use of English, the kind of fluency and lucidity in public commentary that individuals such as ANR Robinson gave us did not come from a hasty jump to the political domain. Consistent among individuals known to be excellent and effective public speakers, able to get to the depths of a situation with incredible agility and logic, is a dedication and commitment to the activity of broad and careful listening, reading, speaking and writing. The ability to be clear and impactful in the use of English on any platform does not happen by osmosis or by accenting one’s self-importance. For this, like any skill, comes after years of fine and careful training that calls for frequent trips to dictionaries, encyclopedias and atlases to do long searches to find answers and explanations to things. What is properly heard or properly read takes its time to marinate in the minds and bodies of listeners and readers, sometimes, often times, waiting for later moments of maturity to unfold as ever deeper layers of meaning.

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Perhaps if the political atmosphere was such that candidates on campaign felt more confident to use Tobago’s own languages (the different varieties commonly spoken on the island) and thus engage the public more frequently in the languages we are more likely to use and hear on a daily basis, the electorate might be in a far better position to make sense of what is said on the political stage. But this is not the case. Tobagonian English lexifier Creole remains very stigmatised in certain contexts that are seen to be ‘official’ or ‘formal’ or ‘serious’, such as church podiums and the political arena, and as such, speakers of the language are still confronted with what has been a long institutional tradition of setting up Caribbean languages as subordinate alternatives to European languages. Despite the incredible work done by our linguists such as Winford James (Tobago), Merle Hodge (Trinidad), Dennis Solomon (Trinidad), and Carlton Ottly (Tobago) on the value, history, structure and complexity of Trinidad and Tobago creole languages (what we often call ‘our dialects’), the use of Tobagonian in public debates is still largely restricted since it has not yet acquired the same level of so-called prestige associated with the legacy of English, a legacy that speaks directly to the long colonial hold on how we shape our civilisation.

Candidates in the political arena have immense responsibilities. First, they are representative of a people. These candidates inadvertently show the rest of the region and, by extension, the world our capacity for serious governance, and this capacity, given the

public pressures on their public persona, is exemplified by, though not restricted/ confined to, the ways in which we work with language at the precise time when clarity of language matters. Second, political candidates signal to residents, their readiness/ preparedness to lead, which also tends to be evaluated by their English language use and ability to convince through cogent argumentation. Susan Craig-James (2007) has given back to us in her hundred-year study on Tobago, the legacy of our elders in developing and setting up rich and far-reaching contexts for the effective public debating of matters that pertain to the growth and progress of Tobago. Her study shows us that we do, in fact, have a long tradition of clear and effective public speaking (in English) on the island. Understanding how this tradition evolved into a thinner, more convoluted pattern of political jargon, might very well be key to coming to terms with the deep crisis of Tobago's governance in the first two decades of the 21st century.

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THE WONDROUS AND TRAGIC LIFE OF IVAN AND IVANA: DECOLONIALITY, TERRORISM AND A SUBVERSIVE NARRATIVE VOICE

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Abstract: Maryse Condé's 2020 novel, *The Wondrous and Tragic Life of Ivan and Ivana*, treats several themes relevant to Caribbean realities and their relationships with global spaces. This article discusses the novel from three perspectives: a decolonial antiracist perspective, a study on terrorism within the Caribbean, and an analysis of its subversive narrative voice.

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Key terms: Maryse Condé, Ivan and Ivana, decoloniality, terrorism, *griot*

Maryse Condé's novel *The Wondrous and Tragic Life of Ivan and Ivana* (2020) tells the life story of the twin brother and sister, Ivan and Ivana, who were born in impoverished conditions to Simone Némélé, a Guadeloupean woman. Their father, Lasanta, was a *griot* (oral poet) from Mali who had a brief relationship with Simone during a visit to the Caribbean Island for a performance but disappeared before Simone even knew she was pregnant. She writes to him and, even though she does not receive a reply for two years, he eventually answers her letter and sends his children airplane tickets to come and spend time with him. Ivan and Ivana's lives, forever entangled, unfolded first in the small town in Guadeloupe, where they were born, later in Mali, where their father lived, and finally in Paris, where they meet their fate.

The story takes place at the beginning of this century, and the reader finds frequent references to historical and cultural events of past decades. More importantly, it incorporates an array of crucial topics, including racism, coloniality, radicalization, sexuality and sexism, migration, spirituality and religion, and violence. These are all issues of great concern to Caribbean readers who, when faced with exploring a text, perhaps

expect clear positions or answers. But nothing is further from the truth in this novel, where Condé presents the readers with a text that rejects clarity and, to use her own words, invites disorder. The term ‘disorder’ is one that we will evaluate when we analyze the narrative voice of this novel.

This article will examine Maryse Condé's novel from an antiracist decolonial perspective. This approach will allow us to analyze the plot and its characters as they navigate the debacle of Western civilization through the lens of the Global South. We will focus on how the text questions the colonial structures in Caribbean society, on the role played by terrorism in the lives of the characters, and on the use of a subversive narrative voice as a way to envision a different world.

What we call decolonial or the ‘decolonial turn’ emphasizes how colonial practices, ideas, and structures persist in colonized countries, even after independence. It underlines how colonialism, in the dimensions of being, knowledge, and power, has been constitutive of modernity. Nelson Maldonado-Torres explains this in his article, titled “The Caribbean, coloniality, and the decolonial turn”:

The decolonial turn represents an inversion of the scheme of subjugation of coloniality. If the colonized entity appears as a problem in the dominant vision, the decolonial turn raises the colonized as agents that pose difficulties. The decolonial turn is made up of at least two moves or repositioning: (1) one move or attitudinal shift that leads colonized people to relate positively to each other and to see modern colonization and Western modernity rather than themselves as problematic, and (2) another move, in the manner of commitment, which leads them to conceive of decolonization (understood as decolonization of being, power, and knowledge and not Western modernity) as a collective project in which to be involved. In this sense, the decolonial turn refers to a change of attitude and the affirmation of a project of action involving political, artistic, intellectual, epistemological, and other types of interventions. (2020, p. 562) (translation by Vanesa Contreras)

One of the pillars of modernity is to affirm that the ideas produced in Europe are universal because they are supposedly not rooted in any particular context or person, but instead apply to all contexts and all peoples in the exact same way. A decolonial approach can seek to expose the Eurocentric roots of these supposed universals by recognizing and emphasizing the importance of bringing our thinking back to Earth by anchoring it in embodied experience and acknowledging that all ideas are ultimately generated from real bodies, thus upending Descartes’ artificial notion of a neat division between mind and body. In an interview with Martínez Andrade, Puerto Rican decolonial sociologist Ramón Grosfoguel explains this Cartesian ‘trap’ in this way:

When ethics are set aside, there are no longer limits to reason. In that sense, a secularization of the attributes of the Christian God is realized in Western man

that, in the words of Descartes, is formulated with the “I think therefore I am” and that “I” according to Descartes produces a knowledge equivalent to the “eye of God.” We are before the project of Western secularization where Western man sets himself up as the new epistemic source of knowledge and, from there, will disdain all other knowledge of the world, all knowledge, and all other spiritualities, branding them as inferior to the scientific reason of Western man. The scientistic Marxists reproduce this imperial Eurocentrism at the epistemological level. This secularist project is more consistent than the theological one regarding “racializing” the world. When you speak in biological terms, there is no ambiguity since you are an animal if you do not have the DNA of human genetics. (Grosfoguel & Martínez Andrade, 2013, p.40) (translation by Vanesa Contreras)

This is one of the first ‘traps’ from which *The Wondrous and Tragic Life of Ivan and Ivana* distances itself. From the novel's beginning, the characters' bodies are the center of all the action, which is why the novel begins and ends in the womb. It is from there, from that space, that the intense relationship between the twin siblings, Ivan and Ivana, begins. The exit from the womb, or rather the entrance into the modern colonial world, is the beginning of their violent adaptation to a realm that is not prepared for the relationship that for nine months has been developing in the womb (body) of Simone. We can affirm that Maryse Condé's novel aims to unsettle conventional contemporary readings through the love story of the twins and through a complex and irreverent narrative, structure, comments on race, and ideological references that ground us in Caribbean Black Power.

Throughout the novel, Condé offers seemingly casual remarks and comments on events that force us to think about the time of the Europeans' kidnapping and enslavement of people from the African continent or the difficult living conditions of people in the colonies. Examples of these comments are found from the very beginning of the text. In the first pages of the novel, when the birth of the twins is described, it is depicted as if it were a kidnapping: “They got the impression of being brutally dragged down and forced to leave the warm and tranquil abode where they had lived for many weeks” (Condé, 2020, p. 15). Later, the reader finds comments regarding chattel enslavement by the Europeans, “Arab sultan also practice slavery … but their slavery was not dehumanizing and could not be compared with the brutality of the Atlantic slave trade” (p. 108).

Race and commentary on systemic racism and consciousness of Blackness appear throughout the novel. At a certain point, Ivan and Ivana become aware of the color of their skin: “In an instant, they realized their skin was black, their hair kinky, and their mother worked herself to the bone in the sugarcane fields for a pittance. Ivana was heartbroken. … Ivan, however, was filled with rage against life and against his fate” (Condé, 2020, p. 27). Later, the narrative voice makes the following comment: “Naturally, the

story of Ivan and Ivana put an end, as if we needed another one, to the myth of Negritude” (p. 251).

Another element related to the decolonial structure and theme of the novel is the brief but incisive presentation of the historical relations between the Global North and the Global South. Warwick Anderson unpacks the term ‘Global South’ in his article “Racial Conceptions in the Global South” as follows:

Any definition of the “Southern Hemisphere” or “Global South” is necessarily a flexible one. While I refer to countries and regions south of the equator, it makes operational sense to include, at times, places further north, such as South Asia, Mexico, and the northern Pacific, especially Hawaii. Making a fetish of the equator may aid geographical neatness, but it would be historically unrealistic. Like the “West,” the “Global South” is a productively ambiguous term; the true extent of it—what it encompasses—depends on historical legacies and patterns, on political dispensations and economic exploitation, not geographical pedantry. (2014, p. 783)

In Condé’s novel, we can see this tension between the Global North and the Global South in seemingly insignificant instances, such as the comment made about the ‘Carifood’ brand that is described as bringing about “Dangerous alimentary alienation and was at risk of altering the infant's palate by accustoming him to regrettable tastes” (Condé, 2020, p.64). Another example is when we meet the professor who has a significant influence on Ivan, Monsieur Nicéphale Jeremie, who has just returned to Martinique, “[He] was in Libya and Afghanistan before returning to Martinique. His pregnant wife was killed in a NATO bombing raid” (p. 30). This is an experience that not only maintains the tension between the Global North and South but also describes the character of the professor and his importance in Ivan’s life.

At the same time, there is commentary that at first glance seems to have nothing to do with the text but remains rooted in its decolonial theme, such as the observations regarding the interventions of MINUSTHA, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, that was established on June 1, 2004. This UN mission was the successor to a Multinational Interim Force (MNF) authorized by the Security Council in February 2004, once President Bertrand Aristide left Haiti for exile after armed conflict had spread to several cities throughout the country. (United Nations, n.d.). This mission is alluded to via the character A. Sow, a blue helmet assigned to the MINUSTHA peacekeeping mission in Haiti (Condé, 2020, p. 117).

Another passage in the text that reminds us of Global North-Global South tensions relates to the term ‘terrorism’: “What is the difference between being killed by bombs that drop from the sky and starving to death? It’s racism over and over again” (Condé, 2020, p. 159). Or when Aissata Traoré of McGill University explains that “Jihadism is the result of centuries of oppression and exclusion” (p. 134). Terrorism and subversion are

integral in developing the novel's main characters. In order to study this theme, we will explore the various facets and results of this socio-political interplay within the story and examine some of the contemporary emphasis terrorism presents within the Caribbean region itself.

The Wondrous and Tragic Life of Ivan and Ivana was written after the Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris in January 2015 and in the wake of the resulting polarizations around issues of North-South inequity and radicalization. Ivan and Ivana, despite their closeness, grow apart and become the antithesis of one another: Ivan, a jihadist terrorist (villain), and Ivana, a police academy trainee (heroine). According to Justin Torres, the story is “a reflection on the dangers of binary thinking.” He points out how the line from Oscar Wilde, cited in the text “‘Each man kills the thing he loves,’ serves as a kind of refrain for the mutually destructive passions between West and East, black and white, purist and pervert” (Torres, 2020, parag. 14).

Much attention has been focused on Western Europe and the United States regarding the ongoing threat of ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria). Nevertheless, the group’s influence can be seen elsewhere, including in the Caribbean. Most notably, the state of emergency and the ensuing ‘security measures’ imposed by France following the attacks in Paris on November 13, 2015, were extended to the French territories of the Caribbean (such as Guadeloupe and Martinique). Additionally, in mid-November of 2015, three men believed to be Syrian nationals traveling on forged Greek passports from Haiti were arrested in St. Maarten; websites of the Jamaican and St. Vincent governments have been hacked and replaced by ISIS images; and several countries in the region have tightened their border controls, with stricter procedures for the entry of foreign nationals. In the interim, in St. Kitts, the government has stopped accepting Syrian applications for its Citizenship by Investment Program (Clayton, 2017; Clegg, 2015; Moore, 2017; Franco, 2018).

In an interview with Arjan Peters (2019), Maryse Condé makes the following observation regarding terrorism:

Terrorism is not usually associated with the Caribbean. But I know from a friend of my daughter's that there are young people in Guadeloupe who are being seduced by terrorists. They are so desperate, and their lives are so boring. Terror is a possibility for survival. I didn't make this up; it exists. Therefore, my Ivan can become a terrorist. (Condé in Jordens, 2019, parag. 14)

In the article , titled, “Assessing the Threat from Terrorism in the Caribbean,” Anthony Clayton (2017) notes that several Caribbean nations have many attributes that make them potentially fertile ground for terrorist networks, including a large number of disaffected, disadvantaged youth with abysmal prospects, serious corruption among public officials, political patronage, a democratic system compromised by links with organized crime that foster cynicism and despair of the prospects of legitimate change, a large

number of criminal gangs, the availability of illegal weapons, existing fundamentalists with contacts with jihadists, extensive inbound travel from nations with active terrorist networks, a small but growing number of Caribbean nationals that have traveled to Syria, and, finally, a large number of soft targets, such as tourist resorts and cruise ships, catering predominantly to North American and European nations, where it would be relatively easy to mount a ‘spectacular’ attack resulting in many fatalities.

Condé's narrator reminds us that the label ‘radicalization’ cannot precisely diagnose how and why Ivan's life concludes as it does. Ivan and Ivana are at once fated — and free. And that is *The Wondrous and Tragic Life of Ivan and Ivana*'s admirable imaginative strength: the story embraces these contradictory realities; it does not run away from them.

In their interview with Condé in *Foreward Reviews*, Monica Carter and Michelle Anne Schingler (2020) comment that Ivan's pulls toward radicalization are tinged with ambivalence. They ask the following question, “How much of the violence that surrounds him is a matter of conviction, and how much of it is a matter of circumstance—both his circumstances and those of the cultures and places he finds himself in?” (2020, parag. 10). Condé replies:

The term “radicalization” is bandied about a lot these days, but nobody seems to know precisely what it means. It is commonly believed that it is the point where the individual decides to act for incomprehensible reasons. Ivan is a loser. He is hopeless at school and is sentenced to prison without ever understanding why. Consequently, he is convinced that his world is hostile without grasping why. His attitude results from his need to understand and analyze his situation; he believes he is a victim but does not know of what. As a result, the massacre in which he is involved and dies has no ideological meaning for him. (Condé in Carter & Schingler, 2020, parag. 11)

Diaspora involvement in terrorist activity is not a new phenomenon, but recent trends have begun to emerge in the methodology of the global jihadist movement. Specifically, and perhaps most alarmingly, members of diaspora communities are now participating in terrorist attacks against their adopted governments. Historically, diaspora communities provided support to terrorist organizations involved in homeland conflicts. Violence may have occurred in their adopted countries, yet the government and its citizens were not the principal targets of such attacks. Western governments often tolerated this support for violence because it was not considered an internal threat but a foreign problem. Since September 11, 2001, this perception has drastically changed. Diaspora communities are not only supporting terrorist attacks targeting Western countries but directly participating in them through recruitment, fundraising, training, operations, and procurement.

Stunted by early experiences of rejection and exploitation, Ivan walks the path of radicalization. The twins, unable to live with or without each other, become perpetrators and victims in a wave of violent attacks. In the epilogue of the story, the narrator makes the following observation:

On the subject of Ivan: “What a ridiculous idea to have imagined a Guadeloupean becoming radicalized and a terrorist! It doesn’t make sense.” Our answer to this is that you are mistaken. Mrs. Pandjamy, a respectable researcher working in the Caribbean for the European Union, is adamant that in the ghettos on the various islands, young men are converting en masse to Islam and leaving to fight in the Middle East. (Condé, 2020, p. 265)

Caribbean governments also deal with radicalization, particularly in Trinidad. According to a report from *European Eye on Radicalization* (Franco, 2018) the secret services found that 100 to 300 Trinidadians had joined ISIS. With a population of just 1.3 million, this makes for one of the highest per-capita rates of recruitment globally. Roughly the same number of people joined ISIS from the larger countries of the US and Canada. To add further perspective, Portugal provided fewer recruits than Trinidad and Tobago, even though it is a country of 10 million people (Franco, 2018). It has also been reported that Guyanese, Jamaican, and Surinamese nationals have joined. Two other related issues have been highlighted: Caribbean ISIS fighters returning home undetected and the possibility that Muslim community members are funding ISIS fighters. So far, the impacts of ISIS, both directly and indirectly, on the Caribbean have been limited, but the risks are there.

It is important to remember that eight of the ten most violent countries in the world are in Central America and the Caribbean. These exceptionally high homicide rates result from interlocking factors, including powerful criminal networks, weak and compromised governments, corruption, extortion, and the profits to be made from trafficking narcotics, weapons, and people, and other criminal enterprises. This violence deters investment and spurs migration, perpetuating underlying social and economic problems, resulting in many poorly educated, disaffected, and marginalized youth who see violence as the way to wealth and power (Clayton, 2017).

Ivan sees oppression everywhere, not merely because of his race but also his poverty and general disenfranchisement. He latches on to anyone who will give him a sense of community and belonging, regardless of religion, sexuality, nationality, or race. This makes him surprisingly open-minded until he snaps. Ivana, in contrast, does not see racism anywhere because she is a stable and genteel person, and everyone treats her well. She enjoys life in France and integrates easily. However, as she asserts in no uncertain terms, she does not like Arabs or Islam. Her blindness to racism in France and elsewhere insulates her from radicalization but not from tragedy.

As if in response to this thought, Anita Sethi (2020) of the *Guardian* asks Condé what her inspiration was for this novel. Condé replies:

When I was a child, it was easier to understand the world. Now that I'm old I don't understand it at all, so I wanted to write about that difficulty. When you are an old writer, you tend to think all day about yourself – your parents, childhood. I decided to tell a story about the world of today, not yesterday, through two young twins, Ivan and Ivana. Another inspiration was the murder of Clarissa Jean-Philippe, a young police officer from Martinique, who was killed by Amedy Coulibaly, a terrorist from Mali, during the Charlie Hebdo attack in Paris. I was upset because a black man could kill a black woman and so Césaire's theory of *négritude*, which claimed that all black people are brothers and sisters, therefore, no longer had any meaning. (Condé in Sethi, 2020, parag. 2)

From the outset, there is no doubt that Ivan is 'bad' and Ivana is 'good.' Their clairvoyant grandmother, Maria, keeps seeing them in waves of blood. The twins are destined for misfortune. An unhappy ending seems ever imminent: even the book's title includes the word 'tragedy.' However, you read on, wanting to know how and why Ivan and Ivana will eventually succumb to their fate.

Let us turn now to the narrative voice that dares to question and denounce the colonial violence experienced by the characters. What are the possibilities of doing this without falling into the trap of the binary discourses that have served the colonizer so well? In this novel, as we mentioned at the beginning of the essay, Condé offers the readers an example of a text that invites disorder. With respect to this term, in her essay, first published in 1993, "Order, Disorder, Freedom and the West Indian Writer" she sustains that in the literature of these islands, "very few writers have dared to transgress, to introduce disorder" (1993/2000, p.152), a move that she deems essential for the West Indian writers to gain the necessary creative freedom to break away from the colonial Eurocentric vision that permeates their writings. This assertion reminds us of the comments made by Édouard Glissant to Manthia Diawara in the video that she produced in 2009, titled *Édouard Glissant: One World in Relation* (Diawara, 2010) to the effect that the undetermined, the uncertain, and the obscure cannot be considered weaknesses, but rather opportunities to discover the complexities and contradictions of reality. Condé's own words and Glissant's reflections are starting points for our reading of the narrative voice in *The Wondrous and Tragic Life of Ivan and Ivana*.

The dismantling of the binary, hierarchical, Eurocentric episteme proposed by Condé in this novel takes place through a narrative voice that keeps the readers on edge throughout the text. With an ironic tone that oscillates between comedy and tragedy, the narrator deals with, as we mentioned before, the predicament of the people who live in the Caribbean in general, and the French Caribbean in particular, in order to make visible the contradictions, the entrapments, the tenderness and the violence which are intrinsic to

the colonial condition. The question that the narrative voice poses, and whose answer can only be found in the multiplex layers of the text, is the following: From where and in what manner can this story be told without distorting and betraying the humanity of its characters, that is, without subjecting them to a colonial reading?

A strategy in Condé's text which produces that sense of liberating 'disorder' which she proposes for the West Indian writer is, as we mentioned before, the use of an ambiguous and varied narrative voice. From the very beginning of the novel, the reader faces doubts regarding who tells the story and from where it is being told. In this section of our article, we discuss, through a close reading of several passages, how the apparent solidity and transparency of the narrative voice, evoked primarily by its oral quality, serves as a disguise that conceals but, at the same time, exposes the opaqueness of the text. It is a narrative voice that, while residing in an indefinite space and in 'dialogue' with the characters and the readers, slips away, avoiding any sense of the rational authority of Western modernity.

For the analysis, we will focus on specific instances in the novel where the narrative voice shifts from one position to another without warning, creating a feeling of fluidity. Sometimes it is a third-person omniscient voice concerned with the character's comings and goings and at other times, it assumes an authoritative first-person plural 'we' that claims knowledge of documents and information. The reader also finds the insertion of passages told by the characters themselves or of dialogues between them. Despite the changes, a tone that prevails throughout is that of 'orality,' a storyteller's voice that uses any strategy possible to keep the listeners' interest and frequently establishes a dialogue with them. At a certain point, when describing life for Ivana in France, the narrator says that "The teachers, charmed by her pretty little face, could not stop praising this lovely girl from Martinique (the French have always mixed-up Martinique and Guadeloupe, you have to forgive them)" (Condé, 2020, p. 176, emphasis added). Allow us to emphasize that these voices interlope with one another and that their separation can only be justified as a subterfuge we, as literary critics, utilize in order to be able to speak about them.

As readers, our first encounter with the text leads us to believe that the story is being told by a third-person omniscient narrator that focuses on the characters who, at that moment, are presumed to be the Ivan and Ivana in the title of the novel. These are the opening words:

As if acting on a signal, an invincible force besieged the twins. Where did it come from, and What was its purpose? They got the impression of being brutally dragged down and forced to leave the warm and tranquil abode where they had lived for many weeks. (Condé, 2020, p. 15)

Additionally, there is a suspicion, a bad omen, signaled by some words included in the title of this opening section, "In utero or bounded in a nutshell" (p. 15). Some readers

will be intrigued by the image, while others will recognize Shakespeare's tragedy *Hamlet* and the wording from Act 2, Scene 2, noting the sense an intertextuality that could contribute to the vagueness of the reference: "Oh God, I could be bounded in a nutshell, and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams" (Shakespeare, 1601/2003, p.141). This exemplifies how the assumed transparent discourse of the opening paragraph becomes 'clouded' by the multiply voiced language that permeates the novel. This becomes more evident with the final words of this brief first section of the text:

Simone whispered into the ears of her newborn twins, "Welcome, my two little ones, boy and girl so alike that one can easily be mistaken for the other. Welcome, I tell you. The life you are about to embark on, and from which you will not get out alive, is not a bowl of arrowroot ... But who cares! I'll grab a pillow of clouds that I'll put under your heads and I'll fill them with dreams." (Condé, 2020, p. 17)

The second example we would like to comment on is the use of the first-person plural, a 'we' whose main effect is a sense of authority. It should be noted, though, that it does not always indicate the same referent and that its boundaries with the third-person narrator whom we have just described, and with the other 'voices' in the text are often blurred. Let us focus on the text. Ivan has lost his first job as a guard (the boss discovers he is not yet sixteen) and is now limited to overseeing the pool. After recounting what happened to Ivan, the narrator states in a seemingly third-person narration, "Now that he was no longer a security guard at La Caravelle he had time on his hands to visit the primary school teacher" (Condé, 2020, p. 37). Then the voice turns to Ivana, "As for Ivana, she was happy. She was lovely. She was top of her class" (p. 38). Nonetheless, soon after, the narrative voice shifts position and speaks from a different perspective, "We know, too, that in order to be happy on this earth we need to shut our eyes to a good many things ... something Ivana was good at doing" (p. 38). In other instances, this 'we' plays more tricks on the readers. At first, it will claim for itself even more authority by 'correcting' the words of the mayor of the town, which are quoted in the text. Then, moments later, it calls into question its own authority by colluding with us, the readers. The mayor comments, "There is an African proverb that says when an old man dies a library goes up in flames" (p. 43). Immediately the narrative voice poses this question:

Should we correct the mayor? This is not an African proverb but a famous quote by Amadou Hampaté Ba, one of West Africa's greatest intellectuals. It would be a waste of time. The mayor is already posturing for photos and publishing them on Facebook. (Condé, 2020, p. 44)

The readers are taken aback by this question which addresses and challenges them with no warning and requires them to assume a position; that is, it incorporates them into the text. Even so, the narrative voice answers its own question after correcting the

information, and the readers are left with the uncanny feeling that there is more to the question and that their position is unclear. Later on, we find another instance of the presence of this interpellant voice when the narrator declares, "And what about Ivana, you are asking. What has become of her ... Forgive me, dear reader" (Condé, 2020, p. 153, emphasis added).

Another aspect related to the narrative voice that contributes to the opacity that we are describing here is the many references it makes to the historical and social background of the story and literary, musical, and intellectual figures and works of the past 50 years. Condé's novel masterfully exemplifies what Glissant refers to as the process of creolization. The novel reflects on those moments of transformation that occur when cultural elements from different spaces intertwine, allowing for something new to be produced. The process requires that the cultural elements that merge have the same value. This allows for the creation of a space where diversity is the norm. If one element is undervalued, creolization does not take place.

One could say that an example of creolization can be found in the novel's beginning. The third-person narrative voice recounts the efforts made by the mother of the twins to get in touch with their father. At that point, the narration is interrupted by the insertions of a dialogue between the mother and grandmother. The latter comments on her recurring premonition – she has the power of 'second sight' and can see the future - that something tragic will befall her grandchildren. The mother replies that nothing can befall her children, "They love each other too much to hurt one another" (Condé, 2020, p. 47). The narrative voice then introduces the following comment, "She did not know that being in love is as dangerous as being out of love and that a famous English writer once said, 'Yet each man kills the thing he loves'" (p. 47). The reference to Oscar Wilde's "The Ballad of Reading Gaol" (1912) recalls the premonition of the grandmother and highlights the coexistence of violence and creativity suggested by the novel's title. The narrative voice continues by proposing a parallel between the story presented in Wilde's poem and the prison in a small town in Guadeloupe where Ivan will spend his first stint in jail. The dialogue between these disparate voices, the narrator's, Oscar Wilde's, and that of Ivan, transforms each one, opening a space for something different.

To conclude the discussion of this dismantling narrative voice, we would like to focus on an instance that is even more elusive than the ones we have just discussed. It is a narrative voice that the reader can perceive, one that shrouds the others but, simultaneously, is the projection of their entanglement; a voice that, precisely due to its vagueness, allows the diverse to emerge. Continuing the tone of parody found at other moments in the text, this voice could be identified with that of the *griot*. As we have already mentioned, Lansana, the father of the twins, is a *griot*, a "storyteller" from Mali, the place of origin of these oral chroniclers of the history of their communities who, with music to accompany them, serve as the guardians of the past.

Perhaps playing a joke on the readers once more, Condé inserts this voice that, although it traditionally represents the fixity of origins, it also dissolves such limitations or constraints to tell the story of Ivan and Ivana. We hear its murmurs throughout the text. As we have tried to show, it is a voice that breaks boundaries, welcomes the unexpected, and incorporates contradictions to exhibit the complexities of the situations it depicts. It is a voice claiming the right to opacity as a decolonial gesture that will make it possible to think outside the colonial matrix. It is the voice heard in the epilogue of the novel, a vantage point from which to hear all the voices of this text:

We have ended the wondrous and tragic life of Ivan and Ivana, dizygotic twins. We have done our best and verified the exactitude of the facts down to the slightest detail. However, if Henri Duvignaud is telling the truth, this is merely our interpretation and one version among many. (Condé, 2020, p. 265)

We want to finish with a quotation from Condé's essay, "Order, Disorder, Freedom, and the West Indian Writer" (1993/2000). Towards the end of her text, she challenges West Indian writers:

[In] the West Indies, literature seems to exist to provide the reader with a few reassuring images of himself and his land. Although West Indian literature proclaims to be revolutionary and to be able to change the world, on the contrary, writer and reader implicitly agree about respecting a stereotypical portrayal of themselves and their society. In reality, does the writer wish to protect the reader and himself against the past's ugliness, the present's hardships, and the uncertainty of the future? Can we expect the liberation of the West Indian writer in future years? (Condé, 1993/2000, p. 164)

We believe that *The Wondrous and Tragic Life of Ivan and Ivana* provides a resounding 'yes' to that last question. The presentation of the themes at the purely referential level includes many examples of transgressive behavior. The presentation of these topics is daring; from the incestual connotations in the protagonists' relationship to the extreme violence at the novel's end, the readers sense the danger of being on (the) edge. However, that cannot be all. It is fundamental to recognize that if genuine transgression is to take place, in other words, a creative transgression that projects a decolonial spacetime, the voice that enunciates cannot remain embedded in a rational, hierarchical discourse that privileges purity and a clear, tidy, monolithic view of origins. In our opinion, the voices that tell the story in Condé's novel come from the decolonial place suggested by Condé in her essay: an indefinite, questioning, messy, liminal, opaque space where the wondrous and the tragic do not exclude one another, and thus disobey the cardinal rule of the binary oppositions that underpin the colonial episteme.

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CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE NEO-COLONIAL DISCOURSE OF CRYPTO-INVESTORS IN PUERTO RICO

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Abstract

The recent influx of individual U.S. investors into Puerto Rico has been ongoing since 2012 with the enactment of Ley 20 and Ley 22. However, since the aftermath of Hurricane Maria in September of 2017 and the merger of the two aforementioned laws into Ley 60, there has been an exponential increase in the arrivals of North American crypto-investors to the island. While there have been brief analyses of this new phenomenon undertaken by popular media outlets, there has been no deep delve into the language used by the American crypto-investors to explore their hegemonic discourse that is saturated with neo-colonial ideology. This article uses a Critical Discourse Analysis approach to begin to unpack the abuse of discursive power in the recurring colonization of Puerto Rico in general, and the language used by crypto-investors that is currently enabling the neo-colonization of Puerto Rico in particular.

Key terms: Crypto-investors, Puerto Rico, neo-colonialism, colonial discourse, Critical Discourse Analysis

Introduction

Just months after Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico in 2017, many residents were still struggling day-to-day to survive without access to electricity or water. Despite the ongoing daily strife that locals were faced with, crypto-investors flocked to Puerto Rico, seeing not only a business opportunity, but also a “blank slate” (Davis, 2018). The blank slate (or *tabula rasa*) ideology is a centuries-old justification for the European colonization of not only the African continent, but also the Caribbean. However, it is not just the *tabula rasa* discourse that has led Puerto Rico to be on the receiving end of the heavy hand of many waves of colonialism since the turn of the 16th century, with the latest formal takeover of the island being inflicted by United States at the turn of the 20th

century. Klein (2018) notes that the underlying theme of *tabula rasa* was also peddled by none other than disgraced and popularly deposed former island Governor Ricky Rossello, who encouraged crypto-investors to view post-Maria Puerto Rico as a blank slate in which to create a new utopian escape for millionaires looking to evade taxes. Throughout this paper, I will deploy the dialectical-relational approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) used by Norman Fairclough (2013; 2015). This multi-disciplinary theory overlaps with the principal themes of the study of Language and Power, which are abundantly evident throughout the various waves of coercive and discursive domination of Puerto Rico by the United States and its Puerto Rican agents in the local governance of the island, who have always depicted foreign investors as benevolent saviors. My interpretation of these themes as they appear in the documentary titled *Is there a revolution brewing in Puerto Rico?* (Davis, 2018) will demonstrate how they are intertwined and how the continual use of hegemonic discourse by the latest waves of crypto-colonialists continues to promote systems of domination.

Hegemony, Critical Discourse Analysis, and ‘Restart Week’

One of the most well-known experts on Critical Discourse Analysis is Norman Fairclough (2013, 2015; Statham, 2022). Fairclough is concerned with the practical application of CDA which focuses on the dynamic relationships between language, power and ideology. It is important to note that Fairclough uses a transdisciplinary approach by drawing from fields such as linguistics, sociology, and critical theory to present a holistic perspective on language use and manipulation. He does this through a three-dimensional framework that he labels ‘discourse-as-text’, ‘discourse-as-discursive-practice’, and ‘discourse-as-social-practice’ (Blommaert, 2005). The first dimension of discourse-as-text refers to choices and patterns in vocabulary, cohesion, and text structure. The second dimension of discourse-as-social-practice is the language which is produced, circulated, distributed, and consumed within society. The final dimension of discourse-as-social-practice refers to the hegemonic processes in which discourse operates. By adopting this three-dimensional framework, researchers can systematically approach relationships between language and social structure in order to unpack the ways that discourse can be abused.

Fairclough (2013; 2015) reconceptualizes discourse, not only as an intrinsic part of language but also as an intrinsic part of all disciplines, and that to truly practice CDA, a multidisciplinary dialectical-relational approach is necessary. In order to understand this approach, it is best to break down the meanings and uses of the compound phrase ‘dialectical-relational’. The term ‘dialectical’ refers to the ongoing interactions and mutual influences among groups positioned differently in terms of asymmetries of power, while ‘relational’ underscores the interconnectedness and interdependence of these elements. This suggests that language cannot be understood in isolation, and instead emphasizes dialectical power relationships established in society and the reciprocal nature of those

relationships. By adopting a dialectical-relational approach, Fairclough aims to reveal how discourse contributes to the reproduction or transformation of societal norms by analyzing not only linguistic features of texts but also the social practices, institutions, and broader discourse that shape and are shaped by language use.

Ruth Wodak (see, for example, Wodak & Meyer, 2016) is another linguist who examines the intricacies of analyzing and interpreting discourse through a critical lens. Wodak's work explores various methodological approaches to arrive at a thorough understanding of how discourse shapes and reflects societal power dynamics, ideologies, and identities. Her work breaks down key concepts, such as discourse and power, ideology and hegemony, interdiscursivity, multimodality, and positioning and identity. The recurring theme behind each of these is that language shapes and reflects social realities, power structures and ideologies. Some of the most important ideas that she focuses on have to do with context and scale, in so far as these underscore the significance of analyzing discourse within its broader social, political and historical settings. It is pertinent to note the function of a discourse-historical approach within CDA as it investigates intertextual and interdiscursive relationships, in order to unpack the meaning of texts by connecting them to broader cultural and historical contexts that contribute to their interpretation and significance. When analyzing the discourse of crypto-investors in Puerto Rico, historical context cannot be discounted, since the island and its people have been under the control of foreign governments and subject to continuous colonization for more than five centuries.

The function of Critical Discourse Analysis recognizes the interconnectedness of discourse, power, and ideology as they are utilized to maintain and reinforce hierarchical and stratified societies. Such abusive use of discourse as a means of control can be equated to the term 'hegemony', which was coined by Antonio Gramsci in order to, "illustrate how the state and civil society produce and maintain consent to the class hierarchies of capitalist society" (Stoddart, 2007, p.193; see also Adamson, 1980). Gramscian theory asserts that there is a difference between coercive and discursive control. Coercive control takes the form of external violence, which can be manifested in obvious ways such as the violence inflicted by the police and the courts, or in more subtle ways, such as the manner in which the inflation of the price of real estate and the increase in rents, due to the overzealous marketing of real estate to crypto-investors by the Puerto Rican authorities, have left many people on the island unable to afford housing. Discursive control, on the other hand, takes the form of internal violence, which aims at getting people to accept and justify domination.

Teun Van Dijk (2004) states that CDA must be analyzed through a multi-disciplinary lens that looks generally at the relationships between text and socio-political contexts, and more specifically at subjective constructs of what is relevant in social settings. Manipulation of discourse creates hegemonic mental models, social representations and ideologies that inculcate opinions and emotions which prompt the dominated to

independently and automatically replicate frames that benefit the ruling elites, especially in cases where the dominated do not have the resources to construct alternative mental models. The ruling classes in Puerto Rico are motivated to attract crypto-investors to the island, so they deploy the symbolic elites in the media and elsewhere who do their bidding to create and propagate a narrative which reinforces the mental model that prosperity for Puerto Ricans can only come from outside sources. This can be seen in the following commentary by crypto-investor Brock Pierce (in Davis, 2018) when he declares, “I’m here to help any farmer I want to give them the resources so they can grow on their land I’m here to help you grow something”. Pierce’s intent to come across as the benevolent pioneer/savior only serves to reinforce the hegemonic discourse that has convinced so many Puerto Ricans that help can only come from outside and never from within.

If such abuse of discourse is successful, then people can be manipulated to accept the preferred ideology of the power elites. Othering of people or events using specific language is a preferred device used by the hegemonic symbolic elites to convince people to accept the mental models and social representation propagated in the interests of the ruling classes. Othering and other forms of discursive manipulation can be manifested through a number of linguistic devices, such as lexicalization, nominalization, or by syntactic means. Exploring the interconnected concepts of ideology, hegemony, and discourse and their impact on shaping societal structures and belief systems, Stoddart (2007) highlights the influence of dominant ideologies and the mechanisms through which power and control over others is maintained. Hegemony operates within societies where dominant groups maintain authority by using the symbolic elites (media personalities, academics, religious figures, etc.) to perpetuate a worldview formulated in the image and interests of the ruling classes as the one and only acceptable norm.

Teun Van Dijk (1987) explores the role of language and discourse in perpetuating and normalizing racist ideologies in society by examining various forms of discourse, such as media representations, political speeches, and everyday conversations, to uncover the ways in which racism is communicated and legitimized. He demonstrates how the use of linguistic devices, like framing, lexical choices, and presuppositions can subtly promote biased perspectives and reinforce unequal power structures between groups who have been raced in different ways while shedding light on how discourse can contribute to the social reproduction of racism by framing certain racial groups as ‘other’ or inferior, thereby influencing public perceptions and attitudes. Within the context of crypto-investors in Puerto Rico, such racialized discourse is evident at many levels, given that the majority of these investors are raced as ‘white’ or of European descent, while the majority of Puerto Ricans are raced as ‘non-white’ or are of mixed Indigenous, African and European descent.

Hegemony can be achieved through controlling public discourse, which Van Dijk (2004) describes as “how the communicative event is defined, who may speak and to whom,

who may or must listen, when and where, and so on" (p. 11). In the case of crypto-investors and their plans for not only themselves but for Puerto Rico as a whole, this hijacking of public discourse was in particular evidence during a media-hyped 'Restart Week' which was marketed aggressively as a series of events designed, using computer terminology, to press the 'restart' button for Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria. Restart Week was featured in the documentary titled *Is there a revolution brewing in Puerto Rico?* (Davis, 2018). The guests and speakers at the Restart Week events were characterized positively in the media as young, tech-savvy, 'unlikely' millionaires who had become wealthy through trading in virtual currencies such as bitcoin. Restart Week can therefore be studied as a series of communicative events presented to the public as a conversation among wealthy North American investors who are 'willing' to include Puerto Rico in their real estate empires and even to include those Puerto Ricans who are ready to fully accept their hegemonic discourse as 'partners' in their plunder of the island.

On the other hand, Van Dijk states that:

power is seldom complete or total – no groups or institutions control all discourses or all actions of other groups ... [as] these other groups may resist or dissent, and not accept the control or the discourses of the power elites. (2007, p. 5).

One day of Restart Week that was promoted as a 'Listening Day' where Puerto Ricans were invited into the room to listen to these investors. The documentary shows that while the crypto-investors expected as usual to control the discourse, there was resistance and dissent by locals who referred to these same investors as 'crypto-colonists'. That said, the narrator of the documentary and members of the local media proved themselves to be complicit in helping maintain the hegemonic framing Restart Week by referring to these local people as 'activists' who 'crashed' the session, as if the only ones worthy of being invited were those who were ready and willing to buy into hegemonic discourse. Once he was forced to acknowledge that the total discursive control normally maintained by the crypto-investors throughout Restart Week was disrupted on Listening Day, Brock Pierce, as leader of the crypto-investors, attempted to restore that control by stating that those who dissented were just a few local Puerto Ricans who didn't yet understand what the crypto movement/ technology was about. Thus, this crypto-investor positioned himself, in typical colonial fashion, as the one who understands what is good and what is real for Puerto Rico, while the colonized people of the island need to 'see the light' and allow themselves to be 'civilized' and 'educated' by North Americans, until Puerto Ricans fully internalize and accept their colonial domination.

Foucault (1972) argues that power operates through discourse, defining what is acceptable knowledge and what is marginalized or silenced. The dominant discourses in society maintain power structures, shaping how individuals perceive reality, and reinforcing the

prevailing social order. All of the major proponents of CDA are in agreement that, as long as hegemonic power abuse persists, we must recognize that CDA is not just an analysis of language and power, it must also assume social responsibility by taking a position in opposition to those who abuse power.

Crypto-saviors and recurring colonialism

Foucault (1972) introduces the notion of ‘discursive formations’ or ‘epistemes’, which refer to the historical frameworks or systems of knowledge that shape how societies perceive and interpret the world during specific periods. In relation to the topic of my research, it is therefore of upmost importance to trace the epistemic frameworks that have been used to justify and perpetuate the colonization of Puerto Rico by the United States over the past century, in order to understand how crypto-investors perpetuate the cycle of colonialism.

Shortly after the United States invaded Puerto Rico on July 25, 1998, Hurricane San Ciriaco obliterated the island as it made landfall as a Category 4 storm on August 8, 1899. In the article *Puertopia: Crypto-colonialism in Puerto Rico* (2019), author Christina Soto van der Plas states that:

In the aftermath of San Ciriaco, U.S. military authorities established a series of policies that were continued by the civil government and maintained the sense of a staggering recovery ... they reduced the agricultural production that benefited the import of U.S. products at the expense of the economy of Puerto Rico ... while the wealthiest landowners took advantage of tax remissions granted after the hurricane. (para. 2)

During this time in which colonial power had recently shifted from Spain to the United States, local Puerto Rican farmers were displaced by wealthy landowners with the blessing of the North American authorities. These landowners thus became the feudal overlords of vast swaths of agricultural land, eventually becoming the ideological, and in many cases the actual genetic, forefathers for the ruling local elites of the island who up until the present dominate the political scene.

Small-scale coffee production was replaced by sugar cane plantations, while the government implemented tariffs on imports from Puerto Rico to the United States. The restructuring of the economy was designed to benefit the needs of U.S. firms and power brokers, and the local elites who depended on them. Similar to the tax exemptions for wealthy landowners post Hurricane Ciriaco, after Hurricane Maria in 2017, Act 60 of 2019 allows for companies or wealthy individuals to be exempt from paying local and federal taxes on their incomes if they spend a minimum of 183 days of a calendar year on the island. The reduction of capital gains tax and the exemption from local and federal taxes legalized in Act 60 represents yet another in a long series of policies designed to intensify the redistribution of wealth and power from the people to the ruling classes.

Following the Great Depression, a new colonial policy aimed deepening the colonial dependence of Puerto Rico was implemented by the U.S. government, known as Operation Bootstrap (Watlington, 2019; Lapp, 1995). Berman Santana (1998) offers a comprehensive analysis of Operation Bootstrap by tracing the historical roots of the development of the program and contextualizing it within Puerto Rico's colonial history and its relationship with the United States. Santana delves into this colonial legacy, examines the intricate interplay of power dynamics, and unveils the underlying motivations and influences that shaped Operation Bootstrap. Her research argues that Operation Bootstrap was not simply a stand-alone initiative but a product of Puerto Rico's colonial past and the interests of external powers.

Berman Santana (1998) illustrates how Operation Bootstrap perpetuated a model of development that prioritized foreign investment and export-led growth at the expense of local communities and sustainable development, principally through tax exemptions for manufacturers on income earned in Puerto Rico. Through her analysis, she exposes the structural inequalities and dependencies created by Operation Bootstrap, shedding light on the complex and often detrimental consequences it had on the island's people and culture. This critical assessment challenges conventional narratives surrounding developmental policy and provides a compelling case for reevaluating the legacy of Operation Bootstrap and similar initiatives on a global scale. Her exploration of the colonial roots of hegemonic models of development and their persistent impact on the island's historical trajectory provides an understanding of the complexities of economic development in Puerto Rico.

Shortly after tax exemptions were implemented for wealthy landowners in 1899 following Hurricane Ciriaco, a 'Charity Board' was created for "the relief effort and ... [for designing] public policies in conjunction with the military government" (Soto van der Plas, 2019, para. 2). Since 2013, Puerto Rico has been effectively under dictatorial rule by a Financial Oversight and Management Board composed principally of North American bankers and those who represent the interests of North American bankers, all appointed by the U.S. president. This board, known locally as 'La Junta', was ostensibly set up to oversee the restructuring of Puerto Rico's \$72 billion dollar debt, much of which was amassed due to the deeply corrupt plunder of the island engineered by these same U.S. bankers in close collaboration with the island's political elites.

Berman Santana (1998) compares the Charity Board of the early 20th century to the current Fiscal Control Board, both forced upon Puerto Rico to further enable the rich to siphon money and resources away from the local population. Berman Santana notes that time and time again, outsiders, whether they be the federal government, control boards, or crypto-investors, have consistently tried to justify their plunder of the island and its people by a manipulative discourse that promotes their supposed 'benevolence' in times of crisis, such as in the aftermath of natural disasters. In reality, disasters are rarely natural, and instead are caused by sustained plunder and abuse of local populations and

local environments that leave them extremely vulnerable to hurricanes and other extreme phenomena. The invasion and exploitation of Puerto Rico by bitcoin investors is just the latest wave of North American colonialism, marketed as ‘disaster relief’.

Even though the Charity Board, Operation Bootstrap, the Fiscal Control Board, Act 60 and other colonial mechanisms are cloaked in a patriarchal ‘savior’ discourse that promises relief from distress and scarcity, Von Werlhof (2001, p. 24) points out that scarcity “which the economic system is supposed to free us from, is actually created by it through [the] policies of monopolization, accumulation and destruction” promoted by these same colonial initiatives. But in the thoroughly patriarchal discourses of both Abrahamic religions and Western colonial policy and practice, ‘salvation’ in the form of ‘progress’ is supposedly not possible without ‘sacrifice’ (Von Werlhof, 2001, p.34), and Puerto Rico and its people are called upon again and again to be the sacrificial lamb on the altar of progress. In 2023, this means that while crypto-investors (and other millionaires) flock to Puerto Rico to avoid taxes on capital gains and dividends, the local population is being roasted alive like a lamb on a spit by rising health care costs, rising housing costs, discontinued pensions, loss of workers’ benefits, higher university fees, and shuttered schools. And the sacrificial lamb is hemorrhaging, in the form of massive outmigration of the youngest and most highly educated to the U.S. mainland, with island’s population declining from some 3.8 million people in 2002 to some 3.2 million in 2023, that is, back to the levels of the early 1980s.

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The widely promoted myth that that the U.S. will always provide for Puerto Rico assumes that the island will always need a North American savior. Confirming the lies behind this myth, a Puerto Rican woman comments on the miserable and deeply corrupt response of the Trump administration to the devastation caused by Hurricane Maria (anonymous, personal communication): “the story that we’ve been passed from generation to generation is America is gonna protect us, is gonna provide, is going to, when it matters, they can defend us, and then when it mattered, they couldn’t get people here.” Von Werlhof (2001) states that patriarchal hegemonic domination in the name of ‘progress’ and colonial ‘salvation’ “has generated a menagerie of freaks and monsters, e.g., the god-fearing exploiter, the salvation-brining missionary … [and] such marvels as ‘creative destruction’” (p. 32) and all of the above apply to the shock troops of U.S. colonization on the island, from the Charity Board, to Operation Bootstrap, to the Fiscal Control Board, to the crypto-investors. Although their labels might have been different, their goal of plunder and their discursive justification for that plunder have remained quite the same.

Echoing the trope of ‘creative destruction’ crypto-investors, most of whom are raced as ‘white’, gendered as cis-hetero-male’ and classed as ‘rich’ go so far as to refer to the devastation left behind by Hurricane Maria as a ‘godsend’ or ‘a perfect storm’, which has opened the door for them to come ‘save’ the people of Puerto Rico. Even though their main motivation for coming to Puerto Rico is to further enrich themselves and

escape taxation, these crypto-investors continually portray themselves as benevolent benefactors who believe that they, somehow, have all the answers to Puerto Rico's economic woes. Bitcoin and Blockchain are highly abstract ideas of currency that do not exist in a tangible sense, but have value only because people believe in them. In recent popular literature on and about Puerto Rico, a discourse has emerged which likens crypto-investors to 'priests' of some sort of newly devised evangelical financial religion (Bowles, 2018). All of this is made evident during the first minute of the documentary, titled *Is there a revolution brewing in Puerto Rico?* as the narrator asks the rhetorical question, "Are they exploiting disaster or can they save the enchanted isle?" (Davis, 2018).

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LONGUE DURÉE Y DURÉE PROFONDE¹

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Resumen

Hasta ahora, la mayoría de los que han adoptado una perspectiva que tiene en cuenta la *longue durée* han argumentado que debemos comenzar a considerar los contextos históricos e influencias que se extienden cientos de años más en el pasado de lo que suele ser el caso. En esta contribución, sostendemos que solo cuando extendemos radicalmente nuestras nociones de *longue durée* desde solo cientos hasta varios cientos de miles de años en el pasado, podemos comenzar a dar sentido real al presente y empezar a vislumbrar futuros satisfactorios para todos.

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Términos clave: *longue durée*, *utu*, *udumu*, subsistencia, soberanía epistémica

Longue durée

Vagando y maravillándose a lo largo de las zonas de transición y liminales de contacto y contingencia entre la masa terrestre del este de África y el Océano Índico, se vuelve difícil ignorar el hecho de que la *longue durée* debe pensarse en términos tanto de tiempo como de espacio. Las complejas dimensiones temporales de la *longue durée* abarcan siempre continuidades dinámicas y a menudo contradictorias que se extienden desde los primeros años en que aparecieron los homíninos, incluyendo al *homo sapiens*, hasta el presente y hacia el futuro, cuando, después de siglos de catástrofe demográfica debido

¹ La versión inglesa de este artículo se encuentra en Mietzner (2023).

al comercio de gente esclavizada, el epicentro de la población mundial seguirá moviéndose cada vez más rápidamente de regreso a África. Las complejas dimensiones espaciales de la *longue durée* abarcan siempre continuidades dinámicas y a menudo contradictorias que se extienden a través de selvas tropicales, montañas, desiertos y océanos, ninguno de los cuales constituyeron realmente barreras significativas para nuestros ancestros errantes sobre mar y tierra. Extendidas hasta las costas de América a través del Afro-Atlántico hacia el oeste, y hasta las costas de América a través del Indo-Pacífico hacia el este, estas conexiones, que también encarnan interrupciones, desafían las suposiciones lineales, artificialmente restringidas, jerárquicas, monolíticas, unidireccionales y mono causales que sustentan la mirada colonial de la ciencia occidental en general y de la lingüística occidental en particular; con nuestra privilegiada concepción de una *langue/competencia* monolítica e idealizada, muerta, sobre la *parole/performace* múltiple, real y viva; con nuestra obsesión por las nociones abstractas eurocéntricas sobre el lenguaje que se disfrazan de "universales"; con nuestros modelos de árbol genealógico que fetichizan las variedades habladas por ejércitos e hordas de hombres conquistadores; con nuestra misión de imponer un orden y control colonizador sobre configuraciones indeterminadas de repertorios mediante la erección de límites inexistentes entre "lenguas" individualmente materializadas de forma artificial, y por una extensión aún más dudosa, entre "culturas", "etnias", "identidades", etc., también igualmente materializadas de forma artificial.

Hasta ahora, la mayoría de los que han adoptado una perspectiva que tiene en cuenta la *longue durée* han argumentado que debemos comenzar a considerar los contextos históricos e influencias que se extienden cientos de años más en el pasado de lo que suele ser el caso. En esta contribución, sostenemos que solo cuando extendemos radicalmente nuestras nociones de *longue durée* desde solo cientos hasta varios cientos de miles de años en el pasado, podemos comenzar a dar sentido real al presente y empezar a vislumbrar futuros satisfactorios para todos. Como seres humanos, hemos estado vagando y maravillándonos tanto por tierra como por mar en este planeta durante al menos 300,000 años, pero solo en los últimos 10,000 años aproximadamente, y solo en algunas sociedades, nos hemos "atascado" (Horvath y Szakolczai, 2017; Graeber y Wengrow, 2021). Pero ¿qué significa "atascarnos"? Una forma de entender esto es a través de los actos de vagar y maravillarse. Cuando le dimos la espalda a vagar, en lugar de seguir reclamando una soberanía sin límites en busca de vida en y con todo el mundo, comenzamos a afe rrarnos a ilusiones adictivas de control, estabilidad y propiedad sobre "bienes" fetichizados y parcelas de territorio encerradas y mercantilizadas. Cuando le dimos la espalda a maravillarnos, en lugar de seguir abrazando y comprometiéndonos con el mundo con curiosidad y asombro en busca de vida sin límites, comenzamos a perder fe en nuestra propia soberanía epistémica, creativa y moral. En su lugar, nos convertimos en esclavos adictos a las palabras de "expertos"; primero a los sacerdotes, luego a los académicos /

científicos y ahora a los *influencers* en nuestros dispositivos "inteligentes" y su artificio seductoramente engañoso de formular teorías de lo que es verdadero, lo que es bello, lo que es normal y lo que es bueno; teorías orientadas hacia la muerte encerradas y jerárquicamente ordenadas, mercantilizadas, ninguna en nuestra propia imagen e intereses, sino en la imagen e intereses de la dominación, que, como un cáncer, en última instancia, no sirve a nadie ni a nada más que a sí mismo.

Para la mayoría de nuestros antepasados, el proceso de quedar estancados comenzó solo en los últimos miles de años, transformándose gradualmente en olas de conquista y colonialismo que ahora han infectado cada rincón de nuestro mundo como un virus, estrangulando lentamente a su huésped, tanto colonizador como colonizado. El colonialismo, en su sentido más amplio (Mies, Bennholdt-Thomsen y von Werlhof, 1988), puede ser visto como una hidra de muchas cabezas con sus cabezas inextricablemente entrelazadas y cosustanciales, ninguna de las cuales puede decirse que haya precedido a la otra, pero ninguna de las cuales puede ser intensificada y hecha más violentamente normativa y exclusiva sin hacer que todas las demás sean más violentamente normativas, exclusivas y ruinosas. Estas cabezas depredadoras, ruinosas pero completamente artificiales, son muchas, e incluyen: la insaciable cabeza del saqueo, cuya última transfiguración es el capitalismo global corporativo; la inhóspita cabeza del etnocentrismo, cuya última transfiguración es el racismo y la histeria antiinmigrante; la cruel cabeza del patriarcado, cuya última transfiguración es el cis-hetero-sexismo; la suicida cabeza del antropocentrismo, cuya última transfiguración es la negación del cambio climático, y sin duda otras.

Una de las lecciones de la lectura radical de la *longue durée* que proponemos aquí es que este monstruo, con todas sus consecuencias reales y desastrosas en nuestras realidades vividas, no tiene poder ni realidad fuera de nuestra fe en él (von Werlhof, 2001). Este monstruo no siempre ha existido, como se nos dice sin cesar por aquellos cuyo trabajo es convencernos de que el poder no reside en nuestras propias manos, sino en algún otro lugar. La dominación y la ruina no son la 'condición humana' ni la 'naturaleza humana' ni la naturaleza de lo que siempre ha sido, ni lo que siempre será. Si esto fuera así, habríamos desaparecido de la faz de la tierra hace mucho, mucho tiempo. El poder no está allí o en otro lugar. Está aquí mismo en nosotros y en las redes rizomáticas que establecemos y nutrimos entre nosotros, que pueden entenderse como *utu* o *durée profonde* (ver más abajo). La implementación de *enclosures*, es decir, del encerramiento violento y de la colonización de nuestra base de subsistencia, nuestros cuerpos, mentes, comunidades y prácticas lingüísticas sólo adquiere su poder falso en la medida en que nos negamos a reconocer, reclamar y ejercer los verdaderos poderes soberanos que, hasta hace muy poco, disfrutaron todos nuestros antepasados.

Los 'expertos' nos dicen que no todos somos científicos, capaces de percibir y entender nuestra realidad y trabajar con ella para vivir vidas profundamente gratificantes como individuos y como comunidades. Y han hecho un trabajo tan exhaustivo en convencernos de que necesitamos que alguien más nos diga qué es real, que millones de personas ahora se están suicidando al negarse a vacunarse contra COVID, aunque ven a los no vacunados muriendo justo frente a sus ojos, todo porque han aceptado ciegamente el consejo de los teóricos de la conspiración de derecha cuyas voces sensacionalistas dominan las redes sociales. Al mismo tiempo, los *influencers* y bots patrocinados por las megacorporaciones nos están adormeciendo en nuestra falsa, pero adictiva zona de confort para cometer suicidio colectivo al negar el cambio climático (si no en nuestros pensamientos y palabras, al menos en nuestras acciones), incluso mientras los casquetes polares se derriten. Los 'expertos' nos dicen que no somos poetas ni artistas. Y han hecho un trabajo tan completo en convencernos de que necesitamos que alguien más nos diga qué es creativo y hermoso, que entregamos nuestros impresionantes poderes poéticos sobre el lenguaje y la vida a las superestrellas cuyas palabras, arte y música están diseñados intencionalmente para reducirnos a consumidores de 'cultura' mercantilizada, evitando que nos convertamos en los agentes culturales que todos los seres humanos hemos sido durante la mayor parte de nuestra historia en la tierra. Los 'expertos' han hecho un trabajo tan completo en convencernos de que necesitamos que alguien más nos diga qué es bueno, que cientos de millones, si no miles de millones, de personas en todo el mundo han entregado sus vidas espirituales y brújulas morales a las manos profundamente corruptas e inmorales de charlatanes que se lucran y cuyas versiones fundamentalistas del cristianismo, el islam, el judaísmo y el hinduismo están saturadas de ideologías de dominación y odio hacia la naturaleza y hacia todos aquellos que están categorizados como no cis-hetero-masculino, no 'nosotros' en términos raciales (léase 'el otro'), y no 'bendecidos' en términos de clase (léase no 'ricos').

Los lingüistas y otros científicos de la tradición occidental han desempeñado un papel clave en el advenimiento de este estado apocalíptico que ahora amenaza nuestra existencia en el planeta a través de disparidades cada vez mayores en la riqueza, niveles acelerados de terror, conflicto y violencia, y una ecocida cada vez más irreversible. No es casualidad que nuestra lingüística teórica y nuestra ciencia teórica se basen en la visión del mundo de Platón y sus discípulos, una filosofía que fue seleccionada entre las docenas de tradiciones filosóficas de la antigua Grecia como el dispositivo hegemónico óptimo para justificar y armar la transformación de la Grecia de una colección de islas y costas adyacentes en un imperio. La filosofía de Platón niega la realidad de nuestra experiencia cotidiana física y socialmente incorporada, a favor de una 'realidad' universal, jerárquicamente ordenada, monolítica, eterna, inmutable y supuestamente 'más real' que existe en un reino al que solo una clase de 'expertos' tiene acceso. Esta filosofía ha demostrado ser altamente efectiva en transformar a todos menos a unos pocos elegidos

de creadores de ciencia, filosofía, arte, espiritualidad y política en consumidores pasivos, dependientes y adictos a la autoridad de los 'expertos'.

Al posicionarnos y/o permitirnos ser posicionados como 'expertos' en el lenguaje, los lingüistas hemos usurpado y violentamente encerrado de manera consciente o inconsciente la soberanía epistémica para determinar lo que es lingüísticamente real, verdadero, normal y bueno, una soberanía disfrutada por todos nuestros ancestros como parte de nuestro patrimonio común durante la mayor parte de los últimos 300,000 años de la larga duración de la historia humana. Mientras trivializamos y desechamos el trabajo de aquellos lingüistas que realmente dejan que el lenguaje vivo les hable, glorificamos el trabajo de los llamados teóricos 'serios' cuyo objetivo final es encerrar violentamente el lenguaje real obligándolo a entrar en un marco teórico preconcebido diseñado para predecirlo y controlarlo, reduciéndolo así a un supuesto sistema universal 'más real' que existe en alguna parte en un mundo platónico idealizado, más allá del alcance de todos excepto de nosotros, los iniciados con títulos superiores en Lingüística. En el proceso, no solo matamos el lenguaje, sino que también extinguimos los poderes de la humanidad sobre la "impresionante materialidad" del lenguaje (Foucault, 1970), permitiendo que esa impresionante materialidad se use en contra de nuestro propio interés y beneficio, para promover en cambio el interés y beneficio de las fuerzas de dominación.

Los lugares, tiempos y vidas arruinados dejados atrás por apenas unos pocos miles de años de intentos hegemónicos por parte de 'expertos' para domesticar y controlar nuestras formas de pensar, hablar y actuar en el mundo se encuentran ahora esparcidos por todo el planeta, siguiendo una ola tras otra de invasión y conquista colonial. Pero entre las regiones donde es menos posible pretender bajo la mirada colonial que hay lenguajes, culturas e identidades unitarias se encuentran aquellos lugares que han surgido por una razón u otra como ejemplos destacados del intenso contacto entre los repertorios genéticos, lingüísticos, culturales, étnicos y epistémicos que el estudio del ADN antiguo ha revelado como la regla en lugar de la excepción para la humanidad prácticamente en todas partes y siempre (Reich, 2018).

Una región así es la costa sur de Kenia a lo largo del vibrante corredor de intercambio acuático que hemos llegado a conocer como el Océano Índico. Debido a que el contacto y el intercambio han sido tan intensos aquí, los resultados han sido aún más difíciles y resistentes de encerrar y domesticar en nuestros corsés teóricos y categorías ordenadas. A medida que uno se aleja de los sitios originales dedicados a la esclavitud coercitiva (como las redes de mercados de esclavos y las trayectorias de captura de esclavos) y los sitios originales dedicados a la esclavitud discursiva (redes y trayectorias de adoctrinamiento religioso y educativo cristiano e islámico), se puede observar una asombrosa y

maravillosa variedad de influencias múltiples, pluridireccionales, pluricausales, contradictorias, palimpsesticas y trans performativas entrecruzadas.

Durée profonde

Nuestros encuentros intelectuales con personas de la costa de África oriental comenzaron con discusiones sobre *utu*, que podría definirse aproximadamente como 'humanidad' en repertorios que incluyen lo que los lingüistas han categorizado como 'swahili' (Brühwiler, comunicación personal; Brühwiler y Hollington, en prensa). Estas discusiones sobre *utu* nos ayudaron a articular entendimientos que nos fueron regalados por pueblos indígenas anteriormente acerca de los conocimientos, prácticas y soberanías orientados hacia la vida que nos han mantenido vivos y satisfechos como seres humanos desde los primeros días en que comenzamos a vagar por la Tierra hace cientos de miles de años, y que continuarán manteniéndonos vivos y satisfechos hasta el último paso que demos aquí.

Utu se refiere al menos en parte a lo que nos hace ser seres soberanos, es decir, un profundo reconocimiento del hecho de que el verdadero poder reside dentro de nosotros mismos, así como en nuestras relaciones con los demás. Este reconocimiento resuena con la reconceptualización de Édouard Glissant (1990/1997) de la noción del rizoma de Deleuze y Guattari (1980/1987) para dar cuenta de las configuraciones múltiples, de tipo mangle, de repertorios lingüísticos, culturales e identificatorios en el Caribe. Al vagar por la costa sur de Kenia, queda inmediatamente evidenciado que los manglares han desempeñado un papel clave en hacer de esta zona un lugar hospitalario para que los humanos sobrevivan y prosperen a pesar de la presencia de agua salada, que no podemos beber; arena, que no podemos cultivar de manera industrial; y violentas tormentas provenientes del mar, que podrían llevarnos a nosotros y a nuestras comunidades. Mientras flotábamos entre los manglares en los estuarios entre Diani y Tiwi, recordamos cómo la imagen rizomática de un bosque de manglares se utiliza en Puerto Rico y en el resto del Caribe para recordarnos que somos más que entidades (o partículas), sino también relaciones (u olas), y estas relaciones se extienden en todas las direcciones posibles (incluso hacia arriba), para conectarnos de manera inextricable con otros seres humanos de maneras impredecibles, de modo que es imposible determinar dónde comienza un manglar y dónde termina otro, o qué manglar ha dado origen a cualquier otro manglar, desafiando así las nociones lineales de tiempo, lugar y causalidad y las nociones mercantilizadas de separación e individualidad.

En Diani al sur de Mombasa y en Bamburi al norte, así como en otras áreas a lo largo de la costa de Kenia más afectadas por la industria turística, este paisaje vivo ha sido sustancialmente arruinado por la destrucción de los manglares y la construcción de muros que rodean parcelas individuales de tierra para excluir el acceso a ellas. Esta

violencia física y encerramiento comercial infligido a una costa es sorprendentemente similar a la violencia discursiva y encerramiento epistémico que la ciencia occidental ha infligido en nociones de lenguaje, cultura e identidad, eliminándolos de su matriz rizomática y vitalizante de enredos para aislar instancias de un lenguaje artificialmente materializado y monolítico, una cultura artificialmente materializada y monolítica, una identidad artificialmente materializada y monolítica. Para empeorar las cosas, como lingüistas, infligimos una mayor violencia al lenguaje, drenándolo de su vitalidad y de sus poderes de dar vida, a través de la imposición de un monstruoso conjunto de prácticas alquímicas sobre él (von Werlhof, 2001), analíticamente 'quemándolo' hasta que esté muerto, para descomponerlo en sus 'esencias' en la forma de categorías definidas, conjuntos nítidos, rasgos binarios, etc. Una vez que hemos torturado y diseccionado suficientemente el lenguaje, procedemos a utilizar nuestras teorías completamente desencarnadas para recombinar esas esencias en una economía pretendidamente universal de unidades y procesos artificiales que se supone que representen lo que el lenguaje 'realmente' es en el abstracto y platónico reino de la lógica matemática y formal, manifestado como modelos sintácticos de árboles 'suficientemente restringidos' de la Gramática 'Universal', tablas de Optimalidad construidas intencionalmente según principios explícitamente violentos como las 'jerarquías de restricciones' y la 'dominación', etc.

En la costa de Kenia, nuestra colega Angelika Mietzner se acercó a Johnson Mwanzia, un artista gráfico de una zona cercana al interior, y le pidió que representara en forma de pintura lo que él entendía por el significado de *udumu*, que en los diccionarios de swahili parece ser la palabra que mejor podría corresponder a *longue durée* (Faraclas, 2024). En cualquier caso, lo que Mwanzia decidió pintar fue un montaje de muchas de las cosas más importantes que, parafraseando sus palabras, "ya están aquí cuando nacemos y que aún estarán aquí cuando muramos". En el centro de la pintura, la vista del espectador es inmediatamente atraída por una mujer que lleva a un niño a su espalda. Junto al sol, la luna y la tierra, Mwanzia pintó una serie de imágenes interconectadas que representaban una variedad de actividades. Todas estas actividades estaban relacionadas con los bienes comunes y los conocimientos y prácticas que aprendemos, principalmente de nuestras madres y abuelas, que nos permiten enfrentar creativamente y eficazmente la contingencia y cuidar de los bienes comunes mientras los utilizamos para vivir vidas saludables y satisfactorias, es decir, que nos permiten practicar la subsistencia, como este término ha sido radicalmente reconceptualizado por Mies y Bennholdt-Thomsen (1999), no como la primitividad y escasez asociadas a ella en el discurso hegemónico. Además de las tareas relacionadas con nuestra subsistencia física, como el cuidado de las fuentes de agua, traer agua y cuidar y cultivar la tierra, Mwanzia representó actividades relacionadas con nuestra subsistencia social, como el servicio y el compartir.

La noción de servicio articula en cierta medida lo que hacemos para lidiar con la contingencia en nuestra vida cotidiana, permitiéndonos establecer, mantener y extender nuestras redes rizomáticas de relaciones, así permitiéndonos integrarnos en configuraciones cada vez más amplias de personas, familias, comunidades y en configuraciones cada vez más amplias de repertorios lingüísticos, culturales e identificativos. Hemos estado vagando y mezclándonos durante gran parte de nuestro tiempo en este planeta. El éxito de nuestra especie ha dependido de manera crucial de nuestras capacidades para compartir y cooperar de modo hospitalario ante la contingencia. Son estas capacidades que incluyen los conocimientos y prácticas que nos permiten brindarnos servicio mutuamente - que se asocian prototípicamente con nuestras madres, abuelas y otras relaciones femeninas - que se han vuelto igual de importantes que nuestros cuerpos físicos para hacernos quienes somos.

Así, *utu* y *udumu* también pueden ser entendidos como el cuerpo de conocimientos y prácticas ligados a nuestra subsistencia física y socialmente encarnada que siempre y para siempre harán posible que no sólo sobrevivamos al lidiar con la contingencia, sino que prosperemos. Estos conocimientos y prácticas difieren de un tiempo y lugar a otro, pero porque son inclusivos, hospitalarios, buscadores y dadores de vida, son sistemáticamente borrados, ignorados y trivializados por los sistemas de dominación excluyentes y buscadores de muerte. Porque se basan en el compartir y en el servicio, son borrados, ignorados y trivializados por el capitalismo y otros sistemas de acumulación y saqueo. Porque se basan en la apertura, la inclusividad y la conexión, son borrados, ignorados y trivializados por el racismo y otras formas de chauvinismo y etnocentrismo. Porque nos los enseñan nuestras madres y otras parientes mujeres, son borrados, ignorados y trivializados por el sexismoy otras formas de patriarcado. Porque se basan en la custodia de nuestros bienes comunes naturales, son borrados, ignorados y trivializados por las nociones ecocidas de 'desarrollo' y otras formas de antropocentrismo.

Desde los pueblos indígenas más recientemente y menos colonizados, cuya base ancestral de subsistencia todavía queda en gran parte intacta, hasta los pueblos más completamente y profundamente colonizados, lo que capacita a las personas para hacer frente a la contingencia y las mantiene vivas y creando vida, incluso en medio de los sistemas más orientado a la muerte, son las prácticas y los conocimientos elaborados, profundos y espesos ejemplificados por *utu* y *udumu*. Son estas formas de vida físicamente y socialmente incorporadas las que nos permiten a todos hacer lo más importante y satisfactorio en la vida, pero que normalmente no reconocemos ni valoramos. Por ejemplo, el trabajo que la mayoría de las mujeres hacen para mantenernos a todos saludables y felices, rara vez se ve como trabajo en absoluto, y definitivamente no se compensa como tal. ¿Y qué tiene que ver esto con la lingüística? Todo. Según el modelo jerárquico y mono causal del árbol genealógico familiar que predomina en la lingüística histórica,

las lenguas de las mujeres conquistadas en el Imperio Romano han sido borradas, ignoradas y trivializadas en relación con el latín hablado por los soldados conquistadores que engendraron a sus hijos. Según la teoría de 'pobreza del estímulo' de Chomsky, que predomina en los estudios de adquisición del lenguaje, o en el bioprograma de Bickerton y otras teorías universalistas en la criollística, los años que las madres y otros parientes femeninos pasan enseñándonos el lenguaje han sido borrados, ignorados y trivializados en relación con el funcionamiento de una Gramática 'Universal' jerárquica y monolítica en el cerebro del niño.

En su trabajo colaborativo con el pueblo indígena Talwa para imaginar y practicar una forma decolonial de arqueología en el estudio de los montículos como arquitectura monumental en relación con el concepto de *longue durée* en el sureste de lo que ahora es Estados Unidos, Lee Bloch (2018) hace varias observaciones que son de relevancia directa para la ciencia occidental en general y para la lingüística occidental en particular. Bloch primero problematiza la noción de *longue durée* a la luz de las comprensiones indígenas del tiempo y del espacio inmanentes/ contingentes: "mientras que el concepto de una *longue durée* generalmente se imagina como un camino lineal dentro del tiempo progresivo, las *longue durées* indígenas emergen en retornos recursivos" (p. xxv, todas las traducciones hechas por los autores). También intenta articular cómo se podrían conceptualizar estas comprensiones no lineales y no progresivas del tiempo y del espacio: "Lugares y tiempos aparentemente distantes comienzan a doblarse el uno dentro del otro; los momentos pasados se agarran del presente mientras que los Talwa encuentran formas de hacer vida dentro de materialidades ancestrales" (p. 25). Bloch ve estas distinciones en las comprensiones del tiempo y el espacio como reflejo de la distinción entre las ciencias y cosmovisiones indígenas, orientadas a la búsqueda de la vida, y las ciencias y cosmovisiones de los sistemas coloniales de dominación, orientadas a la búsqueda de la muerte y obsesionadas con el encerramiento violento, la mercantilización y el control del conocimiento: "En el meollo de mi comprensión de los montículos está la animación y vitalidad en movimiento y transformación. Ser animado es resistir ser fijado en certezas categorizadas" (p. 33). Finalmente, Bloch conecta esta reconceptualización de la *longue durée* con un enfoque rizomático de hospitalidad, servicio, intercambio y aceptación de la contingencia, reminiscente de *utu* y *udumu*: "Las historias de los montículos permanecen inacabadas; sus futuros están lejos de estar predeterminados Estos lugares atraen activamente a la gente Talwa a relaciones de intercambio y cuidado mutuo" (p. 3).

Debido a que las conceptualizaciones de la *longue durée* han replicado típicamente nociones lineales y evolutivas del tiempo que se enfocan exclusivamente en el breve y reciente periodo de la historia humana que ha transcurrido desde que nos hemos 'atascado' en la trampa de los sistemas de dominación, y debido a que estas

conceptualizaciones han borrado, ignorado y minimizado efectivamente el *utu*, *udumu* y los demás conocimientos y prácticas que han permitido cualquier forma de *longue durée* para nuestra especie en primer lugar, nuestras discusiones en Kenia terminaron complementando la mención de *longue durée* con la mención de *durée profonde* (o 'duración profunda'), o reemplazando la primera por la última en su totalidad. En cualquier caso, cuando hablamos del *utu*, *udumu* y los conocimientos físicamente y socialmente incorporados que nos permiten involucrarnos creativamente con la contingencia y vivir vidas satisfactorias, la *durée profonde* ha demostrado hasta ahora ser una formulación mucho más rica, profunda y satisfactoria. Nuestra reconceptualización de la noción de espesor es útil aquí, no solo porque puede encapsular entrelazamientos dinámicos y múltiples a través del espacio y el tiempo, sino también porque va más allá de conceptos como el de 'presente espeso' de Donna Haraway (2016) para incorporar de manera más completa los conocimientos y prácticas de subsistencia de los espacios-tiempos indígenas de maneras que reconocen que no tenemos que partir de cero ni recurrir a monstruosidades colonizadoras como el ciborg en el proceso de curar nuestras ciencias y curarnos a nosotros mismos.

Yendo más allá de nuestras comprensiones útiles pero aún eurocéntricas de *kairos* (en contraposición a *chronos*), *durée profonde*, al igual que la materia 'oscura' y la energía 'oscura', constituye la matriz en la que buscamos, encontramos y creamos vida, donde sea que estemos: ya sea en una comunidad indígena que todavía vive en la abundancia de la subsistencia, ya sea en comunidades como Kinango, donde la sequía inducida por el cambio climático ha llevado a las personas al borde de la hambruna; ya sea en comunidades como Tiwi, donde el encerramiento violento e invasión de tierras tradicionales por intereses corporativos y privados vinculados a una industria turística ruinosa ha hecho que la agricultura de subsistencia sea prácticamente imposible; ya sea en los mercados de Mombasa, donde el control femenino sobre los alimentos y su distribución asegura que todos los habitantes de la ciudad tengan algo que comer, ya sea en los barrios industriales de Nairobi, donde las personas luchan, pero logran salir adelante. *Durée profonde* son las mil y una cosas que todos hacemos todos los días en todas partes para abrazar la contingencia, sobrevivir y prosperar, a pesar de las probabilidades en nuestra contra ocasionadas por sistemas de colonización que buscan la muerte y que están arruinando nuestras vidas (Esteva, 2001). La *durée profonde* es el depósito profundo de conocimientos y prácticas que nos permiten compartir y servir, que nos han sido regalados como parte de los bienes comunes, que hemos sido condicionados a no reconocer conscientemente, pero que garantizan que lleguemos al próximo día. Una vez que comenzamos a ser conscientes de la matriz de *durée profonde*, que es profunda, amplia, espesa y que da vida y busca la vida, deshaciendo su invisibilización, no solo podemos comenzar el proceso de recordar y reclamar las soberanías disfrutadas por todos nuestros ancestros a lo largo de la duración extensa de la existencia humana en la tierra, sino que también podemos darnos cuenta de que tenemos una base sólida en nuestra práctica

cotidiana sobre la cual podemos construir para hacer del mundo un lugar mejor para vivir.

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**SOUTHERN EPISTEMOLOGIES,
SOUTHERN PRAXES AND POETRY
IN THE CARIBBEAN AND BEYOND**

RESETTING THE FRACTURED LAUGHTER IN MARVIN E. WILLIAMS' *ECHO OF A CIRCLE CLOSING*

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Abstract

Up until his death in 2010, Marvin E. Williams was undoubtedly one of the best, yet least celebrated, writers and promoters of poetry, short fiction and drama in the Caribbean in general and in the United States Virgin Islands in particular. In this article, I aim to highlight the prophetic vision of Williams shortly before his death, and to argue that Williams' poetry needs further critical evaluation and study.

Key terms: Marvyn Williams, Caribbean poetry, Caribbean drama, Caribbean fiction, US Virgin Islands,

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Up until his death in 2010, Marvin E. Williams was undoubtedly one of the best, yet least celebrated, writers and promoters of poetry, short fiction and drama in the Caribbean in general and in the United States Virgin Islands in particular. *Dialogue at the Hearth* (1993), *Ebony Field* (1970), *Overtures to Kin* (2007), and *Echoes of a Circle Closing* (2007) are his book length poetry anthologies, while several of his fiction and dramatic skits have appeared in numerous literary journals and magazines. His active role in bringing Caribbean creative writing to a broader audience is exemplified by his edited volume, *Yellow Cedars Blooming: An Anthology of Virgin Islands Poetry* (1998), as well as by his taking on the position of editor of the *Caribbean Writer* journal from 2002-2008 and editing *Seasoning for the Mortar: Virgin Islanders Writing in The Caribbean Writer Volumes 1- 15* (2004), an anthology of poetry, fiction, drama, and personal essays spanning a wide range of themes that are relevant to both the US and British Virgin Islands. In this article, I aim to highlight the prophetic vision of Williams shortly before his death, and to argue that Williams' poetry needs further critical evaluation and study.

In his introduction to *Yellow Cedars Blooming*, Williams wrote these words:

If the poetry is to reach full maturity, however, we need to develop a body of criticism to nurture it along. It is the paucity of critical assessment that in part accounts for the publication of numerous sophomoric books and chap books of poems on these islands. Our writers need honest judgments, not the usual fare of deaf and blind encouragement that leads to mediocrity, nor the cloakroom snickers that show a lack of courage Criticism is invaluable—not for writers, but for consumers and teachers of literature as well. (1998, p. 24)

Yet in “Vultures” (1998, p. 12), Williams seems to take issue with critics who he likens to vultures, always out to pounce on weaknesses in his poetry, without themselves ever crafting anything. However, in the end Williams asserts that even these vultures are necessary to the poet. Thus, in their eagerness to analyze and destroy his work, vulture critics throw away the dross and expose the “healthy skeletal bones” of good verse. They transform what is dead and rotting into life giving forces:

Vultures are the least artistic of nature’s hunters
though their stalking conjures up
the slow encircling hunger of artists
imprisoned in their thronged solitary flights
to ephemeral sustenance, and i must allow that
eating the dead is ritual,
and ritual like art demands faith

demands faithful consumption of the dead. (1998, p. 12)

Williams asserts that patient readers, like vultures tearing through carrion, are able to wade through his themes which have been is criticized as irrelevant and his style that has been critiqued for not resonating with contemporary poetic trends, to find the greatness of his poetry, the “healthy skeletal bones” that all good poetry must have. The “healthy skeletal bones” is that balance of form, voice, style, tone, and theme, not just the brilliant performance of words and sound exuding bombast and ideological arrogance through cliché-ridden verse.

Those who suffer from amnesia, those “warrior vultures will devour [his] melody,” and proclaim that his “melody is dead, rotting, evoking / nostalgia for a past my listeners fled” (1998, p. 12). Williams answers these prescriptive and proscriptive critics in this way: “But my nostalgia is for a Cruz, for / Carib beings, for an Africa / I fondled and loved on the horizon” (p. 12). His task is to craft a poetry that recalls both the beauty of the landscape of St. Croix without minimizing how that landscape embodies the historical ugliness of colonialism, genocide, plantation slavery, and global neo-imperialism. Williams believes that contemporary Crucian problems cannot be understood and interpreted in a historical vacuum. Thus, he insists: “My voice is heir to the cane field crust / that choked my forebears, this cane field / I chisel away and swallow” to give him the voice to “sing melodious” (p. 12). Williams is unapologetic for his nostalgia, for it is

governed by a yearning “for a love ripened and aborted” (p. 12), in other words, the loss of freedom promised after emancipation must be exposed as a way toward healing.

Williams’ *Echo of a Circle Closing* (2007a) published shortly before his untimely death, is a reflexive-self-examination of his deep understanding of the complicated nature the complex paradoxes of Cruzan identities. Like other Crucians, Williams describes himself as “... a contradiction / wooing its selves ... / ... / a black whisper straining / to hear itself speak” (p. 1). His struggle to speak through eroding landscapes, histories, and culturescapes is a sacrificial enterprise aimed at re-membering a fractured ecocultural-memory from the ravages of historical traumas such as the middle passage, plantation slavery, racism, colonialism, globalization and contemporary neo-imperialism. These histories of disarticulations birth, “a contradiction / wooing its selves ... a black whisper straining / to hear itself / speak” (p. 1). It is hence through poetry that Williams hopes, “to grasp, to record / X-ray moments that unravel” the political, social, economic and cultural mimicry he describes as “screams that pose / as laughter?” (p. 1). Failing that, Williams is apprehensive of a possible descent into sociopolitical chaos or into a silence of amnesia.

Williams’ troubled poetic vision is clouded by the rapidly growing problems posed by landlessness and economic dependency on the island and the subsequent erasure of traditional lifestyles that had given Crucians a sense of freedom, all of which have eroded any sense of hope among the youth on St. Croix. Nixon (2011) in *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* describes landlessness and economic dependency as slow paced but devastating violence against the poor. It is a violence so imperceptible, yet so pernicious in its appropriation of poor people’s lands and their resources that it immobilizes them and pushes them into either rebellion or despondency. Crucian land has become “punch-drunk” and “breaks the plow,” while the people are addicted to annual carnivals of “drunken catharsis”, or temporary releases that lead to social death: “This archipelago whose scattered eggs / make the shells that expose its yoke” (2007a, p. 2). All of this causes him great apprehension, which energizes him to assume the role of writer as activist and righter through the crafting of revisionary mythologies as modes of resistance toward a rebirth of a past that had meaning.

These revisionary mythologies engage a reconceptualization of disappearing landscapes and culturescapes and embody Williams’ search for a “vernacular landscape” to fight against encroaching sociocultural and historical lethargies: “A vernacular landscape is shaped by the affective, historically textured maps replete with names and routes maps alive to significant ecological and surface geological features” (Nixon, 2011, p. 17). Vernacular landscape is similar Glissant’s (1992, 1997) concept of the *poetics* of landscape, which encapsulates a recording of ancestral culturescapes which are fast disappearing from St. Croix. The poetics of landscape, which is the source of creative energy, is not to be directly confused with the physical nature of the country. Landscape retains

the memory of time past. Its space is open or closed to its meaning (Glissant, 1992, 1997).

In “Heirs”, Williams laments the simmering discontent among the young, which generates and is generated by emotional, cultural, and historical dissociation from the land. Such alienation from the land of their ancestors leads to emigration as the “youthful eyes hornily chase / the twitching horizon, …” (2007a, p. 2). They no longer are capable of celebrating the land, and therefore the present generations cannot remember, memorialize or see anything lovable in St. Croix. Thus, he takes on the challenging and overwhelming task of the poet as righter and activist, commissioned by the ancestors that will “reset the fractured / laughter rattled / out of joint …” by the violence of colonialism: “the gunboat’s search for love” (p. 1). Though he is a griot and prophet of love, Williams has no words to articulate the people’s pain, expressed as curses, guttural noises or unspeakable silences. Denied the ability to render voice to these pains, “I wince, I choke, / as their curses dehydrate / into gutturals …” (p. 2). Thus, unable to speak their pain, the poet is struck dumb: “So I sit like a dumb ass / grazing on their growing silences / grazing on their solitude thickening inwards” (p. 2). As a poet of love, a prophet of doom, and griot of ancestral knowledge, Williams can offer only prayers of hope, for example, by engaging an extended environmental metaphor of hurricanes, and praying that, despite the occasional upheavals that threaten the island, “no twirling undertows will swirl them back / to embracing their twisted spools” (p. 3).

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Undoubtedly, Williams does not downplay the difficulty he faces in his endeavor to use poetry as restorative tool to a generation that suffers from attention deficiency and immense obstacles. The poet, not only as activist and righter of what he perceives as sociopolitical, cultural, and moral wrongs, but also as narrative witness must confront the inertia that is afflicting and killing the young. He quips that though “I am witness to the boring generation / running roughshod over our hyphe-nation. / … What doesn’t entertain is dissed” (2007a, p. 13). The rhetorical question of “how can one to convince youngsters who have missed / youth that joy lives in slow growing, / that perpetual awe inhabits not knowing” (p.12), echoes Paul Shepard’s (1995) concept of crippled ontogeny in “Nature and Madness” where he argues that technology, excessive economic greed, rapid changes in landscape, etc., in spite of any positive aspects, have also created alienation of contemporary individuals from their natural path of growth, from their natural environment, from family relations, thus giving rise to attention deficiency, depression, and other psychosocial malaise. The pursuit of addictive and illusory sources of happiness cripples young people, who mimic adult behavior seeking instant stardom. Williams indirectly counsels the young through the use of rhetorical questions: “Can they know they hem / themselves in with adult stance / that we see as serious, bad pantomime?” (2007a, p. 13). Later in old age, they will not understand that what they think is rage is actually nostalgia for lost youth.

In “Palaver with Erzulie” (2007a) Williams rails against the conversion of agricultural lands into estates, and the loss of sustainable traditional mixed cropping farm techniques that produced organic and healthy foods to GMO and industrial monocropping:

... Fruits that survive
the deforestation of sale, are forced-ripe
to harness the dreams that pick them
in fields that clutch them with
memory’s fertilizer, the bulldozer
plows their farmers from the soil (p.14)

Erzulie, the goddess that is supposed to protect the environment from such rapacious destructiveness, is silent, and hence arouses anxiety on the part of the poet. The rapid loss of land to present-day colonizers from the United States unquestionably entails not only a loss of the promise of freedom won in through popular uprisings on St. Croix in 1848 and 1878, but also a loss of historical, cultural, and racial memory. He asks how the poet can be unaffected “by imminent doom / of adults taking their mark / to sprint into a tired womb?” His response is that any sensitive poet with a vision of the future and a memory of the past, must look at the present and “... bear down on the primal / tongue and find relief / in Erzulie who offers sustenance” in the natural environment. (2007a, p. 14).

Frantz Fanon (2004) asserts that “for a colonized people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first the land the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity” (p. 9). This reality is borne out by the fact that “imperialism ... is an act of geographical violence through which virtually every space in the world is explored, charted, and finally brought under control” (p. 9).

What I call mythic consciousness in Williams’s poetry is a strategic reconceptualization of St. Croix “as a place [and space and time] of experience” (Devereux, 1996, p. 87) that “evolves and organizes memories, images, feelings, sentiments, meanings and the work of the imagination” (Walter, 1988, cited in Devereux, 1996, p. 87). To do this, it is essential to engage what Walter (1988, cited in Devereux, 1996, p. 88) framed as “topistic” reading that recognizes the landscape as an agent, with its own initiative, language, history, its own consciousness that transcends rationalized interpretations of natural topographies as inanimate and dormant repositories of human actions. In “Naming Names” (2007a, pp. 25-34) Williams crafts twenty sonnets, in which he visualizes and invokes places, animals, foods, ancestral occupations, plants, etc., as agents of human destinies. In these sonnets, Williams demonstrates that the Crucian landscape, including its vegetation, its history, its people’s ancestral knowledges, their traditional ecological knowledges “contains its own memory of events and its own mythic native, its genus loci or spirit of place, which may or may not be visible but can be apprehended by the human interloper, especially in the appropriate mental state” (Devereux, 1996, p. 88). Indeed, Devereux’s comments that “places can therefore illuminate us, and can

provocate mythic imaginings within us" (p. 88) throws greater light and on Williams' celebration of different aspects of Crucian life that are being condemned to oblivion (Kuwabong, 2014, 2015; Sekou, 2010, 2013; and Sekou & Rodríguez, 2010).

Williams' begins this series of sonnets with the words: "I wish" (2007a, p. 25) an expression of yearning, a yearning born of loss and hope and an invitation to Crucians to take bold steps to follow him on his imaginative journey of rememory through gentle, but commanding words, such as: "Come" "View" "Observe" "Read" "Hear" "Summon" and "Come back". He thus opens us to a world that is fast disappearing, but that necessitates, as Helen Tiffin (2005) states, "retrievals of cultural memories of distant homelands and ecologies of the soil which influence their perceptions and representations of their new environments and how they relate to them" (pp. 199-200). Williams' poetry thus "involves a history of ecological reclamation - less a history that seeks to compensate for irrecoverable loss and dispossession than a history re-won" (Huggan & Tiffin, 2010, p. 111), or that must be re-won. Williams negotiates, in the words of Tiffin (2005) "historical, cultural, political, climatic, and biological factors, resulting in ... the interplay between historical and current [Crucian] and ancestral homescapes, ideal or normative environments, and attitudes to tropical and island flora and fauna imported and imposed through colonial rule" (2005, p. 201, see also Paravisini-Gebert, 2005, 2011). Williams demonstrates how, as Devereux (1996) articulates it: "landscape can stimulate this deep structure ... evoking imagery and narrative, which [he] then [projects] back onto the land and in the process", establishes a resonance "between the land [St. Croix] and those who dwell close to it for generations. The mythic narrative is the means whereby that resonance is maintained 'generationally'" (p. 232). Williams' invitation is motivated by his conviction of how tragic it is for Crucians to ignore the rapid erosion and disarticulation of their mythic consciousness along with their social orientation to their land. When that mythic consciousness of the land is finally erased and the portal between their land and their mindscape is closed, all may be lost. This portal can be kept open through the language of poetry because, as Raine (cited in Devereux, 1996, p. 227) argues:

the language of poets is a language of images upon which meanings are built in metaphors and symbols which never lose their link with light and darkness, tree and flower, animals and rivers and mountains and stars and winds and elements of earth, air, fire and water.

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SILENCE AS LANGUAGE IN NOURBESE PHILIP'S *LOOKING FOR LIVINGSTONE*

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Abstract

Language is not only an essential element of everyday activities, but also functions as a tool that can be manipulated to build or destroy social life and communal or individual identity. This article analyses the interaction between the discourses of colonialism and both the overtly articulated as well as the covertly silent discursive means through which the colonised have been able to successfully preserve indigenous knowledges, as represented in Nourbese Philip's work, *Looking for Livingstone: An Odyssey of Silence* (2006). The article also focuses on the concept of 'silence' as a discursive tool, and concludes that, for the subversion and decentering of colonizing discourses to be effective, Africa needs to embrace silence in such a way as to undertake a continental reawakening, by garnering and nurturing a sense of deeper pride through learning about the histories of its peoples and, thereby accessing long silenced archives of indigenous African knowledges.

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Keywords: Decentering; identity; decolonial; silence; subversion, indigenous knowledges

Introduction

"Language is the main tool for constructing every work of literature ... In Africa, the debate about the language to use in literature has remained unresolved" (Agbozo et al., 2014, p. 126). Mazisi Kunene asserts that:

Language integrates disparate elements of one's culture and ties them together in a single meaningful expression according to the imperatives of that culture. It projects nuances of meaning that many non-native speakers will be unable to understand. It embodies attitudes that vary according to the context in which a word is used. (Kunene, 1992, p. 40; see also Anyidoho, 1992)

This observable fact becomes a source of apprehension for Marlene Nourbese Philip's fictional Traveller/ voyager/ adventurer protagonist in her poetic fictional narrative *Looking for Livingstone: An Odyssey of Silence* (2006,), who in the course of her adventures, is not able to come to terms with the environment that she traverses. As a Traveller, this character comes to appreciate the knowledge systems of all the ethnic groups that she encounters and learns the value of silence. What makes her journey so difficult, however, is the fact that the historical figure of Scottish 'explorer' Dr. David Livingstone (1813-1873) has imposed his language in the naming and renaming of places and natural phenomena as a means of undermining indigenous Africans' epistemic and creative sovereignties. Livingstone's acts of (re)naming are prototypical examples of imperial hegemonic subjugation through the suppression of voice, the negation of assertiveness, and the imposition of silence which are aimed at cancelling of the identities and subjectivities of the colonised.

In acts such as the re-naming of the falls of *Mosioatunya* as 'Victoria Falls' as he made his voyages of 'discovery' on the African continent, Livingstone dismissed the indigenous peoples that he encountered, along with their languages, sciences and knowledges. For example, despite the fact that the indigenous Makololo people who were living in the area of the falls at the moment of Livingstone's arrival referred to them as *mosi-oatunya* 'the smoke that thunders', the falls were renamed by Livingstone in honour of Queen Victoria, whose reign was defined by levels of imperial expansion, plunder, violence and genocide that were without precedent in all of the previous 300,000 years of human history. As is normally the case, indigenous names such as *Mosioatunya* figure at the center of oral traditions that embody deep and sophisticated insights into life and into knowledges that constitute sciences that work with nature, rather than against it, which have guaranteed the preservation of biosphere upon which human life depends. However, these insights, knowledges and sciences are disrupted and silenced under the palimpsest of a self-styled 'discoverer' who would make a name for himself as "one of the first Europeans to cross the Kalahari" (Philip, 2006, p. 7). The ironical twist to this, which reveals the devastating and continuing epistemic violence perpetrated by Livingstone and the rest of the shock troops of imperialism, is the fact that although Livingstone was shown the falls by the people of the Zambezi, he claims to have 'discovered' them; and to the present day, even after decades of 'independence' in Africa, the area is still called 'Victoria Falls' and remains part of a tourist complex that is referred to as 'Livingstone.' That the area should be named after Livingstone conforms Nicholas Dirks' (1992) observation that colonialism, fundamentally recognisable as a process of new encounters, facilitated and endorsed the identificatory marking of bodies (or persons, through naming) on geographical spaces as an act of cartographical categorisation of people and places "as 'foreign,' as 'other,' as colonizable" (Dirks, 1992, p. 5).

It is keenly evident from Livingstone's actions as portrayed in Philip's work that African languages, because they embody the cultural values of indigenous African peoples and

simultaneously assert their power to create and imprint identities, have been seen as dangerous to the colonial and neo-colonial enterprises. It therefore becomes necessary to replace indigenous place names whose meanings are intentionally opaque, rich and multilayered with transparent, shallow, drab, descriptive European names, devoid of the entryways into ancestral wisdom and knowledge systems that they violently displace. In indigenous contexts in general, as well as in indigenous African contexts in particular, names and words are not only used as a form of communication, but the way the people sing their songs, go about their household chores, care for their sick, and console one another, depends on these names and words that embody a wealth of communal and indigenous knowledge that bears the stamp of social, spatial, and cultural identification. Kunene posits that:

In dealing with the African world, we are dealing not with individuals but with the community (or with individuals as defined by the communal doctrine)...Within the African context, words are not meant to be used merely as labels, for they also serve as active agents in a reality where there is no disjunction between the spiritual and the physical, between life and death. From this point of view of the African observer, words and their meanings bring phenomena into being. (1992, p. 37)

Colonial discourse and the discourse of decolonisation

According to Hannah Arendt in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1975) European men who went to the colonies, for whatever reason, were ‘superfluous’ adventurers, who neurotically placed absolute value in superfluity and cast off all morality in the process. She further claims that subsequently the prospecting and merchandising of such ‘superfluous’ raw materials, like gold (or ivory), became “the business ... of elements outside the pale of normal, sane society” (Arendt, 1975, p. 189). As time passed, however, and with the growth of consumerist and capitalist western societies, these adventurers were not just “distinctly outside civilised society but, [were increasingly] a by-product of this society, an inevitable residue of the capitalist system and even the representatives of an economy that relentlessly produced a superfluity of men and capital” (Arendt, 1975, p. 189).

Arendt’s insights reveal how capitalism and colonialism are nothing more than systems of plunder, fuelled by insatiable greed for superfluousness and an illusory ‘surplus value’ which leaves nothing but scarcity, misery and ruin in its wake. For the European colonialists, the scramble for that superfluous surplus value, based on a primitive accumulation of capital through the plunder of peoples and territories other than their own, drove them to inflict imperial conquest on the peoples of the world, by whatever means necessary. As states and institutions got attracted to and involved in capitalist plunder, they employed individuals such as Livingstone as emissaries and promoters of their self-seeking enterprises. These chosen symbolic elites were not the scum of society, rather

they were, in part the “true representatives of the nation, in whom the ‘genius of the race’ was personified” (Arendt, 1975, p. 180) who could show the uncivilised ‘savages’ of the colonial territories what it really meant to be a part of the human race, and why they, the civilised colonisers, deserved to be masters and the colonised were to content themselves with being slaves, and who by reason of this polarity were the ‘rightful’ inheritors of the rich resources of the earth.

Johannes Fabian in his book *Out of Our Mind: Reason and Madness in the Exploration of Central Africa* (2001) discusses how adventurers and explorers served the interests of plunder:

... the travels of Richard Burton and John Hanning Speke, Georg August Schweinfurth, David Livingstone, and Gustav Nachtigal had shown that the centre of Africa was accessible from the north as well as from the south They also marked a shift in motivating exploration, with geographic curiosity overshadowed by political and economic imperial interests. Exploration of unmapped space turned from a universalist project into the pursuit of knowledge in the service of European nation-states (closely watched and often supported by the United States). (Fabian, 2001, p. 16)

Explorers are reported to have routinely deployed blatantly racist language and practices, such as ‘kicking and slapping Africans’ to participate in ‘performative’ theatrical violence in the presence of spectators, to assert their authority (Fabian, 2001, p. 145).

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In *Looking for Livingstone* the main motivation of Livingstone’s travels was thus to expand the territorial holdings of the Empire as part of the British colonial enterprise, which purposefully sent some of its most formally educated citizenry out to prospect for new territories for possible annexation and colonization. Philip makes it clear that this imperial expansion could only have been made possible by the establishment of hegemonic systems of discursive control, such as racism, patriarchy, anthropocentrism and capitalism. Philip’s clever way of setting the record straight in this fictional travelogue has recourse to the invocation of the ghosts of both David and Mary Livingstone. In literature, the representation of a ghost may be used as a technical device for unravelling past issues, and is thus closely related to what Jacques Derrida terms ‘the archive’ in his work *Archive Fever* (1996), where he asserts that a human being’s quest for a teleological conclusion to his or her own existence requires the search for a source or an origin:

It is to burn with a passion. It is never to rest, interminably, from searching for the archive, right where it slips away. It is to run after the archive, even if there’s too much of it, right where something in it archives itself. It is to have a compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin. (Derrida, 1996, p. 91)

Such a return to the origin is expected to unravel secrets and yield information that might illuminate a present situation and help resolve the inexplicable malaise that inevitably comes to plague the colonisers, who, in the process of colonising and dehumanising the

other also colonise and dehumanise themselves. Derrida comments that this malaise originates from a “hauntedness [which] is not only haunted by this or that ghost ... but by the spectre of the truth which has ... been suppressed” (Derrida, 1996, p. 87; see also Nietzsche, 1956, p. 288).

Developing this notion of hauntedness from his earlier treatise on hauntology in *Spectres of Marx* (1994), Derrida conceptualises truth as a trace that is as hard to pin down as “ash.” He describes truth as untouchable but always recognizable in its absence, and suggests that this search for truth inspires a sort of illness; thus, the fever of the archive. Derrida, again recognizes that remembering and repeating are central to the archive as an injunction to bear witness to the past which, according to him, is a responsibility not to those who have passed, but for those who will read in the future, i.e., “the one who bears witness for the one who cannot bear witness to herself/himself” (Derrida, cited in Agamben, 2002, p. 82). The moral implications of this insight, which have been routinely ignored by the most dominant voices among the symbolic elites from the time of Livingstone up until the present, are explored in Verne Harris’ article “The Archive is Politics,” (2005) in which he argues that the archivist should be actively seeking justice for past crimes: “every archivist is confronted by and must confront oppression and that the call of justice comes to every archivist” (Harris, 2005, p. 123).

One way to arrive at this truth is through creative writing, where we must, as Elisabeth Loevlie asserts, be willing to suspend doubt and “have faith in the ghosts of literature” (Loevlie, 2013, p. 347) as credible witnesses who are “alive enough to speak and dead enough to be speaking the truth” (Loevlie, 2013, p. 344). Thus, our analysis in this paper is premised on the belief that Philip’s pursuit of the ghost of Livingstone is to enable the author to reclaim the hidden truths of Livingstone’s ‘explorations’.

Philip’s work, though necessarily aggressive in tone, is actually quite good-humoured. This technique is most emphatically deployed in her protagonist’s dialogue with the ghost of the imperial criminal Mr. Livingstone himself. Before she meets him, the voyager/ adventurer encounters Mary Livingstone, wife of David Livingstone, through a letter, dated January 18, 1859. As remarkable as the rest of this narrative poem, this letter turns out to be prophetic since it is dated four years before her death from malarial fever while journeying with her husband on the Zambezi expedition. In this letter, we read of her husband’s silence which is troubling her because it is often dismissive in the paradoxical manner in which it at once acknowledges and represses her presence. We also read of her own “howling silence” which yearns to be heard before it is finally swallowed up, as she equally highlights the “massive impenetrable and continental silence” of Africa, which her husband “penetrates” like a lover. With prescience of her death, she writes: “When the Silence of Shupanga claims me for the last time, David, you will weep for me and my silence, my very small silence that now flails at the larger Silence” (Philip, 2006, p. 29).

This letter, found by the explorer searching in the archives a century after Mary's death, is itself representative of a textual phantom in Nourbese Philip's own archive, as underscored by Principe (2008) (see also Siklosi, 2014). In its haunting revelation, it speaks of a silence which, though small, howls just as loudly as the larger ones, in an effort to escape the erasure of self that threatens her being. Considering the deafening silence that meets her 'howling,' it is possible to consider Livingstone, the embodiment of that deafness, as a devourer of silence. Thus, Mary, like Africa, ends up being devoured by him.

Africa and the language of silence

In *Looking for Livingstone*, silence implies muteness and absence, but not as binary opposites of voice and presence. Sound embodies silence and silence embodies sound. Sound and silence are not opposites, but sound exists as a field of silence, which is never truly silent. Thus, silence can also be seen as an important aspect of African culture, which has itself become silenced and obfuscated under colonial domination. In Philip's work, this depiction of imperial violence is hardly unique, but rather has a precedent:

God first created silence ... until one day man and woman lay down together and between them created the word. This displeased God deeply and in anger she took out her bag of words over the world, sprinkling and showering her creation with them. Her word store rained down upon all creatures, shattering forever the whole that once was silence. (Philip, 2006, p. 11)

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Philip's protagonist's journey is built on the premise that words have done violence to sacred silence, words which have cut through the silence that Philip cherishes; a silence which she will ultimately find inside herself as her heritage. In single-minded pursuit, the Traveller goes on a quest to listen to the people, their stories and 'perceived' silences. Philip writes about how the CESLIENS who perfected the language of silence, an embodiment of all ancestral peoples of Africa, taught her about the power of silence and of nature's voices/ sounds, and how wrong she had been in thinking about nature as an absence of voice/ sound: "Nothing in nature is silent, they taught me, naturally silent, that is. Everything has its own sound, speech, or language, even if it is only the language of silence" (Philip, 2006, p. 46).

From this perspective, Philip subverts traditional western assumptions about silence (and what is socially, or intentionally, silenced) as equated with absence, or even contrasted to madness, irrationality, and hysteria. She highlights how the history of madness in civilization is often deconstructed into a cacophony of chatter, bombs, empire, and volcanic eruption: "Murderous with the mad / in tongue / the Babel of chatter / into / erupt of Krakatau Vesuvius / into Hiroshima and History" (Philip, 2006, p. 46). Kunene states that:

It becomes clear that European languages are totally inadequate to express the African philosophical reality. European languages state, describe, detail, and for-

mulate an atomized reality, whereas African languages already express an integrated and universalized artistic reality. For one thing, African literature presupposes an active participation of the audience. (Kunene, 1992, p. 38)

This active participation underscores a constant interaction between language and experience, performance and observation, which, together, culminate in the lived, meaningful, realities of African cosmological spaces.

Here too there is a firm confirmation of the fact that understanding the African reality is not limited only to listening to verbal exchanges but also involves an observation of the physical symbolic actions that accompany verbal communication, of the place and time of occurrences described by such discourses, and of the unique cultural/environmental artefacts that qualify all such exchanges. This participatory creation of an African cultural reality captured expressively through place-naming is confounded by Livingstone's act of renaming as "a primary colonizing process because it appropriates, defines, captures the place in language" understood only by and/or relevant only to the colonial(ist) explorer or adventurer (Ashcroft et al., 2013, p. 345). Such renaming, while violent, operationalises the adventurer's erasure of the indigenous cultural reality of the place, which becomes reinscribed by the adventurer's fleeting experience. The far-reaching implications of this is the problematic fact that the renamed place is only endorsed as 'coming into being' or 'into existence' through its being recreated by the explorer, for whom the renaming is merely rhetorical: embodying his ambulatory and territorial ambitions characterised by the "desire to possess where he had been as a preliminary to going on" (Ashcroft et al., 2013, p. 354).

As observed elsewhere by other scholars including Graham Huggan (1989), Paul Carter (1987), and G. Malcolm Lewis (1998), Livingstone's 'renaming' or 'claiming' of the land and space that he calls 'Victoria Falls' produces a map, a barrier, a direct ethnocentric imposition and dismissal of the indigenous people who named them *Mosioatunya*. The absurdity of such a contrivance is exposed through a conversation between the Traveller/ adventurer and the ghost of Livingstone about what 'fact' is. Ensuing from this conversation, the Traveller provides observes that, "a fact is whatever anyone, having the power to enforce it, says is a fact. Power – that is the distinguishing mark of a fact. Fact – Livingstone discovered Victoria Falls. 'That is a fact'" (Philip, 2006, p. 67).

In this case, the Traveller/ voyager or Philip, as we know her to be at this key moment, reiterates the role of hegemony/ discursive power in the imposition of foreign imperial languages on indigenous people and the resultant alienation, which persists over a long period of time, even after the formal dissolution of empires. After such an extended period, this sense of alienation results in a mindset of inferiority and backwardness depicted in the words of Kunene (1992) who states that: "The intellectual inadequacy inculcated into the African colonial elite predisposed them to believe that African systems of thought are lagging behind those of Europe or their occupiers or simply do not exist"

(p. 36). It is this long-term effect of reinscribed history that embodies a politics of despair upon the psyche of a people that the Traveller/ adventurer criticises when she forcefully questions Livingstone in a most rhetorical fashion.

In addition, Philip, through the voice of the Traveller/ voyager, charts her own map, which differs greatly from Livingstone's map, not only rhetorically but also empirically, with flexible frontiers, and imaginary contours, which she deconstructs throughout her text. She describes her own map as one composed of the Earth's materials:

My own map was a primitive one, scratched on animal skin. Along the way, some people had given me some of theirs – no less primitive – little pieces of bark with crude pictures of where they thought I would find what I was searching for. I also had some bones and various pieces of wood with directions incised on them. And a mirror. Where was I going! I had forgotten where I had come from - knew I had to go on I will open a way to the interior or perish. "Livingstone's own words - I took them now as my own - my motto. David Livingstone, Dr. David Livingstone, 1813-73 - Scottish, not English, and one of the first Europeans to cross the Kalahari - with the help of Bushmen; was shown the Zambezi by the Indigenous African and "discovered" it; was shown the falls of Mosisoatunya - the smoke that thunders - by the Indigenous African, "discovered" it and renamed it. Victoria Falls. Then he set out to "discover" the source of the Nile and was himself "discovered" by Stanley – "Dr. Livingstone, I presume!"

And History. Stanley and Livingstone - white fathers of the continent. Of silence.

(Philip, 2006, p. 7)

Starting with a reference to Livingstone's words of determination to make it into the interior of the land, Philip's appropriation of these words to her own journey serves the purpose of reinscribing Livingstone's ambition towards a worthier goal: that of validating the places, agency, and identities of the indigenous African people who have been erased from or silenced out of the 'facts' and 'truth' of Livingstone's expeditions. Extending the unpleasant sexual metaphor of patriarchal penetration, the reference to Livingstone's "opening the way to the interior" evokes the violent image of opening the land for the penetration of colonization, an act through which the explorer pretends to marry the land and, by so doing, to rename and own it as bona fide property. Phillip also uses her narrative to underscore the gaps between the sign and the referent, between the symbol and the semiotic with regard to silence, race, plunder, patriarchy and colonial history in terms of "the geography of silence and the geography of the word" (Philip, 2006, p. 32). From this perspective, the word, as related to phallic power (phallogocentrism) and the privileging of the word, the power of language and writing. Through a paradox of reference, Philip subverts the notion of silence as a lack of word and therefore a lack of power. For instance, she introduces a decentering of the word as 'privileged' with her poetic innovations (Philip, 2006, p. 39):

Into Silence
that mocks the again in know
the word discovers
Word
mirrored
in Silence

In a style of poetic writing characteristic of the technique of erasure poetry or blackout poetry, Philip appears to juxtapose the terms ‘silence,’ ‘mocks,’ ‘the word,’ ‘discovers,’ and ‘mirrored’ to stimulate certain mental processes. To the extent that ‘the word’ may infer language expressed through words, Philip’s verse of erasure challenges the notion of passivity often associated with silence as she attributes to it the ability to mock language. This quality attributed to silence gives it a participatory role in what appears to be the narrator’s attempt to set up a confrontation between that which already exists and that which is created from a violent ‘discovery’ that can merely mirror the real. In this struggle of words for primacy over silence, we argue that language or meaningful speech still gets swallowed up or obfuscated by silence, a situation that hints yet again at hauntology. As a way of deconstructing totalitarian thinking, the notion of hauntology illuminates how the word is ‘mocked’ in silence, because it is always haunted by silence or discovering silence. Another level of contestation pertains to the power of the word which carries supremacy within a western epistemological framework, but which appears to lose relevance or meaning within a colonial paradigm where it becomes merely a reflection, ‘mirrored in silence.’ In this struggle for meaning and relevance conditioned by the will to silence or to speech, Philip appears to ironically suggest that silence wields power through an understanding of its own essence.

From the perspective outlined above, Philip demonstrates the power of silence by directing her quest inwardly into herself from where she finds a connection to historical silence:

I had seen no one, spoken to no one during the last two thousand years, though I did have communication with things around me - I had learnt my lessons well from the CESLIENS - but I had been lonely, savagely lonely at times, and was happy to see a human face - to meet people. (Philip, 2006, p. 41)

What Philip is saying here is that she has learned the language of silence from her teachers, and from the ancestral spirits of the past. She has listened to them and learned about their agency. This agency is part of a secret of silence, in all of its power, which is different from being silenced. This silence reveals how the colonial and neocolonial metropoles industrial world has much to learn from the indigenous peoples of colonies and neo-colonies. With an uncontrolled diversity of voices and silences, intermingled with understanding and inner peace, Philip illustrates what it means to be empowered through communicative resonance and entanglement with everyone and everything

around her. As the Traveller, she ends her journey with a sense of inner peace, after a communion with nature: “I surrender to the silence within” (Philip, 2006, p. 75).

Conclusion

Nourbese Philip’s *Looking for Livingstone* suggests to the reader, and by extension to the peoples of Africa and its diasporas, the need to decentre and subvert their colonial mentalities. For this subversion and decentering to be effective, Africa needs to rise up to a new sense of continental re-awakening from which it must garner and grow a deep sense of pride in its own traditional indigenous knowledge systems, heritage and languages. This can be achieved if African people learn more about their own histories and, by so doing, access their indigenous archive to affirm and assert African identities and African cultural realities. As amply demonstrated in *Looking for Livingstone*, literature, orature and performance can play a key role in enabling Africa to stand on its feet and to shed off the weight of centuries of Eurocentric mental and political domination.

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THE PRAISABLE CORE: NAMING IN THE POETRY OF LINTON KWESI JOHNSON'S LITERARY PRODUCTION

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Abstract

Linton Kwesi Johnson (1952-), the Jamaican born dub poet and political activist grew up in the dread days of south London's Brixton district and has fought discrimination, neo-fascism, and police violence all his life. He is only the second black poet to be published in the Penguin Modern Classics series and regards his poetry as a cultural weapon aimed at improving the lives of black people in Britain and elsewhere. This essay explores Johnson's poetry in terms of its *praise* for and its *naming* of men and women caught up in life-altering moments of incendiary racism.

Key terms: Linton Kwesi Johnson, dub poetry, praise poetry, activist poetry, naming

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Linton Kwesi Johnson, the Jamaican-born, British dub poet and political activist is a praiser of people. In his published poetry: *Voices of the Living and Dead* (1974), *Dread Blood An' Blood* (1975), *Inglan is a Bitch* (1981), *Tings An' Times* (1991), *Mi Revalueshanary Fren* (2016), and *Selected Poems* (2022) he memorializes individuals who would otherwise be forgotten, whose lives in the human process would be rendered irrelevant or unimportant. In "If I Woz a tap-Natch Poet", he wrote: "I woodah write a poem/ soh rude/ an rootsy/ an subversive" that would move "a new breed of blacks ... fahwod to freedom" (Johnson, 2022, pp. 91, 19). In doing so, Johnson identifies, by name only, men and women whose very existence was affected by the color of their skin and their background.

In a body of poetry, written in Jamaican *patois* to engage directly with London's Caribbean youth, Johnson isolates the names of those whose lives were lost or altered by racial incidents or who were brutalized by incarceration or false accusation. As an Afro-Caribbean praise poet, Johnson explores, in Judith Gleeson's words, the "Praisable core that words can elicit, revitalize, and nudge toward behavior beneficial to the human community" (Gleeson, 1994, p. xxiv). In doing so, he also 'praises' those 'sacrificed' for a cause that they may not have participated in.

In Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (first published in 1956), Galahad, an immigrant from Trinidad, looks at his hands and says:

Colour, is you that causing all this, you know. Why the hell can't be blue, or red or green, if you can't be white? You know is you that cause a lot of misery in the world. It not me, you know, is you! I ain't do anything to infuriate the people and them, is you! Look at you, you so black and innocent, and this time so causing misery all over the world ...

Why the hell you can't change colour? (Selvon, 2010, pp. 88-89)

Selvon's story-telling, based on living in London in the 1950s, is written in an English that is a quieter subversion of the colonizer's *lingo* than Johnson's. The bone-chilling situations affecting newly-arrived immigrants in his novel sounds a dissonance that seems more amenable to lukewarm acceptance than outright racial rejection.

In Johnson's combat poetry, immigrants, unlike Selvon's Galahad a generation earlier, are encouraged to use fists rather than hands and demand recognition in a *patwah* that is as loud as it is dissonant. "Inglan is a bitch" and "Di ghetto of Brixton" is the 'Waterloo' where young West Indian men, targeted by police and right-wing thugs, fight back in a "righteous righteous war" (Johnson, 2022, pp. 35, 54, 6) against discrimination and hate.

While aware of the "blood bitterness" between rival groups of West Indian men in Brixton, Johnson warns that "brain-blast Rebellion rushing down the wrong road" (Johnson, 2022, pp. 4, 6) might lead to a begrudging tolerance in which 'blackness', in the historian Walter Rodney's words, becomes "a dirty version of white" (Rodney, 1971, p. 24) if there is no *grounding* with brothers and sisters, no solidarity of purpose. While Johnson's poetry speaks intimately to angry young men and women listening to reggae in The Telegraph public house on Brixton Hill or "soakin in sweet musical heat" outside Desmond's Hip City record shop on Atlantic Road in Brixton, he also wants the "Oppressin man/ hear what I say" and understand that white supremacy "bring/ passion to do heights of eruption" (Johnson, 2022, pp. 3, 10). "We is fire", Johnson warns in "All Wi Doin is Defendin", that "we bittah like bile/ Blood will guide" because "freedom is a very fine thing" (Johnson, 2022, pp. 11-12). For many living in Brixton, Johnson is a *riot* who takes on the burden of the poet to address the "hurting black story" (Johnson, 2022, p. 16) of discrimination, unemployment, and disillusionment, and calls upon young blacks to create:

young blood
you rebels
new shapes
shaping

new patterns
creatin new links
blood rising surely
carvin a new path,
movin fahwod to freedom.

If not, then Johnson reiterates the threat to “badituppa” and “smash do sky wid wi bad bad blood” (Johnson, 2022, pp. 3, 20) through the mean streets of inner-city London.

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In *Coming Home: Voices of the Windrush Generation* (2019), Colin Grant elicits responses from the men and women from the Caribbean who sailed to Britain in 1948 on the *Windrush Empire* in search of a new life. While covering all aspects of the immigrant experience - inappropriate clothing, sleazy boarding houses, slum landlords, right-wing thugs, police harassment, race riots, offensive graffiti ('Keep Britain White') - Grant directs the reader's attention to E. R. Brathwaite's *To Sir, with Love* (1959) and its cruel truth that “the inexhaustible brute strength” of racism (Grant, 2019, p. 67) is the defining experience that has rarely allowed people of color with British citizenship to feel completely at home in the mother country where “England [is]no Mumma to Me” (Grant, 2019, p. 13).

For many Jamaican immigrants, however, Brixton was “a bit of Kingston … plonked … in the middle of London”, a place where “you could come out with your verbals” (Grant, 2019, p. 234) as if ‘homecomings’ from the Caribbean, as the poet Louise Bennett once riffed, were like ‘colonisin’ Ingla in Reverse’. While the lives of many ‘settled’ West Indians revolved around church, family, cuisine, social clubs, music, and cricket, Brixton became, after the race riots in 1981, the battleground where “di forces of victri” were mustered to ensure “Babylon” (England) “get vank (defeated)” (Johnson, 2022, p. 34-35).

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In his poem “The Cabin”, Kamau Brathwaite, having described Tom’s world as a “tight house no bigger than your/ sitting room” writes:

No one
knows Tom now, no one cares.
slave’s days are past, for-
gotten. The faith, the dream denied,
the things he dared
not do, all lost, if un-
forgiven. This house is all
that’s left of hopes, of hurt,
of history …

... the hopes of one
whose life here, look
how snapped, how
broken, will not be
recorded on our cenotaphs or
books (Brathwaite, 1967, pp. 71-73)

Brathwaite's poem is Tom's epitaph. Metaphorically, it is also the memorial to countless others who came, lived, and died in the Caribbean without recognition or remembrance. Similarly, Johnson's *praise* of people who "fight gens oppreshan ... bannahs raised chantin justice chantin blood and fyah" (Johnson, 2022, p. 73) ensures that no one is forgotten.

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Six poems in Johnson's *Selected Poems* specifically 'name' and remember victims 'martyred' in the fight for racial and social justice against the "babylonian tyrants" (Johnson, 2022, p. 6). In "Time Come", Johnson *names* a homeless Nigerian man, David Oluwale (1930-1969) who was dogged to distraction by two racist policemen in the city of Leeds and who drowned - mysteriously - in the River Aire. While the details of Oluwale's death have never been adequately explained, his recovered body showed evidence of physical mistreatment. The case led to the first ever prosecution of British police officers for involvement in the death of a black person and a blue remembrance plaque which was almost immediately defaced. In the same poem, Johnson also *names* Joshua Francis, a West Indian, who was badly beaten during a house invasion in Brixton by four men, one of whom was later identified as a police officer. Francis received hospital treatment for his serious injuries and was falsely accused of assault. Like the Oluwale case, the arrest of Francis was a *cause célèbre* for Johnson not only because it was a serious racial incident but also because of the blatant absurdity of the arrest:

Now you si fire burning in mi eye,
Smell badness pan mi bret
Feel vialance, vialance
Burstin outta mi!
It too late now:
I did warn you (Johnson, 2022, p. 21)

"Dread Inna Ingla" is dedicated to George Lindo, a Bradford textile worker, who was wrongly convicted of the armed robbery of a betting shop in 1978. He was jailed despite having a strong alibi but was later cleared after evidence of a false 'confession', extracted under duress, came to light. Johnson lays the blame of Lindo's wrongful imprisonment squarely at 10 Downing Street writes:

Maggi Thatcha on do go
Wid a racist show

But a she haffi go
Kaw,
Rite now,
African
Asian
West Indian
An Black British
Stan firm inna Inglaan
Inna disya time yah
For noh mattah wat dey say
Come wat may,
We are here to stay

Inna Inglaan (Johnson, 2022, p. 22)

In “Sonny’s Lettah” the eponymous ‘hero’ waits at a bus stop in Brixton with “likkle Jim” whom he has promised to look after. While “cauzin no fus”, a van pulls up, and three policemen jump out and start to beat up Jim simply because he is black. Sonny joins in to protect his ‘brother’, but in the mêlée, one of the policemen, hit by Sonny in self-defense, “crash an ded”. The result: Jim is charged “fi sus” (suspicion under the archaic Vagrancy Act of 1824 which, until its repeal in 2000, led to disproportionate arrests of black youth) while Sonny is arrested “fi murder” (Johnson, 2022, p. 26). Johnson, manipulating the pathos, has Sonny explain the tragedy to his mother from Brixton Prison. The legal outcome of the affair is not reported.

In January, 1981, fourteen young blacks attending Yvonne Ruddock’s sixteenth birthday party in Deptford in South London were killed in an allegedly racially-motivated house fire. It was believed by the black community that the house had been fire-bombed by members of the National Front, a racist organization that proudly traces itself to Sir Oswald Mosely’s British Union of Fascists of the 1930s.

While the New Cross Fire remains unsolved, the Metropolitan Police came under severe criticism for not adequately investigating the incident, perhaps because of endemic racism within its ranks. Johnson’s poem “New Craas Massakeh” is dedicated to the young victims whom he does not name. Reminding everyone that ”disya Massakeh mek wi come fi realise/ it couda be/ it couda be yu” and that “di whole a black Britn did rak wid grief/ how di whole a black Britn tun a melancally blue/ how/ nat di passible blue af di murdarah’s eyes/ but like di smoke af gloom on dat cowl Sunday mauning” (Johnson, 2022, p. 51), Johnson goes on to name the police commander and two other officers involved in the investigation:

And di police dem plat an scheme
Confuse an cancel
Mi hear she
Even di poor payrence af di ded dem try fi use

But you know
In spite of dem wicked prapahghaanda
We refuse fi surrendah
To dem ugly innuendo
Far up till now
Nat wan a dem
Needah Stakwell [Stockwell], needah Wilson nar Bell
Nat wan a dem can tell wi why
Nat wan a dem can tell wi who
Who tun dat nite of joy into a mawnin of sorrow,
Who tun di jollity into a ugly tragedy (Johnson, 2022, pp. 53-54)

“Mekin Histri” remembers a school teacher, Blair Peach, and a member of the Anti-Nazi League who was killed during a running battle between rival protesters at a racist rally in Southall in south London in 1979 by a Special Patrol Group of the Metropolitan Police. While the family settled out of court, and after denials by the MET, it is now known that Peach was killed by an ‘unauthorized’ weapon kept in police lockers to be used ‘if necessary’. Johnson, whose poetry often strays further than the borough of Lambeth praises both Asian bystanders and the New Zealander for joining the struggle against “mistah ritewing man”:

Well doun in Soutall
Where Peach did get fall
Di Asians dem faam-up a human wall
Genes di fashist an dem police shiel
An dem show dat di Asians gat plenty zeal
gat plenty zeal
gat plenty zeal

it is noh mistri
we mekin histri
it is noh mistri
we winnin victri (Johnson, 2022, pp. 60-61)

In “Liesense fi Kill”, after pointing the finger at those in authority who were responsible for all who have died in police custody, Johnson *names* the following in a roll of honor:

Yu cyan awsk Clinton McCurbin
Bout him haxfixiashan
An you cyan awsk Joy Gardner
Bout her sufficaeshan
Yu cyan awsk Colin Roach
If him really shoot himself
An yu cyan awsk Vincent Graham
If a him stab himself

But you can awsk do Commishinah
But do liesence fi kill
Awsk Sir Paul Condon
Bout di Liesense fi kill

Yu cyan awsk di Douglas dem
Bout di new style batan
An yu cyan awsk Tunay Hassan
Bout him det by neglect
Yu cyan awsk Marlon Downes
If him hav any regret
An you cyan awsk El Gammal
Bout di mistri a him det
Yu cyan awsk Ibrahim
Bout di CS gas attack
An yu cyan awsk Missis Jarrett
Ow shi get her awt-attack
Yu cyan awsk Oliver Price
Bout de grip roun him nek
Yu cyan awsk Steve Boyce
Bout him det by neglect (Johnson, 2022, pp. 95-96)

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While sharing the view of his compatriot Mikey Smith that “If we doan kick up a fuss dem go reduce us to atmospheric dust” (Smith, 1989, p. 38), Johnson believes also in the *powah* of words, of praising by *name* to imply that significance shown not only to an Oluwale or a Lindo or the fourteen dead in the Deptford fire but also to the *not-named* who have fallen in “di great insoreckshan” (Johnson, 2022, p. 56).

In “Towards Closure”, Linton Kwesi Johnson wrote that the “totemic oaks” Sir Collins, a reggae producer who lost his son in the New Cross Fire, “Once fragile saplings/ Taking root in hostile soil/ Now bear perennial witness/ To spring’s eternal; song of hope” (Johnson, 2022, p. 114). It is important, nevertheless, to keep in mind that “rite tru tick an tin” faith in “mi revalueshanry fren[s] must be constant and unwavering (Johnson, 2022, pp. 69, 63).

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THE BREATH IS WITNESS: AN OVERVIEW OF DEREK WALCOTT'S AND MIKEY SMITH'S POETIC RHYTHMS

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Abstract

Caribbean poetics revolve around resilient acts of social justice and collective hardship. From Reggae, Dancehall, Rocksteady, Riddim, Calypso, to Dub among others, the story of the Caribbean can be traced through the performative qualities of rhythm and text. In this article, we briefly explore the orality, aesthetics, and language employed in Derek Walcott's poetry and Mikey Smith's Dub as textualized performative orality, where Caribbean rhythms confront classical European meter.

Key terms: Derek Walcott, Caribbean poetry, Mikey Smith, Dub, orality

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Witnessing is a word that encompasses the experience of observing and participating in an event. In its biblical context, witnessing refers to the act of observing something extraordinary or significant (Kopf, 2009). By considering this definition, Caribbean poetic performances and orality can be seen as a subconscious form of bearing witness to collective suffering and spiritual awakening. When examining the tone and style, Caribbean poetics revolve around resilient acts of social justice and collective hardship. This theme lies at the core of Derek Walcott's and Mikey Smith's performative orality throughout their work. It is crucial to acknowledge the adaptations and translations of such rhetorical acts in both written and recorded forms when considering the extensive history of artistic and oral performances in the region.

Technology and literacy have played a significant role in interpreting, understanding, and ultimately witnessing the literary and cultural traditions of the Caribbean. From Reggae, Dancehall, Rocksteady, Riddim, Calypso, to Dub among others, the story of the Caribbean can be traced through the performative qualities of rhythm and text. In this article, we briefly explore the orality, aesthetics, and language employed in the literary tradition of Dub as textualized performative orality. This research aims to provide

an overview of Derek Walcott's I/eye perspective and Mikey Smith's Dub, focusing on their poetics to argue that rhythm and orality are the two most vital elements in Caribbean poetry. To initiate this discussion, we must examine two fundamental aspects of human communication: nature and breath.

In the chapter entitled "A History of Voice," Kamau Brathwaite (1993, pp. 259–304) argues that the emergent languages in the Caribbean engage with the forces of nature, which he symbolizes as a hurricane (see also Gräbner, 2011). The hurricane-like nature of Caribbean orality is articulated through its use of rhythms. Caribbean poets often compose their work in such a way as to suggest that rhythm is entangled with, and can serve as an alternative to, meter. The concepts of rhythm and meter, and the preference for one over the other, carry cultural and political implications, while also expressing a stance towards poetic heritage in the Caribbean, where poets have the ability to engage with natural forces which may seem external to them, by perceiving themselves and their own voice as an integral part of this larger external world. By embracing this perspective, their individuality can thrive through their interaction with the environment, resulting in poetry that takes rhythmic shape from this distinct interplay.

In this way, nature transforms itself into the dynamic rhythmic energy that propels the poem, contrasting with classical European forms of poetry, where nature merely serves as some abstract inspiration. Therefore, when it comes to matters of rhythm and meter, Caribbean poets reflect their voice, intentionality and musication by resonating with the natural forces that they have been exposed to.

As Olson observes, breath serves as the intermediary between the poet and nature:

breath is man's special qualification as animal. Sound is a dimension he has extended. Language is one of his proudest acts. And when a poet rests in these as they are in himself (in his physiology, if you like, but the life in him, for all that) then he, if [he] chooses to speak from these roots, works in that area where nature has given him size, projective size. (Olson, 1959, p. 11)

What Olson points at with this is that breath symbolizes the precise instance when the poet is intimately connected with both their inner self and the surrounding environment and conveys this profound bond through their poetic expression. This expression can be varied by the emotion, experience or spirit that poets expose themselves to and therefore their poetic work becomes manifest in a numinous space where they can go in and out of diverse voice(s), characters, perspectives and perceptions without losing their creative and epistemic agency. These elements are particularly salient in the rhythms and poetics of Mikey Smith's Dub music as well as in the I/eye perspectives incorporated into Walcott's poetic voice.

Seeing any given poetic work as an act that, in a non-trivial sense, creates a world in itself, Brathwaite observes that Caribbean poets navigate their engagement with nature by means of the poem, thereby allowing the poem to reflect their perspectives on reality. Brathwaite's viewpoint is situated within a distinct framework centered around a

discourse that leads to a conversation regarding a decolonization of Caribbean culture. More specifically, it not only encompasses his widely quoted understanding of the role of poetry in the reclamation or reconstruction of the evolving ‘nation’ languages of the Caribbean, but also encompasses his less widely-acknowledged understanding of the impact that all of this has on what is emerging as a Caribbean literary canon.

The process of rebuilding the Caribbean after the ruination of colonization necessitates a close and interactive relationship with the region’s natural environment, symbolized by the hurricane. Meter, when seen in contrast to rhythm, poses a significant obstacle to poetry’s connection with its surroundings. Moreover, as we delve into the development of emerging Caribbean languages and poetics, it becomes crucial to focus on the actual rhythm and syllables, which can be likened to their ‘software’.

Historically, classical poetics in Europe requires adherence to a fixed set of permitted meter settings, such as the pentameter. Brathwaite (1993, pp. 9-10) notes that, within the European tradition, some attempts have been made to disrupt this:

Walt Whitman in America sought to bridge or shatter the pentameter through a vast cosmic movement of sound, e.e. cummings aimed to fragment it, and Marianne Moore challenged it with syllabic patterns. Nevertheless, the pentameter has predominantly persisted, carrying with it a particular kind of experience that does not align with the hurricane’s essence. The hurricane does not unleash its fury in pentameters. And that’s the problem: how do you get a rhythm which approximates the natural experience, the environmental experience?

In this discussion, Brathwaite argues that rhythm serves as the vital connection between the poem and the poet’s encounter with nature, and can be empirically and historically traced back to the oldest communicative practice of humanity, orality. Classical European meter is linked to more recent practices such as writing and literacy, and has estranged Caribbean poets from the natural rhythms of their surroundings. Consequently, Brathwaite contends that the emerging languages of the Caribbean must discover a poetic language rooted in the rhythm that has previously been withheld from them by the prescriptive rules of classical European poetics.

According to this analysis, orality and literacy, or the practices of speaking and writing, exist in a state of tension. Orality encompasses the ability to produce sound through spoken language, including various genres such as statements, questions, riddles, proverbs, declarations, insults, teasing, speeches, and prayers. The use of the voice is also integral to humor, storytelling, poetic expression, contemplation, and praise. Given that speech is an inherent human ability, orality predates the acquired skill of literacy, which is an artificial extension of spoken communication. Literacy enables the dissemination of ideas or the transmission of sound beyond the limitations of the human voice in terms of both distance and time. Thus orality, even in its written forms such as poetry and song lyrics, displays certain vocal characteristics that put the poet or singer in direct dialog with the reader or listener in a way that is often absent from written text. Among these

vocal characteristics are paralinguistic features that center around a word-rhythm nexus that is conditioned by how the text is represented and performed. In oral genres, properties such as pitch, intonation, contours, glides, stress and volume can be depicted in written form through a combination of syntax, punctuation, capitalization and grammar use.

Brathwaite (1993, p. 290) uses Linton Kwesi Johnson's poem "Five Nights of Bleedin'" (Kwesi Johnson, 1981) to explain the written representation of these oral properties. While this poem is rich in English vocabulary and syntax, its Caribbean orality lies in the graphic treatment that the poet gives to idiomatic expressions, syllables, consonants and vowels whereby one can identify the rhythmic patterns of his phrasing:

Night number one was in BRIX/TON:

SOFRANO B sound sys/tem

I'm was a-beatin out a riddim/ wid a fyah,

I'm commin doun his reggae-reggae wyah

Here we can see that Kwesi Johnson employs capitalization to suggest stress and forward slashes to suggest pauses for emphasis. His alterations to conventional spelling point to a Caribbean-like pronunciation. This brief example tells us a lot about the symbiosis between sound and poetry and demonstrates how Caribbean poetry may be better understood through its auditory interpretation rather than merely through its textual interpretation.

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Henri Lefebvre's (2004) concept of 'rhythmanalysis' helps us to understand how rhythms express and perform the relationship between time and space. According to Lefebvre, rhythms may not be captured through the written word, they must be engaged by using all the senses:

The rhythmanalyst calls on all his senses. He draws on his breathing, the circulation of his blood, the beatings of his heart and the delivery of his speech as landmarks. Without privileging any one of these sensations, raised by him in the perception of rhythms, to the detriment of any other. He thinks with his body, not in the abstract, but in lived temporality. (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 21)

The process of creating such an analytical engagement leads the reader to bond with the poet and like the poet, the reader assumes a verbal agency that is aesthetically crucial. Based on this layered approach, in this article we consider Derek Walcott's poetic oeuvre and Mikey Smith's Dub music from this rhythmic standpoint.

The replication and imaginative reinterpretation of folk song rhythms by Caribbean poets can take many forms. In Derek Walcott's case, he shows less concern for aligning his prosodic structure with the oral prosodies of folk rhythms. Instead, he achieves the desired Caribbean resonances through intertextual references, evocations of place and folk custom, and the incorporation of idioms, proverbs, and Creole grammatical expressions. In terms of rhythm, poems like "Mass Man" (Walcott, 2007, p. 43) and "The Spoiler's Return" (Walcott, 2007, p. 150) adhere firmly to iambic pentameter. "The

“Spoiler’s Return” exhibits a regular stress pattern on every second syllable (the iambic foot) and maintains consistent rhyming couplets, placing the poem within the tradition of English eighteenth-century satiric verse. An untrained eye might see this poem as maintaining itself within the full tradition of classical European poetic structure and sound. However, is evident in the following excerpt from “The Spoiler’s Return” Walcott rhetorically performs a rhythm pattern very much aligned with Caribbean musicality:

I have' a room' there where' I keep' a crown,'
and Sa'tan send' me to' check out' this town.'
Down there,' that Hot' Boy have' a ste'reo'
where, whole' day, he' does blast' my ca'iso' (2007, p. 150)

Here we encounter a rhythmic contrast because of the uneven number of syllables between each stress, which playfully upends classical notions of iambic pentameter. Just as in Kwesi Johnson’s “Five Nights of Bleedin” cited above, Walcott’s emblematic I/eye observational perspective uses folkloric alterations in spelling, pronunciation and idiom to give the poem a uniquely Caribbean voice.

This and other specific poems by Walcott, like “The Schooner Flight” (Walcott, 2007, p. 127) bear striking similarities to the vocal style of dub poetry or reggae. These resemblances include the utilization of echo and systematic upbeats, the presence of rhyming couplets or alternating rhyme, a propulsive tetrameter structure (with four beats per bar or line, or rather two sets of two beats with a pause in between), and a combination of trochees and sprung rhythm that aligns with dub’s incorporation of shorter note values. These elements are noticeable in the opening lines of “The Spoiler’s Return” (Walcott, 2007, p. 150) where uppercase letters denote the emphasized stresses:

I sit HIGH on this BRIDGE in LAvEnTILLE,
WATCHing that CIty where I LEFT no WILL
But my OWN CONscience and RUM-eaten WIT,
And LImers PASSing see me WHERE i SIT,
GHOSTin brown GAbardine, BONES in a SACK,
And BAWL: “Ay SPOILER, boy! WHEN you come BACK?” (2007, p. 150)

These individual syllables are arranged in writing as if they were small soldiers standing upright and attentive. Walcott deliberately capitalizes and separates them with decisive commas, resulting in a rhythm of beginnings and halts. This approach slows down or interrupts the flow of speech only to accelerate it shortly after, creating pauses and suspensions. The visually striking punctuation marks serve as expressive indicators, with periods conveying a sense of definitive intonation and intense finality, guiding the reader toward a specific manner of pronunciation.

The same could be seen in Mikey Smith’s Dub performance/ poetry where he achieved the desired Caribbean resonances through intertextual references, evocations of place and folk customs, and the incorporation of idioms, proverbs, and Creole expressions.

Smith was the very embodiment of the rhetorical mode manifested through Dub, whether it was through spoken word or rhythmically accompanied by percussionary instrumentation. His poetics involved the individualistic as well as collective voicing of violence and suffering, encountered not only in the Jamaican experience, but also in the Afro-Caribbean experience in general, making audiences appreciate his art as poetry at the literary level as well as at the musical and rhythmic levels.

Smith's subject matter focused mainly on the social conditions of life in the ghetto; the devastating housing conditions, the exploitation of women, the treatment of working-class people by their white masters, the violence on the streets and so on. While these themes are topics to which most societies around the world can relate, what made Smith's work so special was the authenticity with which he witnessed his people's traumatic experiences through his usage of Jamaican English lexifier creole or *patwah*. Just like Shakespearean performance and writing, it wasn't so much the understanding of the words themselves, but instead the performative ethos that propelled his work which lead audiences to connect with him and his community.

Smith's performative poetics went against the grain of classic European iambic pentameter, as demonstrated in his poem "Yout Out Deh" (1989, 17):

Yuh tink de only opportunity
we can give dem dis modern society
is fi come paint political graffiti
further distort dem personality
n tun dem into wild coyote
dat always shoot
an every time dem greet we
is a plow an a yow
no cow:

Well, watch ya now (Smith, 1989, cited in Doumerc, 2008, p. 79)

Smith's poetry shows how dub poets' use of creole language is in itself an act of resistance and subversion of colonial language practices. This is also seen in Jamaican deejaying, where much of the language consists of a set of formulaic catchphrases which are endlessly recycled or 'stitched together' much in the same way as Smith does in the example above, where he says "is a plow an a yow/ no cow;/ Well, watch ya now".

Oku Onoura, one of the founding performers of Dub, states that:

dubbing the ignorance out of people's minds and dubbing in a new consciousness. On the artistic level it means to dub a musical rhythm into poetry. It's not restricting because I can dub into my poetry a reggae rhythm, a jazz rhythm, a disco rhythm, any kind of rhythm that suits the words. I can dub from now till' a morning. (Onoura, in Habekost, 1993, p. 207)

To Mikey Smith as well as his contemporaries, we can see their art as witnessing Word, Sound and Power, so that the two levels of WORD (lyrics) and SOUND (rhythm and

recitation) must come together in order for audiences to experience their full effect. Mikey Smith's poetry seems to stand at the crossroads of various rhetorical traditions which include the Jamaican deejay tradition, Rastafarian oratory and Jamaican performance poetry (such as that of Louise Bennett). Therefore, his body of work can serve as a basis for investigating the psychoaffective theory that orality and performance can resonate with audiences in such a way that spaces are created for the construction of pluralistic and rhizomatic Caribbean identities.

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SOUTHERN EPISTEMOLOGIES, SOUTHERN PRAXES, GENDERING AND RACING IN THE CARIBBEAN AND BEYOND

UN GRITO CONTRA LA IMPOSICIÓN DEL SILENCIO: POESÍA Y VIOLENCIA CONTRA LAS MUJERES EN AMÉRICA LATINA

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Resumen

A través del análisis de alguno de los poemas aparecidos en la antología *El callejón de los cuchillos*, queremos defender que el discurso escrito es uno de los lugares en los que las mujeres a lo largo de nuestra historia han podido empoderarse y denunciar los casos de violencia contra la mujer. Con temas desde la violencia verbal o sicológica y la tan citada violencia “luz de gas”, en esta antología que posee escritoras de distintos lugares del mundo, aunque principalmente de una buena representación de los países hispanohablantes, las autoras también gritan contra la prostitución, la pornografía, la homofobia y las diversas situaciones de violencia que sufren las mujeres en nuestras sociedades patriarcales y neoliberales.

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Términos clave: Violencia contra la mujer, mujeres latinoamericanas, poesía latinoamericana, patriarcado, silencio

Oriette D'Angelo en su introducción al blog *El callejón de los cuchillos* (2018) denuncia que:

de acuerdo con la Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe, cada día mueren en promedio al menos 12 mujeres latinoamericanas por el solo hecho de ser mujeres. Diariamente, miles de mujeres tienen que luchar y soportar episodios de violencia sexual que buscan disminuir su humanidad y limitarlas a formar parte de un grupo que se piensa minoritario para el cual no existe ningún tipo de derechos. Lo cierto es que las mujeres no somos una minoría social. Somos la otra mitad de la humanidad.

Sin embargo, para algunos, las mujeres no tienen derecho a defenderse cuando son pisoteadas y disminuidas.

Para algunos, las quejas de aquellas mujeres que se sienten continuamente violentadas y discriminadas en todos los entornos no son más que gritos ahogados que no deberían existir.

Para algunos, las mujeres que nos quejamos de actitudes vejatorias, de la falta de igualdad de género en los espacios literarios y de comentarios machistas y sexistas, no deberíamos existir.

Allí es cuando la poesía se vuelve un grito (D'Angelo, 2018, párr 1-5)

La violencia contra la mujer en Latinoamérica es algo frecuente y al mismo tiempo algo de lo que no se quiere hablar a pesar del alto porcentaje de feminicidios en esta parte del mundo. Las mujeres sufren la violencia por parte de personas que ostentan el poder y hasta por parte de familiares cercanos, en el seno doméstico, estos son los casos más difíciles de denunciar, ya que se realizan en el espacio privado y en muchas ocasiones, la policía los cataloga como casos de riñas domésticas. Las mujeres son golpeadas, maltratadas y hasta mutiladas, pero la sociedad se olvida de ellas como si no fueran seres humanos. La violencia contra la mujer en Latinoamérica, así como en el resto del mundo, es una situación palpable, latente y debemos denunciar el sistema patriarcal neoliberal que permite este tipo de violaciones para que estos abusos no queden impunes. En este artículo se analizan algunos de los poemas de la antología titulada *El callejón de los cuchillos* (D'Angelo, 2018) para demostrar como las autoras denuncian y utilizan tres estrategias: la reclamación, la repetición irónica y la negación. En estos poemas un tema repetido es el del silencio impuesto en las mujeres y la necesidad que éstas tienen de gritar y de decir lo que no les gusta.

La violencia contra la mujer se acentúa aún más en regiones con conflicto bélico donde: “es prácticamente invisible, la denuncia que era escasa se vuelve nula y las consecuencias se ignoran por completo” (Torres Falcón, 2015, p. 91). Por ejemplo, en Colombia “el 100 % de las mujeres colombianas han sido víctimas de violencia o maltrato psicológico, el 80 % sufrió violencia física, el 70 % violencia económica, y el 45 % acoso sexual” (Giraldo & Ariza Fontecha, 2021, p. 71). No obstante, los movimientos feministas y sus denuncias en las redes sociales son imparables, aunque esta plataforma puede ser un arma de doble filo: “Más de uno de cada diez tweets para/sobre las mujeres incorpora insultos u otro tipo de términos abusivos” (Piñeiro-Otero, 2021, p. 10). Las redes, el estado, la policía, los jueces, el sistema en su totalidad no ayudan a las mujeres en su lucha dejando que los perpetradores de estos crímenes queden libres o en las sombras. Es nuestra labor seguir denunciando la violencia, la impunidad, los abusos, las violaciones y los feminicidios.

Las Naciones Unidas definen la violencia contra la mujer “todo acto de violencia basado en la pertenencia al sexo femenino que tenga o pueda tener como resultado un daño o sufrimiento físico, sexual o sicológico para la mujer” (Organización de las Naciones Unidas, 1993, Artículo 1). Además, la Organización Mundial de la Salud estima que 1 de cada 3 mujeres sufren violencia doméstica en su vida, lo que también afecta a los

niños que crecen en familias donde la violencia está presente (2021). Las estadísticas también muestran que las mujeres de América Latina tienen menos probabilidades de denunciar abusos domésticos debido a la falta de acción de la policía (Creel et al., 2001). Muchas mujeres sienten que no pueden confiar en la policía porque es más probable que ésta empatice con los maridos y, por lo tanto, es más probable que las mujeres soporten el abuso en lugar de denunciarlo a las fuerzas del orden público.

La venezolana Miyó Vestrini en su poema “Muy poco y muy gris el tiempo que te queda” dice sobre este tema: “Silencio mujer, dijo, de nada valdrá tu queja en este momento ni en los otros” (Vestrini en D’Angelo, 2018, poema 5) reafirmando la realidad de las mujeres que ven la impunidad con la que se pasean por las calles sus victimarios como si nada hubiera pasado. Karina Vergara Sánchez, de México, muestra cómo los hombres menosprecian a sus esposas cuando escribe, “Entonces, me acusas:/ Que soy vanidosa. / Que me falta sabiduría/ -para entender tus reglas./ Que de mi boca salen mentiras/ -porque no me puedo tragar tus verdades” (Vergara Sánchez, 1974, en D’Angelo, 2018, poema 14). Su marido la acusa de mentir y de ser estúpida cuando ella cuestiona la validez de sus palabras. Esta táctica de cambiar la culpa es común entre los abusadores. Kelly Martínez-Grandal, de Cuba, también muestra este concepto cuando escribe en 1980, “...me callo todo lo que diga podrá ser usado en mi contra” (en D’Angelo, 2018, poema 20). Estas poetas ilustran la forma en que los hombres manipulan las situaciones y las mujeres deben aprender a no decir nada por temor a las represalias. Despues de que los hombres han excusado o justificado sus acciones, es responsabilidad de la mujer procesar las emociones de vergüenza y culpa y recibir calificativos con etiquetas negativas como llamarlas “putas”.

El silenciamiento más fuerte que puede sufrir una mujer, además de tener que prostituirse, es el feminicidio. Sobre la prostitución el poema que destaca en esta antología es “La danza de los espíritus” de Martínez-Grandal (en D’Angelo, 2018, poema 20):

... Yo no conocía más que una sola palabra: sobrevivencia. Me hice experta en el arte de los túneles y los laberintos

Y todos los días la boca pintada de rojo la lencería de encaje el lubricante su látigo su escupitajo su risa la comparación yo consumida la mandíbula abierta hasta dislocarla de rodillas los azotes de su lengua las plantas venenosas la carne de carroña los clavos las diosas que no eran yo los tacones la cinta negra en el cuello las botas y nunca era suficiente todos los días yo estoy mal las cucarachas tengo miedo y me callo todo lo que diga podrá ser usado en mi contra me hago estatua de sal mejor no existo mejor me vuelvo transparente

Y volví y miré, uno a uno, a los ojos de mi verdugo.

Y arrojé sus cenizas.

Todas las mujeres que contribuyeron a *El callejón de los cuchillos* comparten sus experiencias de violencia y el efecto que tuvo en ellas. Mencionan la fuerza, el miedo, la culpa, y la resistencia. A pesar de la prevalencia de la violencia y los abusos, muchas

mujeres nunca mencionan lo que soportaron. Esto hace que las historias de las poetas sean esenciales para crear conciencia y mostrar que no todas las mujeres tendrán miedo al silencio. Las mujeres que presentan sus historias a menudo son consideradas valientes, pero como se afirma en la canción “Safe” por Sage, las mujeres “no quieren ser valientes/ solo quieren estar seguras” (Sage, 2018, Chorus; traducción hecha por los autores).

La peruana Gabriela Wiener desafía al sistema patriarcal, cuando es capaz de enfrentar con orgullo (en lugar de vergüenza) los calificativos hirientes a través de la reclamación en su poesía. En el poema de 1975 “Princesa cautiva” (Wiener en D’Angelo, 2018, poema 18), Wiener habla de su experiencia en una relación de amor romántico con un hombre abusivo. Ella menciona una necesidad de “desinfectar” su alma y después, escribe “no sé muy bien cuál era mi papel / si estaba entre los buenos o entre los malos / yo quería ser mala.” (Wiener en D’Angelo, 2018, poema 18). Se prefiere la identificación con el grupo de las malas que con un grupo con el que no estás de acuerdo. Valora ser fiel a sí misma más que temer la amenaza de la muerte y por eso, se la califica como mala. Otro poema que sirve como ejemplo de este fenómeno es “Desde la insignificancia” escrito por Vergara Sánchez, en este, sus palabras desempeñan la misma función de una manera más explícita. Cito: “Elijo ser la paria. / La infecciosa. / La insuficiente.” (Vergara Sánchez en D’Angelo, 2018, poema 14).

Al mismo tiempo, el poema de Vergara Sánchez también representa la repetición irónica. Bajo del contexto en que ella se “[ha] negado / de ser [la] musa” de un hombre, repite irónicamente la lengua de este hombre, pero con la intención de exponer la naturaleza degradante y ridícula de sus acusaciones “Me quedo aquí, / vanidosa, / instintiva, / con mi inteligencia poca, / con mi verdad sombría.” (Vergara Sánchez en D’Angelo, 2018, poema 14). Dicho esto, ella le pregunta “Por qué tú, desde el poder, / te ocupas de contenerme, / de acosarme, de acorralarme. / Por qué, si soy apenas nada.” (Vergara Sánchez en D’Angelo, 2018, poema 14). “Por qué, si abro yo la boca, / tú tiemblas.” (Vergara Sánchez en D’Angelo, 2018, poema 14). Por esto, ella se desnuda ante él que a la vez se siente indefenso al oír la palabra “no” y, de esta manera, hace válido el poder de sí misma ya que su identidad no es lo que el hombre ha decidido, sino la que ella se ha labrado.

El poema titulado “¿Qué dirán de mi si un día aparezco muerta?” escrito en 1974 por Regina José Galindo (en D’Angelo, 2018, poema 17) funciona bien como un ejemplo de la negación usada como una herramienta de lucha contra la discriminación las palabras dañinas contra las mujeres. En la situación teórica de su muerte, ella repite todos los defectos de los que ha sido acusada: “Cada periódico hará un despliegue de mis / defectos / mis vicios / mis fallas / y dirán / quizás / que lo merezco.” (Galindo en D’Angelo, 2018, poema 17). Aunque ella misma no combate las alegaciones, repite las palabras de sus cuatro hermanas quienes “limpiarán [su] nombre.” (Galindo en D’Angelo, 2018, poema 17). Exponen las mentiras de otros, y ellas defienden a su hermana

aterrorizada. “Dirán … que no fue una puta, ni una loca, [vaga, maleante, bandida, terrorista, delincuente, paria, asesina]” (Galindo en D’Angelo, 2018, poema 17). Además, sus hermanas afirman su cualidad verdadera: “Dirán que Regina fue su hermana / y que era buena.” (Galindo en D’Angelo, 2018, poema 17). Aunque piense en un futuro, en este poema, Galindo demuestra como la negación de las mentiras del discurso despectivo y posteriormente, la afirmación de la verdad, pueden ser maneras efectivas de ir en contra de los prejuicios.

Todas las escritoras mencionadas han tenido que enfrentarse habitualmente a la discriminación y a los prejuicios. Se les critica por falta de pureza sexual, por sus valores religiosos y políticos, sus apariencias, sus hábitos, etc. Como la cultura patriarcal impone que son características de la mujer virtuosa, la meta de los acusadores es la difamación de las mujeres. Su inconformismo a los estándares esperados las ha convertido en enemigas del orden patriarcal público, todas estas voces poéticas han encontrado una manera de afirmar sus verdades a la vez que rechazan las condenas del mundo. Todo el mundo sabe que las palabras son muy poderosas, especialmente las palabras de quienes que han sido silenciadas. A pesar de sus desafíos, esas mujeres han sido capaces de empoderarse gracias a sus poesías.

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QUESTIONING WHETHER ART IMITATES LIFE OR LIFE IMITATES ART IN SHANI MOOTOO'S *VALIMKI'S DAUGHTER* AND KAMALA KEMPADOO'S *SEXING THE CARIBBEAN*

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Abstract

Which came first, the chicken or the egg? This age-old dilemma is the impetus for this philosophical paper that questions whether literary art imitates our social realities, or whether our lived experiences are sub-consciously structured to mirror the events of the literary imaginary. To this end, I draw on Kamala Kempadoo's constructs in *Sexing the Caribbean* that paint the region as the sexual playground for Empire's descendants, while linking its sex tourism industry to the delicious tensions, contentions and collisions of characters within Shani Mootoo's *Valmiki's Daughter*. I draw on my own experiences as a Caribbean man, scholar and researcher as I examine both works, surmising that whereas one resides in the Caribbean imaginary and the other within the realm of scholarship, they both address the issue at hand in the nebulous area that blurs reality with literature.

Key terms: Caribbean literature, sex tourism, the Caribbean, Shani Mootoo, Kamla Kempadoo

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Which came first, the chicken or the egg? The chicken-and-egg conundrum may be seen through pitting Shani Mottoo's *Valmiki's Daughter* (2010) against Kamala Kempadoo's *Sexing the Caribbean: Gender, Race and Sexual Labour* (2004). A potent truism about literature is that it is mimetic. After all, even the canonical works of West Indian literature – V.S. Naipaul, Lorna Goodison, Samuel Selvon, Jamaica Kincaid, etc. – cannot be read without their audience identifying with a character, or being able to immediately pinpoint the protagonist or antagonist within the local village where they have lived all their lives.

Good literature, arguably, strives to create its own sense of realism by mimicking the lives of everyday people. Contrariwise, it could also be argued that real life societies pattern themselves after the social realities of the characters found within literary texts. In fact, readers emerge from their experiences with characters on the printed page with allies of sorts that accompany them in life-making and life-changing decisions regarding gender identities, gender realities and gender sensitivities. It is as if real life personas are the ones who mimic the lives and stories of the literary craft in shaping their own living tales. The strong relationship between art and life is the springboard for the development of this paper which focuses on both Mootoo and Kempadoo's texts. The aim is to critically compare both texts with a view to truly appreciating how a traditional literary text, albeit one written with a modern sensitivity to gender awareness and identities in the West Indies, both mirrors and impacts what empirical research reveals about sex and gender identities in the Caribbean.

Growing up in the 1970s and 1980s, I was exposed to jingles, songs and rhymes mostly from foreign British and American landscapes. After all, where in the Caribbean can one find a hickory dickory dock? Worse, what exactly is that? My only exposure to West Indian literature was in primary school Comprehension passages of prose and poetry. Secondary school was far worse. The scientific thrust of the all-male Catholic college I attended for seven years did not even have literature as a discipline offered to Form One boys! On reflection, I can truly say that, along with generations of men, I was conditioned to believe two myths. Firstly, traditional scholarship anchored in the positivist approach to empirical data was superior to whatever value literature might hold. And, secondly, males are expected to gravitate towards the sciences and not at all reflect any outward or inward affinity to the 'softer' disciplines of the liberal arts. A swift policing of masculinity either through the jeers of other boys or the institutionalized educational male supremist entrenched values of my college saw to that. Small wonder that successive decades of boys were forced to pursue ten Ordinary Levels, littered with sciences. As culturally acceptable and 'normal' as this may be, it speaks volumes regarding gender inequality, implicit bias in education, and the work that is yet to be done to correct imbalance in pedagogical reasoning, policy and praxis.

Perhaps this is one (sub)conscious reason for my initial gravitation towards literature during my post-adolescent years and subsequent residence within interdisciplinary gender studies for the past two decades or so, debunking stereotypes regarding masculinism and all that. In this regard, Mootoo and Kempadoo's texts have profound and personal meaning for me. And this, as well, is cause for just pause. After all, it shows how scholars' psyches become mobilized based both on their own experiential backgrounds and lived realities, as well on the texts that have caught their imagination, which for me is the case with *Valmiki's Daughter* and *Sexing the Caribbean: Gender, Race and Sexual Labour*.

If I were to re-title Mootoo's novel, I would call it *Like Father, Like Daughter*. S succinctly speaking, this novel reveals a father's secrets (support of a black male lover, multiple heterosexual liaisons with white women) that drive an Indo-Trinidadian family's internal and social lives. Viveka, the older child, seeks to discover her place in the formal, restrictive traditions of the wealthy Indian community, while her mother schemes to keep her husband Valmiki's pursuits a secret, no doubt the legacy of Indian women everywhere as the burden of showcasing a respectable monogamous relationship with their flirtatious and polygamous-stricken husbands, fall on their shoulders. The story's slow start (Part 1 begins with 22 pages of description by an unnamed narrator) demands a committed reader. Once readers become involved in the story, though, the complex plot and truly exquisite character development sustain interest. Mootoo's meticulous writing includes a complicated, intriguing structure (prologue, four parts describing a period of six-plus months, and epilogue) into which she incorporates a coming-of-age story and convincing portraits of two troubled marriages. The climax is unexpected but realistic, and the resolution surprises, but upon consideration seems inevitable.

Daughter Viveka is lesbian and she claims this gender identity. She, like Daddy Valmiki, has tried the heterosexual ride but become untrue to it. In fact, while Viveka, representing the modern liberated generation, dabbles with heterosexuality, she quickly throws off its charade and embraces her homosexual lifestyle as reflective of her real identity. On the contrary, Valmiki cloaks his unfulfilled heterosexual relationship with his wife with layers of additional heterosexual affairs with his white female clients, all in a quest to promote a contradictory identity – false in personal sexual and intimate desire but real in terms of the expected image of the San Fernando hegemonic male who is replete with the indices of the masculine ideal – middle aged, acceptable race, white collar professional, land-owning, educated, rich and – of course – heterosexual with a multiplicity of partners. His true essence regarding romance, intimacy and sexual desire, however, is attained only with his sexual liaisons with his black male gardener.

And whereas Valmiki testifies of feeling fulfilled as a person with this lover, ironically, his lover sees his relationships with the great Dr. Valmiki as nothing more than a mere business transaction. Valmiki pours his love into this relationship through romance and the giving of gifts, whereas Tony the gardener accepts these gifts and extra work around the house for which he is handsomely paid as just due for labour exchanged. This is of such solid belief in Tony's mind that I earnestly believe he would emerge successful if he were to undergo a polygraph test to determine if he was merely leading on Dr. Valmiki or had any personal affinity for a homosexual union.

But this entire complex relationship allows the reader to reflect on something far more profound, something almost institutionalized when it comes to gender roles and gender relations. Forget the men; let's look at the wives: like Dr. Valmiki's wife who accepts

her lot in life to live with her husband's infidelity despite her own faithfulness to him, Tony's wife also accepts her husband's affairs with Dr. Valmiki as a matter of course. Tony, who himself believes that his liaison with the goodly doctor is nothing more than a business transaction, has been instrumental in having his wife share this belief. She is not in favour of it but claims that it is something necessary as a part of life. Even Tony's fishing and card-playing friends accept his affairs as a mere episode in the lives of Trinidad's proletariat in order to make ends meet.

Such realities scream inequality in financial and material resources so loudly that it has created a defeated acceptance among this novel's characters that come to represent the reality of many, many households in impoverished and working-class districts. Beyond this socioeconomic class-based argument is another, perhaps more deep-seated one – the non-optional life that women live under patriarchy. Despite the differences in the lives of Valmiki's wife and Tony's wife regarding race, class, geography, culture and religion, they both are effectively dominated by men when it comes to occupying space and developing their own identities. They are the wives of men, as opposed to women in their own right, who must accept the realities created by their menfolk and adhere to related decisions despite the intense unhappiness that comes their way. Worse, they are forced to accept this unhappiness and become resigned to a life that they cannot fathom escaping.

Still, with its prominent notions of leaky sexual pluralism, ongoing conflict between Indo-Caribbean and queer identities, absence of labels, and policing of masculinity linked to social class, Mootoo's novel must not be read as an indelible acceptance of patriarchy by women. Rather, the discerning reader will see the impact of women as agents of change in the person of Viveka, who comes to see her parents' reality as a dated socio-cultural construct. She becomes representative of the fluid and dynamic nature of female identity, feminism, personhood and belonging – critical tropes in West Indian literature. And she embraces each of these in the process of becoming a liberated female who paves the path for women everywhere both inside and outside the Indo-Caribbean to embrace self and emerge true. In this regard, Mootoo shows how youth and modernity trump age and experience while simultaneously offering the Caribbean as a place for new possibilities.

It is this creation of possibility that allows this reader to reflect on their own past, their present, and the experiences that have shaped both. Indeed, it is this that creates an opportunity for the reader to see literature as having as much potency as researched empirical scholarship to create new knowledge and new ways of knowing. After all, when it comes to finding self and defining identity in very real ways, literature remains profound, exacting, liberating and all-encompassing in ways similar to, and perhaps beyond, that of traditional empirical scholarship.

This does not in the least dilute the effectiveness and potency of Kempadoo's work. It remains a timeless, extensive but impassioned exploration of the economic and social

motivation of male and female Caribbean sex workers. Kempadoo examines the Anglophone Caribbean to explore the inevitable links between tourism and the sex industry, which simultaneously oppress and liberate sex workers. Her work becomes an enquiry into what may be seen as a transformation of racialized and exoticized bodies into pathways toward social betterment and economic development. While examining the lives and stories and realities of Caribbean sex workers, she also pays attention to migrant sex workers and the possibilities of globalization – and for agency in a global economy. This leads to the profound realization that Caribbean bodies reflect a capacity for socio-cultural change.

The author states, “The objectives of this book are to explore Caribbean sexuality in some of its complexity” (Kempadoo, 2004, p. 2). She proposes the notion that the variety of sexual practices and arrangements that define Caribbean sexuality are an intermixture of colonial and neo-colonial European concepts combined with Amerindian, West African, and East Indian cultural legacies and traditions. The intersectionality among all of these constructs generates identities among Caribbean peoples that have been largely fed and watered by Empire along a sexual trajectory. Critically interrogating related identities assists the reader in understanding a significance that lies in the reclamation of sense of self as the Afro-Caribbean man engages in a sexual bricolage to rise from a legacy of subservience under the white man. Bolland (2002, p. 33) declares that:

within relations of domination, the subtle art of bricolage enables the oppressed to avoid repercussions while making innumerable transformations of, and within, the dominant cultural economy in order to adapt it to their own interests and their own rules.

This applies to both sex and sex tourism in various parts of the Caribbean.

An underlying theme of Kempadoo’s study is that Caribbean economy depends on the productivity and organization of human labour that relies on human sexual energies. Sexual energies are more or less commodified and organized in the marketplace and sex industries under the banner of power relations. Caribbean gender theorist and scholar, Eudine Barriteau theorized that instead of interpreting the Caribbean as idyllic, it ought to be seen as a region where “an absence of power characterized many dimensions of women’s lives” (2003, p. 4) [and where gendered relations are shaped by] “the ways in which social relations between women and men are socially constituted to perpetuate male dominance” (1992, p. 15). Upon reflection, I can truly say that prior to my final year of undergraduate studies, I always bought into the idyllic notion of the Caribbean being the crucible of sea, sand and sun. This is not to preclude my awareness of sex being a gravitational factor of tourists from North America and Europe who continue to see the region as a sexual playground for the rich and famous. But it is works like Kempadoo’s texts, testimonies from sex workers, and findings

housed at the Ministry of Tourism that I examined during my M.Phil. years that opened my eyes to the realities of the tourism sex industry. And this is replete with an understanding of the amount to capital that is channelled into an industry with international networks.

Perhaps more jarring than the enormous amount of money that tourists spend to satisfy their lust for the flesh, is the equally enormous level of inequity and inequality regarding access to physical and material resources that make men and women ply their bodies to support self and families. But perhaps more eye-opening than this is the reality that many of these sex workers have real lives and homes and families and need for companionship and love and intimacy that are fulfilled outside of their jobs. And what emerges from this realization is the resilience of these Caribbean people to achieve and realize their own goals regardless of their lot in life. Indeed, it is an awareness that leads one to appreciate and honour these people, rather than frown upon them, as many would who do not know or choose to ignore their stories.

A repertoire of commonalities may be highlighted between Mootoo's novel and Kempadoo's text that bridge the literary with the empirical. Inclusive are intersectionalities between race, class, age, geography, gender and sex identities; female embodiment as agency, sexual performance being directly linked to power; Caribbean bodies as exotic and desired; attention to the Black/White paradigm; sex and intimacy being business transactions; a dynamic fluidity of gender identities; and, sexualized Caribbean bodies arising neither as simply the product of the past nor as passive or inert. Rather, they are self-actualizing and even transformative – transformative in the sense of shaping political, economic, and social forces, institutions, and structures as they are shaped by them.

In understanding this, I am led to signal a number of questions that I need time to personally grapple with, rather than formulate immediate responses to, for instance: 1) since it allows people to rise above adversity and shape spirit, can patriarchy be seen as offering any privilege for women and less powerful men as opposed to simply being a generic curse? 2) Is female sexuality two-dimensional in terms of immorality or agency? And who has the moral claim to decide this? 3) Does acceptance of gender studies as a body of scholarship necessarily entail a potent debunking of biologically determinant theories? 4) Does the quest for identity reflect a capacity to overcome the regulation of social control through all sites (family life, religion, politics, the education sector, etc.)? and finally 5) Will desire for sexual gratification trump other institutionalized and respectable behaviors, as ordained by society?

I end by saluting both Mootoo and Kempadoo for their most admirable and thought-provoking works. They are timely, but reflect a capacity to be timeless as Caribbean peoples may find their own emergent epistemologies within each.

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PLAYA DE BAMBURI: VIDA Y AMOR EN TIEMPOS DE PANDEMIA EN RETROCESO Y FASCISMO EN AUMENTO¹

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Resumen

Tal vez el "Plus" (+) al final de 'LGBTQIA2S+' no debería ser leído como una idea tardía o los pedacitos y piezas que quedan. Quizás este "Plus" representa el 95% de las sexualidades humanas y actuaciones de género que ninguna caja conceptual hegemónica podría encerrar jamás, que la ciencia occidental y las formas occidentales de entender el mundo no se dan permiso para ver, mucho menos para aceptar o celebrar.

Términos clave: sexualidades, actuaciones de género, LGBTQIA2S+, Edwin Chiloba, Bamburi Beach

Nosotros dos llegamos a Bamburi, en Kenia, como una pareja que buscaba la posibilidad de trabajar, de relajarnos y de protegernos de la pandemia de COVID-19. En la costa del Océano Índico al norte de Mombasa, caminábamos en la playa por las mañanas por los tramos de arena amarilla, así como por lo que quedaba de los manglares luego de haberse construido allí una serie aparentemente interminable de paredes de cercado; paredes

¹ La versión inglesa de este artículo se encuentra en Mietzner (2023). Véase también Faraclas & Green (2024).

cuyo papel se había reducido a asegurar inútilmente los complejos turísticos abandonados, los cuales eran testigos de la ruina causada por la industria turística. Con la marea subiendo durante las tardes, podíamos nadar en las aguas cristalinas del mar antes y después de dar clases en línea y de asistir a reuniones en Zoom; clases y reuniones cuyo papel se había reducido a inútilmente asegurar las jerarquías abandonadas que atestiguan la ruina causada por la continua sustitución de los académicos por los medios de comunicación de derecha como propagadores preferidos del discurso hegemónico.

Había un lugar para cocinar en nuestra habitación junto a la playa, de manera que pudieramos evitar más riesgos de los necesarios de contraer COVID en espacios públicos cerrados. Viviendo como personas abiertamente homosexuales desde la década de 1970 y como matrimonio inter-racial durante la década pasada, habíamos aprendido a sobrevivir, no solo a los prejuicios, la violencia y la enfermedad, sino también a prosperar, a pesar de las incertidumbres que existen en la peligrosa, contradictoria y fortuita danza que hay entre buscar vivir una vida plena y, a la vez, proteger nuestro bienestar social, mental y físico.

Parece, pues, que la vida nos había preparado en cierta medida para lidiar con COVID-19 y la vida también había preparado a las personas que vivían y trabajaban en la playa de Bamburi para sobrevivir y prosperar, a pesar de contingencias mucho más amenazantes que los que, en numerosos sentidos, habíamos experimentado nosotros, en particular los estragos que les provocaron las sucesivas olas de conquista, colonización y esclavitud de la era moderna. Los invasores vinieron primero de Medio Oriente, para ser eventualmente reemplazados por colonizadores de Europa, después por los neo-colonizadores del FMI/Banco Mundial/OMC, y finalmente por los cleptócratas sociopáticos que han hecho uso de la malversación para controlar la economía mundial.

Estos oligarcas han logrado ahora una dominación coercitiva de países enteros en todo el continente africano por medio de tácticas de terror y de ocupación diseñadas por mercenarios. Y han logrado, asimismo, establecer una dominación discursiva asegurando poseer un monopolio virtual sobre la corriente constante y adictiva de mentiras hegemónicas que brotan de los dispositivos tecnológicos con los que han logrado esclavizarnos a todos nosotros.

Como resultado de esto, cada vez más personas en Kenia viven al borde de la inanición, con casi toda la riqueza generada por su tierra y su trabajo fluyendo directa o indirectamente hacia las metrópolis neocoloniales, con sus granjas y aldeas encerradas por el turismo, la agroindustria y la apropiación masiva de tierras por parte de multimillonarios extranjeros, con su acceso al agua cada vez más precario debido a la sequía inducida por el cambio climático, y con millones de personas enajenadas de su ancestral y abundante economía de subsistencia y lanzadas a una economía capitalista de escasez.

Regresemos a las ilusorias y adictivas nociones de estar "preparado" y "asegurado". Por supuesto, uno nunca puede ni debe estar completamente preparado o seguro, porque

cualquier vida que valga la pena vivir está, por definición, peligrosamente y dichosamente fuera de control, llena de imprevistos precarios y disruptivos, pero providenciales, y repleta de una frustrante, desconcertante pero afortunadamente fortuita imprevisibilidad. Por ejemplo, aunque aquellos a quienes conocimos en la costa este de África casi invariablemente nos trataron con respeto como dos hombres que habían creado una relación que la mayoría encontró apropiada para referirse como una de "hermanos", al mismo tiempo, pocos días después de que nos fuéramos de Kenia, el activista LBGTQIA2S+ Edwin Chiloba fue asesinado y abandonado en una caja de metal al lado de una carretera en la frontera con el país vecino Uganda, cuyo presidente ha abiertamente declarado que las personas LBGTQIA2S+ son "repugnantes". Uganda es también el lugar donde las organizaciones religiosas estadounidenses de tendencia fascista están inundando el país con dinero para llevar a cabo campañas políticas y sociales contra las personas no cis-heteronormativas.

Y aunque logramos evitar el COVID mientras viajábamos a Kenia y de regreso al Caribe a través de aeropuertos y aviones donde éramos de las pocas personas que usaban mascarillas, al mismo tiempo, casi todos nuestros colegas en nuestro hogar, Puerto Rico, los cuales acababan de ser obligados por una burocracia educativa políticamente designada y de tendencia fascista a regresar al aula para enseñar cara a cara, terminaron contrayendo el virus como resultado, incluso algunos tuvieron que ser hospitalizados y otros sufrieron todavía meses después los efectos posteriores del virus. Mientras tanto, la aparentemente interminable letanía de masacres de personas no cis-heteronormativas en ataques armados a clubes y otros lugares en los Estados Unidos de América ha continuado sin cesar, mientras que las leyes de "No decir gay" están dando lugar a una nueva era de censura y represión proto fascista en las instituciones educativas de Florida y un número creciente de otros estados estadounidenses.

Mientras que nosotros y la mayoría de los turistas africanos en nuestro hotel en Bamburi parecíamos haber venido buscando descanso y refugio de las presiones del trabajo y del COVID, pronto se hizo evidente que la mayoría de los huéspedes no africanos del hotel habían venido buscando algo más. Había un flujo constante de africanos jóvenes entrando y saliendo de las habitaciones, de las chozas improvisadas en la carretera y de los arbustos circundantes, donde atendían lo mejor que podían las necesidades corporales y emocionales de sus clientes, mayormente de descendencia europea, para el contacto, la conexión y la intimidad, a menudo de maneras que subvertían la cis-hetero-normatividad. Este conjunto profundamente incongruente y paradójico de comportamientos y relaciones simultáneamente íntimos y alienantes, opresivos y subversivos, explotadores y niveladores parecía manifestarse mucho más allá del comercio sexual local, de modo que ciertas partes de la playa en ciertos momentos del día se convirtieron en cronótopos para actuaciones trans aún más radicales, menos comercialmente definidas y menos hegemonizadas.

En las primeras horas, cuando el sol apenas estaba saliendo en el cielo del Océano Índico de tonalidad verde-amanecer, por ejemplo, las pocas personas caminando en un tramo particular de arena y manglar justo al norte de nuestro hotel incluían una fascinante serie de lo que podríamos llamar aquí *eminencias*, por falta de un término mejor, que sin pretensiones pero audazmente seguían adelante con su vida diaria disfrutando y celebrando el espectáculo del centro estelar de la órbita de nuestro planeta elevándose sobre el mar, mientras amablemente invitaban al sol, a la playa y a todos los demás en ella a celebrar y disfrutar su elevación igualmente estelar y llamativa más allá de los miasmas cis-hetero-normativos que infectan nuestras vidas diarias.

Cada día, estas estrellas de la mañana emergían mientras las estrellas de la noche se desvanecían: un corredor de género neutral en un tutú reconfigurado en un traje de cuerpo deportivo, una figura seductoramente bigoteada como Don Juan en bufandas y túnicas multicolores fluidas, una Sultana completamente adornada en perlas y con barba, etc. Pero estos no eran estrellas de cine o superestrellas cuyo objetivo era convencernos de que nosotros mismos nunca podríamos ser artistas, intérpretes, *performeros* y creadores, estos eran más como las estrellas en el cielo, cuya luz brillante y gentil nos recuerda que nosotros también podemos brillar, y sutil pero incesantemente nos invita a hacerlo. En contraste con las presentaciones más comerciales que predominaron más tarde en el día en la playa de Bamburi, ninguna de estas *eminencias* parecía estar solicitando algo, y en contraste con muchas trans-presentaciones igualmente impresionantes y espectaculares en el Norte Global, ninguna parecía siquiera intentar llamar la atención ni enfatizar un punto particular.

Y tal vez llamar la atención y enfatizar un punto particular, o al menos la necesidad de llamar la atención o enfatizar un punto particular, sea en parte lo que está en juego aquí. Mucho antes de que nos casáramos, ambos habíamos sido parte de los movimientos sociales y políticos antiimperialistas, antirracistas, anticapitalistas y antipatriarcales de los años 1960 y 1970, incluyendo, pero no limitado a, los movimientos por los derechos y el "empoderamiento" de las personas LGBTQIA2S+. Durante esos años, habíamos participado e incluso ayudado a organizar algunas de las primeras manifestaciones exigiendo que las personas no cis-hetero-normativas "salgan del armario y vayan a las calles", los primeros desfiles del Orgullo Gay, etc. Habíamos pasado tantos años "fuera del armario", que cuando nos encontramos en lugares como Kenia, que muchos en el Norte Global considerarían lugares "no amigables" con los gays, tuvimos que tomar distancia y reflexionar para hacer una revisión crítica de lo que queremos decir cuando decimos "gay" o "amistoso".

Si el Norte Global es tan "amistoso", ¿por qué Bamburi está tan lleno de norteños solitarios buscando conectar con alguien, y por qué se están prohibiendo libros infantiles con personajes LGBTQIA2S+ en escuelas y bibliotecas de los Estados Unidos? ¿Y por qué se debe asumir que las formas en que las personas en el Norte Global construyen binarios como hetero vs. gay, casado vs. soltero, esposo vs. hermano, y "dentro" vs.

"fuera" del armario son de alguna manera "universales" y, por lo tanto, también deben ser las formas en que las personas que viven en la playa de Bamburi interpretan y articulan su mundo?

¿Reflejan las cajas conceptuales que se han ensamblado discursivamente para compartmentalizar, encerrar y domesticar las sexualidades y las actuaciones de género las diversas formas en que los seres humanos hemos entendido y celebrado nuestras sexualidades y géneros durante los 300,000 años aproximados de nuestra presencia en este planeta, o son un artefacto de la colonización hegemónica de nuestras mentes que ha tenido lugar junto con el surgimiento relativamente reciente de sistemas de dominación en los últimos pocos miles de años? Si bien nuestras luchas contra la cis-hetero-normatividad, por los "derechos" LGBTQIA2S+ (incluyendo el matrimonio gay) ciertamente han sido necesarias para comenzar a deshacer esa colonización en el contexto del Occidente Global, ¿cuándo pasamos más allá de las preguntas de derechos controlados por un estado artificialmente "soberano" a preguntas más fundamentales sobre nuestros poderes soberanos muy reales y ancestrales en relación con nuestras sexualidades y géneros; preguntas que muchas personas en el Sur Global pueden estar en una posición algo mejor para ayudarnos a abordar? ¿Cuándo superaremos la proliferación de cajas y categorías colonizadoras representadas por listas cada vez más largas de etiquetas inhospitalarias y exclusivas?

Esto incluye la lista interminable de letras en la mega-categoría LGBTQIA2S+, que siguen dentro de los límites restrictivos y hegemónicos de la metafísica occidental colonizadora, a pesar de los impulsos muy inclusivos y hospitalarios que nos han llevado a lo largo de los años de "Gay" a "Lesbiana y Gay" a "Lesbiana, Gay y Bisexual" a "Lesbiana, Gay, Bisexual y Trans" (LGBT) a "Lesbiana, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex y Asexual, Plus" (LGBTQIA+) a "Lesbiana, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex, Asexual y 2 Espíritus, Plus" (LGBTQIA2S+) a "Lesbiana, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer (Cuir), Questioning (Cuestionándose), Intersex, Pansexual, 2 Espíritus, Asexual y Aliado, Plus" (LGBTQQIP2SAA+)? Tal vez el "Plus" al final de esta lista en crecimiento no debería ser leído como una idea tardía o los pedacitos y piezas que quedan. Quizás este "Plus" representa el 95% de las sexualidades humanas y actuaciones de género que ninguna caja conceptual hegemónica podría encerrar jamás, que la ciencia occidental y las formas occidentales de entender el mundo no se dan permiso para ver, mucho menos para aceptar o celebrar.

Y luego llegamos al término refrescante, simple y abundantemente generoso "hermanos" que nuestros anfitriones kenianos nos otorgaron tan hospitalariamente, aunque sin reflexionar ni problematizarlo, como una bendición y un regalo. Existe amplia evidencia de todo tipo de sexualidades y actuaciones de género no cis-hetero en cada sociedad humana en cada período de la historia humana. Los aspectos más significativos, satisfactorios y duraderos de nuestro tipo particular de unión no cishetero normativa han resonado desde el pasado profundo para convertirse en parte y parcela de los repertorios

lingüísticos, culturales y étnicos que se han unido a lo largo de las costas del Océano Índico de África, Asia y Oceanía durante decenas de miles de años, si no más. Antes de la consolidación extremadamente reciente de la cishetero normatividad y las instituciones para hacerla cumplir, como la familia nuclear, el encierro del vínculo afectivo y erótico dentro de los límites del matrimonio heterosexual legal y / o religiosamente formalizado, etc., todo lo cual ha tenido lugar en no más de los últimos cientos de años en el Oeste Global y en el transcurso de unas pocas décadas en Kenia y la mayor parte del resto del Sur Global, la gente en todas partes disfrutaba del tipo de unión que nosotros hemos disfrutado como 'pareja gay casada'.

Probablemente lo hayan hecho, sin embargo, de tal manera que podrían haberlo entendido como algo similar a 'hermano y hermano', en lugar de 'esposo y esposo'. De hecho, en la mayoría de los lugares y tiempos, el erotismo, el afecto y la formación de relaciones profundas eran igualmente probables, o a menudo más probables, de tener lugar entre personas del mismo sexo que entre personas de distinto sexo. Además, en la mayoría de los lugares y tiempos, las relaciones más formalizadas que podrían haber sido el equivalente más cercano a lo que generalmente se conoce como 'matrimonio' hoy en día a menudo se han visto como un medio para 'prepararse' y 'asegurar' la procreación, en lugar de como un lugar particularmente apropiado, y mucho menos el lugar preferido, para la formación de vínculos eróticos, afectuosos y a largo plazo.

Por lo tanto, cuando nuestros colegas del Sur Global expresan incomodidad con la idea de 'matrimonio gay', esto debería ser visto más como una oportunidad para abrir conversaciones sobre cómo se dieron y se hablaron de estos vínculos no cishetero normativos eróticos y afectuosos antes y después de la incursión de religiones abrahámicas fundamentalistas rabiosamente patriarcales y las instituciones hegemónicas asociadas como escuelas, medios de comunicación, la familia nuclear, el matrimonio, etc., en lugar de como otra oportunidad para 'hacer un punto homohegemónico', donde, como señalan las activistas y académicas caribeñas Krystal Nandini Ghisyawan y Carla K. Moore, "el liberalismo blanco y queer sirve una función neocolonizadora al instruir a los países del Sur Global y del Tercer Mundo sobre la manera correcta de ser queer" (Attai, Ghisyawan, Kumar & Moore, 2020, p. 20).

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MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION: A BRIEF HISTORY AND CRITIQUE OF THE CORRELATION BETWEEN RACE AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

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Abstract

The objective of multicultural education is to offer an equitable education to all members of society regardless of sex, gender, ethnicity, or race. However, the historical background of education in America reflects an uneven playing field. This discussion is intended to provide the reader with a brief overview of the history of multicultural education, as well as a critique of societal beliefs around race and student achievement.

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Key terms: race, education, student achievement, curriculum

The case against notions of ‘race’ and ‘racial superiority’

What constitutes the concept ‘human being’? Are all human beings considered equal regardless of gender, sex, race, ethnicity, religion, political ideologies? Many so-called democratic countries and entities have attempted to establish the rights of people using such mechanisms as constitutions, laws, agreements, and covenants. But the intentional separation of groups by criteria such as ethnicity, gender, religion, and socioeconomic status still prevails. Even the use of the term ‘man’ to stand for human being distinctly highlights the ways in which women have been excluded, erased and consequently denied access to societal institutions.

The notion of ‘race’, especially as a means to determine or explain academic or professional success, will be explored in this work because, in most instances, the concept itself is misunderstood. As Helen I. Safa (2005) points out “The biological foundations of race have been largely discredited, but the meanings attached to racial constructions linger in the popular imagination, linking racial characteristics to behavior in a hierarchical order to justify white superiority” (quoted in Alleyne, 2005, p. 31). Generally, and colloquially, race is used inaccurately as a polysemous term. In many instances, it

is used as a “synonym for nation, or people, which creates considerable confusion” (Cavalli & Cavalli, 2015, p. 246) (all translations are by the authors, unless specified otherwise), and in other circumstances, it is often used to divide subjects belonging to the same species in a way that creates intentional disparities. According to Cavalli and Cavalli (2015) race is “a set of individuals of an animal or plant species that differ from other groups of the same species in one or more constant and transmissible characters to descendants” (p. 246). However, both Cavalli and Cavalli (2015) and Alleyne (2005) point out that there is no objective universal agreement on the definition of race. For these reasons, one of the main aims of this article is to critique and explore the concept of race.

Homo sapiens is a species that gradually spread from Africa to the rest of the planet in different waves, and over time different groups became differentiated to some extent by physical traits (Garn, 1969). In a critique of racial discrimination, Soto (1976) concludes that notions of racial superiority are totally unfounded from a scientific point of view. It was not until rapid advances occurred in fields such as molecular biology in the second half of the twentieth century that physical appearance and other criteria for racial categorization were definitively shown to be without any consistent empirical basis (Coon, 1969). Therefore, we contend that the assumptions underlying racial classifications, both in Puerto Rico and worldwide, rely on a limited understanding of the origin and development of *Homo sapiens*.

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As an artificial category, race is often correlated with other social phenomena such as educational achievement, socioeconomic status and cultural and linguistic repertoires. Ayala (2007) asserts that “the myth of a great genetic differentiation between ‘races’ is just that, a myth without scientific support” (p. 113). Therefore, the concept of race as a criterion for determining individual potential among *Homo sapiens* must be rejected as inaccurate and unfounded in reality. As Rodney (2019) mentioned in his book *The Groundings with my brothers*:

Black Africans have developed in the same way as all mankind and have made their own contributions to humanity, because we are simply a part of a single species - *Homo sapiens*, or ‘thinking man’ ... Skin colour by itself is insignificant. (Rodney, 2019, pp. 38-39)

Gardner (1999) rightly argued that:

Intelligences are not things that can be seen or counted. Instead, they are potentials—presumably, neural ones—that will or will not be activated, depending upon the values of a particular culture, the opportunities available in that culture, and the personal decisions made by individuals and/or their families, schoolteachers, and others. (Gardner, 1999, p. 34)

Of particular interest is Gardner’s assertion that an individual’s intelligence depends mostly upon opportunities made available to them and decisions made by their communities. Thus, the potential of an individual (in terms of intelligence) depends on

their access to various community resources. Poverty is a factor that correlates with individuals' lack access to these resources, such as formal education. Therefore, access to quality education enables individuals to acquire the skills that shape their opportunities in society (Gaidzanwa, 2019).

In the same vein, Darlin-Hammond (1998) concludes that:

the assumptions that undergird [debates regarding the correlation between race and educational achievement] miss an important reality: educational outcomes for minority children are much more a function of their unequal access to key educational resources, including skilled teachers and quality curriculum, than they are a function of race. (para 3)

The tendency to correlate ethnicity with educational and socioeconomic achievement has been deliberately cultivated by dominant narratives of colonial and neo-colonial ‘Western Civilization’ proliferated to legitimize the maritime invasion of the rest of the world by the imperial powers of Western Europe beginning in the 1400s. The resulting plunder transformed a set of relatively impoverished European societies into thriving metropolises who justified their worldwide theft of land and labor by artificially designating themselves as ‘white’ and everyone else as ‘non-white’. This artificial division and the association of ‘white’ with ‘superior’ and non-white’ with ‘inferior’ forms the basis upon which the entire delusional, but insidiously pervasive, edifice of racial thinking has been constructed. Rodney points out that it is “the nature of the imperialist relationship that enriches the metropolis at the expense of the colony, i.e., it makes the whites richer and the blacks poorer” (Rodney, 2019, p. 13).

Multicultural education

Curriculum “is composed of everything that the school proposes to teach” (Yustos, 2003, p. 19). Every curriculum needs an educational philosophy that relates to the social needs of the community as well as a series of specific objectives to generate the necessary criteria for assessment of learning outcomes. Without clear and defined social and learning objectives, a curriculum is unlikely to meet community needs.

Multicultural education is a polysemic term, with varying definitions (Hernández, 1989; Sutton & Levinson, 2001). Here, we define multicultural education as “a field of study or a discipline whose objective is to create equal opportunities for students from different ethnic, socio-economic, or cultural groups” (Banks quoted in Aguado, 1996, p. 59) with the goal of providing access to education and symbolic resources to the members of all communities, regardless of their gender, sex, ethnicity, skin tone, religion, socioeconomic status, etc.

According to Aguado (1996) the term ‘multicultural education’ has its roots in the World War II era, when new opportunities in the industrial sector became available to historically marginalized groups such as immigrants, women and African Americans in the US (Aguado, 1996). As a result, educators from different fields joined together

to organize to provide educational opportunities for diverse populations residing in the United States. These initiatives were generally not very successful and after a while they dissipated. In 1966, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was adopted by the United Nations, which recognizes:

that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, and shall strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms ... [and] that education shall enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society, promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups, and further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. (United Nations, n.d.)

In general, this treaty called on participating nations (including the United States) to provide equitable education for all, with the goal of bettering society, building tolerance, and establishing peace.

It is important to note that according to statistics from the US National Center for Education, Latinx and African American children are more likely to live in poverty, a factor associated with low academic achievement (Sutton & Levinson, 2001). As noted earlier, studies show this is due to unequal access to quality educational services. Likewise, educational resources, i.e., textbooks, academic curricula, staff development, are not evenly distributed across the jurisdictions to which these minoritized groups belong. The authors cited above explain that groups of parents, teachers, and students have demanded that so-called 'minority schools' meet state-mandated academic standards, and that a more equitable system be established. However, government spending patterns and reports in the media clearly demonstrate that these issues are simply not a priority for most political leaders.

Thus, culturally biased measures of 'intelligence' such as the infamous IQ test tend to replicate apparently racially defined patterns, given the fact that families with higher levels of schooling and higher incomes are able to provide their children with more favorable educational environments, which eventually results in greater opportunities and advantages in the labor and economic sectors, perpetuating a vicious cycle (Handy, 1994). Politicians, leaders, and educators should remain aware of, and educated about, the predisposition of marginalized social groups to low academic achievement due to economic deficiencies. As a partial solution to this problem, Gardner (1999) recommends a theory of Multiple Intelligences which can be developed and measured in relation to each individual's particular circumstances.

Alexander, Pitcock, and Boulay (2016) observed that the academic performance of students varies according to the socioeconomic level of their parents. Alexander and Condliffe (2016) conducted a study in which they tracked the academic performance of 650 students from different socioeconomic backgrounds (low, middle, high). To measure academic performance, they used The California Academic Achievement Test, which is problematic in and of itself. The study showed that students at the be-

ginning of their first academic year (first grade) scored with a non-significant difference between socioeconomic status. However, once the semester ended, and the vacation months were over, they were asked to complete the achievement test again. When students returned from the academic break, those students belonging to the high socioeconomic level scored higher than students from the low socioeconomic level. Another important detail which should not be overlooked is that each time students moved on to the next grade, the gap in academic performance between the groups increased. This gap in academic achievement is what Alexander, Pitcock, and Boulay (2016) coined “the summer slide.” So how is it possible for students to increase (or decrease) their scores when they are not in the academic system? Though the study identified differences in ‘lifestyle’ rather than income level specifically as the predominant factor correlated with these differences, it is clear that the amount of resources a family has is an essential key indicator for academic achievement. For example, families with higher incomes were found to have greater options for and access to academic services outside of the school year, such as summer camps, writing workshops, art and music classes, etc.

Government officials must remain conscious of myths and engaged with issues related to racism and academic achievement. They must be held accountable for the reality that even in the 21st century millions of children, adolescents and adults are still deprived of equitable educational opportunities. Fortunately, organizations such as the National Association for Multicultural Education, Rethinking Schools, and the Collaborative Voices Initiative have been working to assist marginalized communities to gain access to quality education. But ultimately it is the role of democratic institutions to provide access and quality education to all communities. As Eugenio María de Hostos stated, “it is the duty of the government to establish schools and provide school programs suitable for all sectors of society” (Hostos, quoted in Yustos, 2005, p. 192). Geneticist Paul Billings concludes that “We know what causes violence in our society: poverty, discrimination, the failure of our educational system. It’s not the genes that cause violence in our society. It’s our social system” (Billings quoted in Pinker, 2002, p. 308). In this article, we suggest that it is the duty, not only of the government, but also of academic institutions, to raise awareness of the right to multicultural education. It is well known that “children for the most part keep up when they have access to the same schooling resources as their more advantaged peers” (Alexander & Condliffe, 2016, p. 31). It is a reasonable assumption that, unless our society is gradually transformed into one that revalues the relevance of multicultural education, the gap between the privileged and the excluded will persist.

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SOUTHERN EPISTEMOLOGIES, SOUTHERN PRAXES HISTORIES AND CULTURES IN THE CARIBBEAN AND BEYOND

POSSUM AND GULISI: UNDERSTANDING GARIFUNA MATRIARCHY, GENETICS AND GENEALOGY

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Abstract

A twenty-year quest to disentangle the story of Gulisi and the discovery of her daughter, Possum, has led to the development of a new methodology for understanding Garifuna oral history. It involves use of oral history, genealogy, civil and parochial registers as well as historical records from Belize, Honduras and Guatemala; population surveys in Honduras and Guatemala; and church and land documents from Belize. Through this process, the story of Gulisi as originally published by Dr. Joseph Palacio has been revised to provide an expanded picture of the famous daughter of Paramount Garifuna chief Joseph Chatoyer, tracing her family from *Yurumein* (St. Vincent and the Grenadines) to Belize and Guatemala via Honduras between 1769 and 1934.

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Key terms: Garifuna genealogy, Garifuna oral history, Gulisi story, Possum, Garifuna ancestry, Garifuna matriarchy, Garifuna genetics, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, St. Vincent and the Grenadines,

Gulisi: Daughter of Paramount Garifuna chief Joseph Chatoyer

Gulisi was first introduced to the world in an article written by Dr. Joseph Palacio circa 1999 with Ms. Baby as key informant. Born Felicita Bernardez on 21 February 1914 in what is now Belize to Salome Flores of Dangriga and Jose Maria Bernardez of Barranco, she was quickly given the pseudonym Baby Amahuni¹ after family members noted a strong resemblance to her maternal grandmother and namesake. When Amahuni died on 8 March, 1929, Baby Amahuni was a mere 15 years of age compared to older sister, Amelia, who was 24 years old. For this reason, in 1998 when Dr. Palacio approached the then octogenarian, Baby Amahuni quickly disclosed her limited knowledge of the

¹ To her contemporaries, Baby Amahuni eventually became Baby and to her grandchildren Granny Baby. As a sign of respect for a Garifuna elder with whom he thought he did not share parentage, Dr. Palacio referred to her as Ms. Baby.

story that her older sister, the family historian Amelia, had taken to her grave. Intrigued by the idea that Garinagu in Belize would have ‘memories’ of *Yurumein* (St. Vincent and the Grenadines) (all translations in the present article are by the author, unless specified otherwise) 200 years after being exiled from those islands, Dr. Palacio spent 8 months interviewing Baby Amahuni and other family members identified by her. However, even though these other potential research consultants recognized that they had a connection with Gulisi, they could not explain exactly how.

Gulisi, daughter of Paramount Chief Joseph Chatoyer, was one of the 2000 or so Garifuna survivors of their genocidal exile from *Yurumein* to Central America. Gulisi recalled being forced onto a ship she called Biddle whose captain was called Misharah.² Historical documents relate their disembarkation on the Bay Island of Roatan, off the coast of Honduras on 12 April, 1797, some 3,000 kilometers by sea from Yurumein. A 1797 census taken in Honduras, the first to document Garifuna arrival in Central America, includes an eleven year old girl identified as Chunisi. Garifuna researcher, Dr. Alfonso Arrivillaga, suspects that this could be a distortion of the name Gulisi by the Spanish census official.

Gulisi’s descendants in Belize recounted that she would have been 13 years old when she arrived in Honduras. Little is known about her life in Honduras; she seemed to have been fiercely independent, so much so, that she left her husband in Honduras and traveled by dugout canoe to Belize, bringing with her 13 children, 12 boys and 1 girl. One son was killed by pirates on the beaches of Puerto Cortez, Honduras; the others initially landed at a place on the coast to the north of Dangriga currently known as Scotchman Town. However, after spotting pirates in that area, they quickly proceeded south, where she and her 12 children established such settlements as Punta Negra/Punta Icacos/Monkey River, Seine Bight, Jonathan Point, Newtown Commerce Bight (now Hopkins) and a homestead somewhere between present-day Dangriga and Commerce Bight. Eventually, her many descendants would found entire neighborhoods in Dangriga.

Gulisi habitually woke her grandchildren in the middle of the night to tell them stories about her beloved *Yurumein*. For example, she identified six tribes on their island of origin, each distinguished by certain characteristics. Gulisi’s descendants today identify themselves as one of these six tribes called Aureyunagu or Oreyunagu (the plural form of Aureyuna or Oreyuna), which Dr. Palacio interpreted as ‘being from Owia’,³ a community still in existence in St. Vincent. Gulisi also raised two of her granddaughters, Sawina and Amahuni, after their mothers died. Granddaughter Amahuni, born circa 1857 to Marugufino, son of Gulisi, continued the tradition of waking her grandchildren in the middle of the night to recount Gulisi’s memories. Amahuni’s most enthusiastic audience member, her granddaughter, Amelia Cayetano (Baby Amahuni’s elder sister), who was born on 12 February 1905 to Salome Flores and Edward Cayetano, became the

² Cayetano, Roy. Interview. Conducted by Peitra Arana. 12 April 2023.

³ Palacio, Joseph. "Keynote Address". Received by Peitra Arana, 2 April, 2012, 2:51 PM.

family historian, who in the 1980s recounted Gulisi's story to Garifuna linguist, Roy Cayetano. In response to an inquiry from anthropologist Dr. Joseph Palacio in 1998, the fascinating story of Gulisi came to light, was researched and was eventually publicized. Thereafter, Gulisi entered the Garifuna public consciousness, with a Garifuna community school being named in her honor.

Beginning in April 2003, several unsuccessful attempts were made to build on this work of Dr. Joseph Palacio. Challenges included language barriers, heavy use of nicknames, lack of time references, and inability to explain relationships between research consultants and other relatives of Gulisi. The option of building a tree for Garifuna families using DNA is next to impossible. For much of their history, Garinagu lived in isolated communities, maintained tribal affiliations and monitored the family lines with which they intermarried, making relationship patterns complex. As a result, the gene pool is small and persons who have access to DNA testing is even smaller, making it a challenge for commercial packages to help construct a family tree.

Garifuna oral historians: Triangulation among oral and archival sources

To help overcome the challenges, the help of one of Dr. Palacio's assistants was solicited. Nurse Pat, who was born Patricia Benguche to Amelia Cayetano and Catarino Joseph Benguche, shared hand-written notes on which appeared the name of an oral historian. Within Garifuna families there are persons with an affinity to act as the guardian of family stories. This person assimilates information easily, is able to memorize a large amount of information and guards the intricate details of the family's past and its relationships. After realizing that other family historians, besides Amelia Cayetano may have inherited Gulisi's story, the decision was made to instead shift the focus from Baby Amahuni, Dr. Palacio's key consultant, toward the identification of as many family historians in as many branches of Gulisi's family tree as possible.

A family tree was constructed for each of these key research consultants using information from recorded interviews and archival records. Patterns were observed and one of Dr. Palacio's assumptions was challenged, disproven and discarded. His key consultant had referred to Ramon Hernandez as a descendant of Gulisi. However, when Ramon's descendants were interviewed, it was found that it was Ramon's wife Justagia Vicente, who had descended from Gulisi. Through Justagia Vicente, the story of Gulisi's daughter, Possum (or Pascuala Vicente), challenged Dr. Palacio's original assumption that Gulisi had borne 13 sons. The approach changed from expanding on Dr. Palacio's research to collecting from as many sources of information as possible and allowing the story to emerge instead. That is not to say that this inductive process was seamless.

For example, after a 96-year-old had named about 7 persons whom she called 'stepfathers', it became evident there was a translation problem, so to minimize misinterpretations she was asked to respond in Garifuna. Her Garifuna term for 'stepfather' turned out to be *nuguchi haña*, which means 'alternative father' or 'substitute father' when a

literal translation is attempted, but in fact refers to a maternal uncle. Because Garifuna society was traditionally matriarchal, a mother's sibling is *nuguchu haña* (female) or *nuguchi haña* (male). These terms convey the role a maternal aunt or uncle plays as a child's second mother/father or substitute mother/father compared to the less central roles played by their father's sister *oufuri* and their father's brother *iafurite*, i.e., their paternal aunt and uncle. For this 97-year-old, her father's siblings were seen as regular uncles and aunts, but her mother's siblings were considered alternative parents.

Similarly, sources often referred to siblings, which implies having a common parent. However, it was quickly realized that a Garifuna brother or sister may not necessarily mean children of the same parents. For research consultants, the children of siblings or first cousins were all considered brothers and sisters, indistinguishable from the children of the same parents. Therefore, in the case of Possum's and Gulisi's descendants, clarifications were always needed to try to distinguish between the children of one sibling from the children of another. In many cases, especially when consultants were referring to a memory shared by a parent or grandparent, no distinction was made between a sibling and a first cousin. For this reason, archival records became crucial.

While a review of civil records had been initiated in 2002 for a different purpose, research into Gulisi vastly expanded the effort. At first the search was for individuals, but it soon expanded to families, and in the case of Gulisi's granddaughter Karuba, and great grandson Sigidini, two Garifuna communities were mapped. Initially, records were consulted and transcribed on paper. However, in 2003 when access to a digital camera was facilitated, baptismal and marriage registers were photographed. An index was created to make it easier to locate the image containing the record of a particular child being baptized or couple getting married. Initially, the index specified the surnames of both parents to facilitate rapid identification of families descended from Gulisi; subsequently, the index was expanded to include transcription of records for persons referenced in interviews. When the importance of godparents and witnesses was realized, all records referencing them were also transcribed. As people became aware of the effort, assistance came in the form of partial family trees for Gulisi's granddaughters, Sawina (Sabina Lambey who married Feliciano Martinez) and Karuba (Josa Martina Vicente who married Antonio Casimiro). Family historian, Baba (Mr. Harold Coleman of Hopkins), shared not only his memories but facilitated access to two family trees done by Felix Miranda and Roman Martinez.

Remarkably, many of Gulisi's descendants didn't know who she was but they recognized her daughter, Possum. In many instances they could not remember Possum's real name but were certain that they had descended from her. Primary research consultants referred to *Tirasa Possum* or Possum's family and her descendants would giggle as they admitted membership. The 'woman who kept many children in her pouch' -- some said 18, others said 12 -- birthed children and descendants who were known for being assertive and protective of each other. Thus, a disagreement with one Possum descendant

would become a disagreement with Possum's entire family. These characteristics brought smiles to the nostalgic faces of those who shared memories but puzzled looks and silence to the question 'What was her name?' That answer eventually came from Mamma, known in records as Ageda Serano-Amaya, daughter of Nana Chica (Francisca Hernandez) and Leach (Francisco Abiel Serano). Mamma was the family historian who in 2004 plotted a generational line from herself to Gulisi by way of Possum whom she identified as Pascuala Vicente. Using Mamma's lineage as the starting point, records for the persons mentioned in her tree were researched and several persons in her generation were interviewed to create overlapping family trees. A 97-year-old in-law warned:

It will be difficult to figure out that *raza* [family]. Those people were always together. They raised each other's children so many people couldn't tell if a woman was raising her children or her nieces [and nephews]. And they all lived together in 'Babylandia' [homestead between present day Hopkins and Dangriga].

To elucidate the relationships between and among the different branches of Possum's descendants, family trees were constructed and updated frequently. In cases where the associations could not be explained by sources, especially where several consultants had referenced the same person, then family trees were constructed for both maternal and paternal lines until a connection could be ascertained. Civil and parochial records proved indispensable in identifying many family members who had been referenced using aliases:

- Marugufino, one of Gulisi's sons and Amahuni's father, became Marcio Ramirez
- Amahuni became Victoria Ramirez who became Victoria Flores after marrying Claro Flores
- Miluni, whom Dr. Palacio had identified as male, has been confirmed to be the mother of Santolina Ruiz/Rhys and the grandmother of Thomas Vincent Ramos
- Possum was found to be Pascuala Lambey who became Pascuala Vicente after marriage
- Yawanaru, another of Possum's daughters, was identified as Juana Paula Vicente and became Juana Paula Marcello after marriage
- Mahuda, Possum's daughter in law, became Justa Moroy, single, and Justa Vicente. married
- Bru or Daweyuri became Fernanda Diego
- Ende, who was thought to have been name Endeletcia, became Andrea Nolbertoas a single woman, and Andrea Pablo after marriage

Knowing that Possum's descendants would have clustered around one another, family trees were constructed for persons who appeared as godparents and witnesses to the sacramental events of persons known to be related to Possum. Descendants of godparents and witnesses were also interviewed to further clarify interrelationships. At first, a template was used to guide interviews; but since templates failed to capture anecdotal

information and since anecdotal information could be used to establish connections, interviews were later recorded. Review and transcription of civil and parochial records continued. Occasionally, a review of records was incorporated into the interviews. Towards the end of the interview, after consultants had shared what they knew, persons' memories would be prodded using information from archival records. For example, a consultant would be told "Person X appears as the godfather when your grandfather was baptized; who is Person X?" In many cases this prodding would be used to confirm relationships and expand the search for relatives.

As had been mentioned above, this twenty-year process, during which all of the family historians (primary sources) have died, has not been without its challenges. Gulisi's grandchildren and great grandchildren sometimes intermarried, leading to confusion in mapping the resulting descendants. A nonagenarian explained why he had taken two distant relatives as spouses at different time periods in this manner: "family members will protect you" (anonymous, personal communication). Even 6 generations removed from *Yurumein*, the theme of fear and need for protection was still present in Gulisi's descendants and was still influencing their decisions, a sign of historic trauma. An unintended consequence of these consanguineous marriages continues to be the challenge of disentangling lines of descent.

It was only after her descendants had helped to recreate her story that the attempt was made to relate Possum to Gulisi's other children, which extended the scope of research to Punta Gorda in Belize as well as to Guatemala and Honduras. Six years after the first parish records were photographed in Dangriga, Mr. Roy Cayetano and Dr. Joseph Palacio photographed parochial registers in Punta Gorda and Livingston. Receiving those photos and transcribing the records helped to establish Gulisi's ties in stronghold communities of Punta Negra, Punta Icacos and Monkey River, which consultants in Dangriga and Hopkins had mentioned. Through a collaboration with Dr. Alfonso Arrivillaga in Guatemala, census records from Roatan island (Honduras, 1797), Trujillo on the Honduran mainland (Honduras, 1821) and Livingston in Guatemala (Guatemala, 1843) also served as sources of information and continue to be consulted. In partnership with Carlson Tuttle, GEDCOM files for exchanging genealogical data for Barranco (Belize) and Livingston (Guatemala) have been created and continue to be updated. In 1928, the Guatemalan government started a process of regularizing status for immigrants employed by the United Fruit company. Included in the immigration applications found in the Central American Archive of Guatemala are a few of Gulisi's descendants. The records of Garifuna immigrants in that collection were also photographed. Despite these valiant efforts, information gaps at different points in the process limited progress, leading to several hiatuses while new sources of data were being explored. Several attempts were made to connect different sources of data using commercial grade family tree software packages. Recently, however, an online platform that allows the insertion of supporting

records, both parochial and civil, from different countries, has facilitated the correlation of archival and oral history. Since then, the story of Gulisi has taken better shape.

From Honduras to Belize: Lt. Francisco Lamber, Gulisi, and their children

Dr. Palacio had estimated Gulisi's arrival in Belize as circa the 1840s and talked about her feeling in danger. However, when the data spoke, this assumption was discarded. What no one stated and that which had seemed inconsequential to her story is why Gulisi would have left her husband in Honduras. Also unexplained by interview subjects is why Gulisi's sons, presumably all sharing the same father, used different surnames like Vanega, Ramirez, Baltazar, Moroy and Avila. Yet, her grandchildren in Belize, Guatemala and Honduras, seemed to have identified with one surname and its variations: Lamber, Lambey, Lambert, Lambé, Lamberth and Lambí. To answer those questions, the focus shifted to Gulisi's husband.

What type of person would Gulisi have married? Using clues from descendants and a census conducted in Trujillo, Honduras in 1821, Gulisi's husband would have most likely been Francisco Lamber, a 52-year-old identified in the census as "Carib, catholic, second lieutenant", the head of a household that consisted of 22 year old Maria Antonia, female, identified as "his woman" and 3 year old Concepcion, classified as "daughter". Francisco Lamber is conspicuous for a number of reasons: he is *Yurumeina* (was born in St. Vincent and the Grenadines) circa 1769 which implies that he would have been in his prime when the Second Carib War with the British that led to genocide and exile had started in 1795. He was probably a highly skilled soldier because his post was the highest held by a Garifuna in the Honduran army in the 1821 census. His wife was fairly young and judging from the age of the daughter, so was their relationship. However, given his age of 52 years and his position in Garifuna society, Francisco Lamber would have been expected to have adult children and an older wife.

Could that wife have been Gulisi, who in oral history would have been born around 1784 in *Yurumein*? The only other contenders in the 1821 census who identified as Lambert were Jose Agustin Lamber, 16-year-old son of Jose Luis Cocoi, and Esteban Lambi, 15-year-old son of Francisco Lamber and Maria Juana Josefa. Gulisi, the only surviving daughter of Paramount Chief Joseph Chatoyer is not likely to have been paired with this second Francisco Lamber (that is, the father of Esteban), but instead with the aforementioned Lt. Francisco Lambert. Given their proximity in age and social status, she being the daughter of Paramount Chief Joseph Chatoyer and he having attained a high rank in a relatively short period in the Honduran army, and given that Francisco Lambey is a name that recurs several times and over several generations in the accounts provided by Gulisi's descendants in Belize and in Livingston, Lt. Francisco Lamber was most likely Gulisi's husband.

There is yet another reason Lt. Francisco Lamber is likely to have been Gulisi's husband. The Second Carib War 1795-1797 may have ended in 1805 but roughly 5,000 Garinagu

were captured and imprisoned on the barren island of Balliceaux in October 1796. Six months later, in March 1797, the approximately 2,200 prisoners who had survived starvation, disease and war wounds were forcefully taken from the Caribbean and approximately 1,600 to 2,000 were abandoned on the island of Roatan in the Bay of Honduras in Central America. After losing most family members and friends and forced removal from the only home Gulisi would have known, she would have likely to have been suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Generally -- albeit superficially, however, Garinagu seemed to have become well-adjusted and integrated into life in Trujillo on the Honduran mainland until 1807, the first year Garifuna soldiers were called upon to defend against an attack on the fort there.

A year later, an unidentified chief traveled to present day Belize where he is documented in British Honduras archives as having expressed growing discontent concerning his people's situation in Trujillo, and his desire to find another place where Garinagu could settle.⁴ During the Wars for Independence from Spain, Honduras in general, and Trujillo in particular, experienced waves of military engagements between 1813 and 1821 where Garifuna soldiers were used by the Spanish as cannon-fodder. One of the more important of these battles was documented in the Honduran Almanac: On 27 August, 1820, sometimes French privateer, and sometimes Bolivarian General Aury made an attempt three miles north of Trujillo. A former Governor reported that Garifuna troops alone had stood against General Aury.⁵ On 31 March, 1823, Garifuna leaders Alejo Beni, Romualdo Lewis, Elias Martínez, Alejo Lambey and Benito Beni met with Superintendent of British Honduras Edward Codd to make known their intent to leave Trujillo. However, as there was mutual distrust between the Garinagu and the British, the agreement was for Garinagu to establish a settlement South of the Sibun River, which had been established as the southern border of the British settlement through the Convention of London in 1786. Six months later on Wednesday, 19 November, 1823, five hundred Garinagu arrived on the shores of Belize to establish the community of Dangriga, marking the first large scale migration of Garinagu from Honduras to areas immediately outside the British settlement.

Gulisi's decision to leave her husband and bring her children to Belize is likely to have happened before the 1821 Trujillo census since they do not appear in the census and is likely to have been made to protect her sons from mandatory Honduran military conscription. Had they remained in Honduras, the fate of Gulisi's sons would have been sealed. As a protective measure they did not settle in one location, in a single-family

⁴Belize National Archives (Magistrate Meeting 3rd December 1808)

⁵Roberts, O. W. (1827). *Narrative of voyages and excursions on the east coast and in the interior of Central America: Describing a journey up the river San Juan, and passage across the lake of Nicaragua to the city of Leon: Pointing out the advantages of a direct commercial intercourse with the Natives.* Constable & Co; Hurst, Chance & Co.

homestead, as was the usual practice for Garinagu. Having deserted or avoided the Honduran army, Gulisi's sons and their families dispersed, forming communities along the coast of present-day Belize. Records supporting the oral history of the arrival of Gulisi's children can be assumed to be nonexistent. However, Gulisi's descendants identified specific coastal communities as areas settled by their families. Some of these communities no longer exist; however, they are documented in the 1865 British Honduras Annual Reports. Titled "Statistical Return of the Cultivation and Occupation in the Southern District", the survey provides a comprehensive overview of agricultural lands and communities along Belize's coast with information on the ethnic disaggregation of the occupants allowing a better understanding of Garifuna settlement in Southern Belize, including of communities that are no longer recognized as being Garifuna in origin. Of the 19 communities mentioned, 10 were primarily occupied by Garinagu:

- North Stann Creek (present day Dangriga)
- Gamasi Beidi: Commerce Bight, whose Garifuna inhabitants were relocated twice before occupying present day Hopkins
- Saradi (in Garifuna): Southern Stann Creek, present day Kendal
- Jonatan: identified as Jonathan Point
- San Beidi: present day Seine Bight
- Senisa or Riba Senisa in Garifuna: River Snaish
- Mono Riba in Garifuna: Monkey River Bar
- Seven Hills
- Peini: present day Punta Gorda
- Red cliff: present day Barranco

To offer further support of the family's decision to hide in plain sight, Gulisi's children used several aliases. While it is often assumed that changes in Garifuna surnames resulted from a tradition of adopting the names of godparents, no such evidence has been found to support that practice in Gulisi's family. Instead, name changes seemed to have been a deliberate attempt to hide and protect identity:

- Francisco may have originally been named in his father's honor, but he identified as Francisco Avila in records in Belize.
- Marugufino used Ramirez for the records, but his family affirmed that he was Lambey even though they could not explain the origin of the surname "Ramirez".
- A primary source for Gulisi's descendants in Labuga (anonymous, personal communication, Livingston, Guatemala) referred to Solarzano as the origin of the Baltazars, but she was certain that he was Lambey because Solarsano's (alternative spelling) father, she asserted, had been Francisco Lambé. Even though she had not heard of Gulisi, descendants in Dangriga knew they were "one people with the Baltazars in Labuga" that is, that they all were descended from Gulisi.
- One of Gulisi's sons used the surname Vanega.

- Some of Gulisi's descendants used the Garifuna naming system, which consists of one singlename, as seen in both the 1797 (Roatan) and 1821 (Trujillo) censuses in Honduras. For Gulisi's family, the single names Marugufino, Karuba, Yawanarugu and Amahuni have been identified. However, the official names of Meriwa and Miluni still remain unknown.

With time and as the danger faded, the connection with the original Lambey name was asserted. Petrona, one of Gulisi's grandchildren, used both Lambey and Vanega as her surname even after she had married Ascencion Higinio. Francisco Avila, who would have been born circa 1819 in Trujillo (based on church marriage record in Dangriga), was father of Mariano and Francisco, both of whom used the surname Lambey in records. Despite the aliases and even though six generations have passed, the oral historians in the families could still identify their relatives.

Deciphering the relationships among consultants who identified as cousins was challenging, and at least part of this challenge may have been the result of unconscious bias. Current society, in which the paternal surname is retained while the maternal surname is discarded, tends to assume patrilineal relationships. For generations after their arrival in Belize, Garinagu lived in isolation, intermarrying each other sometimes along distinct tribal preferences and maintaining matrifocal ties. However, the lens of modern Garinagu has begun to be shaped by the patriarchal societies in which they live. There is a tendency to assume a relationship is through a male relative when traditionally Garifuna sisters often shared homes and the task of raising children communally. For those reasons, godparents, informants, and witnesses in records tend to be related through their mothers.

The mothers clustered around their families and the women's male relatives served as 'fathers' if a biological one was not around. Consequently, there are many cases in which a mother's children have different fathers and a father's children have different mothers. Additionally, because maternal mortality was high, it was the mother's sister who assumed responsibility for raising nieces and nephews. At times, the children wouldn't remember the names of their mothers. Sometimes, they were not told they had been raised by an aunt. Even in the rare cases where women left their communities, the family link seemed to have been maintained. A woman would return to her parents' home for the birth of her first child and many women preferred to return to their home communities for the births of all their children. Consequently, children identified with the maternal community, sometimes erroneously assuming to have been born there.

For example, Juan de los Martires Lambey, also known as John Lambey, was born in Jonatan to Gulisi's son, Antonio and Maria Juana Socorro around 1850, according to Juan's three marriage records. He consistently referenced his mother as Maria Juana Socorro, but unfortunately did not provide her maiden name. Juan married Gregoria

Nolberto on 3 January, 1888 in Barranco where many of their children were born. However, John and Gregoria Lambey also lived in Monkey River and Punta Negra, still recognized as Lambey strongholds. Juan Lambey's two maternal aunts, Cornelia and Gervasia, remained in Dangriga and their descendants, Baba John Mariano and Mrs. Virginia Diego, in separate oral history interviews, insisted that Juan Lambey was Dangrigan. Moreover, they asserted that, when Maria Socorro died at a young age, Juan returned to Dangriga to be raised by maternal aunt, 'Helo' Gervasia. Since her sister Maria Juana Socorro married Antonio Lambey while Gervasia married Ireneo Diego and Cornelia married Hilario Mariano, identifying the maiden name of all three sisters has been a challenge. Even though Cornelia is the only one who appeared with a surname, Guerero (spelled verbatim), it cannot be assumed that all three sisters had this surname because in matrifocal households, all three sisters may not have shared the same father.

Another challenge in tracking Gulisi's descendants is the lack of data. Even though the 11 prison ships carrying 2000 survivors of Garinagu disembarked in Roatan, Honduras on 12 April, 1797,⁶ the first known census was conducted in Roatan five months later in September 1797. By that time, most Garinagu had moved to the mainland Honduran town of Trujillo. Additionally, many persons were designated by a single name, as in the case of 5 year old Zabele and 7-year-old Asiguas (genders unknown) and sometimes by French sounding names, like 6-year-old Ma Francoise and 11-year-old Angelique. In 1821 the census of Trujillo provided a much more detailed understanding of Garinagu homes with clear identification of parents, children, religion, ages, households and neighborhoods. However, by 1821 many Garinagu were believed to have already migrated from Trujillo. Additionally, as is the case for the 1797 census, many persons were identified by a single name and sometimes more than one person had the same single name, making it a challenge to show continuity of individuals or families.

The largest known single movement of Garinagu into Belize ended with the founding of present day Dangriga Town on 19 November 1823. Nine years later, in neighboring Guatemala, an 1832 report sounded the alarm that Marcos Sanchez Diaz, founder of the Garifuna Community of Livingston, Guatemala, had moved with families across the Amatique Bay into present day Punta Gorda. The idea of the Garinagu shifting alliances to support British expansion was so distressing that a stipend was offered for Marcos Sanchez Diaz to return to guard the entrance of the Rio Dulce. While Marcos Sanchez is documented to have returned a year later in 1836,⁷ it seems unlikely that the entire

⁶ Gazeta de Guatemala. 22 de mayo de 1797. Number 16, Folio 127-128

⁷ Transcription by political leader of Chiquimula of note received from Administrator of Livingston on August 15 informing of the arrival of Marcos Sanchez to repopulate Livingston which was abandoned in 1832. ²⁴ August 1936. B119.2 Expediente 56992 Legajo 2521 Folio 1. Fundacion Traslado Poblaciones Archivo Centroamericano Guatemala City, Guatemala, Guatemala

contingent had come back with him. Father Genon, the Flemish priest who had accompanied King Leopold's failed attempt to create a colony in Guatemala, had started to serve the clerical needs of Garinagu in Livingston when he documented ten families living across the Bay of Amatique. The next reference to Garinagu in official records comes from the 1843 censuses of Omoa, Honduras and Livingston, Guatemala; however, they are not detailed and organized like the 1821 Trujillo census, once again creating difficulties in following family lines.

Father Genon's parish records, which started in 1843 and sputtered on until around 1847, provide an important look into lives of families of Livingston, Guatemala and across the border in Punta Gorda, Belize. For one thing, it is clear that all the members of the 1832 contingent that left Guatemala for Belize did not return to Guatemala, with some settling in present day Punta Gorda, maintaining close ties with their relatives in Livingston to which they would travel for baptism and marriage ceremonies as documented in the Livingston church registers. For Dangriga, records from the established 'Wesleyan Chapel at Charib Town' provide evidence of the establishment of families and the birth of children beginning in 1839 with the marriage of Santiago Beni (spelled Benney in the records), schoolteacher, to Juana Innes, spinster, on 29 July, 1839 and son of Alejo Beni "Captain Wm. Benney".⁸

In 1857, thirty-four years after Garinagu had established a community on the north bank of the Stann Creek River, the lands they had cleared and occupied were declared Crown lands and rules of land ownership were imposed. Fifty-nine persons applied⁹, and the resulting records of lands occupied in Dangriga have become another source of information in reconstructing Garifuna family lines, when triangulated with parochial records. In 1859, Father Genon created a parish register in which Catholic rites for Garifuna communities Barranco, Punta Gorda, Mono Riba (Monkey River), Riba Ceniza (Snaish River), Jonatan (Jonathan) and Dangriga were recorded. While records for Punta Gorda and Barranco were consistent, the other communities were spotty and eventually vanished from the parish registers. According to oral history, the lands occupied by Garinagu between the 1850s and 1890s were sold, sometimes while still occupied by Garinagu, with some inhabitants being forced to relocate. This was the case of the New-town Commerce Bight community which was pushed southward; the Seven Hills community, which by 1867 had been granted to Young, Toledo and Company for timber extraction, forcing the Garinagu out; and lastly the Jonatan community, which was granted to two families despite large areas being cultivated by Garinagu. Some of those expropriated in Jonatan returned to Dangriga, others moved to Seine Bight and San Vicente, about 3 to 4 miles south of Monkey River; others like Quiteria, Desideria (surname Nunez or Lambey) and her two sons, Anastacio and Teodoro Palacio sought refuge in, and helped to establish Barranco as Belize's most southern Garifuna community.

⁸Belize National Archives (Wesley Church records, Marriages 1839-1848)

⁹ Belize National Archives (R-Record 58 Folios 418-420 and 569, 21st October 1857)

While the parish in Punta Gorda still maintains its records, the church records in Dangriga haven't been as well maintained. Methodist records (baptisms and marriages) continue until the 1890s, stop abruptly and then resume in the 1920s. Despite several attempts, nobody has been able to say what has happened to the missing records. The Dangriga Catholic church records seem to have fared a similar fate; the baptism registers begin with Book 3 (1890-1900), the marriage records start with Book 2 (1890) and the death records start with Book 2 (1940). Even though research from the past includes notes taken from the earlier church books, nobody can account for the missing registers. These data gaps continue to create challenges for disentangling Gulisi's web of descendants.

Challenges: Recording practices and naming practices

Even when records have been present, data quality has not always been optimal. Some Garinagu did not trust or did not engage with Government offices that documented births, deaths, marriages. Where literacy was low, Garinagu relied on relatives and sometimes friends who could better navigate these complex spaces, leading sometimes to inaccurate information being documented. In the case of early birth records, for example, those who provided the information were primarily men, usually the father of the child, but also paternal or maternal male relatives. As a result, there were many examples where the child was registered with one name and baptized with another. For example, on 17 July 1914 Rosenda and Augustine Lewis gave birth to a daughter who was registered as Confesora on 18 July, 1914. A day later, on 19 July 1914 the baby girl was taken to the Catholic Church by godparents Crescencio Palacio and Margarita Palacio and baptized as Symphorosa, the name research consultants later used to identify her. A note next to the baptismal record reads "the godparents did not know the name of child but took Symphorosa given in the order for that day".

Some names have been lost in translation: William Sampson in the British system became Julián when he sought work with the United Fruit Company in Guatemala in 1927 and also appeared as Guillermo in parochial records. As documented in the Archdiocese of Guatemala, Santiago Avilez, the founder of Barranco, sought dispensation when he married his first cousin and possible Gulisi descendant, Desideria; in records Santiago Avilez frequently appeared as Jacobo. Sometimes the errors came from the Garifuna pronunciation. In all cases where British officials documented the name Eustacia, Garifuna informants use Justagia; in Spanish records, Eustacia became Eustaquia. The Garifuna reference, Santa, was transcribed in records as Santiaga; Austin would be recorded as Augustine; Estanislao or Tanislao appeared as Estanislado; Wenceslao or Venceslao became Wenceslada or Wenceslado in records. Anyone bearing Nolasco as a surname is usually the son of a Pedro Nolasco. In the case of famous Parandero Marcelino 'Maraza' Fernandez, his birth record lists him as Marcelino Nolasco, presumably because the father's name is documented as Pedro Nolasco; all of Pedro's children were

subsequently registered with the surname Nolasco. Additionally, the children who remained in Belize, used the surname Hernandez, while Maraza, who migrated to Honduras, used the surname Fernandez.

Because Garinagu seemed to have traditionally used only one name, it took some time to transition to using a surname. Initially, the surname seemed to have come from the father's first name. However, Father Genon habitually appended the mother's first name to a girl's name as in "Helena filiam Jacintha" who appears with Hilario Salgado as a parent of Maria Catarina whose 25 November, 1871 birth was registered on her baptismal record; but the priest also connected girls to their fathers, as in the 1868 baptism of Ines where "Basilia filiam Francisci Labriel" appears.

It seems that entire families may have earned a surname by appending the father's first name. Perhaps the best example of this is the case of the Jeronimos, a surname Garinagu seemed to have stopped using. Early records in Honduras, Guatemala and Belize show many Jeronimos. Sacred Heart Records in Dangriga, for example register 9 Jeronimo baptisms between 1890 and 1899 and 0 Noralez baptisms in the same time period. However, baptisms between January 1899 and April 1910 report 5 Jeronimos and 17 Noralezes. Additionally, the surname Jeronimo is scratched from early records and the surname Noralez appears instead, marking the seeming transition; the same change from Jeronomio to Noralez is also noted in records in Honduras and Livingston, Guatemala. One surname that came from Honduras as Lacayo was repackaged as Locario in church records in Belize. Lacayo is still used in Honduras but has not been found in records collected from Guatemala. The transition from the Honduran to the British naming style was not always a flawless one. Jaime Sacaza Noguera and his wife Sabina Cacho Lacayo were married in Trujillo, Honduras on 8 June 1916. By 1917 they had migrated to Belize and had borne their first child named Sabina Lucia Noguera, then Juana Victoria Noguera (1919), then Jaime Nicholas Noguera (1920) and so on until their 8th child Cruz Lino Noguera (1930). Jaime Nicholas Noguera is a well-known Garifuna entrepreneur, who was born on 11 October 1920 in Belize City and died on 12 November, 1984 in Corozal. Two things are little known about Jaime Noguera: 1) he married Miluni's great granddaughter (Miluni was Gulisi's granddaughter) and 2) according to Honduran naming conventions, the person who became known as Jaime Noguera should have been Jaime Sacasa.

Considering that the Spanish Jaime Sacaza Noguera is equivalent to the British Jaime Sacaza, all of Jaime Sacaza Noguera and Sabina Cacho Lacayo's children born in Belize should have carried their father's surname, Sacasa. Instead, they were inadvertently given and became known by the surname of their paternal grandmother. This is also the case of the person born as Felipe Benicio Marin. If the British registrar who documented the birth of the son of Encarnacion Bermudez Marin on 24 August, 1912 had understood the Honduran naming system, the first Garifuna priest would have been ordained as Father Philip Bermudez, carrying the surname of his father. Instead, he was ordained

Father Philip Marin, immortalizing the name of his paternal grandmother. There are many additional examples where a lack of understanding of Spanish naming systems created aliases. To add more color to the rainbow of Garifuna names and misnomers, the maternal and paternal surnames were sometimes used interchangeably.

Conclusions

To summarize, reconstruction of Garifuna oral history is key to deciphering family relationships. In this endeavor, the role of family-based oral historians has been of incalculable value. In general, reconstructing Garifuna family relationships requires both a multidimensional triangulated methodological approach as well as a granularly contextualized interpretive framework which must take into consideration that Garifuna history is complex, with migrations figuring prominently. Migratory patterns have been multi-directional and largely undocumented, which creates challenges involving tracking persons and records across political, religious, cultural and other types of borders. For example, Garifuna family research in Belize has been made difficult because early civil records there have been lost in major fires, making it impossible to find civil records before 1885. Moreover, tracing Garifuna genealogies in Belize inevitably leads back to Honduras, where the geopolitical map has changed at different historical points, thus complicating the process of locating records. Additionally, the jurisdictional distribution of Catholic church institutions in Honduras has also changed over time, with early records from Roatan being housed in Trujillo and early records from Tela being housed in Yoro at specific times.

Until the 1920s, concepts of Garifuna names and naming were different from those of the dominant societies in which they were living, and this has generated conflict and confusion among oral, civil and parochial sources of information. For example, traditional Garifuna single term names and the resulting assignment of the same exact name to multiple persons, often makes it difficult to specify precisely who a given name might be referring to. In addition, the differences between Spanish naming practices in Honduras and Guatemala that use the paternal surname followed by the maternal surname on the one hand, and British naming practices that use only the paternal surname on the other, resulted on more than one occasion in the mistaken elimination of the paternal surname in favor of the maternal surname as Garinagu crossed over the border into Belize. All of this complicates the process of triangulating data.

For much of their existence, Garinagu have relied exclusively on oral history to transmit traditions and document history. Oral sources of information which have safeguarded family information are needed to complement parochial and civil records. The rapidly increasing tendency of Garinagu to leave their communities to live in the diaspora where they have less access to the sources of Garifuna oral history is threatening the survival of Garifuna traditions and impeding the transmission of family histories. Even when it has been maintained and preserved, Garifuna oral history is encoded in a cultural context

that many Garinagu are no longer able to decipher, creating impediments for matching oral history with the Garifuna voice in records and documents. Garifuna family relations and relationships can be confusing if a Garifuna lens is not used to analyze them.

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“GONE FROM THIS WORLD OF SIN AND SORROW”: THE BIBLE AND HISTORY IN G. W. GORDON’S LAST LETTER

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Abstract

This article undertakes an analysis of the letter hastily penned by George William Gordon one hour before he was hanged after the Morant Bay Uprising in St-Thomas-in-the-East, Jamaica, in October 1865. As recognised by the *Law Magazine and Law Review*, “The letter to his wife was Gordon’s last profession [of faith] and defence [of his actions]” (1867, p. 76). Four versions of this letter are examined to determine how and why the Bible was utilised by him in describing his personal and historical circumstances while establishing his innocence. It builds on a previous discussion of the imperial context and Christian rivalries in Victorian Jamaica revealed in this same letter (Perkins, 2019) to conclude that his Native Baptist faith provided the impetus for his actions to rid the world of all oppression. Having been so chosen, his life was open to suffering and sorrow as the oppressors put him to death like Isaiah’s suffering servant. The religious practice of Gordon and his Native Baptist co-religionists is an example of a resistant Reader-Response approach to reading the Bible that provides historical and theological antecedents for ways of reading the Scriptures still current among many Caribbean theologians today, a legacy that bears further investigation.

Key terms: George William Gordon, Jamaica, Morant Bay Uprising, letter, Bible, Native Baptists, hermeneutics

Introduction: A world of sin and sorrow

General Nelson has just been kind enough to inform me that the court-martial on Saturday last has ordered me to be hung, and that the sentence is to be expected in a hour hence, so that **I shall be gone from this world of sin and sorrow**. I regret that my worldly affairs are so deranged, but now it cannot be helped. I do

not deserve this sentence, for I have never advised or took part in any insurrection. All I did was recommend the people who complained to seek redress in a legitimate way; and if in this I erred or have been misrepresented, I do not think I deserve the extreme sentence. It is, however, the will of my Heavenly Father that I should thus suffer in obeying his command to relieve the poor and needy, and to protect, as far as I am able, the oppressed – G. Wm. Gordon, October 23, 1865. (Gordon, 1865/2010, p. 93)

In 1865, the same year the USA abolished Slavery, Jamaica was already one generation out of enslavement, since enslavement had been abolished on the island in 1834, even though the enslaved lived under another form of bonded labour called Apprenticeship for another 4 years before it was abandoned. Formerly enslaved men and women and their descendants formed the mass of the population. Among those was George William Gordon, one of seven children born to an enslaved mother, Ann Rattray, and a Scottish father, Joseph Gordon, an attorney and later proprietor of several plantations, a member of the House of Assembly and Custos (the Governor's representative). George William was hanged on October 23, 1865, found guilty as an instigator of the infamous Morant Bay Uprising, which was violently suppressed (Heuman, 1994). The Morant Bay Uprising unfolded in the middle of the Victorian Era, which lasted from 1837 to 1901.

This discussion undertakes an analysis of the letter hastily penned by G. W. Gordon one hour before he was hanged. As recognised by the *Law Magazine and Law Review*, “The letter to his wife was Gordon’s last profession [of faith] and defence [of his actions]” (1867, p. 76). The present article builds on a previous discussion of the imperial context and Christian rivalries in Victorian Jamaica, as revealed in this same letter (Perkins, 2019). Four versions of this letter are examined to determine how and why the Bible was utilised by him in describing his personal and historical circumstances while establishing his innocence, including:

Version 1: published by the *Illustrated London News*, December 9, 1865 and reprinted in the *Jamaica Journal* in 2010 (Gordon, 1865/2010, p. 93)

Version 2: published in the *Law Magazine and Law Review, or, Quarterly Journal of Jurisprudence, Volume XXII*, in 1867, in the context of their review of Gordon’s case (*Law Magazine and Law Review*, 1867, pp. 28-83)

Version 3: Geoffrey Dutton’s transcription published in *The Hero as Murderer* (1967); and

Version 4: published as part of the exhibition *Uprising: Morant Bay, 1865 and its Afterlives* in which a copy of the handwritten original from the National Library of Jamaica was also exhibited (Institute of Jamaica, 2015).

There are some slight differences among the four transcriptions, for example, in some of the names: Mr E.C. Smith rather than Mr Espeut; Mr Ramsay rather than Mr Bamsay; Janet rather than Jane; Panther rather than Parthner. Mr Parthner was the Methodist missionary from Morant Bay, whom Gordon requested to see before going to the gallows,

but this request was refused by Brigadier-General Nelson. Mr Ramsay was Inspector Ramsay, the Provost Marshal, who oversaw Gordon's detention while he was on trial in Morant Bay. There are other minor differences where words like "forever", "please", "and all other" appear to have been inserted at points in the 1867 *Law Magazine and Law Review* version. The *Law Review* transcription also inserts the sentence "Love to all" in the Postscript re Messr Pa[r]nther and B/Ramsay.

These changes – inadvertent or not - do not affect the substance of the letter significantly and may well be put down to human error in transcribing a handwritten document, especially a copy of a copy, or capturing the words of a letter read into evidence at a commission of enquiry. In addition, in the best of times, Gordon's handwriting was challenging to decipher, much less under the conditions of severe strain that were occasioned by the sentence of death to be executed one hour later.

The article begins by presenting George William Gordon and his experience of conversion which led him to the Native Baptist Church, placing him closer to the Black masses and their experiences of suffering and oppression, while alienating him from his class and colour. The peculiarities of the Native Baptist biblical hermeneutic, which was evident in his final testament, are then discussed. The specifics of the deployment of scripture and the hymnodic traditions in the letter and its meaning are then covered.

Depending on who you listened to at the time, Gordon was a hypocrite, a scapegoat, a most mischievous person, a conman, or a Christian martyr. He was a polarising figure during the last decade of his life and continued to be so post-mortem. Recognising the inherent dangers in such polarised descriptions of a person - as either wholly good or wholly bad – this exploration focuses on his "born again" Native Baptist identity as perhaps most central in providing him motivation to act in the historical circumstances of the mid-nineteenth century colonial Jamaica (Wilmot, 2016). His letter to Lucy is replete with biblical quotes and allusions that are tied directly to his life experience and those of his fellow disempowered Jamaicans.

In reflecting on his soon-to-come execution, Gordon very tellingly described his circumstance as "a world of sin and sorrow" from which he would soon be gone – hence the title of this article. *The King James Bible* would have been part of the common language and cultural heritage of Jamaicans of all walks of life in mid-Victorian times. The indigenous Native Baptists in particular appropriated this religious heritage in a fashion that gave the Bible a central place in their life and worship, often signified by the Bible being placed on a stand in the middle of their chapels. This central place for the Scriptures was accompanied by a peculiar form of biblical hermeneutics or interpretation that refracted biblical text through their current life circumstances, giving the latter priority. This study, therefore, takes seriously Gordon's strong use of biblical language in his last letter to Lucy and argues that this letter is yet another display of the Native Baptist biblical hermeneutical perspective on Gordon's part – albeit his very last. In that regard, Gordon and his fellow Native Baptists stand as part of the stream of Black Atlantic

biblical interpretation (Raboteau, 2001; Wilmore, 1998; Gilroy 1993), from which many Caribbean theologians today imbibe. Gordon's circumstances in 1865 Jamaica were distinct but the biblical hermeneutical process by which he made sense of them was not.

Religion, politics and Native Baptist biblical interpretative strategy

Gordon's faith commitments had meaning for how he lived beyond the activities he undertook in his religious community; they influenced the friendships he made with men such as Paul Bogle, the business ventures he undertook, the political activities he was involved in and the causes he championed. Such commitments were particularly momentous for such a polarising public persona. Indeed, it is recognised that Gordon's "new" politics and "born-again" religion propelled him from his earlier more conservative politics and perhaps a life of some shadiness in business dealings to one that brought him into conflict with his fellow magistrates, the Anglican clergy, his former friend the Custos of St Thomas-in-the-East, and most of all, the Governor (*Law Magazine and Law Review*, 1867; Wilmot, 2016).

Despite this, Baptist theologian Devon Dick (2009) argues that the religious impetus for the Morant Bay Uprising continues to be ignored, given the focus on economic and political factors. To that end, Dick speaks of the Uprising as the '1865 Native Baptist War' and sees it as a continuation of the 1831-2 Baptist War led by enslaved Baptist deacon Sam Sharpe. Use of the designation 'War' for what appears to have been a more spontaneous localised riot born out of planned protest may be overstating the case, however. Disagreements concerning the nature of the events at Morant Bay are clearly still in evidence (Greenland, 2015; Hutton, 2015; Wilmot, 2010; Heuman, 1994; Robotham, 1981; Olivier 1933). What is indisputable are the destructive effects of their suppression on the lives of many individuals and families in St-Thomas-in-the East (Jemmott, 2015). In the study of the Bible, one of the key processes engaged is hermeneutics – interpreting the Scriptures. This includes answering questions about what was meant when the passage was written and what it means now. Contemporary biblical scholarship identifies several approaches that can be used in interpreting the Scriptures such as the literal and allegorical approaches. The hermeneutical approach that best describes the Native Baptist is a kind of Reader-Response method, which places emphasis on the perspective of the interpreting community rather than the original community behind the text. As Caribbean theologian Oral Thomas would describe it, this reading strategy is one that critically re-interprets the biblical text such that "the reader contributes much to the meaning of the text through social engagement. What is crucial here is the reader's ideological stance and commitment" (Thomas, 2010, p. 37). This means that Native Baptists contributed much to their understanding of the biblical text through their desire for justice and freedom from the oppression which was a prominent feature of their experience in post-emancipation Jamaica. The key argument is that the method of interpreting the scriptures employed by the Native Baptists rose organically from their lived experience.

Their experience of oppression and disempowerment was therefore primarily the lens through which they read the Scriptures.

Importantly, their experience tests the authenticity of any interpretation proffered. As such their experience guided them to be suspicious of any interpretations of scripture that seemed to perpetuate their own systematic disempowerment or bore little relevance to their daily lives. In this sense, they exercised a “hermeneutic of suspicion” long before that term was used in biblical studies (Stewart, 1989). They did not and could not accept the status quo in post-emancipation Jamaica as being immutable, nor could they continue to accept dominant interpretations that may have been the teaching of some missionaries, who ideologically had more in common with the planters than is often appreciated, including a belief in the cultural superiority of Europe, in hierarchy in general and in hierarchies of race and gender in particular (Bryan, 2003). Indeed, some missionaries continued pre-emancipation practices of refusing to speak out against political or economic injustice and in so doing tacitly legitimising the status quo. This was evident among several missionaries who sided with colonial authorities after the Morant Bay Uprising (Perkins, 2019).

Their Reader-Response approach enabled Native Baptists to read the scriptures and other scripture-related sources such as hymns from the perspective of the disempowered. This enabled them to envision realities and possibilities different from those imposed upon them by their current circumstances, which were often sanctioned by interpretation of the scriptures by the dominant classes that controlled church and state. “The Native Baptists’ hermeneutical approach was deliberate and so afforded insights into their theological concepts and strategies for protest actions” (Dick, 2009, p. 66).

Dick (2009) attempts to make the case that the hermeneutical approach of the Native Baptists was a special one and the basis on which their faith in particular was grounded. I would argue, however, that this approach may well be a feature of Black Atlantic religious experience as it can also be found among the approaches deployed by enslaved Africans elsewhere in the Americas. Dick may well have contradicted this claim to distinctiveness by identifying such an interpretive perspective in the preaching of the African American freedman George Liele, who arrived in Kingston in 1763, whom he credits with starting the Baptist Movement in Jamaica (S.C. Gordon, 1998). Dick claims, however, that Native Baptists were much more strident than Liele in that their resistance motif was much stronger and their attack on the machinery of oppression was much more direct than his. They were not subtlety requesting liberation – they were demanding it as a gift from God and a need in their daily lives (S.C. Gordon, 1998).

In Thomas’ (2010) important analysis, we find a taxonomy that suggests that, beginning with Paul Bogle, the Reader-Response interpretive strategy has proved to be a specifically resistant hermeneutic that focusses on the elimination of oppressive material conditions in the here and now, rather than solely on salvation in the hereafter. This approach can be identified as being a guiding force in Gordon’s own life, as exemplified

in his last letter. Importantly, from the perspective of Caribbean theology, it is possible to show that many of the current crop of theologians are heirs to the Reader-Response approach of scriptural interpretation of the Native Baptists. See, for example, Black theologians such as James H. Cone (1990).

Gordon's faith journey

In the deeply Christian world of post-Emancipation Jamaica, it is no surprise that the words best suited to describe Gordon's reality and that of the Jamaican people were taken from the Christian Scriptures. The Bible was a very important book in the lives of the formerly enslaved. Many learned to read by reading the Bible while attending Sunday School. Secretary to the Baptist Missionary Society Edward Underhill, in his assessment of Morant Bay and Jamaicans becoming more aware and assertive of their rights, stated that "The Bible had been their primer, and its Divine teaching familiarised them with the great law of righteousness – that law which exalteth a nation. Some of them had proved apt scholars" (Stewart, 1992, p. 160).

As noted previously, the Bible was certainly central in the belief and practice of Native Baptists, in particular. Relevant biblical passages were skilfully woven into their everyday language as well as their writing. Their attitude to the Bible was "unquestioning obedience to God's word" (Dick, 2009, p. 137). So deeply rooted were they in the Bible that they interpreted all their experiences in light of the Scriptures. They seemed to have attracted the generation of Jamaicans who had come of age around the time of the Morant Bay Uprising, not the ex-enslaved who were grateful for the Christian lifestyle urged on them by the paternalistic anti-slavery missionaries. These Jamaicans were the children of the formerly enslaved, who sought alternatives in indigenous groups such as the Native Baptists because they presented ways of dealing with a society that had not fulfilled the promise of freedom and equality (Brodber, 2004).

Gordon himself is described as "mighty in the Scriptures" (Dick, 2009, p. 137). Indeed, his daily communications like letter writing, addressing the House of Assembly, and working among his flock in St Thomas-in-the-East were saturated with scriptural quotations (Dick, 2009, p. 137). In 1863, while addressing the house of Assembly, for example, Gordon based his objections to an established church using Matthew 22.21, in which Christ said, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God's the things that are God's" (King James Bible, 1970, Matthew 22.21). Similarly, in April 1864, he addressed the Assembly, saying, "the first and great commandment is this: 'Hear, oh Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord'" (Dick, 2009, p. 137). This Bible-based political rhetoric, of course, did not find favour with his opponents, one of whom characterised his speeches as "combinations of 'garrulous display and scriptural citations'" (Stewart, 1992, p. 161). Furthermore, they considered his utterances to be incitement, but as Shirley C. Gordon demonstrates, his speeches were more in the "tradition of the

native preacher" (S.C. Gordon, 1998, p. 100). In this tradition, he exhorted the congregation at a meeting in St-Thomas-in-the-East to "Remember that he only is free whom the truth makes free You are no longer slaves but free men; then as free men act your part" (S.C. Gordon, 1998, p. 100). All those present would have heard echoes of Jesus' exhortation to his disciples in John 8.32. Gordon begged the people of St Thomas-in-the East to help themselves, "then heaven will help [them]" (S.C. Gordon, 1998, p. 100). It is hardly surprising, therefore, that his last letter continued this trend of referencing the Bible in opposing the prevailing circumstances of oppression and injustice.

Gordon's indebtedness to the Evangelical hymnody traditions is also evident in his writing. Hymn singing was another important element in Native Baptist worship; indeed, the first Native Baptists, Liele and Baker, were said to use hymns as a sort of biblical text (Dick, 2009). Perhaps demonstrating both prudence and zeal, Liele and Baker especially preferred hymns composed by European Christian writers and Devon Dick comments there is no evidence that they used Negro Spirituals or Jamaican hymns. Eighty years later, psalms were favoured by the Native Baptists as they expressed a range of emotions and experiences that resonated with theirs.

Gordon and Bogle were both fond of the hymns composed by Isaac Watts (1674-1748), the father of English hymnody. As he awaited trial that fateful October, Gordon is reported to have sung hymns and read from his Bible, actions viewed by some contemporaries to be those of a hypocrite. Bogle's hymnal was Watts's *Psalms of David, with Supplementary Hymns*, which was apparently given to him by Gordon (Dick, 2009). Hymns express a theology, especially those based on specific Bible passages. A system of theology is itself a hermeneutic, a particular interpretation of the Scriptures (Leaver, 1978). Dick (2009) notes that before Emancipation, the planters hated Watts' hymns, maintaining they discerned sedition in the ostensibly spiritual songs. Dick notes further that the attraction of Watts's compositions may well be their emphasis on the here and now. "It was a belief in a realised eschatology, in that there was a cry to experience heaven now or at least have a foretaste now" (Dick, 2009, p. 136).

Gordon journeyed from Church of Scotland to Anglican to Native Baptist in his quest for spiritual fulfilment and social change, which he defined as "instill[ing] principles of morality or supply[ing] the mental and bodily wants of a poor suffering community" (letter to Secretary Cardwell, March 24, 1865 cited in Jamaica Committee, 1866, p. 42). The Great Revival of the 1860s was the turning point in his existential journey and deeply impacted his religious sensibilities (Wilmot, 2016, p. 9). He was re-baptised by prominent European Baptist minister James Phillipps on Christmas Day 1861. He did not join the Baptist Missionary Society, however, but the Native Baptists, composed mainly of Afro-Jamaicans of the poorer classes. His wife Lucy, however, remained a member of the Kingston Anglican chapel (Wilmot, 2016).

Gordon was perhaps attracted to the Native Baptist Church because it "had a more radical social agenda than the European-directed religious groups" (Johnson, 2007, p. 218).

Gordon began organising meetings of his own in St-Thomas-in-the-East, built chapels on his properties, and even worked as a lay preacher (Hart, 1972). In so doing, this moved him closer to oppressed Jamaicans, but served to alienate him further from members of his class (Johnson, 2007). Gordon's religious efforts in St. Thomas-in-the-East were shortly integrated with his more overtly political activities. Aided by Paul Bogle, with whom he had a multi-layered relationship, including co-religionist, business partner, "election manager" and "political" friend, Gordon built for himself a strong political base in that parish (Hart, 1972). Both men collaborated to increase the black vote despite the restrictions of the 1859 Franchise Bill. The effectiveness of Bogle's political organization and electoral campaigning was demonstrated in March 1863, when Gordon was elected to the Jamaica House of Assembly for St. Thomas-in-the-East after an earlier defeat in February of the previous year.

Gordon became the most consistent spokesman on behalf of oppressed Jamaicans during his time in the Legislature (Wilmot, 2016). "Gordon's open sympathy with the black poor and his emotionally charged oratorical style did much to alienate him from his colleagues in the House of Assembly. He also became the leading critic of Governor Edward John Eyre's administration" (Hart, 1972, p. 58). His religious 'conversion' complemented his zeal on behalf of the oppressed. Wilmot highlights the long battle Gordon waged against the Custos, the Magistracy, and the Governor, all of whom he severely criticised for "incompetence, arrogance, and insensitivity to the hardships that confronted the people" (Wilmot, 2016, p. 12). Gordon, on occasion, shocked the house with his intemperate attacks on the Governor starting as early as 1863, when he stood to give the response to the Governor's Opening Address to the Legislature. He shocked the Assembly by not showing respect to the constituted authority saying, among other things,

I say that the gentleman now at the head of the affairs would never have been sent to Jamaica if the Duke of Newcastle had any respect for the island, and the only thing for us to do is to tell him that we are not satisfied, and there will be no progress, no improvement, so long as Lieutenant-Governor Eyre is here and governs as he has governed during the last eighteen months. (cited in Hart, 1972, p. 58)

Indeed, such rhetoric was seen to be dangerous and impermissible (Hart, 1972). Gordon had had several previous clashes with the Governor and his supporters, beginning with his letter to Eyre concerning the actions of the Rector of Morant Bay towards a pauper, whom he housed in the prison latrine (the man later died). Despite the truth of his claims, Eyre removed Gordon from his office as magistrate. Interestingly, on the enquiry into this case, Gordon was not allowed to explain, develop his case or call any of his eleven witnesses. This clearly foreshadowed his later treatment at the court martial. In defending himself against the Colonial Secretary's reprimand for his handling of the case of the Rector, Eyre described Gordon thus:

I believe Mr. Gordon to be a most mischievous person, and one likely to do a great deal of harm amongst uneducated and excitable persons, such as the lower classes of this country. His object appears, not to rectify evils where they exist, but rather to impress the peasantry with the idea that they labour under many grievances, and that their welfare and interests are not cared for by those in authority. (Catherall, 1977, p. 167)

It was clear that Governor Eyre despised Gordon, a mulatto of the propertied class, for his non-conformist faith but even more so for his having “gone native” among the unlettered and unwashed former slaves. Apart from temperament, the enmity between Governor Eyre and Gordon may well have been partly due to the “bitter inter-denominational hatred of nineteenth century Christianity”, which had transplanted itself to the colonies (Catherall, 1977, p. 165). As a Native Baptist, Gordon represented the more radical tendencies of the mid-nineteenth century Dissenters, while Eyre, the son of a Yorkshire clergyman, represented the conservative religious and political Establishment. Indeed, Gordon called loudly and continually for the disestablishment of the Church of England, which he believed taxed the population without benefitting a large portion of them. To be fair to Gordon, he was also against grants for the dissenting churches. Gordon did not believe that public funds should be used for the support of any religious denomination:

I hold it a cardinal principle that the state has no right to support religion. Every sect is bound to support its own churches. If we have a state religion forced on us, we must continue it until force of circumstances also gets rid of it; but if the House is to make grants to the dissenting churches, they will become as corrupt as the state church is. (cited in Hart, 1972, p. 36)

He continually spoke up about the various scandals in church construction and repairs (Hart, 1972). The Morant Bay Uprising provided the opportunity for Eyre to rid himself of “his chief political opponent and the island’s leading troublemaker” (Johnson, 2007, p. 198). Ridding himself of Gordon was not without significant consequences for the Governor, however.

Letter writing and such matters in Jamaica

Letter writing was a significant genre of communication during the Victorian Era. Indeed, Bannet (2005) maintained that letter writing sustained the British Empire. It was a mature genre complete with a set of salutations and courtesy endings. These conventions, present in Victorian letter writing manuals:

not only served as models for proper correspondence, but also expressed general standards for private and public conduct to encourage British citizens across ranks to present themselves with civil and moral self-management, both in writing and in action. Letter writing manuals were pervasive in Regency culture. (Lentz, 2013, no page)

All in all, “letter writing required careful rhetorical awareness of social decorum and presentation of self” (Lentz, 2013, no page).

Letter writing and the delays due to transatlantic shipping were significant factors in the Morant Bay Uprising (Perkins, 2019). Letters flowed from Jamaica to England and back “from persons of every position in life” (Reynolds, 1866, no page). Bogle and Gordon exchanged many letters. Numerous letters written by the soldiers engaged in the suppression of the Morant Bay Uprising detailed their in carrying out their task. Dutton quotes in full a letter written in half-literate prose of a young soldier to his parents, in which he details, *inter alia*:

But by theire surprise we slotered all before us; we left neither man or woman or child, but we shot down to the ground. I must tell you I never see site ths before as we taking them prisoners by a hundred per day—we saved them for the next morning for to have some sport with them (1967, p. 297)

Letters were written in the press denouncing Gordon as the cause of the Uprising. Letters were regularly undelivered, intercepted and destroyed.

As can be demonstrated in the Gordon case, letters were written to higher authority such as the Queen in petition or from aggrieved persons desirous of redress. Gordon himself wrote to the Colonial Office in 1862, after he was unjustly dismissed from his post as justice of the peace and member of the Vestry (ostensibly for being a Native Baptist). Catherall opines that that letter was the final affront against Eyre and that thereafter “reconciliation between the two men was out of the question” (1977, p. 168).

An important letter that contributed to the train of events that eventually led to the Uprising – the Underhill Letter – was written by the Secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society to the Secretary of State on January 5, 1865, several years after his visit to Jamaica in 1858. In his letter, Edward Bean Underhill highlighted conditions in Jamaica that were already known to the authorities in Britain – extreme distress among the population, unemployment, low wages, and an increase in petty crimes in response to poverty and near starvation. Underhill put forward some recommendations, but it was not these that aroused much interest. Rather, it was his description of the state of the island and its starving people that engendered such deep feeling at all levels.

The Colonial Secretary sent the letter to Eyre in early 1865, for comment and the Governor ordered its distribution island-wide for comments on its accuracy, inadvertently giving rise to many “Underhill meetings” at which its contents were debated and resolutions passed. Many of these meetings were organised by ministers and held in churches, even when authorities refused permission for the use of parish court houses. Gordon himself addressed several of these meetings. Heuman (1991) made the important connection that many of the men who attended the Morant Bay Underhill meeting were later implicated in the Uprising. Shirley C. Gordon (1998) maintained that the majority of those addressing the Underhill meetings would have “presented a righteous,

Christian cause, with biblical references, and due respect to constituted authority in Jamaica and in Britain" (p. 100).

In 1864, a letter of petition had been sent to the Queen from "the Poor People of St Ann's Parish," in which similar recommendations to those found in the Underhill Letter were included, but arising from the direct experience of "the most Gracious Sovereign Lady's loyal subjects" (S.C. Gordon, 1998, p. 100). In October 1865, Paul Bogle and his Stony Gut congregation petitioned the Governor directly in writing, to no avail. S. C. Gordon (1998) notes that the Bogle letters were not written in Standard Victorian English and displayed militancy in their demand for protection from incidents such as the one in the Morant Bay Court where policemen had been ordered to arrest them for protesting the unjust treatment of an alleged trespasser. They threatened:

We will be compelled to put our shoulders to the wheel, as we have been imposed upon for a period of 27 years with due obeisance to the laws of our Queen and country, and we can no longer endure the same. (S.C. Gordon, 1998, p. 100)

This is the kind of militancy that Dick (2009) would associate with the Native Baptist hermeneutical approach and Governor Eyre would associate with rebellion.

Such was the importance of letter writing that a rumour circulated after the Uprising that the rebels had cut off Von Ketelhodt's fingers so that he could "write no more lies to the Queen", for the Custos had written to Eyre requesting troops be sent (attested to Gardner, writing from Kingston, 24 October, 1865, cited in S.C. Gordon, 1998, 100). Von Ketelhodt identified the ringleader of the disturbance as Paul Bogle "who generally acts with Mr GW Gordon" (Brock et al., 2015, p. 212). Several days later, at his court martial, one witness against Gordon, named James Gordon (no relation), swore in an October 21 affidavit that G. W. Gordon sent a letter to "the valley" to say there would be war and the people should prepare for it.

Gordon himself wrote several letters in the immediate aftermath of the Uprising most of which expressed in various ways his innocence, his ideas surrounding the causes of the riot and his sadness at the suffering and hurt caused (Hart, 1972). Indeed, over five hundred of Gordon's own letters were examined during the Royal Commission sent from London to investigate what had occurred in Jamaica (*Law Magazine and Law Review*, 1867). The Commission had to conclude that they provided no evidence of his involvement in a rebellion despite the accounts of words Gordon was supposed to have uttered. The Commission opined that, "the majority of [the words brought in evidence were] taken from scripture phraseology, which show he felt deeply, and that he had a vindictive spirit" (*Law Magazine and Law Review*, 1867, p. 81). Indeed, in his closing statement at the court martial, Gordon emphasised that he had no letter that he should not have liked seen by the court or the world.

The letter transcribed: “Soon I shall be gone [forever]”

Gordon’s last letter was approximately seven hundred and six (706) words long. It was written in bold Victorian Copperplate, the handwriting style of that era, and bears the impact of the speed and extreme duress under which it was composed – words scrawled together in haste, strikethroughs, misspellings, shorthand forms (eno = enough) and so on. It is actually a difficult letter to decipher, but was later transcribed and reprinted in several British newspapers, including, the *Illustrated London News* of December 9, 1865, having first been published in pamphlet form by Alexis Chamerovzow, the anti-slavery campaigner and author to whom he instructed Lucy to write a few weeks earlier. Gordon had been carrying out a vibrant correspondence with Mr Chamerovzow and Henry Brougham for several years. Gordon’s intent for his letter to become public may be read into the fact that he instructed Lucy to make contact with Chamerovzow, as someone who would surely have been interested in Gordon’s case. This proved to be so, as Chamerovzow appears to be the first to use the letter in a public way, publishing it as a pamphlet in November 1865.

Gordon’s language – word choice and grammar - may well betray his education, being in the style of Standard Victorian English and differing from the communications of grassroots Jamaicans, as the latter are described by S. C. Gordon (1998). At the same time, the influence of the King James Bible on the development of language and literacy in Jamaica needs to be considered. Breiner (1998) argues that by the eighteenth-century exposure to the King James Version of the Bible was so widespread in Jamaica that it was the standard for public speech or writing. An anonymous broadsheet published in Lucea, Falmouth, in 1865, is an example of how biblical language had been internalised by the average Jamaican (Breiner, 1998).

As Perkins (2019) outlines, the letter can be divided roughly into seven interwoven but discernible parts: 1) Greetings, information about his fate and avowal of innocence; 2) Suffering for the sake of obedience; 3) Brief farewells and consolation for Lucy; 4) Unjust trial and sacrifice; 5) Extended farewell for friends and family; 6) Closing formula; and 7) Postscript re Messrs Pa[r]nther and B/Ramsay. Given his history of intemperance regarding the Governor, it is a surprisingly mild letter. To the end, he refers respectfully to the Governor as his Excellency and thanks both Nelson and Ramsay for their kindness. Both of these military men were reputed to be quite brutal in their treatment of suspected rebels and various members of the peasantry (Kostal, 2005).

Roughly three-quarters of the letter consists of greetings and affectionate farewells to nineteen named friends, family members and perhaps important business associates. Twice Gordon requests that there be no shame for his death – once to his wife and another directed to her aunt. Indeed, being connected to someone executed for treason and sedition would certainly have caused Mrs. Gordon to be ostracised from polite society. For decades the Bogle family suffered a great deal of persecution, and some were forced to change their name and flee the parish (O’Brien Chang, 2012). Mr Gordon expressed

regret to Lucy that his affairs were “so deranged” for he did leave behind a most confused set of financial matters for her to deal with.

Some words are repeated and so dictate the tenor of the letter, its flavour, purpose and direction: Lord Jesus Christ (8 times); glory (2 times); suffer/ed/ing; (4 times); die/death/dying/end (6 times); farewell/goodbye (5 times); thanks (2 times); sentence (3 times); hour (2 times). Words like “Heavenly Father”, “truth” and “sacrificed” appear only once, but are significant. The prominence and significance of these words – all of which are a regular part of the biblical-inflected vocabulary of someone who was familiar with the Scriptures – demonstrate how deeply he interpreted his situation in light of his Native Baptist faith. The letter contains expressions of faith, words of endearment and instruction, lament at being unfairly treated, but a deeply held trust in God. In a previous letter to his attorney Mr Airey on October 17, 1865, he stated similarly, “God is able to do all things. I will patiently wait upon him” (cited in Hart, 1972, p. 86).

Gordon describes the world from which he was soon to exit as one of “sin and sorrow”. There is no direct scriptural allusion in that particular phrase, but it can be found in at least two hymns that were popular in Victorian times. The first is “I have a home above, from sin and sorrow free” by Henry Bennett, first published in the *Baptist Psalms & Hymns* 1859, No. 59 (see Budwey et al., 2007). The second hymn is “Joy to the World,” that world famous Christmas hymn, which was written in 1719 by none other than Isaac Watts, the favourite hymn writer of Gordon and Bogle (Dick, 2009). “Joy to the World,” a hymn glorifying Christ's triumphant return at the end of the age, is a paraphrase of Psalm 98, which is a song of praise for God as ruler of the world (Miller, 2009, p. 3). Originally, it was not meant to be a Christmas song, but rather, it is a hymn celebrating Christ coming as the Messiah, who ushers in a new era in human history. Gordon's personal faith in this promised Messiah was central to his Native Baptist faith. It was this newfound faith in Christ that propelled him into that community and into radical activism on behalf of the people. The relevant verse of “Joy to the World” is the third:

No more let sins and sorrows grow
Nor thorns infest the ground
He comes to make his blessings flow
Far as the curse is found
Far as the curse is found
Far as, far as, the curse is found.

This verse alludes to Genesis 3, where the Creator God told Adam that the very ground itself would be cursed as a consequence of his sin. Instead of producing abundantly, the earth would now bring forth nothing but “thorns and thistles”. These annoying weeds would cause Adam's progeny to have to work hard in order to eke out a living. In this verse of the song, “Watts anticipates the day when the blessings of salvation in Christ will overturn sin's consequences ‘as far as the curse is found’” (Pyne, 1991). The *Atlantic Monthly*, in describing the moral state of Jamaica in 1865 carried forward similar

images of creation, sin, and a curse. It opined that “Slavery, dying, cursed the soil with its fatal bequest, contempt for labor; and the years which have elapsed since emancipation have done little or nothing to give the toiler conscious dignity and worth” (Reynolds, 1866, p. 481). Thus Jamaica, which “came from the hand of the Creator a fair and well-watered garden”, was now despoiled and despised (Reynolds, 1866, p. 481). Certainly, viewed theologically, the immediate context of Post-Emancipation Jamaica reflected the very hardship of living under conditions created by human sinfulness. Gordon’s words speak directly to his current personal circumstances and can also be read as a reference to the larger socio-cultural circumstances of post-Emancipation Jamaica where the peasant majority were being denied their full rights and respect for their human dignity. There seems to be a clear connection between the sinfulness of the world and the sorrow which it produces in those that inhabit it, especially those without power. The Post-Emancipation period has been described by Ewart Walters as a time of “severe privation” for the majority of the Jamaican people (2014, p. 20). Wages were below what was required for subsistence and there was no land available for cultivation due to the unjust practices of the White Plantocracy, who tried by every means to keep the freed people in complete economic subservience. In addition, during the early 1860s, exacerbated by the catastrophic environmental devastation which was part and parcel of virtually all colonial plantation regimes, there had been a prolonged drought across the island which resulted in a severe shortage of food (Heuman, 1994).

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The majority of the people lacked any political power or influence with very few being able to vote. Walters (2014) states that:

Even though they were free, it was not their island. They were not given the opportunity to thrive. They had no power or control. They were despised, and discrimination was rampant It's easy to see how this mix of racial prejudice and economic discrimination continued to determine life after slavery for the ex-slaves. (p. 20)

Yet, the Plantocracy and the Colonial Office blamed the hardships experienced by the poor Jamaicans on laziness, ignorance, immorality and the low price of sugar and coffee (Erickson, 1959).

On the burden of his faith, these were the circumstances which Gordon felt called to address most vociferously and which led to further sorrow being heaped upon him, his family and the people of St Thomas-in-the-East, by the brutal response to the Uprising, which he did not instigate.

Gordon believed that the circumstances of the people mirrored those depicted in Luke 4.14-20, which demanded “one such as himself to relieve the poor and needy, and protect, as far as was able the oppressed” (Gordon, 1865/2010, p. 93). Gordon accepted the obligation that was his based on the property, power, and access that he had. Furthermore, he was clear that he was the people’s representative and as such, “one such as himself” had an important duty to perform for his people. More importantly, it was his

Christian duty to do so. In so doing, he was assured that he would receive his just reward in the hereafter. He confirmed his faith in this reward at his trial, where he declared, “If I die I shall die triumphant” (*Law Magazine and Law Review*, 1867, p. 72). Of course, it was not his task alone to help change the here and now, as he indicated in a letter to Paul Bogle, written earlier in the year, “things are bad in Jamaica, and will require a great deal of purging” (Hutton, 2015, p. 123).

Despised servant: “If I should suffer”

Gordon interpreted his death as a form of innocent suffering, much like that of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah (King James Bible, 1970, Isaiah 42.1-7; 49.1-7; 50.4-9; 52.13-53.12), which is a motif according to which Jesus’ own life and death are also interpreted. It is possible to see points of similarity and difference between Gordon’s portrayal of his experience and the experience of the complex figure of the Suffering Servant that is presented in Isaiah 53. Like the Servant, Gordon states firmly that he dies innocently and is not deserving of the sentence meted out to him. At his trial, he declared solemnly before his Maker and the Court that he was unaware of any planned insurrection. He was not aware and indeed astonished that his “political friend” Paul Bogle was at the head of any insurrection (*Law Magazine and Law Review*, 1867, p. 76). He declared further that it was Bogle’s duty, by his profession as a deacon “to have practiced peace and goodwill” (*Law Magazine and Law Review*, 1867, p.76). Like the Suffering Servant, Gordon is able to interpret his suffering and death as part of the Divine will: “It is the will of my Heavenly Father that I should suffer in obeying his commands” (Gordon, 1865/2010, p. 93).

In his words, we hear echoes of Isaiah 53. 10-12, where we are told of the Suffering Servant:

Yet it was the Lord’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer,/ and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin,/ … 11 After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied;/by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many,/ and he will bear their iniquities./ 12 Therefore I will give him a portion among the great,/ and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death,/ and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, / and made intercession for the transgressors. (King James Bible, 1970, Isaiah 53.10-12)

A further description of the Suffering Servant in vv. 7-8 paints him as silent and docile in the face of his oppressors and the affliction they mete out.

Unlike the Servant, Gordon was very vocal – he opened his mouth, picked up his pen, opened his pocket, and offered ultimate, if unintended, sacrifice. He clearly realized that the people were long-suffering and had suffered too long. Ansell Hart, Gordon’s biographer, notes that Gordon was a scapegoat for the events of October 11. He was blamed by many for the Uprising.

At the same time, another, not often remarked upon, source of suffering for Gordon was his illness. During his imprisonment and trial “he was debilitated and sick” and had only a blanket to cover with (*Law Magazine and Law Review*, 1867, p. 50). He seemed to have been suffering from dysentery. One source noted a medical practitioner who had seen him previously, not expecting that he would have survived a year. In two of the letters Gordon wrote in the immediate aftermath of the Uprising he spoke of his illness: On October 14, he wrote to a Mr. Smith expressing sadness at the events and informing him that he was “weak and unwell” (cited in Hart, 1972, p. 81). On October 16, he wrote his physician and friend Dr Fiddes telling him that the cough was nearly gone while the “debility of the stomach continues” and requesting more bitters (cited in Hart, 1972, p. 82). It was this illness that prevented him from attending Vestry meeting on the ill-fated day October 11, 1865.

During the trial, he was refused medical attention and was only served a biscuit and water, as Lieutenant Brand boasted at his own trial (*Law Magazine and Law Review*, 1867). In addition, Gordon had to stand throughout the entire trial, which lasted from 2:00 pm to 7:30 pm. He would not have eaten during that time. Fiddes, a well-respected physician and surgeon, later testified to the Commission that Gordon was in poor health and had been feeling unwell on October 11. In the end, the Royal Commission described him poignantly as a man sick, tired and denied even the comfort of friends, whose ability to defend himself was that much weaker for his condition.

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Nonetheless, Gordon appears at peace with the lot measured out for him as he accepts suffering for obeying God’s command to relieve the poor and needy. It is perhaps for this reason that at his trial he declared that if he was to die, he would be dying triumphant. Unlike the Servant, however, his death is connected directly to his acts of seeking and providing such relief and so cannot be termed truly “innocent suffering”. Yet he deems himself “an innocent man” for, to his mind, he is indeed innocent of the charges. Gordon is not alone in seeing his death as innocent and G. B. Wallace in his poem, “No Reason Why (George William Gordon)”, echoes the belief that Gordon’s murder at the hands of the colonial authorities was unjust:

And now he stands/
With no abuse nor angry frown/
In sorrow looking down/
Courageous to the end/
A father, patriot, and friend/
Truly, there was no reason why/
This man should die. (Wallace, 1966, p.7)

The image of a martyr forces its way through G.B. Wallace’s imagery and is confirmed by Catherall (1977) and others. Yet the mantle of a martyr rests uneasy upon Gordon’s shoulders, as his death was not a direct result of his Native Baptist faith. A martyr is usually someone who dies for the faith he or she professes. However, the extension of

the title martyr to Gordon may be a recognition of the centrality of his Christian faith and the identification of his cause with the mission and work of Christ, which was to free all captives (Brock, 2015).

Other similarities exist between Gordon and the Suffering Servant. Like the Suffering Servant, Gordon was a man despised by many, most especially Governor Eyre. Isaiah 53.3 depicts the Servant as: “[D]espised and rejected by mankind, / a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. /Like one from whom people hide their faces/ he was despised, and we held him in low esteem” (King James Bible, 1970, Isaiah 53.3). There are further Christian archetypes present in Gordon’s trial and execution. On the day of his hanging, one Mr. Lake, correspondent for *The Colonial Standard* in Morant Bay, reported and published by the Jamaica Committee, the unofficial group in England investigating the Morant Bay Rebellion, wrote:

After William Gordon had been brought ashore, he was taken to the station, and there the scene presented is hardly describable. From one blue jacket you would hear, “Which is that venerable Parson Gordon?” From another, “There he is,” (pointing to him). From a third, “I’ll set the bloody dogs at you, you rascal.” From a: fourth, “I will tear you up myself.” From the next, “What, is he a white man ?” From another, “By J___s he’ll catch it. Would you like to have a taste of the cat, you?” “You won’t be long here, we’ll soon string you up”; and other exclamations which would hardly be the thing to put to paper. Under each of these epithets George William Gordon seemed at each moment to have been more depressed, and I doubt not that if the blue jackets had been left to exercise their own will he would have been torn to pieces alive. (Lake, 1865, see Jamaica Committee, 1866) This whole display is reminiscent of Christ’s passion and death. Jesus too was mocked, beaten and deprived of his garments – by soldiers. Indeed, the description of the scene in the *Atlantic Monthly* further echoes Christ’s own ordeal:

Not one insult was spared. When he was marched up from the wharf, the sailors were permitted to heap upon him every opprobrious epithet. Before his execution his black coat and vest were taken from him as a prize by one soldier, his spectacles by another; so, as an officer boasts, he was treated no differently from the common herd. (Reynolds, 1866, p. 483)

There is always a danger in painting someone as either wholly good or wholly bad. The human personality is much more complex than can be captured by monolithic discourses. Gordon was described by his critics as ‘hypocritical’ or an ‘oily demagogue’, making a pretence at friendship with the labouring classes. Mary Seacole also had less than complimentary things to say about him, having known him in his younger days (Gilmore, 2022). There are indications that Gordon was not always scrupulous in his business dealing and at the time of his death had several matters before the Courts with persons seeking to recover damages. Indeed, Dutton (1967), who has no love for Gordon, in discussing Gordon’s widow’s later reluctance to be party to the prosecution of

Eyre for her husband's murder, suggested that, apart from the "obvious and nauseous hypocrisy involved in casting of Gordon for the role of saint and martyr", she may have "reasons" (Dutton, 1967, p. 327).

Among these reasons may be those put forward by George Solomon, former member of the Legislature, in 1906, as he urged "that the holy veil be withdrawn from Gordon, who was a complex and fascinating figure, but no saint" (cited in Dutton, 1967, p. 327). Solomon (cited in Dutton, 1967) claimed without eliciting any rebuttal that Lucy used to refer to Gordon in her letters as "The Monster" and before Gordon's murder she had been carrying on a relationship with a dentist, whom she married shortly after. Solomon also called into question some of Gordon's strange financial activities. Of course, Gordon's character has little direct bearing on his guilt as a co-conspirator in the events at Morant Bay. Yet Eyre defended his act of authorizing Gordon's execution by calling him a bad man, an adulterer, a swindler, a hypocrite. Undoubtedly, this weighed heavily even as Eyre declared, "I can only repeat my conviction that however defective the evidence may have been in a strictly legal point of view, Mr. Gordon was the proximate occasion of the insurrection ... therefore he suffered justly" (Catherall, 1977, p. 170). The English Baptists, who were initially less than supportive of Gordon, by 1866, were referring to him in their newspaper, *The Freedman*, not only as innocent, but as noble and a Christian gentleman (Larsen, 2004). The Baptist Missionary Society newspaper goes on to compare his trial to that of Christ; Eyre was therefore compared to Caiaphas, having thought it expedient to have "one man die for the people" (Larsen, 2004, p. 182). Of course, that was not strictly correct as hundreds of men and women died for the cause, too many of them innocently. Larsen observed that Gordon's case was much discussed in the English Baptists' Sunday sermons and Luke 6.22-26, which was quoted by Gordon in his last letter, seemed to have featured as a text in such sermons. This reference to Gordon quoting Luke 6.22-26 in his letter is not correct, however. From the discussion above it is evident that the better comparison is Luke 4.14-20, which deals with preaching the Gospel to the needy, the oppressed, and prisoners. Luke 6.22-24 is Jesus' response to his critics after he healed a paralyzed man. Jesus' actions cause controversy because he first tells the man that his sins are forgiven. Forgiveness of sins is understood to be God's prerogative only, so Jesus' pronouncement was deemed blasphemous. (Aleric Joseph (2017) references a letter written by the wife of one of the Commissioners sent to investigate the circumstances of the Morant Bay Uprising, Elisa Gurney, who after seeing the letter sent by "poor Gordon" to his wife just before his execution," wrote: "On the outside is written, 'Luke vi, 20-26.' This was thought peculiarly seditious" (Joseph, 2017, p. 185). Of course, Mrs Gurney, who was clearly against Gordon does not say what was seditious in the Beatitudes.)

As time went along, however, there was a re-evaluation of Gordon and his role in Morant Bay Uprising. Decades later, author and journalist Herbert de Lisser portrayed Gordon as having unintentionally precipitated the Morant Bay Uprising: "Gordon did serve his

country by his death, but he never intended to die, he never anticipated death, he played with fire without clearly realising that it might burn, and that he himself might be consumed in the conflagration" (cited in Johnson, 2007, p. 204). By 1899, the English Editor of the *Jamaica Gleaner*, W.P. Livingstone, presented a re-evaluation of the Morant Bay Uprising and Gordon's role in it. He pointed out that the colonial government simply used Gordon as a scapegoat in the aftermath of the Uprising for a situation it had created. Livingstone stated, "It was during this period of palpitating fear that the authorities offered up Gordon's life on the scene of disorder, a sacrifice to a condition of things which they themselves had created" (Livingstone, 1899, p. 76, cited in Johnson, 2007, p. 207). Discussions of Gordon depicted him as a patriot and martyr, who gave his life "in the cause of Truth against oppression and wrong" (W. Clarke MacCalla, 1921, cited in Johnson 2007, p. 208). This is the generally accepted position that later led to Gordon being made a national hero alongside Paul Bogle as part of the creole nationalist project of Jamaica.

Towards a conclusion

At the point of death, there is no time to waste words. The dying person is often conscious of the need to speak or, in this case, to write the most important things s/he has to say and arrange her/his worldly affairs. In Gordon's case, the speed with which he was dispatched left his worldly affairs in some disarray, but his letter opened a window into his faith journey and the religious worldview that shaped his political action. Indications are that his Native Baptist faith provided the impetus for his words and acts on behalf of the disempowered.

Gordon's story reinforces the idea that religion played a significant role in the Morant Bay Uprising, especially on the part of 'leaders' of the uprising, who were prominent members of the Native Baptist Church. Such was the prominence of the Christian identity and practice of the leaders of Morant Bay that it has been dubbed perhaps too naively and emphatically, "the 1865 [Native] Baptist War". Undoubtedly, their faith provided the impetus for the revolt as it allowed them to interpret their experiences using a scriptural lens, allowing a reading that revealed to Gordon that he was called upon to rid the world of all oppression. Having been so chosen, his life was open to suffering and sorrow as the oppressors put him to death like Isaiah's Suffering Servant.

Gordon and his Native Baptist co-religionists are an example of a resistant Reader-Response approach to reading the Bible that provides historical and theological antecedents for ways of reading the Scriptures still current among many Caribbean theologians today. That is a legacy that bears further investigation.

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PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALING THROUGH CULTURAL MEMORY: THE DAGAABA DIRGE

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Abstract

A dirge or elegy is a song, poem, or chant of grief or a lamentation performed at a funeral and has been a global cultural phenomenon since ancient times. The dirge and its performance have not disappeared even in modern times; many cultures, including the Dagaaba and other communities in Ghana, still include aspects of dirge performance among funeral rituals. What are the underlying reasons for the persistent presence of this cultural phenomenon? In this paper, I examine funeral dirges among the Dagaaba, an ethnic group found on both sides of the Black Volta, which forms the Northwestern boundaries between Ghana, Burkina Faso, and Côte d'Ivoire (Saanchi, 1992; Bekye, 1991; Tuurey, 1982). The arbitrary imposition of colonial borders by France and Britain in the 1880s split up the Dagaaba population among Burkina Faso, along with a small population in Côte d'Ivoire. There are also large Dagaaba populations found in mining towns in southern Ghana: Bekwai, Dunkwa-on-Offin; Obuasi, Takwa, Bibiani, etc.; farming areas in the Savannah, Northern, Ahafo, Bono East, and Brong Ahafo regions, and sizeable populations in big cities such as Kumasi, Accra, Tamale, Sekondi, and Takoradi, Bolgatanga, Tamale, Techiman, Sekondi-Takoradi, etc., (Abdul-Korah, 2007). In this paper, I engage psycho-sociological theories to explore the importance of funeral dirges as ritual performance among the Dagaaba at both the individual and community levels.

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Key terms: attachment, Dagaaba, dirge, ritual, cosmology, performance, phasic, grief, memory, burial, rites, healing

Introduction: Dagaaba rituals and cosmology

The concept of Dagaaba funeral dirge as “ritual” needs clarification. A ritual is a set of highly conventionalized performances which people believe can help them by mystical means to control, protect, purify, or enrich the participants and their group (Bagah, 1997;

Marshall, 2002). A ritual is a functional mechanism that mediates the thought-action dichotomy, and in this way, ritual is inseparable from lived belief (Bell, 2009). Ritual provides a template of performance for a peoples' collective beliefs and ideals to be (re)generated, (re)experienced, and (re)affirmed and individual perception and behaviour to be socially appropriated or conditioned. Ritual also facilitates essential interactions between the collective representation of social life (the mental category) and the individual's experience and behaviour (the activity category) (Bell, 2009). More pertinent to the discussion on Dagaaba dirge as ritual performance, Nuolabong (2015) argues that Dagaaba rituals are portals through which humans contact the invisible powers of the spirit world, erase the imaginary duality between the material and spiritual, the sacred and mundane, and create the conditions of harmony and equilibrium in the community.

Dagaaba rituals are defined by prayer and animal sacrifice to ensure harmony between the ancestors and the living, ask for protection and blessings from the ancestors, seek forgiveness for moral infractions, and commit the future into the hands of the ancestors and *Naajmen* (the creator) and *ymime* (other deities) (Mwinlaaro, 2005) (all translations are by the present author unless specified otherwise). To the Dagaaba, “[r]ituals and good moral life thus becomes the means of maintaining peace and harmony in the community and the universe” (Nuolabong, 2015, no page). Hence, this study of the Dagaaba dirge and its significance is framed within Dagaaba culture, specifically their cultural cosmology as expressed in their funerary rites to “supply the motive force for the universe” (Nuolabong, 2015, no page) and restore and maintain the cosmic harmony and equilibrium that is ruptured and destabilised by the catastrophe of death of a family member (Mwinlaaro, 2005; Nuolabong 2015).

Similar to that of other African societies, the Dagaaba universe comprises of three interdependent worlds: the spirit, natural (physical) and social (human) worlds (Bagah, 1997; Kpiebaya, 2016; Kuukure 1985), or of the invisible and the visible (Nuolabong, 2015). The natural world (mountains, thunder and lightning, bushes, trees) is believed to possess mystical power that sustain or destroy life (e.g., enough rain is a blessing of the deity of rainfall, while too much rain or drought a curse). Though Dagaaba recognize and worship other deities and venerate ancestors, they believe strongly that all power derives from *Naajmen* (Supreme being and creator) (Bekye, 1991; Hien, 2019; Kpiebaya, 2016; Kuukure, 1985; Tuurey, 1982). Dagaaba also believe there are lesser gods and ancestral spirits (*kpiine*) who manage the natural and supernatural worlds to be in sync and harmonize with the human world. Hence, Dagaaba make petitions and offerings to them (Bagah, 1997; Nuolabong, 2015; Suom-Dery, 2000). The *kpiime* inhabit the spirit world, a world that is invisible yet are part of the visible world. They protect the living members of the family, clan and community from spiritual attacks, sickness, and misfortune (here and in the afterlife) (Bagah, 1997; Doggu, 2015). In this way, the departed are still alive in a more powerful domain.

Teykpiine (spirits of the recently dead), not to be confused with *kpiime* (ancestral spirits), exist in the transitional zones between the human/ physical, the non-ancestral/ spirit zone, and the ancestral/ spiritual realm (Bagah, 1997; Goody 1967; Kpiebaya, 2016; Kuukure, 1985; Nuolabong, 2015). *Teykpiine* mediate between lesser deities (*ymeme*), *Naajmen*, and humans. Because of their past familial relationship with *koyiri* [*kóyírí*] *noba* (the bereaved, close family), they provide safe spiritual links between the spirit world and the human world (Bagah, 1997; Goody, 1962; Kpiebaya, 2016; Kuukure, 1985). They visit their human families frequently and pay close attention, exert their influence, and ensure that the appropriate rituals are carried out correctly and in a timely way regarding their last wishes on earth. It is believed that if their instructions, usually revealed through dreams or divination, are not followed, the living are warned and/or punished through *kpiin kyiir* (death whip), which could manifest as an illness or even death in the family believed to be caused by the angry *kogii* (from the word *kpiinkogre*) (Bagah, 1997).

Ghosts (*nensee* or *nyaāaākpeen*) are the souls of human beings that have not yet gained admission into spirit world for a variety of reasons. These include the spirits of the recently deceased whose final funeral rites (*komaale*) have not been performed, who hang around the community waiting, and communicate their wishes to have their final funeral rites performed to enable them journey to *kpiima teja* or *dapari*, the land of spiritual rest or ancestral realm (Kpiebaya, 2016). The *nensee* or *nyaāaākpeen* are to be differentiated from the *kpiinkogre*, who are the troubled and angry souls of the dead whose funerals have not been properly handled, and hence no proper *komaale* have been held to make them welcome to the spirit realm (Bagah, 1997; Kuukure, 1985). They are troubled ghosts stranded between the grave, the spirit world, and the human world with little assurance that their family will do the necessary rituals so they can enter *kpiima teja* or *dapari* (Nuolabong, 2015; Bagah, 1997; Kuukure, 1985, Kpiebaya, 2016).

Death removes people not only physically, but also socially from the community, including the status formerly assigned to them, and the roles they once performed (Bagah, 1997). For example, if a married woman dies, she is removed from her status as a wife, a mother, a sister, a daughter, etc. and her roles. The roles she once performed in both the domestic and public arenas (home maintenance, childcare, pito brewing, making pottery, weaving, basket-making, etc.) are now abandoned. This means that within society, old relationships are forced to change, creating new identities and new realities (Bagah, 1997; Kuukure, 1985) whose nature and number depends on the type and variety of statuses and roles of the deceased in their family and community (Bagah, 1997). After assuming these new identities, the bereaved are ritually prepared to assimilate the new experiences and adjust to being able to play the roles associated with them (Bagah, 1997). This preparation occurs during the process of the funeral, and the bereaved are ready to assimilate these new roles and realities after the post-burial rites. Until all the

funeral rituals are performed, the deceased is stranded between the human community (the living) and the ancestral world which they cannot enter (Bagah, 1997; Kpiebaya, 2016 Kuukure, 1985).

The Dagaaba funeral process

There are many different kinds of Daagaba funerals depending on the circumstances of death, the perceived cause of death, the age, social status, and religious affiliation of the deceased. These factors help the family and community to determine the type of funeral to perform (Bagah, 1997; Kpiebaya, 2016; Kuukure, 1985). Below, I outline some of the steps in a traditional Dagaaba funeral of an adult.

As soon as an adult person dies, lineage elders use divination to seek funeral ‘permissions’ from the ancestors; if permission is granted, an offering of a red cock or hen is made to the ancestors requesting a fitting funeral and preparing the deceased for the journey to the spirit world (Bagah, 1997; Kpiebaya, 2016). After this, the corpse is ritually bathed. Importantly, the funeral is not carried out by the deceased’s family or lineage; it is assumed that they will be so preoccupied with the loss that it would be difficult to organize and conduct the appropriate rites (Bagah, 1997). Those in reciprocal funeral groups, usually more distant relations or sometimes by groups from other patriclans, are obligated to assist (Bagah, 1997). The group that organizes the funeral is usually also on the receiving end of such treatment from the currently bereaved family when they have a death. While the undertakers dress the corpse for public mourning, a few loud cries from the elders of the bereaved families officially announce the death (Bagah, 1997; Kpiebaya, 2016). The wailing of women and children, sounds of *tumpaane* (drums), horns, muskets, and *gyil* (xylophone) dirges follow (Bagah, 1997). The wailing of women and children establishes the death locally, while the instrumentation informs neighbouring villages of the death. The age, sex, and social standing of the deceased can also be revealed through the language of the drums (Bagah, 1997). Messengers are dispatched to inform more distant villages. Today, the message may be sent over the phone or through radio announcements.

The period of mourning depends on the deceased’s social standing, that of their family, and the state of the corpse (Bagah, 1997; Kpiebaya, 2016). The higher the social standing of the deceased, the more elaborate the funeral. Overall the magnitude of the funeral depends on the magnitude of the loss (Bagah, 1997). The attire of the deceased, along with the decoration of the catafalque, reveals aspects of their life, such as their occupation (Bagah, 1997). For example, at the funeral of a hunter, the catafalque may be decorated with the skulls of animals, bows, quivers of arrows, and dry animal skins. There may also be items attached or enclosed to assist in integrating the deceased into the spirit world (Bagah, 1997).

The performance and psychology of the Dagaaba dirge

The dirge performance is the main event of the funeral celebration (Saanchi, 1992). The participants include the deceased, the dirge singers, the xylophonists, the gourd drummer, the chorus, the chief mourners, the bereaved family, helpers of the chief mourners, general mourners and sympathizers, and the invisible ancestors (Saanchi, 1992). Dirges can be classified according to sex, age, groups, status groups, or the profession of the deceased (Yemeh, 2002). Some basic motifs included in every dirge performance are the role of a provider and protector (for an adult male); roles of supporting the man, entertaining visitors, and caring for children (for an adult female); and a child's innocence and the joy they bring to their parents (Saanchi, 1992). The deceased and the ancestors are listed as participants in the dirge performance. The performance is not only of importance to the living but also necessary for the well-being of the deceased (Saanchi, 1992). The dirge performance acts as a listing of credentials presented to the ancestors to allow the deceased to journey to *kpiima teya* or *dapare* (ancestral realm of rest). The commendation of the living is important to the ancestors to prove that the deceased is worthy based on their conduct in the physical realm. This is why at times the ancestors are addressed directly in the dirges (Saanchi, 1992).

The repertoire of dirges is vast, as evidenced by the several hours or days that a given dirge performance can last, depending on the age of the deceased, as well as on their sociocultural, political, and religious circumstances. Dirges are panegyric eulogies composed and chanted to recall, recount, and extol real or imagined historical greatness and achievements of the deceased's patrilineal and ancestors. The dirge performer also laments the loss of the deceased to their immediate and extended families by praising and extolling his or her goodness when alive, and by pointing out that the deceased belongs to an equally worthy family, with the ancestors, though invisible, participating and hearing the praise (Saanchi, 1992). The praises thus imply that the deceased not only belongs to a worthy lineage, but his/her current relatives are also praise-worthy. However, the dirge can include criticisms of the deceased's relatives, bringing any wrongdoings to light in an effort to get them to change their ways. In praising the deceased, the dirge singers draw attention to the magnitude of the loss, revving up the intensity of mourning. Funeral dirges act as a form of public discourse through which oral history and traditional beliefs are communicated to the participants and the community (Woma, 2012). Overall, the dirge performer also functions as a social critic of relatives, community, and even ancestors. Of course, they make sure to empathise with the bereaved as well (Saanchi, 1992).

Amongst the Dagaaba, funeral rituals such as the funeral dirge performance are believed to help the bereaved navigate the permanent physical separation from a loved one and assist in their adjustment to their new life situation (Bagah, 1997). The dirge's role specifically is to assist in the proper completion of the grieving process, which occurs through its content, its music, its performance, and its incorporation of participation by

the community. As it has been hypothesized that all humans go through similar stages in the grieving process, I have chosen the phasic model of grief as a framework within which to examine how the Dagaaba funeral dirge assists in each stage of the grieving process.

Bowlby's phasic model

There are many ways in which to conceptualize grief, but most are fairly similar to one another. For example, Bowlby's (1961) phasic model of grief includes four phases: protest, despair, internalization, and reorganization. As the pioneer of attachment theory, Bowlby sees grief through the lens of an attachment relationship between the bereaved and the deceased. Bowlby's attachment system is an organized set of biologically based behaviours activated in times of threat that lead to the individual attempting to maintain or re-establish proximity to an attached figure (Field et al., 2005). There are differences between children and their bond to their primary caregiver and attachment bonds between adults. For example, in younger children, physical distance regulation is important for the secure functioning of the attachment system, however in older children and adults, what is more important is psychological proximity, anticipating that the attachment figure will be capable and ready to respond when needed, even if not physically present. Psychological proximity is activated through the ability to evoke a mental representation of a responsive attachment figure. The belief in the possibility of becoming reunited with the attachment figure when needed is a central aspect of availability (Field et al., 2005).

Death is psychologically disorganising in that the possibility of reuniting with the attachment figure physically is nullified (Field et al., 2005). In the protest phase, the bereaved does not fully register the permanence of separation at the attachment system level; the absent loved one is simply 'missing'. The bereaved displays marked protest and distress, with the main aim being to re-establish physical proximity to the attachment figure. As this goal is repeatedly frustrated, the bereaved begins to accept the permanence of the loss; this is known as the despair phase. The bereaved no longer believe they can reclaim the deceased; however, they do not relinquish the goal of trying to re-establish physical proximity and this leads to a sense of hopelessness (Field et al., 2005). The internalization phase allows the bereaved to resolve this discrepancy through a process whereby the bereaved begin assuming the roles previously assumed by the deceased attachment figure, such as affect regulation, allowing them to provide for themselves in areas that were formerly attended to by the deceased. This marks the end of mourning. Finally, in the reorganization phase, the attachment system comes to terms with the loss by reconfiguring its webs of attachment based on psychological proximity (Field et al., 2005).

Funeral dirges function in aiding the despair, internalization, and reorganization phases of grief. The content of many Dagaaba dirges promotes a collective catharsis through the music of the xylophone and the drums, and through chanting. The dirges re-iterate

the fact that the deceased is truly gone from this world, lamentations in and of themselves that promote lamentation not only of the bereaved but for others in the community to mourn their lost loved ones as well. The language of the xylophone and drums articulate repetitive refrains that accentuate the effect of the sung dirges. The cathartic element of the performance of dirges allows one to move through the despair stage, acknowledging that the deceased is truly gone, and they will be unable to re-establish a physical connection. The dirges make the bereaved miss the deceased all the more with praises (e.g., praise of how good of a hunter or wife they were) and bring mourning to its peak by extolling the helplessness of humanity at the hands of divinity, thus attesting to communal shared belief (Yemeh, 2002). The moments in the dirges where ancestors are called upon and genealogies are traced also remind the bereaved of their cultural cosmology, particularly *kpiime* and the continuation of life in the spirit realm. This allows the living to proceed to the internalization and reorganization phases of mourning.

African grief work

There are always issues with applying a foreign framework to a socio-cultural phenomenon. However, in this case, Nwoye (2005) has outlined a framework for what he calls African grief work, defined as the patterned ways invented in traditional communities for the healing of psychological wounds and pain in bereaved persons. African grief work is directed at healing four memory components: fact, behavioural, event, and prospective. Dirges can impact the healing of memory in each of these components.

Fact memory seeks clarity regarding the facts surrounding the death; whether it took place, where, when, why, etc. The restlessness and cognitive dissonance these generate are similar to that described in the protest phase in Bowlby's phasic grief model. It is only when permission to begin mourning is given that the performance of dirges begins. As common cultural knowledge, when the bereaved hear the xylophones and chanters, they know that death is indeed a fact (Nwoye, 2005).

Behavioural memory is the bereaved's existing knowledge of how grieving people are attended to in their culture (and the expectation to be treated the same way) and their cultural memory for legitimate mourning and grieving, which shows them how to proceed, along with the expected cultural rituals and programs that will be organised for them to facilitate their healing (Nwoye, 2005). Just the fact that the dirges are being performed helps to heal the behavioural memory as this is an expected cultural ritual known to facilitate healing.

Event memory deals with the bereaved coming to believe they are under special threat because of the current and previous adversities and deaths; the community effects healing by dispelling this illusion (Nwoye, 2005). This is where the healing effect of dirges comes into full force. The collective grief displayed by those hearing the dirges show the bereaved that they are not the only ones to have undergone such suffering. Dirges also help through a multiple description process to define the meaning of the loss, helping mourners not to overgeneralize.

Prospective memory refers to the preoccupation of the bereaved with interruptions to life because of the deceased's passing (e.g., unfinished business, interruptions to family routines, leadership) and the loss of dreams for the future (Nwoye, 2005). It also relates to what must be done to give the deceased a decent burial and dignified passage into the land of the ancestors. Dirges address these prospective memories by calling attention to these life interruptions and lost dreams. Genealogical tracing and calling the ancestors to collect the deceased releases them from trouble in their future in the afterlife, providing some mental relief. The compatibility between Bowlby's phasic model of grief, attachment theory, and the theory of African grief work leads me to believe they can be applied together in the analysis of Dagaaba funeral dirges.

Sample analyses of Dagaaba dirges

Dirge at a man's funeral (Yemeh, 2002):

O teore may wa teorany
Bay voora vɔ nyaba
Bidao koɔraa, o may koɔraŋ
Idmaa seelaa eŋ koɔbo pos
Hōō
O may koɔraŋ
Idme dakpule ka nyao yi kpore
Hōō Hōō Hōō
[His arrows once shot
Are removed with intestines!
He makes his farm
With a sielaa amidst
Humm
His chest muscles knock down stumps
As he farms along!
Humm humm humm]
O may koɔraŋ
Gyaleŋgyeehe ba sigre kolaa!
O may koɔraŋ
Gyaleŋgyeehe ŋmaa nyuuro waloo.
Hōō
O may koɔraŋ
K'o kuuri voona ya lori
Hōō Hōō Hōō
[When he is farming
Birds never go to the river!
When he is farming

Birds gather to drink his sweat!

Humm

When he is farming

His hoe roars like thunder!

Humm humm humm] (pp. 36, 57)

These stanzas exemplify the aspect of dirge that is praise. The man's strength, and therefore abilities as a provider and protector, are extolled through his description in the dirge. In the first stanza, the deceased's physical strength and ability to farm well are celebrated, along with his ability to hunt. His ability to hunt well is implicitly mentioned in his shooting of arrows (*teore*); with only one arrow, the man was able to kill any creature (shown by the arrow reaching the intestines, a near if not fatal wound). His farming acumen is inflated in the following lines; his farm is so large that even a *sielaa* (large mound of clayish rock that cows love to lick) is not noticed. The reference that his huge chest muscles result from using his chest to knock down tree stumps while tilling the ground demonstrates his dedication to hard work to feed his family. This continues in the next verse, with weaver birds gathering to drink the sweat that collects on his back as he works. The metaphor of the sound of his hoe also points to his strength in farming. As found in almost every stanza in Dagaaba dirges, the mnemonic devices of repetition and parallelism are salient for example, the repetition of *o may koɔraj* (when he is tilling the ground) and the parallelism in “*Gyaleŋgyeehe ba sigre kolaa! / Gyaleŋgyeehe ȳmaa nyuuro waloo.*” Repetition and parallelism give unity to the dirges and make them easier to memorise by those learning to be dirge chanters. Constant repetition also emphasizes the loss and underscores the emotional experience of the situation, helping to aid in the mourning process.

Xylophone dirge at a woman's funeral (Yemeh, 2002):

Laabili gbe-ley nmaree

Laabili gbe-ley nmaree

O koŋ nye meere k'o me

O koŋ nye meere k'o me

[A well-baked bowl is broken

A well-baked bowl is broken

There is no potter to mend it)

There is no potter to mend it]

Dakoore woo zie maanyey

Dakoore woo zie maanyey

Ka fo na dogla foŋ dogla

Ka fo na dogla foŋ dogla

[Widower, evening has come

Widower, evening has come
If you will start cooking
If you will start cooking]
Gandaba yiri yele
Laama laama
Gandaba yiri yele
Laama laama
Ka pɔga gaa koloo
Baŋ yma dɛŋna
[Inexplicable are the affairs
In the house of Gandaba
Inexplicable are the affairs
In the house of Gandaba
A woman goes to the river,
And they break her pots] (pp. 42, 63)

This dirge is performed by the *gyil* (xylophone) and forms the basis of the xylophone instrumental, while a different dirge is sung by the dirge chanter. The well-baked bowl *Laabili gbe-ley gbe-ley* alludes to the deceased woman. If broken, some bowls can be fixed, but in this case, it is explicitly stated that there is no potter to fix it; this is a culturally relevant metaphor for death. Traditionally, women would make the pots, bowls, etc. that were used for household chores such as drawing water, or for generating income such as the pots used to sell *pito*. Pottery and its association with women make this metaphor all the more fitting. This dirge also addresses the widower. Traditionally, after returning from the farm, the wife would have prepared food for him. However, now that she is gone, he must return to the house exhausted and cook for himself. This highlights the loneliness and sudden imbalance in the family unit; the division of responsibilities that allows daily life to flow smoothly is disrupted; the unit is fractured. “Evening” has cultural connotations based on the Dagaaba concept of the two sex/gender roles. While males are buried facing east or sunrise (*samuni/ sapare*), females are buried facing west or sunset (*mannoɔre [mànnóɔr]*). Men face *samuni* so that the rising sun will tell them to rise early and leave for a hunt or go to the farm. Women face *mannoɔre* to keep track of the time as the sun begins to set so they can leave the farm in time to go home and prepare the evening meal for the family (Kpiebaya, 2016). In telling the widower evening has come, not only do you remind him of prospective memories related to the interruptions caused by the death, but you remind him of the destination of the woman on her journey to the afterlife, passing through *mannoɔre*.

This dirge facilitates the healing of both fact memory and prospective memory. It clarifies the fact that the woman has died by emphasizing that there will be no one waiting for the husband at home. This statement of the facts allows the widower to pass from the protest phase into the despair phase, in which he can truly begin to mourn for his

loss. The dirge chanter also empathizes with the family by acknowledging the confusion in the house after losing a central member (Inexplicable are the affairs/ In the house of Gandaba).

Dirge at a child's funeral (Yemeh, 2002):

Naale yela yey men da man kpe
Koɔla te dara
Naalee pampaana ŋa
E na baŋ la e noba zie?
Hōō
Naalee k'e gaaye, dabuo eŋ waana?
Hōō Hōō Hōō
[It was for Nnale's sake
That you used to struggle in the farm
Now will you know
Where your people are?
Humm
Nnale when you go
When will you return?
Humm humm humm] (pp. 48, 68)

This dirge expresses the grandparent's despair for the loss of their grandchild (*nnale*) but also brings hope for their return. The dirge chanter acknowledges parents' hard work in raising a child. Children never become ancestors though they exist in the ancestral realm. Only certain adults can become ancestors in death. This does not mean because one is not made an ancestor, one is eternally banished into a realm of suffering. The person elevated to ancestorhood stands in for all the departed others from the family. It is believed that when they die, they will return to the same family. This belief in (limited) reincarnation allows the parents to grieve but be partly consoled that their dead child may reincarnate, so the loss is not permanent (Alenuma, 2002; Doggu, 2015; Kpiebaya, 2016; Saako, et al. 2014).

Wongteŋa-ma (Kuwabong, 2019):

Kuu woo wuli ma eŋ noba kye koora ba yaa
Kuu woo wuli ma eŋ yɔɔmine kye koora ba yee
Kuu woo wuli ma eŋ bemine kye koora ba yaa
Eŋ ma bi yeni kaŋ meŋ da deli ka kuu wa nyog'ō
[Oh death, show me, my people before you kill them all
Oh death, show me (allow me to get to know) my younger siblings before you kill them all
Oh death, show me, my older siblings before you kill them all

It is my mother's only daughter that I too leaned on and death has taken her]

Ekooła ba biiri woi

Ware la nyɔgi Sabie yaajaa pikpaga puoŋ

Ware la nyɔge Sabie yaajaa pibɔgre baaj

Kye ka sapiime ba teora varivari

Kye ka sakubo ba sigre biribiri

A naŋ so ka kuuŋ dare kpɛ Laung dabuo

A yeɛle Laung boora bara aya vaala

Ka kuuŋ bataa dɔma kye walaj so

Ka kuuŋ dɔɔlong iri oŋ yɔ kyiere

Kpiebaya dabuoŋ ka kpeli ymera

A naŋ so ka kuuŋ lugro ire eŋ bieri mine

Laborong lugro tuuro ng kpeeymine

Laboroeng daara eŋ yɔɔbili zaa lɔɔra

A na wala la ka kuuŋ logri iri te yɔɔpɔga ŋa

Kye kyeri te teŋ daara moɔpɔɔ

[It is drought that has caught the grandchild of Sabie among rocks

It is drought that has captured the child of rain (Sabie) among rocky caves

And yet no multitudes of rain arrows rain down

And yet no hail drops in their numbers

That is why death boastfully enters Laung's household

Blowing around (scattering) the descendants of Laung like dry leaves (in the wind)

They say/it is said that death has no enemy, but why is it

That death's masculinity/ masculine pride has ballooned and goes around strutting and boasting

In Kpiebaya's household and people are screaming (mourning, real soul-wrenching cries from the deepest part)

That is why death is gouging out my big brothers

And also taking out my older sisters

And also knocking down my younger siblings

If that is not the case, why has death taken away this my sister

And has left me roaming wildly in the bush]

The dirge chanter begins with a call to male members of the *Ekooła* clan; this is the paternal clan of the deceased. The clan is not just made up of relatives and encompasses a larger social group than known relatives. *Sabie* is the name of a powerful non-consanguineous clan grandfather. There is irony in the fact that the grandchild of *Sabie* (which means 'child of rain') is taken by drought (*wari*). This alludes to the belief that if *Sabie* were around, this would not have happened. The lack of rainfall or hail symbolizes the loss of the protective power of *Sabie*. The mention of rocks and rocky caves reference

the deceased's marital home in Sankana, a village webbed among granite rocks and caves which provided sites of refuge from enslavement in the 19th century. *Wongteyama*'s death reveals the lack of the calibre of warriors that had resisted slave invaders to have risen up to save their beloved wife from death. The concept of males being the protector of the family comes into play as the elder males have passed, allowing death to enter *Laung*'s household (*Laung* is the great-grandfather of the deceased and the head of their branch of the wider family). The description of death as strutting around in the *kpiebaya* (deceased's grandfather's) house widens the dirge to include the mourning of other members of the family who have also passed away. The dirge chanter uses very visceral imagery (*lugro ire*, which means scooping or gouging out) to emphasize the pain of losing their siblings (there is no word for a 'cousin' so this includes what would be called cousins in English). This representation of death emphasizes that no one can escape death, in a way encouraging the bereaved to come to terms with the loss (Kuutiero, 2006). They then relate this to the deceased who is presently being mourned. This dirge speaks not only specifically to close relatives of the deceased but methodically widens in scope to encompass people in the larger family, relatives, and fellow clan members. The imagery of drought is pertinent in a farming population, as they more than anyone know that drought means death in many respects (crops, animals, people).

After the funeral: Burial rites

The final funeral rites enable relatives and friends who could not attend the primary rites to personally share their condolences. The main purpose, however, is to fulfill the need for continuity after death. First, the family tries to ascertain the real cause(s) of death, potentially through a diviner-spirit medium. The *Kodeo* is observed on the seventh day after burial by the bereaved. The family gathers to tie up loose ends. For those that consulted a spirit medium, it is at this time that family and lineage elders are informed of the findings. Money owed to or by the deceased is reported and accounted for, promises made by them to others or to them by others are noted, and procedures of fulfilment are devised (Bagah, 1997; Doggu, 2015; Kpiebaya, 2016).

The *Komaale* (final rites of death) is the next, and the final stage for the deceased to enter the spirit world. Discontinuities in normal life caused by death need to be restored and roles involuntarily abandoned must be redistributed to facilitate the continuity of life without the deceased. The lingering soul must be integrated into the world it now belongs in, and survivors must be reorganized to facilitate their adjustment to the loss sustained. The *Komaale* is more of a celebration for sympathizers with food and drink, to celebrate the entry of the deceased into the spirit world and their (potentially) becoming an ancestor. After these rights, the soul of the deceased transforms into a spirit and takes its place in the spirit world as an ancestor (from *terkpiine* to *kpiime*), where they remain linked to their family, whose activities and possessions in the human world can impact their well-being or their harm. The *komaale* finally ends the official grieving

process, with balance having been restored to the family and community (Kpiebaya, 2016).

Conclusion

Even outside of Dagao (the Dagaaba hometowns and villages), Dagaaba perform their funerals in almost the same way, with xylophones, gourd drums, and the performance of dirges. If the deceased cannot be returned to their hometown in Dagao, they are usually buried in the area where they have died. In such cases, a second funeral is held in the deceased's hometown and it includes the performance of dirges. If the deceased dies in Dagao, they are usually returned to their hometown for the funeral to be performed there (Saanchi, 1992). That is how important the traditional funeral and dirge are to people. If they pass away overseas and cannot afford the expense of sending the body back to Dagao, items representing them (such as a lock of hair, an item of clothing, and a photo) will suffice to perform the funeral at home.

Dirge combines collective representation of social life (Bell's mental category) and individual experience and behaviour (Bell's activity category) (Bell, 2009). Through ritual, collective beliefs and ideals are generated, experienced, and affirmed as real by the community. For those peripheral to the bereaved, the funeral is more of a social obligation and the dirge performance an opportunity to mourn once again for someone they have lost and to show solidarity with the grieving family, increasing solidarity and goodwill between families. The content of dirges affirms collective beliefs of how women and men should behave, roles in society, how people should relate to one another, the presence of the ancestors, and other important cultural beliefs. Dirges can effectively heal different layers of memory in the bereaved, allowing them to go through the phases of grief nonpathologically. Not discussed in this essay is the xylophone itself, which has healing properties emitted through the resonances of sound (Woma, 2012).

The limitations of this article are evident in its narrow focus on a few samples of sung and xylophone texts. It does not address drum dirges, nor does it attempt to explore the differences and similarities among the different dirge categories that are performed for and by women, children, hunters, men, etc. The essay also does not address the layering of group and individual sung texts, instrumental texts, gendered and generational texts forming an orchestra of overlaying dirges, and generating multiple depths and textures of the languages and messages relayed during the dirge performance. Even the xylophone can be described as 'crying' or 'weeping' *A gyil kone ni vla* [The gyil is sounding good/ crying well] (Hien, 2019). A more complete study would include thick descriptions as the sung dirges do not happen in isolation; they take place within a wider performance in which there are many groups involved. The literary analysis of the poetry exposed some of their social and psychological facets, but there is a greater need for analysis of the poetry as performance poetry. Nonetheless, the present study has drawn

attention to the fact that the Dagaaba dirge performance promotes the type of personal and community grieving that promotes psychological and emotional healing.

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COMUNIDAD, AUTOGESTIÓN Y GESTIÓN DE ARCHIVOS EN EL CARIBE: EL CASO DE CASA PUEBLO PUERTO RICO

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Resumen

Este artículo explora el proyecto puertorriqueño de autogestión comunitaria Casa Pueblo como caso de estudio sobre la praxis de comunidades que han sido marginadas en el Caribe y que enfrentan a la desigualdad y a la pobreza desde propuestas orientadas a lograr un bienestar común. A través de la incorporación de acciones desde la experiencia de la economía solidaria y autogestión Casa Pueblo ha desarrollado el sentido de pertenencia entre los miembros de su comunidad logrando la sustentabilidad de sus proyectos y propuestas. Se considera además la gestión de Casa Pueblo en la creación del Archivo Histórico de Casa Pueblo como ejemplo de estos esfuerzos.

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Términos claves: Comunidad, autogestión comunitaria, archivo, Casa Pueblo.

Introducción

La Real Academia Española (2014) define el concepto de *comunidad* como un conjunto de las personas de un pueblo, región o nación. El *Diccionario de sociología* (Greco, 2008) lo define de múltiples maneras: “conjunto de individuos que tienen una forma de vida común y que están sujetos a la vigencia de las mismas valoraciones”; “grupo cuyos componentes ocupan un territorio dentro del cual se puede llevar a cabo la totalidad del ciclo vital”; “congregación de personal que conviven y se sujetos a ciertas reglas”; “grupo social en el que la subsistencia del grupo prevalece sobre los antagonismos de los intereses individuales”; y “un todo humano de lazos internos fuertes, cuyos integrantes están cohesionados por el espíritu de cuerpo e ideales comunes” (p. 89). Identificando puntos de convergencia en estas definiciones es posible argumentar que la constitución de ‘comunidad’ es lo que resulta de la praxis humana en lo cotidiano enmarcado por lógicas temporales y axiológicas que dan orden a las cosas.

La acción común de los sujetos que se organizan como una comunidad ha sido tema de profunda reflexión en los estudios culturales. En su estudio sobre comunas, Vaisey

(2007) describe los múltiples modelos teóricos que contemplan el término ‘comunidad’ fundamentados desde la lógica de las relaciones interpersonales. Vaisey (2007, p. 866) concluye que en el caso de estos tipos de organización comunitaria la coherencia de su organización resulta de un balance entre el capital social ejercido por sus participantes, la confianza que se genera por sus interacciones y la expectativa de que todos los participantes experimentan bienestar y actúan solidariamente.

Autogestión comunitaria

En el Caribe, particularmente en el archipiélago puertorriqueño, el actuar de las comunidades se inserta en las lógicas de la economía solidaria y la autogestión. Angélica Martínez Díaz (s.f.), especialista en el Desarrollo de los Recursos de la Comunidad (DRC), define autogestión comunitaria como “una gestión de la comunidad que ocurre como consecuencia de transformar la espiral descendente de la pobreza en espirales ascendentes de desarrollo” (pár. 2). Determina que la fuente de la autogestión comunitaria es el cambio de una visión fatalista de la pobreza a una visión esperanzadora como generadora del impulso necesario para el desarrollo. Martínez indica que es este el canal a través del cual el potencial del ser humano se encauza hacia el logro de una vida digna mejorando la calidad de vida de cada uno de los moradores, de acuerdo a sus propios objetivos y metas (pár. 2) Se entiende que la autogestión comunitaria es un enfoque integral de la vida en sociedad, que no solo se refiere a organizar democrática o participativamente el lugar de trabajo o la empresa productora de bienes o servicios sino que se extiende a todas las dimensiones de la vida económica y social en comunidad.

La base de la autogestión está en el concepto mismo de la persona (o del ser humano) y sus derechos fundamentales, como el derecho a la autodeterminación y la participación, en las esferas personales, familiares y comunitarias. También, define autogestión comunitaria como un proceso mediante el cual se desarrolla la capacidad individual o de un grupo para identificar los intereses o las necesidades básicas. Incluso, la considera una herramienta eficaz probada, que exalta la utilización de los mejores valores del individuo y de los grupos.

Por otro lado, el ingeniero Alexis Massol González, presidente del proyecto de autogestión comunitaria Casa Pueblo y autor del libro *Casa Pueblo Cultiva Esperanzas* (2019), define el concepto como la gestión de un grupo organizado de personas que voluntariamente se unen para actuar sobre aquellas cosas que les rodean y les afectan, con el fin de superarlas. Explica que la autogestión comunitaria busca defender los intereses de las personas con miras a alcanzar una mejor calidad de vida y un porvenir más deseable. También, añade que la autogestión comunitaria “se expresa desde la defensa del ambiente, los derechos humanos y de género, hasta reclamar mejoras a un camino vecinal, entre otras modalidades” (p. 129). De ahí que se puede entender el que la autogestión comunitaria se origine desde la propia aspiración y necesidad de los sujetos a vivir en

ecosistemas justos, en donde las relaciones de poder son horizontales. De hecho, en muchos casos esta aspiración responde a experiencias traumáticas que resultan en desigualdades económicas y sociales que el Estado no ha podido sufragar ni resolver. La autogestión comunitaria vincula nuevas visiones y prácticas de las relaciones socioeconómicas, por un lado, y por el otro, la organización y la praxis política de la sociedad. Accionar desde la autogestión y la valoración de la experiencia solidaria resulta en una de las manifestaciones más importantes de soberanía ciudadana dado que se expresa en diferentes formas y mecanismos de autogobierno local. Por lo tanto, es una forma de expresión entre la sociedad civil y la sociedad política; responde a la complejidad entre Estado y las relaciones sociales (D'Angelo Hernández, 2004).

En general, la autogestión comunitaria busca incluir la participación de los integrantes de la comunidad, así como desarrollar proyectos que permitan crear empleos y promover los productos locales y alcanzar logros de manera colectiva. Martínez Díaz (s.f.) entiende que la autogestión comunitaria debe incluir: 1) la acción participativa de los ciudadanos en las esferas personales, familiares y comunitarios para la toma de decisiones; 2) la acción para disminuir la dependencia de ayudar gubernamentales para sobrevivir; 3) el esfuerzo comunitario para responder y buscar soluciones a las necesidades o intereses de la población; 4) la autorresponsabilidad, colaboración, contribución y trabajo voluntario para búsqueda de soluciones; y 5) la participación en las estructuras de poder, acceso al derecho y a las formas de prevención de los males sociales. Además, identifica como principios fundamentales del modelo de autogestión valores fundamentales como la democracia, la libertad, la solidaridad y el trabajo. En los proyectos de autogestión comunitaria el voluntariado ejecuta acciones que resultan en el bienestar comunitario; desde una lógica de acción participativa los sujetos del colectivo aspiran a ser autosuficientes y crear cambio social y político.

El voluntariado es uno de los componentes más importantes en los proyectos de autogestión y empresas sociales y comunitarias; son su capital social. Los y las voluntarias se unen a los proyectos sin ningún interés monetario; aportan su tiempo porque creen en la causa y quieren ser parte del cambio social. Igualmente, las organizaciones de autogestión también cuentan con personal remunerado que brinda apoyo al voluntariado. Es importante destacar que el personal remunerado no va a sustituir el voluntariado. Para todo proyecto de autogestión es necesario tener “vivo” el personal voluntario. Ellos son el pilar del proyecto, los portavoces de los eventos e iniciativas, y los que crean el cambio social y económico. Así mismo, los voluntarios obtienen la experiencia de colaborar con las comunidades, teniendo la oportunidad de identificar las necesidades, conocer y aportar a propuestas e ideas que puedan mejorar la calidad de vida en las comunidades. Por otro lado, los proyectos de autogestión comunitaria, como toda empresa, requieren de un ingreso para seguir sus operaciones por lo que deben aspirar a ser autosustentables. El desarrollo de proyectos que le brinden un ingreso al proyecto o la empresa es vital. Entre estos proyectos se pueden encontrar: actividades para recaudar fondos, vender

algún producto con la intención de utilizar los ingresos para el mejoramiento y desarrollo de la empresa, recibir donativos de la comunidad o personas creyentes de la causa y crear alianzas entre las empresas y cooperativas que les permita buscar fondos y otras alternativas de financiamiento. Estos proyectos permiten la creación de nuevas propuestas que funcionan desde la lógica de la economía solidaria, como una inversión comunitaria, logrando la sustentabilidad económica e independencia del estado benefactor. Así pues, la comunidad ejerce su autogestión gracias al capital social de sus participantes. Esta independencia permite que la comunidad siga creando soluciones a los problemas que enfrenta y seguir transformándose y desarrollándose.

El sur global, la cooperación y la economía social y solidaria

Para entender las lógicas de la autogestión comunitaria y de la economía social y solidaria es necesario reconocer las experiencias de las sociedades de lo que se llamó en el siglo XX el “tercer mundo”, y más recientemente se ha definido como “sur global”, entendido como aquel espacio geopolíticamente ubicado en la periferia del centro (Lechini, 2009, p. 55). Ambos conceptos son el resultado de una deconstrucción del modelo discursivo propuesto por las naciones “desarrolladas” y el orden global que establecieron post Segunda Guerra mundial. El centro se entiende como los países del norte que se definen como “desarrollados”. Como resultado de ese ejercicio de deconstrucción surgen “epistemologías del sur”, orientadas a promover narraciones decoloniales representativas de las naciones del sur global (De Souza, 2006; Quijano, 2000).

Ante el modelo de desarrollo neoliberal que tomó fuerza a finales del siglo XX, y el resultante endeudamiento de los países en desarrollo, el sur global inicia acciones concretas para la colaboración interregional “para promover un orden más equitativo, donde los países medios y los periféricos puedan defender sus intereses” (Lechini, 2009, p. 67). Tanto la autogestión como la economía social y solidaria articulan esfuerzos para descolonizar los paradigmas de desarrollo económico y social de las naciones de la periferia. Las naciones de la región del Caribe se han inscrito en estos esfuerzos internacionales. En el caso de Puerto Rico, y por su condición de territorio no incorporado a los Estados Unidos, han sido grupos de la sociedad civil quienes han liderado acciones orientadas a la autogestión y la economía solidaria.

El crecimiento de las empresas sociales y proyectos de autogestión tienen un efecto dominó en el capital social y sustentabilidad de las comunidades. A esta transformación que surge se le conoce como el desarrollo local comunitario. La comunidad va en búsqueda de crear autosuficiencia, disminuyendo la necesidad de ayudas gubernamentales. Promover los productos y el trabajo local es su prioridad para el mejoramiento comunitario en comparación a la empresa capitalista. Estas brindan una nueva perspectiva de ser autosuficiente a los integrantes de la comunidad. Ya no es necesario esperar a que el gobierno brinde ayuda para las soluciones si no que, los líderes y demás miembros de la

comunidad, unidos, pueden buscar soluciones y crear oportunidades de empleos en la comunidad.

Como parte de los proyectos que se pueden desarrollar y que se consideran autogestivos podemos resaltar la empresa social o comunitaria, y las cooperativas. Vera J. Santiago y José I. Vega y, en su artículo *Modelo para la dinamización de la gestión exitosa de las empresas comunitarias en Puerto Rico* (2007) definen empresas comunitarias o de base comunitaria como aquellas iniciativas empresariales organizadas de forma colectiva para la producción y venta de productos y servicios en el mercado. Detalla que este tipo de empresas, además de seguir las usuales metas de rendimientos financieros y competitividad (inherentes a las empresas tradicionales), pretenden mejorar las condiciones socioeconómicas de las personas que la integran y la comunidad donde operan, mediante la creación de oportunidades económicas, ingresos y empleos, y estrategias de reinversión comunitaria. Las empresas comunitarias se organizan como corporaciones sin fines de lucro y se caracterizan por no contar con bienes de capital, ni tener acceso a financiamiento como lo tiene el sector privado (Martínez Díaz, s.f.). Es importante destacar que la autogestión no es lo mismo que la sostenibilidad. La autogestión es el decidir por uno mismo mientras que la sostenibilidad es la permanencia de esa decisión. Uno de los principales desafíos de los proyectos de autogestión comunitarios es lograr su sostenibilidad y viabilidad económica. Por su parte, en el *Diccionario de sociología* se define el cooperativismo como una tendencia o doctrina favorable a la cooperación en el orden económico y social. También lo define como asociación en un sentido lato, que no tiene fines de lucro pues su causa es la solidaridad. Se constituye entre productores, vendedores o consumidores para la utilidad de los socios (Greco, 2008, p. 104).

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Casa Pueblo

Considerando los conceptos que hemos definido anteriormente utilicemos el ejemplo de Casa Pueblo. Casa Pueblo es un proyecto de autogestión comunitaria que nace en el año 1980. Este proyecto, liderado por un grupo de voluntariado entre ellos el Ing. Alexis Massol y la maestra Tinti Deyá, logró unir a una comunidad en contra del Plan 2020, proyecto conjunto del gobierno federal y local cuyo objetivo era explotar la minería en los pueblos de Adjuntas, Utuado, Lares y Jayuya. Desde su victoria en la lucha en contra la minería, Casa Pueblo ha establecido proyectos autosustentables y se ha mantenido a la defensa de los recursos naturales, los derechos humanos y la cultura de nuestro país. Casa Pueblo se mantiene desarrollando y transformando su comunidad brindando las herramientas, el apoyo y los recursos necesarios para seguir creando cambio social y político.

Los proyectos que permitieron generar ingresos para alcanzar sustentabilidad y así seguir expandiendo y desarrollando la empresa social fueron: Café Madre Isla y la Tiendita Artesanal, ubicada en la casona antigua en el pueblo de Adjuntas y lugar que se transformaría a la sede del proyecto. Estos proyectos abrieron el paso a la sostenibilidad

energética de Casa Pueblo, sostenibilidad ecológica y la sostenibilidad cultural-educativa. En la actualidad Casa Pueblo genera el 100% de su energía logrando la soberanía energética. Se entiende como soberanía energética a la capacidad de la autogestión comunitaria de generar toda la energía que consume (Massol Deya, 2018, p. 206).

A raíz de la crisis eléctrica causada por el Huracán María en 2017, Casa Pueblo sirvió de oasis energético para la comunidad por una agenda de operar con energía renovable desde el 1999. Con un sistema recién modernizado de energía solar, la autogestión comunitaria viabilizó tareas intensas de ayuda humanitaria para el pueblo, su ruralía y otras municipalidades (Massol Deya, 2018). Casa Pueblo propone un nuevo proyecto llamado Cinturón Solar. Este proyecto brindó lámparas solares a las familias adjuntas y a otros pueblos afectados. A través de talleres se educó a las comunidades sobre la energía renovable. Se energizaron hogares de personas con condiciones de salud y colmados en los barrios apartados. Los modelos de neveras solares y casas 100% solares también fueron implementadas en los hogares y los barrios como parte de este proyecto.

Por otro lado, la sostenibilidad ecológica surge con el manejo del Bosque Escuela Ariel Massol Deyá. Este terreno en donde se encuentra el bosque se adquirió a través de donaciones del pueblo, fondos del Café Madre Isla y la Cooperativa de Crédito y Ahorro del pueblo de Arecibo. Este bosque expone a sus visitantes a la experiencia de conocer sobre el ecosistema y participar de proyectos comunitarios. Se brinda una experiencia de aprendizaje no tradicional a los estudiantes que visiten el bosque, a través de maestros y un salón de clase “vivo”.

Por último, tenemos los proyectos de sostenibilidad cultural educativa. Aquí se incluye el Bosque Escuela, la Escuela comunitaria de Música, Radio Casa Pueblo, el Instituto Comunitario de Biodiversidad y Cultura y el Archivo Histórico Casa Pueblo. Estos proyectos enriquecen la cultura a través de servicios educativos a los estudiantes y colaboraciones con instituciones académicas como la Universidad de Puerto Rico, la Pontificia Universidad Católica de Puerto Rico y profesores de universidades estadounidenses como Cornell y Michigan State. El más reciente de estos proyectos es el Archivo Histórico de Casa Pueblo, que surge en el año 2020. El archivo tiene como objetivo preservar y conservar a través de la digitalización los documentos encontrados en los “álbumes de Tinti”. Estos documentos son accesibles a través de la página del archivo y son apoyados por material educativo creado por profesores para ser implementados en los salones de clase (Archivo Histórico de Casa Pueblo, 2020).

Como podemos apreciar, Casa Pueblo es un ejemplo de un proyecto de autogestión en Puerto Rico. Sus inicios se remontan a la integración de las comunidades en la discusión pública sobre la sostenibilidad ecológica de los modelos de desarrollo esbozados para la Isla en las postrimerías del siglo XX. En el 1980, y ante el “Plan 2020” esbozado por el gobierno de Puerto Rico que buscaba implementar acciones de desarrollo fundamentadas en la explotación de recursos naturales con alto impacto en las comunidades del centro de la Isla, se organiza un grupo comunitario en el municipio de Adjuntas bajo el

nombre de Taller de Arte y Cultura. El objetivo fundamental de esta organización fue la de educar y combatir el “Plan 2020”, y su gestión evitó que la explotación minera hubiese causado una catástrofe ecológica y social en 36, 000 cuerdas de terrenos en los municipios de Adjuntas, Utuado, Lares y Jayuya. De igual forma, su gestión redundó en proyectos autosustentables para que la organización mantuviera el apoyo a su comunidad y siguiera defendiendo los recursos naturales, la cultura y los recursos humanos. Lograron ser reconocidos a nivel nacional e internacional y se mantienen a la vanguardia creando nuevos proyectos ante las necesidades de la comunidad.

Además de las aportaciones que Casa Pueblo realiza en su comunidad, también permite la colaboración entre instituciones. Un ejemplo de estas colaboraciones es la del Archivo Histórico Casa Pueblo y el Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC, <https://www.dloc.com>). dLOC es un espacio de colaboración en donde se recopilan recursos relacionados a la cultura e historia de países caribeños. A través de la digitalización se le da visibilidad a los recursos localizados en las bibliotecas, archivos y colecciones privadas para que los usuarios los puedan consultar de manera remota. Es importante mencionar que los colaboradores mantienen los derechos de autor de los recursos que se suben a la página de dLOC. La página está disponible en tres idiomas: español, inglés y francés. También se puede encontrar información catalográfica sobre los recursos en el formato MARC 21 y la metadata generada para el recurso.

Como parte de las colaboraciones entre la Universidad de Puerto Rico y Casa Pueblo surgió la oportunidad de incluir estudiantes de la Escuela Graduada de Ciencias y Tecnologías de la Información (EGCTI) y estudiantes de la Maestría en Gestión y Administración Cultural de la Facultad de Humanidades en la conceptualización y el desarrollo del proyecto Archivo Histórico de Casa Pueblo. Esta colaboración, igualmente fundamentada en la experiencia solidaria y participativa, permitió que los estudiantes articularen sus investigaciones y trabajos de fin de grado en colaboración con Casa Pueblo. La experiencia les brindó la oportunidad de poner en práctica sus conocimientos en sus respectivos campos. Junto a el equipo de Casa Pueblo, aplicaron el conocimiento obtenido en sus estudios graduados en la organización y desarrollo de las colecciones del archivo junto a la comunidad. Es decir, la planificación, producción y publicación del Archivo Histórico de Casa Pueblo resultó de la común acción entre la academia y la comunidad. En el caso de los estudiantes de la EGCTI, estos trabajaron con la transferencia de colecciones digitalizadas, desarrollaron descripciones de colecciones, e incluso facilitaron talleres de catalogación a otros estudiantes voluntarios como, por ejemplo, de la Escuela Secundaria de la Universidad de Puerto Rico (UHS), y participaron en el desarrollo del contenido de la página web del archivo. Estas colaboraciones son importantes ya que brindan la oportunidad a estudiantes en programas de postgrado de completar sus experiencias académicas aportando a un proyecto práctico que contribuye al desarrollo de una comunidad.

Conclusión

Son muchas las maneras en las que una comunidad puede dar a conocer sus necesidades y reclamos. Una de las formas más efectivas es a través de la protesta. Cuando los ciudadanos o un país se enfrentan a una injusticia o no están de acuerdo con una decisión en la cual no tuvieron la opción de elegir, estos tienen el derecho a la libre expresión. Las protestas se organizan con la intención de dar a conocer los reclamos o necesidades de los individuos. A través de manifestaciones, marchas y talleres educativos sobre soluciones a la situación que se enfrenta la comunidad se puede conseguir que la sociedad y el gobierno tomen conocimiento del problema y lograr soluciones.

Sin embargo, la lucha de las comunidades marginadas en el Caribe no solo se ejecuta desde la protesta. Esta también se ejecuta desde la autogestión comunitaria, desde propuestas y soluciones concretas, y gestionables, a los problemas que enfrentan. El diálogo organizado desde y por la comunidad resulta en su empoderamiento; de allí surgen propuestas, desde el diálogo horizontal, con ideas e iniciativas que brindan soluciones a los problemas. Casa Pueblo ha logrado ejecutar estas ideas con herramientas entre las que se encuentran proyectos de autogestión comunitaria, el cooperativismo y la solidaridad comunitaria. La implementación de estos conceptos ha permitido que las comunidades a las que le sirve Casa Pueblo se vayan independizando del gobierno, permitiéndoles transformarse y seguir brindando apoyo a los integrantes de su comunidad. El Archivo Histórico Casa Pueblo es una herramienta que a su vez documenta estas acciones desde la lógica discursiva desde la misma comunidad. Es por esta razón que el archivo se constituye como resultado de la praxis de la comunidad y debe entenderse como un instrumento de apoyo, desde la experiencia de la memoria, a las organizaciones de autogestión y empresas sociales.

El archivo con un enfoque decolonial es un archivo vivo ya que permite crear un impacto en la sociedad al narrar desde la experiencia de una comunidad su historia. La creación del Archivo Histórico Casa Pueblo permite a la organización comunitaria democratizar el acceso a sus contenidos, a la vez que responsabiliza a sus usuarios del manejo ético de los materiales que están allí disponibles. Igualmente, permite a la organización normalizar la protección de sus acervos sin limitar el acceso a ellos.

Los archivos comunitarios permiten documentar y visibilizar la praxis de las comunidades, así como aquellos saberes, costumbres, cultura que le dan identidad. De igual manera, registran y dan voz a los problemas que enfrentan y a los que se deben buscar soluciones en conjunto. Un archivo vivo rescata la historia de las acciones de las comunidades que han sido olvidadas y se enfrentan a la desigualdad social. El Archivo Histórico Casa Pueblo provee un modelo para otros proyectos similares en el Caribe. Ante esta realidad, más investigación es necesaria para explorar la cultura de los archivos y su función, desde una perspectiva postcolonial y democratizadora (Rufer, 2020) y bajo

la premisa de que un archivo es portavoz de una comunidad, manteniendo viva la memoria de las luchas que validan su misión de unir, organizar y luchar por la igualdad social.

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SOUTHERN EPISTEMOLOGIES, SOUTHERN PRAXES AND ARTISTIC EXPRESSION IN THE CARIBBEAN AND BEYOND

AU NIGARAWOUN BEI, NIGARAWOUN AU

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AU NIGARAWOUN BEI, NIGARAWOUN AU [I AM MY DRUM, AND MY DRUM IS ME]

This is my drum.
This is my heritage.
I hold on to you so close,
You embody the concept upon which the
Garifuna Culture was built.

Au Bun, Amürü Nu
I for you, you for me
Spiritual selflessness, oneness
ABAN

As I hold you tilted forward
In a 30 degree angle unbroken circle
You, Me, Earth
You are the rhythm of my heart
You are the vine that reminds me that in this
World we are just a part of a whole

As we embrace ourselves in each other,
360-degree circle of life.
Do you know how much I love you?
Value your contributions?

Au Bun, Amürü Nu
I for you, you for me
Spiritual selflessness, oneness

ABAN

Oh how a few turns of you
Makes all the difference in the world.
You represent all who makes that
Sacrifice to ensure there is a culture
For me, for you, for us.

The skin represents those
who were once with us

and one day Niraü
One day
It will represent you.
So play on, play on, play on,
Continue to walk in the footsteps
Of our ancestors.

DEL BAILE DE BOMBA AL BOMBAZO: MIRADA AL GÉNERO MUSICAL DE LA BOMBA EN EL ÁREA SUR DE PUERTO RICO EN DOS MOMENTOS HISTÓRICOS; MEDIADOS DE S. XX VS. LA SEGUNDA DÉCADA DEL S.XXI

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Resumen

Comparamos la práctica del género de la bomba entre las dos épocas: mediados de siglo XX vs. la segunda década del siglo XXI. Realizamos entrevistas presenciales a familiares de ejecutantes de la bomba en el S. XX, observación participativa y revisión de fuentes secundarias. Se encontraron diferencias en la práctica de la bomba en la instrumentación, los bailes, la organización del evento, los auspiciadores y la vestimenta. Concluimos que estas diferencias en la práctica de la bomba fueron multifactoriales y motivadas por el proceso natural evolutivo de aspectos socioeconómicos, culturales y tecnológicos.

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Términos clave: Bomba puertorriqueña, bomba del Sur, tambores acostados, bomba de Guayama, bomba de Arroyo, bomba de Ponce, Cuá, Maracas

Introducción

A los que nos encanta la música de la bomba puertorriqueña debemos saber que en el sur de Puerto Rico en el periodo entre el 1954 y 1965 del Siglo XX, este género se practicaba de manera muy distinta en comparación con la manera que se ha practicado en el periodo entre 2013 a 2018. Las diferencias percibidas en la práctica de la bomba entre ambas épocas son múltiples y muy significativas. En este artículo se mencionan algunos de los valores, las normas y las construcciones de significados compartidos en la estructura de la bomba en ambas épocas para tratar de explicar las diferencias. Por un lado, la información sobre el primer periodo se obtuvo mediante entrevistas a 6 personas nacidas entre 1935 y 1945 en los municipios de Arroyo, Guayama y Ponce. Por el otro lado, la información de los cinco años más recientes la conocemos de primera mano por haber sido testigos y participantes activos en la ejecución de la bomba con personas de

Guayama, Salinas, Ponce y Guayanilla. Pero también tomamos de referencia artículos y escritos de algunos protagonistas destacados de la época más reciente.

Si aplicamos algunas acepciones de la definición de la palabra ‘criollo’ (la cual considero problemática en sí misma) se puede considerar a la bomba puertorriqueña como música criolla. Primero, su procedencia es negra-africana pero desarrollada en el continente de América; segundo, está en constante evolución por los contextos dinámicos en que ocurre; y tercero, es autóctono o propio del país o del conjunto de países la región. La práctica de la bomba siempre ha sido influenciada por los aspectos sociales, tecnológicos, técnicos, culturales y económicos, entre otros factores de la actividad humana. Por lo tanto, se puede considerar que el género de la bomba en Puerto Rico siempre ha estado en constante evolución. Es probable que desde sus inicios la bomba en Puerto Rico haya sido una forma adaptada de hacer música por personas de distintas etnias y naciones trasladadas involuntariamente desde el Continente Africano por el sistema esclavista europeo desde finales del Siglo XV hasta el Siglo XIX. Pero con el tiempo también fue influenciada por personas llegadas a nuestra nación procedentes de distintos lugares del Caribe con diversidad inmensa de lenguajes, culturas, músicas y tradiciones. Tampoco deben descartarse las influencias europeas y árabes por obvias razones históricas.

De acuerdo con Scarano (1993) los africanos traídos a Puerto Rico procedían de una multitud de pueblos, naciones, grupos étnicos y estados, cada uno dueños de historia y unas tradiciones propias. Picó (1986, p. 33) planteó que la inmensa mayoría de los africanos que trajeron mediante la trata de esclavos procedían del África occidental, desde las regiones de la actual nación de Senegal hasta Angola, donde se hablan más de mil idiomas distintos, principalmente de la rama Benue-Kwa de la familia Niger-Congo. Entonces, la literatura sugiere que históricamente la diversidad de influencias en la música de la bomba fue continua en el archipiélago puertorriqueño por las inmigraciones forzadas o voluntarias desde África y el Caribe. A través de los siglos XVI al XIX a Puerto Rico trajeron o llegaron en oleadas inmigrantes esclavizados bozales del Continente Africano y esclavizados criollos de las hermanas islas del Caribe hispano, anglo, francés, danés y neerlandés: Santo Domingo Cuba, Jamaica, San Tomás y las otras Islas Vírgenes, San Cristóbal (St. Kitts), Antigua, Dominica, Martinica, Curazao, Guadalupe, entre otras Picó, (2012, pp. 14-17).

La música de la bomba puertorriqueña ha estado en constante evolución; probablemente como resultado de que el traspaso del conocimiento se ha dado por tradición oral. Este método sugiere mucha variabilidad en la enseñanza y el aprendizaje a través del tiempo y aún en una misma época en las distintas regiones del archipiélago. Ferreras (2005) planteó que la diversidad de los grupos étnicos se juntó y una síntesis de muchas tradiciones diferentes se creó. De esta mezcla de linajes y esta fusión de tradiciones fue que, paulatinamente, emergió la bomba. En este artículo nos enfocamos en resaltar las similitudes y diferencias encontradas en la práctica de la bomba puertorriqueña entre dos

épocas en una misma región, el sur del país. Ambas épocas estuvieron enmarcadas en sus respectivos contextos sociales, económicos, tecnológicos y demás características del quehacer humano, factores que pueden explicar dicha evolución.

La región del Sur de Puerto Rico a la que se hace referencia incluye a los municipios de Patillas, Arroyo, Guayama, Salinas, Santa Isabel, Juana Díaz, Ponce, Peñuelas, Yauco, Guánica y Guayanilla; pero con la presencia constante de bomberos de Mayagüez y otros pueblos del suroeste. La época a la que nos referimos es para mediados de siglo XX, entre los años 1954 a 1965. Todos los informantes de los eventos de la bomba de esa época fueron testigos presenciales que para esa época eran jóvenes de entre 8 a 19 años de edad. Eran las hijas e hijos, nietas y nietos que acompañaban a las cantadoras, bailadoras, tocadores y gestoras culturales de la época. Aunque reconocemos que los sesgos de memoria y maduración pudieron afectar las narraciones de los informantes, muchos datos específicos de la información fueron validados entre los entrevistados. A pesar de la distancia física y temporal entre las entrevistas se encontraron muchos datos consistentes entre las personas entrevistadas.

La organización del evento antes y ahora

La organización de una actividad de bomba en el Sur entre 1954 a 1965 se daba en el contexto de las condiciones de la época. A una actividad grande de bomba asistían personas de toda el área Sur y hasta del Oeste. Los bailes de bomba eran eventos importantes para las personas mayores por lo que la manera que se organizaba y promocionaba respondía a las circunstancias de la época. Existían dos auspiciadores principales para los eventos públicos de bomba; por un lado, el gobierno (estatal o municipal) y por otro lado los negocios de bebida alcohólica, bares o terrazas. Los entrevistados José Antonio (Goro) Díaz Sabater (julio 15, 2017), Wilfredo “Ito” Santiago (julio 17, 2017) y Edwin Brenes (enero 29, 2017) mencionaron en entrevistas separadas que el Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña (ICP) pagaba un total de \$7.50 por evento a los grupos de bomba en el Sur. Los gobiernos municipales pagaban estipendios de menor cantidad que el gobierno estatal, pero solían proveer transportación a los bomberos y las bomberas.

Los negocios pequeños y bares de bebidas alcohólicas eran los auspiciadores más consistentes para los bailes concurridos de bomba en esa época. Dos ejemplos muy recordados lo son el Bar de Chato, en Puerto de Jobos, Guayama y el Bar de Domingo Sánchez Cora, en Arroyo. Los propietarios de estos dos negocios organizaban consistentemente bailes de bomba como estrategia para atraer público y aumentar sus ventas. En su momento fueron lugares famosos y reconocidos por los bomberos del Sur como puntos de bailes de bomba. Ambos negocios quedaban cerca de la carretera principal por donde pasaban las líneas de transportación de carros públicos, por lo que su acceso era relativamente fácil. Otros eventos comunitarios de la bomba eran más íntimos y menos concurridos, tales como: las fiestas familiares y vecinales, así como el Belén (toques de

bomba en velorios en cuerpo presente), el Balá (toques de bomba en honor de un fallecido ya enterrado) y el Baquiné (toques de bomba en funerales de infantes, niñas y niños).

Para los bailes concurridos de bomba el auspiciador establecía una fecha y se activaba una red de promoción y divulgación que respondía a las circunstancias de la época. En el pueblo de Guayama para mitad de siglo XX la gestora y principal cantadora de bomba era Doña María Texidor, que era contactada por los promotores para generar los bailes de bomba. Tan pronto era contactada, Doña María, residente del Barrio Puerto de Jobos, activaba personalmente a su grupo de bailadoras, que eran las coristas del evento. La mayoría de las bailadoras/ coristas vivían en el mismo barrio o en barrios aledaños, por lo que se enteraban pronto del evento. Para esa época, Doña María solía procurar los servicios de los tocadores de Ponce: Don Sixto Cabrera, tocador del tambor primero (primo o subidor) y Andrés Mangual Ortolaza, alias Andrés Comodín, tocador del tambor segundo (buleador). De Don Sixto daremos una información muy pertinente más adelante. Doña María era conducida por un vehículo del municipio desde Guayama hasta Ponce para comunicarle a los tocadores la contratación para el evento. Un dato curioso es que muchas veces el vehículo municipal disponible era el carro fúnebre y era así como transportaban a Doña María a hacer esa gestión.

Como hemos mencionado, para los bailes masivos los choferes de carros públicos jugaban un rol esencial de promoción y transportación. Era la red de choferes de carros públicos (llamadas ‘las líneas’) que operaban desde Patillas hasta Mayagüez quienes se encargaban de divulgar por todas las rutas la fecha y lugar del evento. El día del evento estos choferes, entre los cuales algunos eran bailadores de bomba, transportaban a muchas de las bailadoras y los bailadores procedentes de los distintos pueblos de las áreas Sur y Oeste. De esa manera, un baile de bomba en cualquiera de los municipios era concurrido por personas de ambas regiones. Nos contó Don Ito Santiago que una canción de Doña Isabel Albizu Dávila narra un suceso ocurrido en Guayama entre un chofer de línea ponceño, bailador de bomba con un jíbaro de la montaña que estaba presente en un baile de bomba. La canción narra cómo el chofer asentó un golpe al jíbaro cuando se percató que le había sacado a bailar la pareja mientras el chofer le pedía piquete al tambor primero (subidor). La canción al ritmo Sicá titulada “El Golpe” del álbum *Isabel Albizu: La matriarca de la bomba* (Albizu Dávila, 2011) dice: “Qué golpe dio, qué golpe dio, qué golpe dio en Guayama, Bernardo Pillot.” Esta canción cuenta un suceso real y brinda a la luz el interesante dato de que algunos choferes de carros públicos eran bailadores de bomba, lo cual puede explicar el interés de estos en ser portavoces, transportar a participantes y asistir a los bailes de bomba.

En la época reciente, entre 2014 a 2018, los auspiciadores de los eventos de bomba no han variado mucho; los gobiernos municipales y estatales, junto con firmas comerciales, siguen contratando a grupos establecidos de bomba para eventos masivos tales como

festivales, fiestas patronales y otros eventos. La incorporación de las firmas comerciales para contratar exclusivamente a grupos de bomba en el presente puede que haya tomado auge a partir de los años noventa. Ese momento se identifica como el resurgir de la música de la bomba en Puerto Rico y es contemporáneo con el movimiento llamado “El Bombazo de Puerto Rico”. Halbert Barton (2004) estuvo involucrado y documentó este movimiento en conjunto con los hermanos Jorge, José y Víctor Emmanuelli Náter para fines de la década los 1990. Las actividades se desarrollaron con la estructura del Centro de Investigación y Cultura Raíces Eternas (CICRE), organización sin fines de lucro de naturaleza investigativa didáctica del género musical de la bomba.

En la época reciente en el Sur, los auspicios municipales y estatales para grupos de bomba ocurren en el contexto de festivales organizados por las comunidades y fiestas patronales. Hay al menos dos ejemplos destacados de festivales en el área Sur organizados por acción comunitaria con el auspicio de gobiernos, organizaciones no gubernamentales sin fines de lucro y empresas privadas con fines de lucro. Primero, en Salinas, el señor Edwin González y su organización sin fines de lucro Centro Cultural Cunyabe lleva organizando anualmente y de manera consecutiva desde el 22 de marzo de 2015 hasta la fecha de esta publicación el “Libre Soberao”. Este es un evento dedicado exclusivamente a la música de bomba. Los auspiciadores de este evento son el Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, algunos negocios del área de Salinas y Guayama, por el esfuerzo del propio señor González y su equipo de trabajo. Recientemente también se les unió la organización Segunda Quimbamba, de New Jersey.

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El segundo ejemplo ocurre en el Barrio La Cuarta en Ponce donde se lleva a cabo el Festival Nacional Afrocaribeño La Cuarta, organizado por el señor Ángel (Papote) Alvarado, presidente fundador de dicho evento y su grupo de colaboradores (Comité Pro-Nuestra Cultura, Inc.). Este festival se ha realizado durante los pasados veintiún años, cada mes de junio. El mismo también cuenta o ha contado con el apoyo económico del ICP, el Municipio de Ponce, la Cámara de Representantes, algunas marcas de licores y otros auspicios de negocios del área cercana al evento. Pero, cabe mencionar que los auspicios estatales y municipales son cada vez más difíciles de lograr para los organizadores. En 2018 el Municipio de Ponce ya había eliminado su colaboración económica a este evento en comparación a años anteriores, y limitándola a otras cosas como, por ejemplo, el apoyo de la Guardia Municipal y los servicios sanitarios portátiles. Pero eso no evitó la celebración del festival ese año pues la voluntad y capacidad gestora de sus organizadores vencieron los obstáculos financieros.

En la época reciente los apoyos de los gobiernos municipales a los eventos exclusivos de bomba o donde se contraten grupos de bomba son relativamente menos frecuentes que otros eventos artísticos. Las fiestas patronales de Ponce siempre incluyen la participación de grupos de bomba en sus programas. Pero municipios como los de Guayama, Salinas y Patillas han sido muy inconsistentes en el auspicio de grupos o eventos de

bomba. En tiempos recientes el municipio de Arroyo ha destacado de manera consistente en su apoyo a la gestión y ejecutoria de los grupos de bomba regionales, tanto en sus fiestas patronales, como en los diversos festivales que celebran. Por ejemplo, el festival Fiesta Negra, creado y desarrollado por el Centro Cultural de Arroyo y avalado por la administración municipal en el Malecón de Arroyo, en 2018 y 2019 giró en torno a la bomba. Para el mismo contrataron a los grupos Bomba Iyá de Ponce, Colectivo Umoja, la Escuela de Bomba y Plena Isabel Albizu Dávila de Ponce, el Grupo Verso y Tambó de Guayama, y Bomba Brava de Cayey. El municipio de Arroyo también contrató a Colectivo Umoja para la actividad Pequeña París Art Fest, realizada en el Malecón y apoyó al Colectivo Umoja en la celebración de un conversatorio y divulgación sobre la investigación de la historia de La Bomba: “Goro Cántame un Cuento” en ese mismo año, 2018, proveyéndoles dos espacios para la celebración del evento, el personal para atender los espacios y la cobertura del seguro de responsabilidad pública.

Por su parte, el municipio de Salinas y el Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña han apoyado a Centro Cunyabe a la realización de su festival en logística, brindando el espacio, preparándolo y, de manera limitada, con apoyo monetario, según su organizador, el señor Edwin González. Los primeros dos años, 2015 y 2016, el festival Libre Soberao se realizó en la plaza del Barrio Coquí de Salinas y los últimos tres años, 2017, 2018 y 2019, el festival se viene realizando en la Plaza Kennedy del emblemático Poblado Aguirre de Salinas. En una nota aparte, me parece que es una reivindicación histórica y una muestra de resistencia cultural que este festival se realice en los predios de la Central Aguirre, en la cual durante la época que fue propiedad de los norteamericanos, estaba prohibido hablar español en algunas áreas, específicamente en la plaza del poblado.

En resumen, al comparar los aspectos de la organización de los eventos de bomba entre mediados de siglo XX y la segunda década del siglo XXI muchos factores son similares. Por un lado, gobiernos municipales y estatales patrocinando de manera relativamente limitada en comparación con otros tipos de eventos culturales; por otro lado, mucha autogestión de parte de los organizadores, tales como gestiones comunitarias o vecinales y los eventos organizados por negocios pequeños que también están ubicados en comunidades generalmente de clase de escasos recursos, de la clase trabajadora y explotada por las grandes compañías extranjeras. Los negocios pequeños en ambas épocas se pueden identificar como los más consistentes patrocinadores para atraer público, aumentar ventas y a la vez sirven de taller y espacio de exposición musical, mientras proveen alguna remuneración monetaria a los bomberos. Tal vez el factor que diferencia ambas épocas es el patrocinio de marcas comerciales globales a actividades artísticas, festivales grandes y fiestas patronales donde también se contratan grupos de bomba. Sin embargo, el apoyo o auspicio económico a grupos o actividades exclusivas de bomba siguen siendo limitados.

Los instrumentos musicales de la bomba

Las bombas (tambores)

Los señores Edwin Brenes, Ito Santiago y Goro Díaz, en entrevistas separadas coincidieron en que los instrumentos utilizados para los toques de bomba en el Sur cerca de 1950 eran: dos tambores, los cuá y la maraca. Los tambores de bomba eran hechos de barril de gran tamaño (toneles), con piel de chivo o chiva e iban acostados en el piso al momento de tocarlos. El Dr. José Emanuel Dufrasne González, describió en sus escritos los tambores sureños de la siguiente manera: “Los barriles de Don William Archeval miden treinta pulgadas de alto y diecisiete y un cuarto pulgadas de diámetro en cada boca” (1990, p. 40). Don William era un tocadorponceño contemporáneo con Don Sixto Cabrera y está documentado por el Dr. Dufrasne en sus artículos de investigación.

El señor Wilfredo “Ito” Santiago, informó en su entrevista que, de niño, él presenció la afinación del cuero de bombas de cuña (clavijas de madera incrustadas al costado del tambor) atada a las anillas de bejucos o metal. Afinaban el cuero colocando una vela grande debajo de los tambores puestos de forma vertical con un calzo de madera para permitir el aire circular y mantener la candela encendida, según Ito Santiago. Los tocadores se ponían a hablar mientras bebían pitorro y ocasionalmente probaban la afinación del cuero percutiendo el tambor. Cuando quedaban satisfechos con el sonido procedían a acostarlos y a calentar las manos dando golpes para crear sonidos al azar y luego entrar en ritmos conocidos para entrar en sintonía rítmica. Goro Díaz Sabater informó en su entrevista otro modo de afinación que consistía en darle golpes a las cuñas y a las anillas con un mazo de madera.

El señor Edwin Brenes planteó que al momento del baile los tambores iban acostados en el piso y usaban pedazos de madera para aguantarlos por los costados a manera de calzo, para que no rodaran. Los nombres de los tambores en el Sur identificaban una jerarquía: Tambor Primero y Tambor Segundo. El Tambor Primero era el que hoy día conocemos como el Tambor Primo o Subidor, que marca los piquetes de los bailadores. Este tambor era tocado por los más experimentados, respetados y reconocidos tocadores. El Tambor Segundo es lo que hoy conocemos como el Tambor Buleador, que llevaba el ritmo constante. El Tambor Segundo era tocado también por personas reconocidas y respetadas por los bomberos de la región.

Los tambores de bomba en el Sur del archipiélago han variado en tamaño y modo de tocarse para la segunda década del siglo XXI. Rara vez se usan los barriles acostados, salvo honradas excepciones. En la época más reciente los tocadores sureños generalmente usan tambores más pequeños en tamaño y los tocan de manera vertical, inclinados levemente hacia el frente para permitir la salida del sonido. Con variaciones aproximadas de dos a tres pulgadas, los tambores que más se utilizan en esta época son de alrededor de 24 pulgadas de alto por 14 pulgadas de diámetro. Los tocadores sureños de esta época, como en el resto del archipiélago puertorriqueño, se sientan en sillas y colocan el tambor al frente entre sus piernas. He recibido la explicación por los tocadores del Sur

de que su preferencia para tocar tambores más pequeños en forma vertical es por la comodidad de la postura. Las razones dadas tienen que ver con la logística, la conveniencia práctica, la agilidad de traslado de instrumentos y la comodidad.

Los tocadores mencionan que los barriles acostados resultan más incómodos. Más allá de la incomodidad física que representa el estar sentado sobre la forma cilíndrica del tambor, existen consideraciones adicionales para que se les consideren incómodos:

- Cambia el posicionamiento de las manos al dar los golpes para sacarle los sonidos, especialmente los golpes secos.
- Es mucho más cómodo y fácil transportar un tambor de 24 x 14 pulgadas que uno de 30 x 17 o hasta 32 x 20 pulgadas.
- Muchos tocadores participan en grupos profesionales que tocan en negocios donde el espacio es limitado y conviene llevar instrumentos más pequeños.
- Puede que en un mismo día tengan compromisos artísticos en más de un lugar, lo cual hace necesario el poder moverse con agilidad entre los espacios donde tienen los compromisos.

Para esta segunda década del siglo XXI, uno de los tocadores más destacados y respetados de tambor de bomba en el área Sur lo es el Maestro José Luis Archeval “Archie”, nacido en el barrio Bélgica de Ponce. Archie es integrante del grupo Bomba Iyá, y director de la Escuela de Bomba y Plena Isabel Albizu Dávila de Ponce. Aunque tiene el mismo apellido del tocador del siglo pasado, Don William Archeval, el mismo José Archeval nos plantea que no están emparentados de manera directa. Otro tocador muy destacado de esta época lo es el talentoso Amaury “Beto” Santiago Albizu, hijo de Doña Isabel Albizu y Don Wilfredo “Ito” Santiago, quienes fueron los fundadores del Grupo Bambalué de Ponce. Beto Santiago creció y aún reside en el barrio La Calzada, que queda frente al Aeropuerto Mercedita; es continuador de la tradición de la bomba al fundar el grupo Bomba Iyá. Este proyecto musical es un ejemplo digno de la evolución de la bomba, pues en el concepto se incluyen instrumentos de otros países caribeños tales como las tumbadora, los tambores batás, la batería, entre otros. Beto es un excelente subidor que se distingue por su energética manera de ejecutar el toque del tambor, y por los particulares cortes y patrones que crea a la hora de tocar.

No podemos dejar de mencionar entre los más destacados tocadores de bomba de la región Sur a Pedro Luis Amaro Ruiz, mejor conocido como “Pepa Amaro”, de Guayama, quien llegó a la bomba aproximadamente para el año 2009, luego de haber destacado durante toda su juventud y adulterzado temprana como tocador de timba o conga. Su incursión al mundo de la bomba la hizo con el Grupo Tradición, de José Miguel “Ñeco” Flores; también colaboró a menudo con la folklorista Nora Cruz Roque en muchas de sus presentaciones. Más adelante, además de ser el subidor del Grupo Tradición, se une a bomba del Sur, grupo establecido por Edwin González, y de ahí pasa a co-fundador el proyecto Colectivo Umoja, con el cual actualmente se mantiene activo. Como tocador de bomba, por su talento y humildad, se ha ganado el respeto de la comunidad bombera

y frecuentemente es buscado para que colabore con diversos grupos de bomba de toda la isla.

Los Cuá

Otro de los instrumentos esenciales de la bomba son los cuá, dos palos de madera que eran percutidos en el costado del Tambor Segundo. Como el tambor estaba acostado, el tocador de los cuá se sentaba en un banco de madera pequeño (taburete) y se colocaba detrás del tocador del Tambor Segundo (buleador) para percutir los cuá en la superficie que quedaba descubierta. El tocador de los cuá también era una persona reconocida y respetada en la bomba. El Señor Edwin Brenes identificó a Pascual Saunión Pica, alias Mano Gasón como uno de los tocadores de cuá de la época de los 50 y 60 del siglo XX. Los cuá en esta época tienen la función de servir de clave y llevar el tempo de la música de la bomba. Tienen unos patrones rítmicos particulares de acuerdo con el ritmo, son o seis de bomba que se esté tocando. Uno de los estudiosos de los patrones rítmicos de los cuá en el Sur lo es el Dr. Emmanuel Dufrasne González (2017) quien ha documentado, publicado y presentado en distintos foros los sonidos de los ritmos sureños del Mariandá, Leró, Holandé del Sur, Cunyá del Sur, Sicá y Güembé, entre otros.

En cuanto a la evolución del instrumento, una variación importante ocurrió en el tocador de los cuá por razones similares a las de los tambores. El tocador de cuá en la actualidad tiene una proyección más destacada en comparación con los tiempos de antaño en el Sur. Antes, el tocador de los palos se sentaba en una banqueta pequeña casi escondido detrás del tocador del tambor segundo. Ahora, el tocador de los cuá tiene una base de madera que generalmente tiene la forma de un barril pequeño de aproximadamente 12 pulgadas de largo con un diámetro de aproximadamente 6 a 8 pulgadas. También es común que se utilice un pedazo de bambúa de aproximadamente 12 pulgadas de largo. Esta base de madera o bambúa es colocada sobre un soporte de madera y el tocador casi siempre está de pie frente a la base para los cuá. Esto supone una evolución conveniente para el tocador de este instrumento pues en antaño la posición era muy incómoda y suponía una proyección disminuida hacia el público, pero ahora está en una posición más cómoda de pie, paralela a los tambores con una proyección prominente.

En las otras regiones en antaño el tocador de los cuá quedaba incómodo, en cuclillas tocando sobre el costado del tambor buleador que estaba colocado de manera vertical. Por lo general, el tocador de los cuá era un aprendiz o un ejecutante de menor rango en la jerarquía de los bomberos ejecutantes. En la actualidad el tocador de los cuá no solo está más cómodo ejecutando su instrumento, sino que tiene una proyección más destacada con respecto a los demás tocadores al compararlo con su posición de antaño. En los grupos de la época actual los ejecutantes de cuá son músicos experimentados y muy buenos, pues posiblemente la profesionalización de los grupos de bomba demanda que el que toque este instrumento tenga una habilidad de mantener un tempo constante para referencia de los tocadores de tambores y mantener también el amarre consistente.

Como mencioné antes, otro aspecto evolutivo de la época reciente en los cuá ha sido la incorporación de otros instrumentos. Los cuá son los palos percutidos sobre una superficie de madera. La evolución estriba en que se han incorporado otros instrumentos sobre el cual los palitos son percutidos. En el grupo profesional sureño más destacado, Bomba Iyá, de Amaury “Beto” Santiago Albizu, se resalta el uso de la batería como instrumento, siendo ésta el elemento evolutivo en el rol de los cuá en la instrumentación. Este instrumento es ejecutado en este grupo por músicos experimentados tales como Joel Abraham, Martín Rivera y José “Murcy” Reyes. Dentro de lo que es el toque tradicional de los cuá, destaca oír su precisión, sentido de musicalidad, patrones y proyección a la hora de ejecutar, la también maestra bailadora de bomba, Naisha Charlotte Villalobos, de la Escuela de Bomba y Plena Isabel Albizu Dávila de Ponce.

La profesionalización y adaptación evolutiva del ejecutante de la marcha con los cuá por músicos cotizados se repite en otras regiones del territorio borincano con los grupos profesionales más destacados de esta segunda década del siglo XXI. Músicos Mario Pereira del emblemático grupo Son del Batey, o Gabriel Oliver Cruz del grupo Bomba Evolución, han llevado la ejecución de los cuá a otro nivel con la incorporación de la batería y otros instrumentos de percusión. Como muy bien opinara George Rosario, uno de los cantadores de bomba más destacados de la Generación del Bombazo y de esta época reciente, que hace referencia a las fuentes rítmicas de los ejecutantes de cuá con respecto a las variantes percusivas que ellos crean siempre respetando las referencias rítmicas “tradicionales” de la bomba, en estos grupos profesionales los tocadores de cuá son ejecutantes, músicos excelentes y muy experimentados. Es evidente que los tocadores de los cuá en la época actual tienen gran importancia y prominencia en los grupos profesionales más destacados, no como en antaño que lo tocaba un aprendiz o un músico de menor rango.

La maraca

A parte de los tambores y los cuá, el siguiente instrumento de la bomba que reseñamos es la maraca. Está hecha del fruto seco del árbol de higüera, con semillas que pueden ser de la planta de maraca, peronías, camándulas o alguna otra clase de semillas colocadas dentro del fruto seco al cual se le incorpora un mango de madera. La maraca era tocada exclusivamente por la cantadora principal, quien era una persona reconocida, respetada y con muchos años de experiencia en la bomba. En el Sur de Puerto Rico las cantadoras tenían la maraca, cuando cantar era una función exclusiva de las mujeres para esa época. Tanto en antaño como en la actualidad se puede inferir que la maraca es el instrumento que marca el ritmo y establece el tempo de la canción. Al igual que con los cuá, con la maraca se tocan unos patrones rítmicos específicos para un ritmo o una familia de ritmos particulares. De ese modo los ritmos, sones o seises de Sicá, Leró y Güembé con sus variantes tienen unos patrones rítmicos específicos en la maraca. En la bomba tradicional la combinación del sonido de la voz y la maraca de la cantadora (si es en el área Sur) o el cantador en cualquier otra región, es lo que da inicio a las canciones. De esta manera

es que se establece el ritmo de acuerdo con el patrón ejecutado y el tempo de acuerdo con la velocidad del sonido de la maraca. Hoy día se siguen estos fundamentos en la bomba, aunque se ha notado muchas veces que se van perdiendo la diferenciación de patrones rítmicos entre un Sicá y un Güembé. Es por esta razón que los estudios del Dr. Emmanuel Dufrasne González (1990, 2017) en los patrones rítmicos de la percusión menor en la bomba (los cuá y la maraca) adquieren importancia.

La vestimenta

Una de las entrevistadas en el área Sur fue la señora Marta Almodóvar Clavell (2017, comunicación personal), hija de Julia Clavell y nieta de Salomé Villodas, destacada bailadora de bomba de la primera mitad del siglo XX. Marta explicó que el baile de la mujer se centraba en un elemento principal: mostrar sus enaguas. Marta también fue crítica acerca de la vestimenta utilizada en los grupos folclóricos, así como en ilustraciones académicas y culturales. Ella opina que han contribuido a que se generalice en el imaginario popular la idea de que la indumentaria tradicional en la bomba la falda ancha, la camisa de manga larga y el turbante tenían prominencia general. Los testimonios de los entrevistados en el Sur tienden no son consistentes con esa idea, aunque es importante mencionar que las diferencias en valores y costumbres en la bomba pueden estar relacionados a la regionalización.

Sobre la indumentaria femenina en el Sur para los bailes de bomba de mediados del Siglo XX, Marta negó que tradicionalmente se usara la falda como pieza individual como la conocemos ahora en 2018 así como el uso de ropa totalmente blanca tanto en las féminas como en los varones. Ella informó que las mujeres usaban los trajes enteros sencillos, no ceñidos, pero tampoco muy volanteados y que la enagua y el pañuelo a la cabeza eran los elementos más importantes en la vestimenta femenina. Respecto a este tema Marta menciona lo siguiente:

... ellas nunca usaron ropa como tal de baile de bomba ni faldas. No. Se usaban trajes. De eso me acuerdo, yo estaba pequeña y mi bisabuela lo que usaba era traje. Traje y con sus enaguas bien adornaditas. Más nada ... eso era esencial. Lo que era el pañuelo y las enaguas era importante para ellas. El traje era un trajecito sencillo, casi siempre amarradito con un cinturón aquí en la cintura. Su falda, casi siempre la falda era en corte de campana, cuestión que abriera un poquito, pero un poquito. Nada de volante y nada de esas cuestiones. Bien sencillito. Porque el orgullo de ellas era la enagua. (Almodóvar Clavel, julio 15, 2017, comunicación personal)

Marta abunda en los detalles de la enagua:

... ah!, entonces las enaguas eran en tafeta, pero los adornos podían ser en tela bordada, en algodón, o en tela bordada como encaje, con cintas, y entonces, casi siempre los volantes ellas les gustaban blancos entonces ponerles adornitos a esos volantes. Ponerles cintas, ponerles flores, los lacitos ... habían unas florecitas,

miosotis ... las miosotis, pues ese era el orgullo de ellas (entonación). Y para mí fue algo, cuando mi abuela, porque ella salía a Ponce, a Mayagüez, a donde sea la invitaban y la venían a buscar y se las llevaban ... (Almodóvar Clavel, julio 15, 2017, comunicación personal)

Con respecto al pañuelo, Marta argumenta:

Ese pañuelo era en cuadro siempre. En cuadro, eran en cuadro, lo que llamaban guin-gan. De cuadros más chiquitos, cuadros más grandecitos, pero esos pañuelos eran de cuadro siempre ... siempre ... siempre Ellas ... abuela, sus pañuelos, ella tenía una colección de pañuelos ... mi abuela. Y si nosotras salíamos y veíamos unas telas guin-gan, enseguida comprábamos una yarda para llevárselo Así puesto y entonces amarrado acá de tal forma que le quedaba un pico pa' arriba y otro pico para abajo. Ese era el pañuelo. Ese es el pañuelo. (Almodóvar Clavel, julio 15, 2017, comunicación personal)

De modo que el traje era de una pieza, sencillo, hasta los tobillos; debajo del traje una enagua de tela de tafeta adornado con lazos, encajes, lentejuelas y otros accesorios. En la cabeza la mujer vestía un pañuelo de tela de cuadros llamado guin-gan (conocido como “madrás”) que se amarraban en nudo dejando dos puntas señalando hacia arriba y hacia abajo. La invalidación que hace la señora Almodóvar sobre la vestimenta nos pone en perspectiva de que las características, los valores y normas en la práctica de la bomba no necesariamente eran uniformes u homogéneos en tiempo y espacio. Tal vez respondían a las circunstancias socio culturales, económicas y de otra índole del momento en cada espacio o región. Lydia González (2004), planteó como problemático el tema de las vestimentas supuestamente tradicionales, que se arraigaron en el imaginario popular y fueron establecidas en los espectáculos promovidos por el aparato turístico del gobierno desde la misma época en que abordamos en este estudio.

En cuanto al varón, también ‘se tiraba’ la mejor tela que tuvieran disponible en su vestimenta. Algunos usaban chaqueta de traje, otros en camisa blanca abotonada hasta arriba. José Antonio Díaz Sabater (Goro), nos da detalles del énfasis del bailador Esteban Boyer en su vestimenta: “Sí. Él, Boyé, que era un personaje pequeñito, trigueño bien buyanguero de esos. Bien parao, que no se quería sentar porque no se le iba a arrugar el pantalón. Eso era un filo desde acá hasta acá.” (Díaz Sabater, julio 15, 2017, comunicación personal)

El baile de bomba era una actividad muy importante para los participantes y lo abordaban con mucho entusiasmo y mucho respeto. Pudo haber representado la oportunidad de divertirse y olvidar la carga y dureza de la vida cotidiana para el sector de la sociedad más explotado y marginado por parte de las clases dominantes. La mayoría eran trabajadores de la caña y estaban sujetos al desempleo en las épocas de baja producción, el llamado tiempo muerto. Eran gente de muy bajos recursos económicos, por lo que veían en el baile de bomba una oportunidad de olvidarse de las dificultades por un momento. También era espacio de socialización y de identidad de grupo. En la literatura se ha

planteado que la preocupación por el atuendo reflejaba la búsqueda simbólica de una cierta igualdad con los sectores dominantes por parte de los afrodescendientes oprimidos, que en su mayoría pertenecían a las clases marginadas del país. Todas estas razones pudieron ser las respuestas para explicar por qué sus participantes se ponían sus mejores vestidos.

El baile de bomba

El señor Edwin Brenes (comunicación personal, enero 29, 2017) lo describió muy acertadamente: para mediados del siglo XX en el Sur ocurrían bailes de bomba, no existían los bombazos que conocemos hoy día. Cuando la gente que se dirigía a la bomba, estaban asistiendo a un baile formal. Brenes explicó que antes la gente iba a bailar; se bailaba en pareja y bailaban muchas parejas a la vez. Era el equivalente a un bailable de salsa en de la época más reciente, pero lo que se bailaba antes era bomba. Todas las parejas bailaban simultáneamente, ocupando todo el espacio del batey. Se iban moviendo mientras bailaban, de manera que en algún momento cada pareja pasaba frente al Tambor Primero (Tambor Primo o Subidor).

Todos los entrevistados coincidieron en que en el baile del Sur los roles y formalismos estaban claramente designados por género. Solamente el varón podía bailarle piquetes y pedirle repiques al Tambor Primero. Durante el baile en pareja cuando el varón tenía la oportunidad de estar frente al Tambor Primero, le hacia una reverencia de respeto y comenzaba a dar los piquetes. Estos movimientos eran en baile libre en el cual el Tambor Primero interpretaba con golpes para crear los sonidos que reflejaban esos piquetes. Luego de terminar su improvisación el bailador saludaba al Tambor Primero y volvía a donde estaba su pareja. Los nombres de los bailadores varones mencionados fueron: Regino Texidor alias El Cojo, Esteban Boyer (o Boyé), Faustino Vélez “Mangay”, Esteban Confesor y Andrés Mangual Ortolaza alias Comodín. En el área de Arroyo estaban para esa época Pablo Lind, Erasmo Ramos Soler y Domingo Sánchez Cora (propietario del Bar de Don Domingo en Arroyo, donde también se celebraban bailes de bomba frecuentemente). Se me escapan muchísimos nombres de bailadores y tocadores de bomba de esa época, queda entonces como tema a ser visitado en la sección posterior de este artículo titulada “Los nombres nombrados”.

De acuerdo con los entrevistados en el área Sur, el baile de las mujeres era elegante, con pasos cortos y refinados, sin hacer movimientos bruscos. Ellas hacían figuras o posiciones del cuerpo y los brazos mientras subían ligeramente la parte de abajo de sus trajes de modo que se vieran sus enaguas. Estas piezas de ropa era el orgullo de las mujeres, las cuales estaban fina y cuidadosamente adornadas con lazos, bordados, flores y otros adornos que fueron descritos en detalle en la sección anterior por Marta Almodóvar Clavel. En cuanto a la limitación de movimientos, es plausible que una de las razones por las cuales las bailadoras no realizaban movimientos bruscos sea la edad de las ejecutantes. Reiteradas veces los entrevistados de todas las áreas del Sur hicieron referencia a

que los que practicaban la bomba eran personas muy mayores en edad, por lo que tal vez eso explica en parte las limitaciones de movimiento. Pero esto es una especulación y merece mayor investigación.

De modo que, por un lado, los entrevistados plantearon que el rol de la mujer en el baile del Sur era la de exhibir su indumentaria, especialmente sus enaguas, mientras acompañaba al pareja varón en el baile. No piqueteaban ni pedían golpes al primo, pues se entendía que ese era rol exclusivo de varones, ellas hacían figuras en interacción a los piquetes del pareja, lo que la hacía tener un rol más allá de la exhibición de la falda. Por el otro lado, en el baile del Sur a mediados de Siglo XX, los varones lucían su habilidad piqueteando, pero también había una interacción de la pareja en el baile pues las mujeres les hacían figuras al pareja con coquetería y elegancia mientras que éste le respondía con piquetes galantes para agradar, y viceversa. Esta interacción ocurría mientras el varón no pasaba frente al primo. Ahora, imaginen a muchas parejas bailando a la vez en el batey con esta hermosa interacción. A los ojos de un espectador debió de haber sido tremendo espectáculo tener frente a sí múltiples estímulos visuales y sonoros con cada pareja interactuando y un bailador frente al primo piqueteando.

Uno de los datos más interesantes provistos fue el concepto de Los Diplomados, que eran los bailadores más reconocidos y considerados en lo más alto de la jerarquía de la bomba, según Ito Santiago (julio 17, 2017, comunicación personal). De acuerdo con Ito Santiago, un Bailador Diplomado podía pedirle al varón de cualquier pareja bailando en el batey que le cediera bailar con la mujer. La manera de pedirle el intercambio de pareja era mediante la entrega de un pañuelo, y se devolvían en intercambio de pañuelo y pareja cuando terminaba la pieza. No se consideraba una falta de respeto sino un honor que un diplomado pidiera bailar con la pareja de un bailador. Este enfoque de patriarcado y machista es característico de la época en que ocurría en la bomba del Sur. Estos Bailadores Diplomados eran siempre varones, dado que a las mujeres no les era permitido piquetearle al Tambor Primero.

Estos son los nombres nombrados

Para mediados del siglo XX, aproximadamente entre 1954 a 1965 en Guayama la cantadora más reconocida y tocadora de la maraca, lo fue María Texidor, quien además se encargaba de coordinar la participación de las bailadoras y bailadores de la región entre Patillas y Guayama. La voz principal de Doña María Texidor versaba alternando con el coro en modo responsorial, una tradición de canto en muchos sectores del continente africano. Los hombres no cantaban en la bomba del Sur; en ese sentido, la mujer tenía un papel protagónico. Doña Marta Almodóvar (Almodóvar Clavel, julio 15, 2017, comunicación personal) señaló en entrevista que existe un video antiguo en el que sale Doña María Texidor. Pregunta de investigación emergente: ¿Se refiere al video titulado “La Plena” que se puede ver por YouTube?

Cruz Gual y Petronila (Toní) Sabater son bailadoras/ coristas que Doña María Texidor siempre llevaba a los bailes de bomba que ella organizaba. Bailadoras mencionadas incluyen también las hermanas Salomé, Amalia y Sica Villodas, Blas Villodas, Yeya Candó, Julia Clavell Villodas, Flora Texidor, Aurora Texidor (que no tienen relación sanguínea con María) y Petronila Sabater (Doña Toní). Otras bailadoras de esa época en Arroyo fueron Sisita (mencionada sin apellido por Edwin Brenes, comunicación personal, enero 29, 2017), María Inés Ramos Clausell, quien fue la compañera de baile del gran tocador Pablo Lind, y las Hermanas Atiles, por mencionar algunas. Reitero la necesidad de escribir sobre el tema de los nombres de bailadores y bailadoras de antaño. También repaso algunos de los nombres de bailadores varones, que incluyen a Regino Texidor, hijo de María Texidor que tenía una discapacidad en una pierna y bailaba en muletas, Esteban Boyer (o Boye), Pablo Lind, gran tocador de tambor primero y bailador, Faustino (Mangay) Vélez que era compañero de Salomé Villodas, Esteban Confesor Vázquez y Pascual Saunión Pica (Mano Gasón). Para la época de mediados de Siglo XX en el área Sur, Don Pablo Lind, que era de Arroyo y era siempre invitado por los tocadores de Ponce a tocar sus tambores cuando estos visitaban Guayama o Arroyo, también fue mencionado como un buen bailador de bomba.

Uno de los nombres que más llamó la atención fue el de Sixto Cabrera, cuyos datos de los censos de 1930 y 1940 fueron encontrados por la investigadora Melanie Maldonado Díaz (2018). De acuerdo con estos datos censales nos hemos topado con uno de los hallazgos más importantes de este estudio: Sixto Cabrera nace en 1895 en Ponce, tenía 45 años, residía en el número 12 de la calle Oeste del Barrio Primero de Ponce, el nombre de su esposa aparece como Clisanta Ortiz de 33 años (nacida en 1907) y también residían dos menores; Herminia Cabrera de 16 años de edad y César Cabrera de 12 años de edad. Estos datos sugieren que la pareja de Sixto y Clisanta llevaban juntos por lo menos 17 años pues el nacimiento de su primera hija fue en 1924. La importancia de este hallazgo es que es muy probable que los nombres de Sixto y su esposa Clisanta son los nombrados en una canción tradicional de la bomba disponible en YouTube, el Holandé titulado “Eleticia” cuyo coro dice: “Ay, Eleticia llámame a Sixto, que le diga a Clisanta que yo me iba a morir.” ([Sorongo], 2009)

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Algunos nombres nombrados actuales

En la segunda década del siglo XXI los bailadores varones más reconocidos y destacados parecen ser menos en comparación con los del siglo XX. Me lanza a plantear que Amaury “Beto” Santiago Albizu se puede considerar como el mejor bailador de esta época en el área Sur y de los mejores en el planeta. Beto es hijo de Isabel Albizu Dávila; tiene linaje, nació y se crio en comunidad y familia bombera. Su conocimiento proviene de dos fuentes: la genética y la crianza, por lo que su conocimiento es inmenso y profundo.

Otros bailadores destacados de esta época en el Sur son del Barrio Jobos en Guayama, entre los que se encuentran la familia Flores. Don Miguel Flores a sus 92 años es en estos momentos bailador de bomba de mayor edad en el mundo. Don Miguel fue esposo de Doña Evangelina Villodas, hermana de las legendarias bailadoras Salomé, Amalia y Sica Villodas, por lo que también nació y creció en el contexto de una comunidad, familias y tradición centenaria bombera. Se reconoce y resalta la edad en la cual Don Miguel continúa activo en la bomba y es testigo presencial de la actividad bomba del siglo pasado. Don Miguel llega a consolidar su contacto con la bomba al unirse con Mamá Eva en matrimonio, y por consecuencia, estar muy cercano a la familia Villodas. En estos momentos Don Miguel, junto con los mayores que quedan vivos, representan el enlace directo con la generación anterior de la bomba en el Sur.

El legado bombero de los Flores de Guayama continuó fuerte con el hijo de Don Miguel, José Miguel “Ñeco” Flores, quien carga en su sangre todo el legado de la raza Villodas y es la figura central de la continuidad de la bomba en el Puerto de Jobos entre aquella y esta época. Ñeco carga los genes, el legado y la tradición bombera por la sangre y el apellido materno y de manera muy justa se le debe atribuir la responsabilidad de la continuidad a esta tradición en Guayama. Ñeco no sólo es un excelente y sumamente elegante bailador de bomba, sino que además es compositor, cantador y muy buen tocador de bomba sureña. Su hijo, José Flores “Ñequito”, así como sus hijas Madeline y Jessica, son también destacados bailadores y bailadoras de la bomba sureña.

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Ñeco Flores vivió plenamente la bomba en la diáspora al residir durante muchos años en los Estados Unidos y al regresar a Puerto Rico decide darle continuidad a su línea bombera estableciendo un proyecto en su comunidad de Puerto de Jobos. En dicho proyecto él y sus hijos José y Jessica enseñaron a niños de la comunidad, que ya no tenían tanta exposición al género el baile, a fin de rescatar la tradición bombera del barrio. En ese contexto funda el Grupo Tradición que actualmente sigue activo. Gracias a esfuerzos de personas comprometidas como Ñeco que procuran enseñar, hay jóvenes emergentes bailadores de bomba.

Otra persona comprometida es la profesora y gran folclorista y gestora cultural guayamesa Nora Cruz Roque PhD. Nora merece todo un libro que resalta su infinita aportación a la cultura en general y de manera particular, a la bomba. Destacada educadora, folklorista, poeta, ensayista, conductora de programas de radio, promotora y gestora de actividades culturales, Nora es una de las personas responsables de que la bomba en Guayama haya resurgido y se haya mantenido vigente. Su proyecto poético-musical más reciente es “Verso y Tambó” (nacido del título de uno de sus poemarios publicados); el mismo consiste en poesía y canto en ritmos de bomba, que se enfoca en la historia y la herencia africana en Guayama, el Sur, Puerto Rico y el Caribe. Este proyecto ha sido llevado por Nora a diversos lugares del archipiélago puertorriqueño y a festivales de la República Dominicana, Cuba y Estados Unidos.

Cabe también mencionar el maestro José Luis Archeval (Archie) con la Escuela de Bomba y Plena Isabel Albizu Dávila de Ponce, y el gestor cultural Edwin González con el Centro Cultural Cunyabe de Salinas. Los productos de estos esfuerzos son muchísima cultura relacionada a la bomba y otras incontables personas que aprenden y se benefician de estas oportunidades. Se pueden mencionar a jóvenes emergentes como Norixa Santiago, integrante del Grupo Verso y Tambó y su hijo, Joseph Dorico residentes en Salinas. Norixa imparte clases de baile en Guyama y en el Centro Cultural Cunyabe en Salinas con Ivette Negrón, y Joseph se ha destacado como bailador desde niño. Madre e hijo han bailado en muchos escenarios importantes de la bomba en todo el archipiélago boricua. Luis Jorniel, hijo mayor de Norixa también destaca como bailador, pero más aún como una promesa de subidor de los tambores de bomba. Cabe destacar que todos los integrantes de la Familia Dorico-Santiago colaboran con la enseñanza de la bomba a personas novatas en el Centro Cultural Cunyabe y en la Casa del Poeta Luis Palés Matos de Guayama bajo el Proyecto Verso y Tambó de la profesora Nora Cruz Roque.

De la Escuela de Bomba y Plena Isabel Albizu Dávila de Ponce destacan las bailadoras y cantadoras de la época más reciente Noemí Román Vives y su hija, Naisha Charlotte Villalobos Román, Cairis Yalees Pérez Valentín, Yary González, Marta Lina Dominici, Karimar Antonetti Tarrants y Juneily Antonetti Tarrants, entre muchas y muchos otros jóvenes. En el contexto comunitario mencionamos a Yvette Ayala y su hija Yeiza Semidey Ayala. También de Guayama podemos mencionar a una persona muy especial en Adelis M. Pérez Laporte. Adelis es una autodidacta que aprendió a bailar bomba en el batey. Tomó clases con el maestro Rafael Maya en San Juan, pero su estilo lo ha ido desarrollando por observación y su propia interpretación de lo que es el baile en general y el baile sureño en particular. Su baile tiene la particularidad de que acostumbra a hacerlo sin falda, aunque ocasionalmente usa una estola o bufanda. El baile de Adelis se basa en la expresión corporal y los gestos, es un deleite ver su entrega y piquetes.

En Salinas también tenemos a la destacada bailadora Ivette Negrón, quien, aunque es nacida y criada en Salinas, aprendió a bailar bomba en Santurce en la Escuela de Bomba y Plena de Don Modesto Cepeda y también en la Escuela Caridad Brenes de Cepeda, dirigida por Margarita (Tata) Cepeda. Cabe destacar, por lo tanto, que el baile de Ivette está influenciado por el estilo santurcino, pero ella también es una autodidacta que estudia e integra los estilos sureños a su baile. Como ya mencionamos, los testimonios de los mayores entrevistados sugieren que el baile sureño se supone más recatado y estilizado mientras que el de Santurce es más abierto y agresivo en los movimientos con la falda. Ivette tiene de ambos estilos en su baile y lo sabe a conciencia, por lo que al momento de bailar o enseñar tiene claro lo que está haciendo y así lo manifiesta.

Entre las épocas de mediados del siglo pasado y la época actual de segunda década del siglo XXI en el Sur se destacaron dos exponentes: Isabel Albizu Dávila y Marta Vargas Cortés. Doña Isabel se recuerda como la cantadora principal y más importante de las décadas de los 1980 y 90 en el Sur. Ella también tenía linaje pues su madre, Doña Teresa

Dávila fue cantadora, bailadora y compositora de canciones de bomba en Ponce, según nos contó don Ito Santiago (Santiago, 2017, comunicación personal). Doña Isabel compuso muchas canciones y documentó algunas en el disco compacto Isabel Albizu: La Matriarca de la Bomba y su Grupo Bambalué, grabado por Casabe Records (Albizu Dávila, 2011).

Por su parte, Marta Vargas Cortés organizó el Ballet Folclórico Baramaya, también en el legendario Barrio Bélgica de Ponce (Alfonso, 2017). Marta también tiene linaje cultural importante en su padre Juan Bautista Vargas conocido como “El Indio de Voz de Oro” y su tío José Oppenheimer Vargas, apodado como “El Rey de la Plena” en Ponce. Con su proyecto cultural, Marta expuso la bomba en festivales en Europa, Estados Unidos, Centro y Sur América. Compuso y cantó canciones de bomba y las documentó en dos discos, (Cartagena, 2004).

En la época actual sobresale Julia I. (Julie) Laporte García como cantadora de bomba. Julie, natural de Guayama, ha sido influenciada por múltiples cantadoras y cantadores exponentes de la bomba sureña tanto actuales como de antaño, entre las que se encuentran María Texidor, Nellie Lebrón (Taller Paracumbé), Keyla Enid Rivera Arroyo (Revolución Cultural), Nora Cruz Roque (Ballet Folclórico Guayama) y José Miguel (Ñeco) Flores (Grupo Tradición). Julie compone canciones de bomba basadas en su propia investigación histórica y comunitaria. Siguiendo los pasos de Nora, Julie también es una destacada poeta y folklorista, así como gestora de mucha actividad cultural en el área Sur y el resto del territorio. Su proyecto más reciente es el Colectivo Umoja, que se enfoca en la investigación y divulgación de la historia oral comunitaria ligada a la música de la bomba. Colectivo Umoja reúne bomberos de todo Puerto Rico y tiene un componente musical que utiliza como instrumento de divulgación a través de canciones.

En Ponce, parte del legado de Isabel Albizu Dávila continúa vivo en su sobrina Marta Lina Dominici, quien sigue sus pasos como cantadora en el Grupo Bomba Iyá de Beto Santiago Albizu. Marta Lina se puede considerar una auténtica cantadora tradicional de la bomba por lo aprendido con Isabel y su experiencia artística en general. Junto a Marta Lina mencionamos a Flor-Angel Guilbe-Stevens, quien también destaca como cantadora con el Grupo Bomba Iyá y con Los Rebuleros de San Juan. El estilo de Flor tiene influencias de otros géneros de la canción popular, lo que le imprime a su cante un estilo particular y muy contemporáneo.

Conclusión

Quedan por mencionar muchísimos bailadores, cantadoras y tocadores de bomba. Muchos no asisten regularmente a actividades de bomba, pero si por casualidad se topan con algún toque de bomba salen al batey a tocar y bailar con notable conocimiento del género. Sus cantos, bailes, piquetes y fundamentos a veces difieren de los conocidos y enseñados en las escuelas actuales, pero son auténticos, hermosos y antiguos. Son dignos de ver, escuchar y aprender para mantener esos lenguajes vivos. De ahí la importancia

de visitar lugares donde la bomba es tradicional, orgánica, histórica y parte de la comunidad.

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“WHERE THE LIGHT ENTERS YOU”: SUFI POETRY AND LYRICS IN THE GREATER CARIBBEAN

PRIYA PARROTTA, MUSIC AND THE EARTH

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Abstract

My compositions draw upon a wide variety of musical styles - from South Asia and the Caribbean, as well as other regions of the world. I enjoy bringing a wide diversity of musical influences into my songs, in part to help reflect the way in which environmental challenges and inspirations often resonate across widely dispersed geographic and cultural contexts. The lyrics, meanwhile, are profoundly informed by the sensibilities of wisdom, wonder and yearning that are defining features of a great deal of Sufi poetry. In this article, I would like to share the lyrics to a selection of original songs, and convey the ways in which both Sufi poetry and Caribbean realities inform each piece. I present these songs in the order in which they were composed.

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Key terms: Caribbean music, music and the environment, Sufi poetry, *ghazal* music, Music and the Earth

In the Caribbean, we are at a crossroads in our relationship to the environments which surround us. In some ways, this crossroads has been a defining feature of this region throughout its history. Taking a path towards sustainability implies deep choices; and ultimately, it is the gentle among us that will show us how to appreciate the world anew. These are important premises in my work as a musical environmentalist, and today I would like to explore with you a musical dialogue which might illustrate these ideas.

We live and work in some of the most brilliantly biodiverse spots on the planet. The stories of our lives are interwoven with the lifeways of other beings, from exuberant birds to chirping tree frogs. The ever-abiding sounds of the ocean have accompanied us through some of our most fruitful moments of solitude, and perhaps, on rare occasions, our most delicate encounters with other human beings. Though we tend not to call much attention to it, here in the Caribbean we live within webs of reciprocity and responsibility. The quality of our lives depends upon how much we appreciate those webs — and how much we create music that conveys that appreciation to diverse audiences.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to deny that the Caribbean is vulnerable to profoundly disruptive environmental events, such as hurricanes. It is also impossible to avoid the fact that politics, markets, and rogue leadership play an instrumental role in how we experience these events, and how well we are able to recover from them. But it is also impossible to ignore the fact that, in many places in the Caribbean, we continue to espouse certain cultural values that impede our own ability to be custodians of the ecosystems within which we live. Equally, in order for us to be able to participate in culturally-driven environmentalism, we must look at our own behavior, and transform it if need be.

For the purposes of this article, I have distilled this issue into two ways of seeing the world - where we tend to be, and what we might wish to become. Carelessness is, unfortunately, condoned far more often than it should be in this region, and in some cases throughout the world. Circumstances vary from place to place of course, but at least in Puerto Rico, environmentalists struggle daily against the pressures of a dominant culture that tells us that it is okay to pollute. It is okay to litter on the beach, it is okay to discard kilos of waste on a daily basis, it is okay to make decisions without considering their environmental impacts. We are told that we have the right to dominate the Earth in this way, that it exists for our conquest, for our use.

This ideology of conquest has been active in the Caribbean for centuries, ever since the domination of man over nature became politically sanctioned. This logic of domination is often mirrored in cultural expectations about the relationships between men and women. Today, we are still combating machismo in its myriad forms, from outright physical violence to emotional abuse. Part of what keeps such systems going is a careless disregard for the delicate webs of reciprocity that I mentioned earlier. And this is a pity, because beyond the range of interactions that this paradigm of carelessness allows, is a wide horizon of beauty, peace and sustainability.

Let us call that horizon “appreciation.” Appreciation for the intricate threads that connect life, before the trash lands upon it. The dazzling beauty of the natural world, whether expressed in a seashell or in the cry of a bird. The acoustic interactions within a forest, the eternally captivating soundscape of a wave. The opposite of domination. Rather than seeing the non-human world, and the relationships in our lives, as something that is valuable so long as it satisfies our needs, we can go a different way. We can appreciate plants, animals, people for their beauties and their inclinations, whether they belong to us or not. Is it possible to effect a cultural transformation away from conquest, and towards appreciation? And in this process, does music have a role to play?

I believe wholeheartedly that it does. In the long tradition of Caribbean syncretism, I would like to draw from a cultural paradigm that is practiced among the South Asian and/or Muslim diasporas in the Caribbean, and which serves as a heartbeat for people around the world. Sufism is most commonly defined as the mystical branch of Islam. Its philosophical base is gentle, tolerant, and deeply appreciative of the subtle dynamics of

human and non-human life. According to Sufi cosmology, humans and nature comprise an infinite Mystery. The world is made up of unanswered questions, but it also contains experiences of endless light. And it is this light that forms the basis of inquiry, choice, and artistic practice.

In defining human fulfillment, we often place humans and nature into separate categories. Further, we consider nature solely as an instrument for attaining objectives that we have already determined. Like many of the world's mystical traditions, music and poetry are essential to Sufism. And within Sufi poetry, it is clear that humans and nature are not separate at all. On the contrary, they constitute each other. They are interdependent, and without appreciating that reciprocity, we cannot hope to attain true insight into the art of life.

“Ecology” itself is the study of the interactions between living and non-living things within an ecosystem. Sufi poems and songs cannot exactly be called ecological studies. If anything, they are deeply subjective. A river might play a certain role in one poem, and in another take on an entirely different function. They are also imbued with profound feelings and questions that no human has the answers to. But one thing is absolutely certain in Sufi music and poetry: Nature is never extraneous. Nor is gentleness. Nor is appreciation. Nor is the principle of reciprocity. Nor is curiosity. The guiding principles of ecology are therefore woven into the Sufi tradition, in a way that speaks directly to our hearts. Sufi music can therefore help us a great deal in navigating the chasm between carelessness and appreciation, upon which our tranquility and sustainability depend.

I began to write original music after several years of studying and practicing a musical tradition that has been associated with Sufism since its beginnings: the *ghazal*. The word *ghazal* has the same root as the word gazelle, or in Spanish, *gacela*. When I came across this connection, I found it delightful though perhaps not surprising, as agility and grace are very clearly part of both the animal and the music.

The *ghazal* developed in the Arabian Peninsula in the seventh century, and traveled both East and West with the spread of Islam. It reached Andalucía in the medieval period, though its presence there was not long-lived. It found its way to the shores of Trinidad and Guyana centuries later, via indenture. The *ghazal* reached Persia, now Iran, in the 10th century and flourished into a long and beloved tradition. In South Asia, the *ghazal* enjoyed centuries of popularity in court. Then, following the violent Partition of India and Pakistan, the *ghazal* was embraced in a more popular form. It was beloved for its delicate treatment of the subject of love, and its attendant messages of peace and gentleness.

The love expressed in the *ghazal* is not linked to possession or domination. It is not a means to an end. It is not an achievement or an acquisition. Within the logic of the *ghazal*, love is neither physical nor pragmatic. It is a meeting of spirits, which occurs within the gossamer threads provided by time in nature. It is never careless. It is, above all, appreciative.

So how can the practice of genres such as the *ghazal* in the Caribbean help us to affect the cultural transformations that our islands require? As a South Asian diaspora in Borikén, this question is of particular interest to me. The natural soundscapes of the Caribbean have taught me so much about music, about life, about love, and about choice. I have only recently begun to explore the possibility that such intimate encounters with the environment can be expressed in the music I work with. The *ghazal* played a big role in this inquiry for several years. And over time, the delicate environmental sensibilities that are so frequently found in Sufi poetry began to inform my own, original music.

My compositions draw upon a wide variety of musical styles—from South Asia and the Caribbean, as well as other regions of the world. I enjoy bringing a wide diversity of musical influences into my songs, in part to help reflect the way in which environmental challenges and inspirations often resonate across widely dispersed geographic and cultural contexts. The lyrics, meanwhile, are profoundly informed by the sensibilities of wisdom, wonder and yearning that are defining features of a great deal of Sufi poetry. In this article, I would like to share the lyrics to a selection of original songs, and convey the ways in which both Sufi poetry and Caribbean realities inform each piece.

I present these songs below in the order in which they were composed.

Esmeraldas

“Esmeraldas” was written a week after I began to present my reflections on the *ghazal* at academic conferences. As is often the case with composition, the piece began with an idea that was transmuted and refined as new images and messages were incorporated into it. Its initial provocation was the fire at Notre-Dame Cathedral in April 2019. The images of the destroyed interior, including precious works of stained glass, made me think about an article I had once read about a glass factory located in the middle of a forest in France. This, in turn, made me think about forest fires, and about how in many senses, they are the result of small acts of carelessness, aggregated on a global scale. The lyrics of the song thus emerged—an allegorical story of a boy who carelessly struck a match and ended up setting a forest aflame. The lyrics lament this loss, and make clear that, in a more mindful world, such sadness would not have occurred.

Once there was a forest
Which shown with emerald leaves
And in this grove a glass house
Sparkled amidst the trees

Once there was a forest
Set to smoldering flame
When you struck a tiny match
For the glory of the game

For fire moved you more than light
And slowly this lovely world turns

And the forest blazed like molten glass
As the fire scorched its path
And the forest blazed like molten glass
And my aching heart stood worn and still
And yearned for the flames to pass

The grove and glass once glistened
Evading wealth and fame
Emerald leaves and branches
And gleaming windowpanes

Ancient life has come and gone
And quickly this deep beauty burns

And the forest blazed like molten glass
As the fire scorched its path
And the forest blazed like molten glass
And my aching heart stood worn and still
And yearned for the flames to pass

And what if the match had lit a candle
Which gave off a soft light
That is a world that I could handle
And we would have been alright

And the forest blazed like molten glass
As the fire scorched its path
And the forest blazed like molten glass
And my aching heart stood worn and still
And yearned for the flames to pass

Medianocche

“Medianocche” was inspired by the many, many nights that I have spent looking out upon the Atlantic Ocean, in a neighborhood which during the day is overrun by tourism. Its lyrics celebrate the mystery of this seascape, which stands in dramatic contrast to the ways in which the beach is marketed and experienced by most visitors. It is a celebration

of the mysterious, transcendent, and exquisite beauty of the ocean—in part because of the aspects of it which we can see, but also because of those which we cannot.

Veo la tinta
La orilla del mar
La luna, la brisa
Me invitan a soñar

Sueño con bailar
Sueño con saltar
Sueño con cantar
Sueño con volar

Llévame al alma
A dónde puedo tocar
El cielo, con calma
Y volver a buscar

Veo la tinta
La orilla del mar
La luna, la brisa
Me invitan a soñar

Port Meadow

“Port Meadow” is a song which draws upon experiences that I have had in the meadow of the same name. Port Meadow is a short walk away from the buildings which comprise Oxford University—so close, and yet so far beyond. In the brief period of time in which I studied there, the meadow was a place in which shyness, careful observation and quiet appreciation were possible.

The meadow stretched out to the sky
on that cool late summer day
and I could not help but wonder why
we chose to go this way

You and I were simply shy,
wishing we were brave
And the meadow stretched out to the sky,
and I hoped that we were safe (x2)

Beyond books and stone walls
The meadow stays despite it all (x2)

The meadow stays to enthrall

This vast and open place we've found
that needed us to try
To listen to the softest sound
and the meadow stretched out to the sky

This I Know

“This I Know” is the song of a redwood tree which has witnessed the impacts of settler colonialism. I wrote the lyrics in first-person—that is to say, in the tree’s own words—because I wanted to convey that the voice is not as fixed as we sometimes believe it to be. It is true that human beings are gifted with the capacity to speak and to write in particular ways, but that does not mean that the nonhuman world (or rather, the more-than-human world) lacks such capabilities. I wanted to remind listeners of the immense wisdom that can be received when we fall into humble silence, and listen to what the universe’s other beings have to say.

Conflict rages
A story for the ages
Hearts in cages
Silenced sages

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This tale is far too old
My home bought and sold
Measured out in stolen gold
I'm tired, truth be told

But the thing about being ancient
Is you learn to be patient
To wait and see
What will be

And this is the time
To end the crime
To let us grow
This I know (x2)
This I know.

Estelas

“Estelas” is a song about moving on, in the company of the sea. The lyrics acknowledge the tender and mysterious nature of human love—the way in which, even after connections between people fade, that love still remains in the hearts of those involved. It continues to animate one’s journey through life, which is also nourished and supported by the nature which surrounds us. The lyrics were inspired in part by a thought by Rumi: that in “the garden of mystic lovers,” distinctions fade away. Love can exist between humans, but it can also resonate and be stewarded by the wider ecosystems within which we live.

Hemos oido
Que cuando se vaya un amor
La experiencia del infinito
Da lugar al dolor

Y quizás es así,
Pero no será para siempre
Y este colibrí
Ahora por fin entiende

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Que la passeggiata que comenzamos
Continúa hasta hoy
Y los sueños que diseñamos
Forman parte de quién soy

Y siento el aliento del mar
Y sin prisa, con una sonrisa
Empiezo a caminar

No sé a dónde fuiste
No sé dónde ahora estás
Pero ya no estoy tan triste
Ya tú lo verás

Que la passeggiata que comenzamos
Continúa hasta hoy
Y los sueños que diseñamos
Forman parte de quién soy

Y siento el aliento del mar

Y sin prisa, con una sonrisa
Empiezo a caminar

Frontline

“Frontline” is a protest song, written in resistance to the systematic acquisition, pollution and sale of tropical coastlines. Specifically, it was written as a response to the ecological injustices of commercial tourism and, more recently, the atrocious dynamics of disaster capitalism on the shorelines of Puerto Rico. As somebody who grew up in San Juan’s most heavily commercialized coastal zone, I have always felt fury about the way in which wealthy interests are able to run roughshod over precious coastal ecosystems – whether in the name of economic development or undisguised personal profit. Such injustices are common not only in Puerto Rico, but throughout the Caribbean, as well as across archipelagos in the Pacific and Indian Oceans, and beyond. Reckless profiteering on coastlines is part of a paradigm which must be resolutely challenged in as many spaces as possible, from city plazas, to schools, to the halls of major international institutions such as the United Nations. This song is inspired by the possibility of a call to action which transcends geographic borders, links the people of the world’s shorelines, in defense of all of the ecosystems which we inhabit, and which require the best in us all.

We sound our call from the shore
As we have a thousand times before
While the waves ripple and the sun shines
Hear our call from the frontline

You love us 'cause we never seem to worry
Because we hardly ever hurry
Because you can be wealthy here
But let's make something crystal clear

You think the island is here to sell
But we know all too very well
That this is precious sacred ground
Now be quiet, and hear its sound

And we sound our cry in the hall of nations
A song for a thousand generations
A call for a resolution
For a real and true solution
A cry for restitution

A now or never revolution

You think the world is in your hand
That you can own the sea and sand
That the island's served on a silver platter
As if all life here doesn't matter

You fancy yourself royalty
But you cannot shake our loyalty
And as you sink in your own lies
Our strength soars to the skies

And we sound our cry in the hall of nations
A song for a thousand generations
A call for a resolution
For a real and true solution
A cry for restitution
A now or never revolution

Beast or Beauty

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“Beast or Beauty” was initially inspired by the story of Beauty and the Beast, but quickly became about the way in which human darkness—the absence of love—can make beasts of us all. Or perhaps better put, that the shadows in which we live are not necessarily of our own making, but rather the result of living amongst those who have forgotten how to care for one another. The darkness and bestiality in the lyrics are therefore metaphorical, a reminder that it is only through love and care that we can feel fully human, and fully ourselves.

I knew nothing but the shallows
before I met the Beast
Knew not that in the darkest shadows
The sun still rises in the East

Come out of the darkness
and look me in the eyes
and know that I too fear
the shadows that we disguise

and can we call this an enchantment
when it seems to bring no light?

and would we call it magic
if we see glimmers in the night?

and as I watched the petals fall
I remembered life in color
and I found it impossible
to think that I could ever love another

and can we call this an enchantment
when it seems to bring no light?
and would we call it magic
if we see glimmers in the night?

but then I realized the Beast
isn't who I was
that it really was the world, you see
that had forgotten how to love

and can we call this an enchantment
when it seems to bring no light?
and would we call it magic
if we see glimmers in the night?

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Starstruck

“Starstruck” is a celebration of the beauty of the stars, in a society which tends to accord a great deal of pomp and circumstance to itself. The singer is scheduled to perform in a large theater, a space of spotlights and sold-out seats. She is reluctant to perform, however, because the night sky calls to her—and she cannot shake the feeling that true light, and true brilliance, cannot be found inside the theater, but rather in the twinkling tapestry of stars above.

The stage is set, my turn to shine
The show is on, a grand design
I know they've been waiting for this day
But I just want to walk away

When I stand up on stage
This special song drifts away
Can it be real and can it be free
While everyone is looking at me?

These days I sing to the mystery...

Let's return to what feels true
The invisible threads connecting me and you
The mystery that is art
A cosmic symphony, a quiet start

The big stage and the bright lights
While all the while in the night
Shine down a million stars
Come, let's find out who we are

Let's return to what feels true
The invisible threads connecting me and you
The mystery that is art
A cosmic symphony, a quiet start

Placid Court

“Placid Court” is a tribute to the street in San Juan, Puerto Rico, which has been my home my entire life. This neighborhood, as well as several adjacent to it, have recently been witnessing the encroachment of new, private investors who are converting multi-generational residences into lucrative Airbnbs. I wrote this song as a reminder that, in neighborhoods such as this, there exist deeper relationships than these investors could possibly comprehend. For us, even the most simple of occurrences—meeting a friend for a morning stroll—can be filled with mystery and joyful connection to the ground, the trees, and the sky which surrounds us. In Sufi fashion, the stroll that I describe might be between two people, or it might be between one person and the nature which they know and love—it might even be an encounter between two beings in nature, such as birds or flowers. In this sense, this song (as well as several of the others which I have described) honors the way in which love often crosses the borders not only between humans, but also between species, landscapes and experiences. It reminds me of a lyric which has not yet been turned into a song: “Take me beyond your clouds, above your rain, towards your sun / take me to where I can see, that you and me, were always one.”

Tangerine and golden light
Mist emerging from the night
Bright chirps of brilliant birds
A place and a presence beyond words

Meet me here outside my door
As we have so many times before
Take my hand, and let us stroll
Walk with me, here and whole

Let us borrow the day
Let our thoughts and feelings stray
As we walk down these sun-soaked streets
Life, let us meet

This is a place many feel they can buy
But we'd like to see them try
Beneath our steps the Earth beats
No one can truly own these streets

Let us borrow the day
Let our thoughts and feelings stray
As we walk down these sun-soaked streets
Life, let us meet

Complacent

In torn jeans and canvas kicks
I walk the streets of DC
And think about the global rich
Who are too comfy to see

That the world is burning on their watch
And there's nothing I can do
But watch the ever-ticking clock
And feel the flames inside me too

Yes, sir, right this way
Leave the future for another day
While we stand outside your comfort zone
And march for life, and march for home

You think that we'd be impressed
By your so-called success
You say, "follow us and you'll go far"
How stupid do you think we are?

You talk about the complacency of youth
But the fact is that we know the truth
That one day you will pay the cost
Of the integrity that you have lost

Yes, sir, right this way
Leave the future for another day
While we stand outside your comfort zone
And march for life, and march for home

So stop all your goddamn lies
Admit the emptiness you feel inside
Grow up, here and now
Let wiser people show you how

Yes, sir, right this way
Leave the future for another day
While we stand outside your comfort zone
And march for life, and march for home

Dandelions

I've heard that change is in the past
That protests no longer last
I've heard them wish for what was before
As if love and peace are no more

And we recall the fights for change
To challenge the rules of the game
They tell me that while the road was long
There was always time for a protest song

And now we rise, a new generation
Searching to heal new abominations
Searching, too, for a new song
And we hope that you will sing along

And we recall the fights for change
To challenge the rules of the game
They tell me that while the road was long
There was always time for a protest song

Sister

Gentle and kind
With large, calm and loving eyes
She cries out that it hurts
To be our dinner and dessert

Please don't make her cry
Please don't scoff and cast her aside

Let the cages turn to rust
Let us give her cause to trust
Let her care for those she loves most
While we eat some almonds and oats

Brave and sweet
How can we hurt her for milk and meat?
What did she ever do wrong?
Why don't we hear her song?

Let the cages turn to rust
Let us give her cause to trust
Let her care for those she loves most
While we eat some almonds and oats

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Poison Ivy

Set apart from all the rest
Told too often that they're the best
They packed their bags, all neat and tidy
and walked straight into poison ivy

Education as such
does not really matter all that much
compared with the more enticing plan
of becoming as famous as you can

'Cause who has time for a healthier way
when there's attention to grab and a world to save
but the world is tired of this hero stuff
enough already, slow down, wise up

You tell yourself, pick up the pace
go out and win that imaginary race
Keep on talking about how you're great
And take up everyone else's airspace

'Cause who has time for a healthier way
when there's attention to grab and a world to save
but the world is tired of this hero stuff
enough already, slow down, wise up

Leaders of the world, puh-lease
We're the last thing the planet needs
Let's learn and laugh like the kids we are
and hope that in time we may travel far

But who has time for a healthier way
when there's attention to grab and a world to save
but the world is tired of this hero stuff
enough already, slow down, wise up

A LOWER EAST SIDE REBEL: MIGUEL PIÑERO'S DEFIANCE OF PUERTO RICAN NATIONALIST IDENTITY

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Abstract

This article deals with poet and playwright Miguel Piñero's vehement affirmation of Puerto Rican identity while defying the Puerto Rican cultural nationalism established by a *criollo* intelligentsia on the island. It also showcases Piñero's discourse as an example of the "talk back" from the Puerto Rican diaspora to Puerto Rican islanders. Markers of Puerto Rican identity have evolved and broadened throughout the years, and the exodus after hurricane María in 2017 will surely test current theoretical limits and is triggering new dialogue over where Puerto Rican identity is headed.

Key terms: Puerto Rico, Miguel Piñero, identity, poetry, drama, diaspora

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"Lower East Side Rebel." "Bad Boy Genius." Co-founder of the Nuyorican Poets' Café. Puerto Rican diaspora poet and playwright Miguel Piñero (1946-1988) was perhaps the most controversial of the diaspora writers of his generation. As he stated in "A Lower East Side Poem:" "I am the Philosopher of the Criminal Mind" (2011a, p. 1394). Although his life was plagued by poverty, familial problems, drug addiction and criminality, it is that darkness from which part of his street-savvy poetry, prose and plays emanate. His ability to portray what was the harsh environment of New York City's Lower East Side during his lifetime stems from having experienced it personally.

Piñero was accused of everything from drug addiction, to robbery, to even child molestation, but legally speaking, he was only charged and convicted of armed robbery during his youth. Criminality is not alien to great artists. World renowned actor and Academy Award nominee Robert Downey Jr. confessed to heroin addiction for half of his life. Acclaimed film Director Roman Polansky fled to France the very day he was to be sentenced after a guilty plea of unlawful sexual intercourse with thirteen-year-old Samantha Geimer. Multiple Grammy Award winning singer and dancer Michael Jackson was accused of sleeping with children twice. The list goes on. These examples are not meant

to excuse the alleged actions of anyone, but instead to provide context when discussing the literary works of one of the greatest Puerto Rican poets of the twentieth century.

According to León Ichaso, director of the 2001 film *Piñero*, famed theater producer Joe Papp had to send Piñero to Philadelphia because the family of a boy he allegedly molested wanted to take revenge on him. However, the boy he allegedly molested was accused of sexual hustling similar to that which Piñero reportedly practiced in his youth. This does not justify any sexually exploitive behavior, but it must be mentioned before expressing any opinions about Piñero's character. Adriane Ferreira Veras (2004) cites an interview that Ichaso gave in December 2001 to *The New York Times* in her article "La Bodega Sold Dreams: A Reading of Miguel Piñero's Poetry": "He said in the interview Mike and his friends, when they were 13 or 14, 'started hustling at the movie theaters on 42nd Street [...] later on he had a taste for street kids very much the way he'd been.'" (p. 36).

In addition, I remind those who might demonize Piñero that there was a very human and vulnerable side to him as shown in the 2001 film. Adriane Ferreira Veras provides a real-life example of this. Ferreira Veras writes: "In 1971 he was caught in an armed burglary of a Lower East Side apartment. Two witnesses at his trial agreed that he was 'the nicest burglar they had ever met.'" (2004, p. 34)

This article deals with Piñero's vehement affirmation of Puerto Rican identity while defying the Puerto Rican cultural nationalism established by a *criollo* intelligentsia on the island. I will also discuss the "talk back" from the Puerto Rican diaspora toward the Puerto Rican islanders, of which Piñero is a major practitioner. These are complicated issues to say the least, given the number of Puerto Ricans in the United States. Markers of Puerto Rican identity have evolved and broadened throughout the years, and the exodus post hurricane María will surely test current theoretical limits. Culture has now the same standing as birthplace, place of residence and language. This development triggers a new dialogue over where Puerto Rican identity is headed. In *Blurred Borders*, Duany (2011) affirms this of Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and to a "lesser" extent, Cubans: "In each case, the massive displacement of people has raised difficult questions about how national membership is defined and who can claim citizenship rights in the home country." (p. 80) In this vein, Piñero expresses transnational Puerto Rican identity and cultural praxis through his poetry.

Piñero was born Miguel Antonio Gómez Piñero in Gurabo, Puerto Rico in 1946. At the age of eight his family relocated to the Lower East Side of New York City. Over time, his identity began to acquire its distinct urban flavor. During his years residing in "Loisaida," the street name for the Lower East Side, he absorbed all the idiosyncrasies of street-life in such a marginalized, poverty-stricken and crime-infested neighborhood. Piñero fittingly conveys the "talk back" from stateside Puerto Ricans toward those on the island. He personifies the transnational phenomenon addressed in this article because

although he was born on the island, he was raised in New York City since age eight, and always acknowledged and defended his Puerto Rican-ness.

Since all Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens, they do not fit neatly into the immigrant category. They must be categorized as migrants, however, since Puerto Rican culture is so strong, and differs in so many ways from that of the Anglo-Saxon American and Black American: hence, Puerto Ricans' identity—specifically for this study—must be categorized as a cultural one. Moreover, the all-year sun-drenched Caribbean location of the island, the long dominion of the Spanish language, the African- and Indigenous- based lifeways and practices such as the Santería religion, and the racial hybridity of a Latin American country, make Puerto Ricans protagonists of a transnational phenomenon par excellence. Duany (2011) discusses this:

... how Puerto Ricans cross the cultural border with the United States, which is technically not an international boundary because Puerto Rico is a territory that 'belongs to but is not part' of United States. And yet the geographic, linguistic, religious, and racial contrasts between the island and the mainland are sufficiently large to conceive them as transnational. (p. 110)

The year 1974 was big year for playwright and poet Miguel Piñero. His play *Short Eyes* was brought to Broadway by the legendary theatrical director and producer, Joseph Papp, who saw the play off-Broadway in the Riverside Church and was greatly impressed. Papp then moved it to Broadway. However, the works I will be discussing here are the poems "This is Not the Place where I was Born," (Piñero, 2011b) "A Lower East Side Poem," (2011a) and "There is Nothing New in New York," (Piñero, 1975) all first published in 1974. "This is Not the Place where I was Born" (Piñero, 2011b) reflects Piñero's Puerto Rican identity affirmation, while defying the era's insular *criollo* intelligentsia's cultural nationalist definition of Puerto Rican-ness and their complicity with the colonial chokehold on the island by the U.S.

By *criollo* intelligentsia, I am referring specifically to those intellectuals in Puerto Rico who see it as their role to define what is and what is not definitively Puerto Rican. I also refer to them as *cultural gatekeepers*. This group is not strictly necessarily affiliated to a particular political party or ideology. However, some members belong to certain political parties and are currently active in government, hence they can be regarded as members of the "ruling class." Most belong to the middle and upper-middle classes. A bastion of this group has traditionally worked on the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras campus.

I will also cover this issue by discussing the 2001 film, *Piñero* (Ichaso, 2001), which dramatizes the writer's life. The film is important because it brings to life the tensions and contested terrain of Puerto Rican-ness brought forth by Piñero. "A Lower East Side Poem" (Piñero, 2011a) conveys that the Lower East Side is home to Puerto Ricans who deem themselves to be as authentic as any island Puerto Rican. "There is Nothing New

in New York" (Piñero, 1975) reflects the language duality among diaspora Puerto Ricans by addressing the usage of English and Spanish, hence affirming the bilingualism that stateside Puerto Ricans possess without losing their "Puertorriqueñidad."

In "This Is Not The Place Where I Was Born" (2011b) Piñero deconstructs the myth of Puerto Rico being a paradise-like location. He reminisces about his mother's portrayal of the island, which is still in his consciousness. The author laments that Puerto Rico does not fit the description provided by his mother. Piñero is criticizing the false premises upon which many insular Puerto Ricans base their identity. Piñero relates his mother's tales about idiosyncratic Puerto Rican figures such as "el bodeguero" (the grocery store man) and eating mango to establish that he had personal experience with Puerto Rican culture from a very young age despite residing in the diaspora – here Piñero exercises this knowledge as *cultural capital* (Bourdieu, 1985). Piñero writes:

this is not the place where i was born / remember — as a child the fantasizing images my mother planted within my head — / the shadows of her childhood recounted to me many times / over welfare loan from el bodeguero / i tasted mango many years before the skin of the fruit / ever reached my teeth. (2011b, p. 1394)

Piñero is suggesting these idiosyncratic details are what promulgate culture. The "bodeguero" is found in the diaspora as well as on the island. In all five boroughs of New York City you can find Puerto Rican-owned "bodegas," working class neighborhood grocery stores, whose owners give credit to loyal and low-income customers. Mango fruit is not only symbolic of Puerto Rican culture due to its lusciousness, but also because of the tree itself, "*la sombra del palo de mangó*," the mango tree shade, is famous for the shelter it provides during scorching Puerto Rican summers. Piñero chooses these symbols to state the importance of the nostalgic yearning for the island and culture in diasporic Puerto Rican identity.

The above lines reflect that emotional attachment, yearning, melancholic feeling, and nostalgia have played an important role in Puerto Rican identity since the beginning of the diaspora. This love for the island abroad plays an important role in diaspora Puerto Ricans' construction of identity. This view of the island came about as a response to the heavy U.S. influence upon Puerto Rican culture. Adriane Ferreira Veras (2004) discusses this as follows:

in an attempt to regain cultural identity, cultural nationalists turned to Boriquen in the late 60s and early 1970s. Their literary production and political ideology reflected a romantic and idealized vision of the island. Boriquen was transformed in an ethnic myth that previous generations had fed to their young Clearly, to the generation that followed, Boriquen was a dream that their parents had embraced in an effort to hold onto an identity. The first generation of Puerto Rican migrants in the United States lived with the dream of returning to the homeland. (pp. 24-25)

Piñero continues his defiance by pointing out the hypocrisy of the *criollo* intelligentsia, who boast about Spanish-only as a marker of Puerto Rican-ness, and yet this privileged insular crowd engages in English as much as diaspora Puerto Ricans. Piñero is revealing the existing transnational phenomena in Puerto Rican identity, and denouncing the acquiescence of many insular Puerto Ricans to the U.S. colonial imposition that undermines the established language on the island. This is Piñero's way of pointing out how insular Puerto Ricans criticize or look down upon diaspora Puerto Ricans while they themselves have been Americanized and act oblivious to it. In "This Is Not the Place Where I Was Born" Piñero writes: "where spanish was a dominant word / & signs read by themselves" (2011b, p. 1394).

In addition, Piñero points out that even the institutions on the island, such as the police force, practice repression in similar fashion to those stateside, being that police brutality was common for minority communities and civil rights groups such as The Young Lords. Piñero is using a classic Puerto Rican figure of the neighborhood police officer who is known by all neighbors and comes as public "servant" and "friend," and not as brutal oppressor or foe. This brutality by the police force in Hispanic and Black American neighborhoods has been well documented by U.S. media throughout the years, especially in cities such as Los Angeles and New York. Piñero states that Puerto Rico has been contaminated with such brutality and criticizes the governing *criollo* ruling class, who are responsible for setting the norms concerning the island's police departments' behavior, for their acquiescence to such oppressive tactics. The author also makes a poignant statement "in slogan clothing" directed at the quintessential law enforcement slogan: "To serve and protect" to better convey his message. Piñero writes: "I was born in a village of that island where the police / who frequented your place of business-hangout or home came as / servant or friend & not as a terror in slogan clothing." (2011b, p. 1394). Piñero suggests that Puerto Rican law enforcement, originally founded as a colonial apparatus, has retained its Spanish colonial modus operandi and more deeply ingrained the "American way" of doing things.

Piñero goes on to criticize how Puerto Ricans now deem each other untrustworthy, suggesting this is another influence of U.S. culture upon Puerto Rican society, after the establishment of the status of Free Associated State that propelled Puerto Rico's great migration of the 1950s. The author also states how Puerto Rican society has lost its characteristic and centuries-old respect and regard for previous generations. Piñero states: "I was born in a barrio of the village on the island / where people left their doors open at night / where respect for elders was exhibited with pride." (2011b, p. 1395) Piñero is denouncing what has become of the island in his absence. The "outlaw poet" is pointing out that from 1954 to 1974 the fast-paced industrialization and urbanization of Puerto Rico ushered in an oppressive capitalist system.

Piñero discusses how U.S. cultural characteristics have infiltrated Puerto Rican society, and how Puerto Rican society has allowed this to happen. The author suggests certain

Puerto Rican freedoms have been stifled by the influence and imposition of U.S. culture, down to the way that Puerto Ricans fall in love, thereby denouncing the invasion of privacy that has increased throughout the years. Piñero suggests that people feel they must keep their romantic relationships secret, and without public displays of affection. Piñero also suggests that the oppression of colonialism has stripped Puerto Rican youth of their natural *joie de vivre*, with increasing violence toward one and other betraying their civility. Piñero writes: “where courting for loved ones was not treated over confidentially / where children’s laughter did not sound empty & savagely alive / with self destruction ...” (2011b, p. 1395)

Moreover, Piñero also criticizes the lack of depth in insular Puerto Ricans’ Puerto Rican-ness by suggesting they allowed themselves to become aliens in their own land and acquiesced to the status of second-class citizens. This is Piñero’s way of lashing out against the so-called culturally nationalist *criollo* intelligentsia, who in his view, have forgotten what it means to be Puerto Rican, and what this identity entails. The “bad boy genius” is criticizing the colonial status quo that has proliferated on the island during his years in the diaspora. The Commonwealth, as a political and economic project headed by Luis Muñoz Marín, and its consequences upon Puerto Rican cultural identity are also among Piñero’s concerns.

Piñero writes:

i was born on an island where to be Puerto Rican meant to be / part of the land & soul & puertorriqueños were not the / minority / puerto ricans were first, none were second / no, i was not born here... / no, i was not born in the attitude & time of this place. (2011b, p. 1395)

This passage foregrounds Puerto Rico’s 119-year colonial status as a possession of the United States – which it belongs to but is not a part of – while the island’s citizens struggle with the “in-betweenity” they live in culturally. Puerto Ricans’ sense of value diminishes because they are U.S. citizens, but also colonial subjects. This is how Piñero’s verses reveal the repercussions of the transnational phenomenon that is felt all throughout Puerto Rican culture. Adriane Ferreira Veras (2004) points to this in her work: “The island’s history as a colony has a crucial role on the self-worth and validation of its citizens and their culture” (p. 2).

Piñero suggests that Puerto Ricans on the island have allowed themselves to be oppressed and have submitted to working and living in slave-like conditions under a capitalist system that forces them to take low-paying jobs in the tourism industry to make ends meet. Piñero stresses how islanders who reside in touristic areas have gone out of their way to accommodate tourists by building houses that function as hotels or guest houses. The author expresses that these workers must adopt a cutthroat attitude to survive in such a competitive environment. Piñero writes: “this slave blessed land / where the caribbean seas pound angrily on the shores / of pre-fabricated house / hotel redcap hustling people gypsy taxi cab / fighters for fares to Fajardo” (2011b, p. 1395).

Piñero continues his critique of insular Puerto Rican identity by pointing out the rampant superficiality on the island. This superficiality has stifled Puerto Rican culture to the point that the culture is not allowed to freely express itself. Piñero writes: “& the hot wind is broken by fiberglass palmtrees” (2011b, p. 1395).

Piñero sharpens his denouncement of the stranglehold upon Puerto Rican identity by stating that the *criollo* elite have allowed the island to become alien and hostile to its own diaspora sons and daughters, while also allowing island Puerto Ricans to be subjected to subservient work in their own land. This is Piñero’s way of shining a light on the *criollo* elite’s inefficiency in protecting the Puerto Rican people and culture from foreign intrusion.

Piñero depicts a situation “where nuyoricans come in search of spiritual identity / are greeted with profanity / this is insanity that americanos are showered / with shoe shine kisses” (2011b, p. 1395). These lines convey Piñero’s indignation when some island Puerto Ricans allege that they are the “authentic” Puerto Ricans, and that those in the diaspora are less Puerto Rican due to their residence in the United States. Piñero is vehemently denouncing the audacity of the island Puerto Ricans who think they can decide unilaterally who is and who is not Puerto Rican, especially when it is the islanders who have acquiesced to U.S. cultural influences. Piñero writes: “& foreigners scream that puertorriqueños are foreigners / & have no right to claim any benefit on the birthport” (2011b, p. 1395). Ferreira Veras (2004) also discusses Piñero’s indignation in her work. She writes: “He was amazed how Puerto Ricans who had never left the island could accuse him when they allowed the American contamination that could be seen all around the island” (p. 47).

The “Lower East Side Rebel” also exposes the ruthless tactics of colonialism that turn Puerto Rican against Puerto Rican and gag those who wish to express their national identity by waving the Puerto Rican flag by itself, and not alongside the U.S. flag. Furthermore, Piñero ingeniously uses the compound word, “left-in” to stress that the flag has been abandoned by many island Puerto Ricans. This is also another knock by Piñero on the rampant consumerism that has coopted Puerto Rican culture. Piñero writes:

stale air & que pasa stares are nowhere / in sight & night neon light shines bright
/ in el condado area puerto rican under cover cop / stop & arrest on the spot puerto
ricans who shop for the flag / that waves on the left — in souvenir stores —.
(2011b, p. 1395)

Besides criticizing the lack of nationalist fire in the island Puerto Ricans’ identity and spirit, Piñero goes further and suggests that it is really diaspora Puerto Ricans who are carrying the weight of the Puerto Rican nationalist struggle, and that diaspora Puerto Ricans are the more “authentic” Puerto Ricans given that it is them who are putting their lives on the line stateside for their Puerto Rican identity and nationhood. This is reminiscent of the Puerto Rican proverb: “Nadie es profeta en su tierra,” [nobody is prophet in their own land] (all translations are by the present author unless specified otherwise).

Piñero is stating that the Puerto Rican creole elite who control the country's politics is stuck in the past, out of touch, and does not acknowledge the transnational phenomenon happening in Puerto Rican cultural identity, which the diaspora embodies: "puertorriqueños cannot assemble displaying the emblem / nuyoricans are fighting & dying for in newark, lower east side / south bronx where the fervor of being / puertorriqueños is not just rafael hernandez" (2011b, p. 1396). Ferreira Veras (2004) discusses this in her work, and then cites William Luis' book: *Dance Between Two Cultures: Latino Caribbean Literature Written in the United States* to drive the point home: "Piñero suggests that Puerto Ricans in New York are more Puerto Rican than those who reside on the island" (p. 30).

Piñero also hits upon an aspect of Puerto Rican culture and identity that has always been swept under the rug by the *criollo* intelligentsia: racism. Racism on the part of whites towards people of color in Puerto Rico differs from racism in the U.S. in that the island's upper-class whites reproduce a distinct specific history, and Piñero shows how these subtleties are quite nuanced. In Puerto Rico racist expression is less verbal and more about treatment, exclusion and marginalization. For example: racist upper-class Puerto Ricans may not utter the nefarious epithet "nigger" in public, but they will oppose their son or daughter having a relationship with a Puerto Rican black man or woman because in their view "daña la raza," [it ruins the race]. This means that African ancestry is seen as somehow diminishing the quality of an individual's race. This distorted view of race is shared by many in the upper-classes and beyond. Prejudice leads them to believe that Puerto Rican black people are criminals, undesirables, and inferior to them.

Researcher Isar P. Godreau explored the long-hidden issues of racism and class-based discrimination in Puerto Rico in her 2015 book: *Scripts of Blackness: Race, Cultural Nationalism, and U.S. Colonialism in Puerto Rico*. The author writes about many *criollo* whites in Ponce who historically have marginalized and discriminated against Puerto Rican black men and women due to a misplaced sense of superiority. Godreau writes:

... power-laden relationships and racial differences [existed] between the urban *criollo* bourgeoisie and the *mulato* and black cane workers who live[d] in the rural working-class barrios of the nineteenth century. Historians have documented how *criollos* availed themselves of the idioms of morality, health, hygiene, labor and sexuality to control the black and brown working-class poor who lived in the fringes of cities like Ponce Anti-vagrancy laws enacted between 1817 and 1862 restricted access to land and criminalized the black and *mulato* population as vagrant. In Ponce, these so-called vagrants were identified with black and poor neighborhoods such as La Cantera, Bélgica, and San Antón, which were commonly represented in public discourse and newspapers managed by *criollo* elites as 'dark dangerous places, where ignorant, unruly people danced the *bomba* to African rhythms. (2015, p. 136)

Godreau goes on to point out that racial and class-based discrimination have been linked in Puerto Rico since the nineteenth century. This discrimination has not been restricted solely to San Antón, but has extended to the whole island. The center of town was reserved for the more affluent *criollo* whites, while the economically-disadvantaged black laborers were relegated to the outskirts of town. Therefore, besides the anti-vagrancy laws, the poor black population also had to suffer marginalization in their own home country, for being both black and poor. Godreau reveals these discriminatory practices perpetrated by the *criollo* whites:

an island-wide decree issued in 1893 established that...cities should be divided into three zones. Structures in the zone surrounding the main plaza (zone 1) had to be built in rubble masonry; structures in the areas surrounding zone 1 (zone 2) were to use stone, and structures in the outer fringes of the city (zone 3) were to be built with wood (Rodríguez-Silva 2012, 102). Those who could not abide by the code had to leave the zone. Thus, as Rodríguez-Silva states, 'The physical reorganization of cities, in effect, translated into a new regime dividing physical spaces along racial and class lines, with the heart of the city becoming the reserved domain of the upper-class whites.' (2015, pp. 136-137)

Piñero suggests that Puerto Ricans have also engaged in distorted white supremacist thinking inherited from Spain and the U.S. He states that this racism and corruption has extended into the Puerto Rican police force. Piñero provides examples such as John Wayne, a Hollywood icon who symbolized movies of the Wild West from a dominant white perspective, and the Ku Klux Klan – who historically have murdered and terrorized thousands of blacks – to make his point. As Piñero writes in "This Is Not the Place Where I Was Born:" "police in stocking caps cover carry out john wayne / television cowboy law road models of new york city detective / french connection / death wish instigation ku klux klan mind" (2011b, p. 1395).

There is an existing parallel between Piñero's 1974 narrative and contemporary society, with the links between both countries' expansionist and colonial histories giving way to institutionalized and culturally pervasive stereotypes demonizing poor urban communities as dens of criminality. This was the case at the time Piñero was writing as it is in today's highly charged atmosphere of visibility on social media. As for the Puerto Rico side of the transnational equation, then and now, corruption and brutality in the Puerto Rican police force have been rampant since its inception with the black population being disproportionately targeted, especially in the economically-disadvantaged sectors of the island.

Several cases of abuse based on race and class are documented in a report published on June 2012 by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) titled: "Island of Impunity: Puerto Rico's Outlaw Police Force." This report exposes the racial prejudice of many police officers. Economically-disadvantaged Puerto Rican blacks and Dominican blacks are routinely harassed and targeted more frequently than non-blacks. The report reads:

PRPD officers assigned to tactical units regularly use excessive force while on routine patrols and checkpoints in low-income, black, and Dominican communities. During encounters with civilians in these communities, officers routinely use excessive force or resort to force unnecessarily and inappropriately, and they disproportionately target racial minorities and the poor. (ACLU, 2012, p. 4)

So Piñero's poem of return gaze to the island is one of recognition; its colonial institutionalized violence against the poor and the marginalized is seen all the more clearly in double vision of transnational knowledge from the diaspora.

Piñero's marginalization in U.S. culture and the “talk back” mode toward the island's *criollo* intelligentsia that was created by the Puerto Rican transnational experience extends to the corporeal. Besides his writing, it is through his body that Piñero expresses his frustration with these forces. Piñero's self struggles to find solid ground amidst the instability of Puerto Rican diaspora and island identity. This inner struggle pulls Piñero several ways and it is manifested through his self-destructive behavior with drugs and alcohol. And this “tug of war” is also expressed through his performances, in which he revels in the abjection he is subjected to from U.S. mainstream society and Puerto Rico's *criollo* intelligentsia.

For “The Lower East Side Rebel” his body is the only place where colonization cannot take place and the status quo can be defied. Piñero's considers his body the place where neither the influences of the Puerto Rican diaspora nor the Puerto Rican island can dominate. Instead, his body is completely free. Given that Piñero cannot dominate or bend social forces at his will, he utilizes his body as vessel for this. Author Urayoán Noel covers this aspect of Piñero's identity in his 2014 book: *In Visible Movement: Nuyorican Poetry from the Sixties to Slam*. In a section titled: “Performing the Interzone” the author goes into Piñero's corporeal dilemma. Noel cites Piñero's Nuyorican Poets Café co-founder and fellow poet Miguel Algarín, and then offers his own insights:

Algarín praises Piñero's willingness to confront ‘an authority that indoctrinates and betrays at the same time,’ yet from the interzone perspective, Piñero's performance appears bounded by his inability to do as Burroughs did and unwrite the external controls of the social order, and by his body's exclusion from both island Puerto Rican ... and U.S. mainland territory. In Piñero's performances the ungovernability of the interzone is displaced onto the body itself; his performances seek to imagine the body, as a site where national laws can only be weakly enforced, where illegal, unregulated encounters can flourish, breaking down social, psychic, and national barriers, as well as the boundaries that define self and other. (Noel, 2014, p. 56)

The 2001 film titled *Piñero* was directed by León Ichaso and starred Benjamin Bratt as the Lower East Side poet. The film dramatizes many issues in the writer's life, but it is his trip to Puerto Rico in 1974 that interests me the most for purpose of this article, since

I am focused on his engagement with the problematic issue of Puerto Rican identity. William Luis discusses this in his article: “Afro-Latino/a Literature and Identity:”

In some respects, that past was closed off to Nuyorican writers who were accused of not being ‘real’ Puerto Ricans, as portrayed in the film “Piñero” (2001), when the main character and his friends return to the island and are treated as foreigners by their own compatriots. Piñero accuses them of ignoring their own identity and being blind to the U.S. control over the island. (2012, p. 39)

Piñero pulls no punches here because in his view, these islanders should act as defenders and disseminators of Puerto Rican culture and not assign responsibility solely to Spain and the United States. Authors César J. Ayala and Rafael Bernabe cover this in their 2007 book: *Puerto Rico in the American Century: A History Since 1898*. They write:

Thus, although we feel U.S. colonialism has deeply shaped Puerto Rican life since 1898, we do not think all key events or turning points of Puerto Rican history can be attributed to U.S. colonial policies. We thus allot considerable space to the initiatives and the ideas, the contradictions and limitations, of Puerto Rican actors in this intricate drama. Similarly, while U.S. policies have been colonial, they have not been monolithic or static They have also included flexible approaches, willing to tolerate Puerto Rican autonomy and even certain affirmations of Puerto Rican identity and culture. (p. 10)

In the film’s depiction of Piñero’s visit to Puerto Rico in 1974, a group of members of the Puerto Rican *criollo* intelligentsia respond to his recital of “This Is Not The Place Where I Was Born.” The scene exemplifies the differences concerning cultural identity between Puerto Ricans living stateside and on the island. When Benjamin Bratt playing Piñero is finished reciting, the only acknowledgements emanate from the poet’s fellow diaspora friends. Next, what ensues is a dialogue that centers on these differences, and stirs up further debate about the transnational phenomena taking place in Puerto Rican diaspora identity.

First, Piñero informs the audience that the diaspora is not voluntary, but a response on the part of poverty-stricken families to improve their lives and that of their children, or as Tato Laviera (1985) states in his famous poem “Nuyorican:” “pecado forzado” (p. 53). Second, the Piñero character stresses that his proud identification with the category, “nuyorican” is a product of a reality that cannot be ignored, and that this badge in no way diminishes his Puerto Rican-ness. Third, Bratt portrays the “bad boy genius,” who expresses that he does not hide from who he is, and that islanders should not hide from who they are either to conform to U.S.-based cultural markers. Fourth, the film’s Piñero states that his cultural hybridity, which encompasses New York City and Puerto Rico, is more authentic than any islander’s Puerto Rican-ness. Finally, the “Lower East Side Rebel” points out that islanders are alienated from the colonial chokehold and reality that surrounds them. The exchange in the film happens about half way through the film and goes as follows:

Piñero: & the island is left unattended because the middle class / bureaucratic Cuban has arrived spitting blue eyed justice / at brown skinned boys in military khaki / compromise to survive is hairline length / moustache trimmed face looking grim like a soldier / on furlough further cannot exhibit contempt for what is/not cacique born this poem will receive a burning / stomach turning scorn nullified classified racist / from this pan am eastern first national chase manhattan / puerto rico...

Piñero: It's kind of quiet in here. Reminds me of the time I auditioned for the parole board at Sing Sing.

Auditorium man: Well, excuse me but I'm not sure that you know about our internal problems here. I mean, what is it that you feel for Puerto Rico besides an obvious affection and some kind of nostalgic notion of what we really are besides rum, and music, and dominoes on the sidewalk and God knows what else you need to feed this anger?

Piñero: You don't know?

Auditorium man: Listen, even if well intentioned, it is still out of place when it becomes a character that corrupts the language when you are calling yourselves "Nuyoricans," as if it was a race?

Piñero: Check this out. I was born here in the town of Gurabo, in 1948. Lived on the island till the age of seven. My family decided to move to New York – not a trip that I planned nor wanted. I am Puerto Rican. Now, I subnamed myself with a reality-given motherfucking slang of a title – in this case – "Nuyorican" – and wherever I go I am Puerto Rican and Rican and Nuyorican 24 hours a day. Now if you're embarrassed or afraid of what you are, don't blame me. It's not my fault. Blame that fucking Oxford shirt you're wearing from whatever prison you live in that forces you to wear it to fake something that you are not, to be something you are not. See, cause even if I am half and half, any of those halves is more whole than all of you. I know who I am, and I know when it hurts and I'm still the same man. The same Puerto Rican 24 hours a day. But thank you. Thank you for your comments. Does anyone else have any comments, questions literary criticism? Don't be afraid. Speak up. This is a free country, I think. (Ichaso, 2001)

The words "...wherever I go I am Puerto Rican and Rican and Nuyorican 24 hours a day" by Benjamin Bratt, the actor playing Piñero, accurately reflect the attitude of millions of diaspora Puerto Ricans every day in their own way. They are a statement of the power of Puerto Rican diaspora identity, and how it transcends geographical space and other markers. For example, Duany (2011) conducted a survey with second generation stateside Puerto Rican subjects concerning the identity issue and discusses the results:

Toward the end of the interview, I asked my informants: ‘How would you define yourself, as Puerto Rican, Hispanic, Latino, or something else?’ The overwhelming response – for fourteen out of sixteen interviewees – was simply Puerto Rican. Sandra felt ‘100 percent Puerto Rican,’ ... For her, the island is ‘the fatherland I love, even though it’s far away When I moved here, I renewed my ties [to the island] and my identity has never changed.’ She further explained: ‘Many Puerto Ricans [Puerto Ricans] live with one leg in here and another in Puerto Rico. There’s an underlying connection ...’ (p. 123)

That “underlying connection” that Sandra describes is not only the nostalgic utopic notion of the island that drives people to define themselves as Puerto Rican, but also culture, pride, ancestry, and of course, family. The majority of these folks have family members they visit or keep in contact with through phone, email and even old-fashioned hand-written letters, and adding a high degree of fluidity and immediacy today, social media.

Piñero suggests that island Puerto Ricans at this historical period (1974) felt their national identity was being threatened by diaspora Puerto Ricans because of U.S. influence at the time, and due to their alleged assimilation into U.S. culture. This prompts islanders to hold on tight to simplistic constructions of identity. Alberto Sandoval (1997) discusses this in his article “¡Mira, que vienen los nuyoricans!: El temor de la otredad en la literatura nacionalista puertorriqueña:” [Look, the Nuyoricans are coming!: The fear of otherness in Puerto Rican nationalist literature] “...estos hijos de inmigrantes activan los temores de aquellos isleños cuya identidad está amenazada por el mero hecho de que Puerto Rico es una colonia Americana.” [...]these sons of immigrants activate the fears of those islanders whose identity is threatened by the mere fact that Puerto Rico is an American colony] (p. 308) Although Sandoval is referring to nationalist sectors and an important strand of the island’s literary canon, this observation of his nonetheless reflects attitudes worth interrogating.

Some members of the island’s *criollo* intelligentsia have done an about face concerning the importance of the Puerto Rican diaspora in the Puerto Rican identity discourse. For example, in her 1994 work, “Saludo a los niuyoricans” Puerto Rican island writer Ana Lydia Vega makes a clear statement on the indispensability of the Puerto Rican diaspora to the Puerto Rican identity discourse in general. She acknowledges the large numbers of Puerto Ricans residing abroad and how language should not act as a sole marker of identity, even pointing out that the “Padre de la Patria” [Founding Father of the Puerto Rican homeland] Dr. Ramón Emeterio Betances resided in France and spoke French while addressing questions of Puerto Rican identity.

Vega’s statements reveal that a sector of the Puerto Rican *criollo* intelligentsia recognizes that Puerto Rican identity in general is evolving and becoming something greater and broader than anyone could ever imagine. Vega alludes to the complexity of Puerto

Rican identity and how it contains paradoxical elements within the collective subconscious. The author utilizes the popular Puerto Rican proverb “arroz con cuajo,” [lit. rice with pig’s stomach] which is used to describe a situation that is a mess, to refer to such complexity. Vega points out that eventually there will be a higher number of Puerto Ricans residing abroad than on the island itself, which became a reality in 2002. Vega addresses the characteristic “to and fro” [vaivén] between the island and mainland as well to point out how many Puerto Ricans are not stable in one geographical location, but rather fluctuate between locations in search of a better quality of life and employment opportunities. She writes:

he preferido darles una idea general del arroz con cuajo que reina en eso que llaman el subconsciente colectivo, acosado por tantas imágenes contradictorias de la identidad puertorriqueña. Dentro de ese arroz con cuajo, la Conexión Nuyorican es vital. En el siglo XXI, tendremos más boricuas viviendo allá que acá y mucho más, como las olas del mar Caribe, yendo y viniendo. ¿Cómo se definirá entonces esa obsesión inefable que hemos llamado puertorriqueñidad?.¿Cuántas veces nos preguntaremos, en español, en inglés, en *Spanglish* y hasta en francés, como lo hizo Betances, quiénes somos? (1994, p. 36)

[I have preferred to give you a general idea of the mess that reigns in that which they call the collective subconscious, harassed by so many contradictory images of Puerto Rican identity. Within that mess, the Nuyorican connection is vital. In the 21st century we will have more Puerto Ricans residing over there than here, and many more, like the Caribbean sea’s waves, coming and going. How then will we define that ineffable obsession we have named Puerto Rican-ness?...How many times will we ask ourselves, in Spanish, in English, in *Spanglish*, and even in French, like Betances did, who are we?]

Over 100 years of migration and the increasing *vaivén* of the past half century cannot be shoved aside as if it did not have an impact upon Puerto Rican identity and society in general. An identity filled with such complexities such as colonialism, race, gender, sexuality, class and migration cannot be looked at with a unilateral optic. No matter what essentialist image the Puerto Rican *criollo* intelligentsia wishes to portray before the world, such as the iconic *jíbaro*, there are realities they cannot control.

There are roughly 5.14 million Puerto Ricans residing outside the (versus some 3.2 million on the island) who will vehemently contest any simplistic and discriminatory construction of Puerto Rican identity, and who have a voice concerning their identity. Diaspora and island Puerto Rican identity must be looked at through a transnational lens, otherwise, it is lacking. Geographical space is only one marker among many. Alberto Sandoval (1997) discusses this as well:

De esta manera, el temor de la Otredad es el temor del ser nacionalista que teme perder su pseudoidentidad coherente, homogénea, y uniforme. Este temor

nacionalista niega las realidades históricas de la migración masiva puertorriqueña a los estados Unidos desde los años cuarenta. (p. 308)

[In this manner, fear of the Otherness is the fear of the nationalist being who fears losing his coherent, homogenous, and uniform pseudoidentity. This nationalist fear denies the historical realities of the Puerto Rican mass migration to the United States during since the 1940's.]

Puerto Rican identity is going through a process of constant flux that will force it to keep reinventing itself. Such continuous change is what Piñero reflects in his poetry. The 2000 book: *Adiós Borinquen Querida: The Puerto Rican Diaspora, its History and Contributions*, edited by Edna Acosta-Belén, et al. discusses this. Acosta-Belén writes:

... it also befitting to say that there is 'another Puerto Rico' blossoming in the many deterritorialized communities located all over the United States. In these locations similar and different ways of being Puerto Rican are taking form, introducing a new dimension to the construction of identity and to the notion of what it means to be Puerto Rican. (p. 2)

Identity relies on markers of culture, not solely on markers of geographical space, birthplace, and language. Cultural elements such as music, art, food, religion, and other traditions are also markers of Puerto Rican identity. Author Arlene Dávila discusses the value of these elements as building blocks of Puerto Rican identity in her 1997 book: *Sponsored Identities: Cultural Politics in Puerto Rico*. The author provides the example of "festivales culturales," cultural festivals, to state the importance of these markers to the construction of Puerto Rican identity. Dávila writes:

Most often, however, these groups promote elements of regional and popular culture and thereby serve as important venues for expressing aspects of Puerto Rican culture that go beyond what is recognized by official cultural policy. In the context of the festival, different aspects of contemporary life, including food, music, and contemporary folk arts were presented as expressions of Puerto Rican-ness. Similarly contributing to the festivals, such as by preparing cod fritters to sell or simply by attending them, as referred to as *hacienda patria*, or helping to forge and strengthen the nation. (1997, p. 153)

The "in-betweenity" that diaspora Puerto Ricans must navigate in is a kind of "limbo" that tortures their *self*. They experience racism, ostracization, and other adversities in the U.S. for defending and preserving their Puerto Rican culture, and not acquiescing to total U.S. acculturation. Ironically, and adding insult to injury, when they go back to Puerto Rico their Puerto Rican-ness is questioned and almost put on trial as if they were foreigners with no relation whatsoever to the island. Ferreira Veras (2004) mentions this dichotomy in her work while discussing the Nuyorican Poets' Café founded circa 1973 by Miguel Algarín and Miguel Piñero. she writes:

The members of the Café and its patrons were not quite Puerto Rican nor completely New Yorkers. They became a symbol of a culturally and linguistically

hybrid experience of the Puerto Rican community living in New York, experiencing discrimination and marginality within U.S society. (Ferreira Veras, 2004, pp. 29-30)

Piñero wrote his poem, “A Lower East Side Poem” as his last will and testament (2011a). In this work, Piñero chooses New York City’s Lower East Side as his final resting place. Even though Puerto Rico was his birthplace and was held in high regard by him, except for its *criollo* intelligentsia, Piñero enacts the transnational phenomenon by declaring the “Lower East Side” his home. Piñero rejects Puerto Rico as a final resting place because he is filled with indignation at what the island has become, a haven for rich tourists and business people where the poor continue to be exploited and marginalized.

The author also rejects the often-desired suburbs of Long Island also due to its lack of lower-class Puerto Ricans and superficiality. The Lower East Side of Manhattan is the only place he has truly considered his home because it encompasses all the things that have made up his identity in life, such as the lower-class Puerto Rican community, the drug and crime-infested streets, the prostitution and LGBTT crowd, and the avant-garde creative literary scene of the Nuyorican Poets’ Café. Piñero writes:

Here the hustlers & suckers meet / the faggots & freaks will all get / high / ... /
There’s no other place for me to be / there’s no other place that I can see / there’s no other town around that ... / fancy cars & pimps’ bars & juke saloons ... / a thief, a junkie I’ve been / committed every known sin / Jews and Gentiles ...
Bums & Men ... making sales ... dope wheelers / & cocaine dealers ... smoking pot / streets are hot & feed off those who bleed to death ... I stand proud as you can see / pleased to be from the Lower East ... / I am the philosopher of the criminal mind ... / I don’t wanna be buried in Puerto Rico / I don’t wanna rest in Long Island cemetery / I wanna be near the stabbing shooting / gambling fighting & unnatural dying / & new birth crying / so please when I die ... / don’t take me far away / keep me near by / take my ashes and scatter them thru out / the Lower East Side. (2011a, p. 1393)

Authenticity is impossible to define in any culture, especially in Puerto Rican culture with all its complexities and nuances. Piñero speaks for millions of stateside Puerto Ricans who have had their Puerto Rican identity questioned by a *criollo* intelligentsia that discriminates against a diaspora that was propelled by poverty and a lack of upward social mobility. Piñero infers that the island needs to decolonize from the U.S. and needs to face this identity conundrum to confront racism and classism, especially in such a hybrid culture as that of Puerto Ricans. As such, Piñero’s work provides great insight into Puerto Rican ethnogenesis. The Spanish/English language dichotomy also needs to be addressed. The English language, regardless of the island’s current or future political status, is here to stay. And the proliferation of it is due in great part to the back and forth movement of Puerto Ricans to New York City, Chicago, Orlando and other U.S. cities.

English is also a reminder that Puerto Ricans must balance U.S. colonial forces with colonial forces inherited from Spain in their contemporary reality.

Piñero expresses his Puerto Rican-ness in English and Spanish in the poem, “No Hay Nada Nuevo en Nueva York”/“There is Nothing New in New York” (1975). The author does this to state he is Puerto Rican in either language, and that it does not take away from his identity as a Puerto Rican or New Yorker. The “Bad Boy Genius” published the poem in English and Spanish, and in both versions the first line is in Spanish, further establishing his “Puertorriqueñidad” as well. Piñero conveys the situation of oppression that diaspora Puerto Ricans must deal with just for being Puerto Rican when he writes: “no hay nada nuevo en nueva York / there is nothing new in New York / I tell you in English / I tell you in Spanish / the same situation of oppression” (1975, p. 68).

Piñero’s intention is to highlight that language, geographical space, birthplace and place of residence are not the sole markers of Puerto Rican identity, but it is culture that should hold a higher position in the Puerto Rican identity echelon. Piñero’s critique about racism on the island is one that merits discussion to this day. The racially-mixed constitution of the population does not eradicate racism, but only complicates it further. The diaspora going on today is not only constituted by the economically disadvantaged but by professionals of the middle-class as well, especially after hurricane María in 2017, which compelled many of these professionals to relocate to the U.S. in search of career opportunities. This calls for a new dialogue concerning what it means to be Puerto Rican, and the transnational phenomenon that this article elaborates must be in the center of Puerto Rican identity discourse.

Some of the negative attitudes by part of the *criollo* intelligentsia toward diaspora Puerto Ricans have diminished to some degree in the last decades, however, there is still much dialogue to look forward to. Although Piñero wrote about the issue of Puerto Rican identity in his poems during the 1970s, and we must now approach Puerto Rican identity with a different optic, the author’s writings are relevant to the Puerto Rican identity discourse today, especially its cultural aspect. The transnational phenomena on Puerto Rican identity taking place in Puerto Rican society has changed much since its inception in 1898. The “Bad Boy Genius” is one of the authors who tackled this complex issue in his writings by addressing it through culture. Piñero’s stance is that diaspora Puerto Ricans must affirm their Puerto Rican-ness through culture, and that the ethnogenesis of the Puerto Rican nation transcends simplistic notions based on one particular geographic location and one particular language.

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ABOUT THE EDITORS



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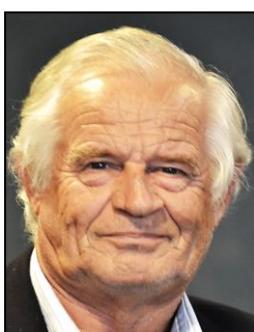
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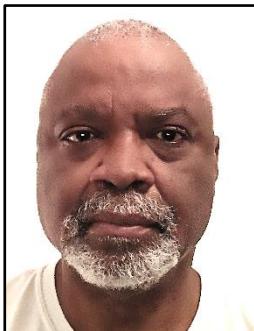
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