Afro-Asian Connections in Latin America and the Caribbean

Edited by
Luisa Marcela Ossa and
Debbie Lee-DiStefano

Copyright 2019. Lexington Books. All rights reserved. May not be reproduced in any form without permission from the publisher, except fair uses permitted under U.S. or applicable copyright law.

EBSCO Publishing : eBook Collection (EBSCOhost) - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via
AN: 1946339 ; Luisa Marcela Ossa, Debbie Lee-DiStefano.; Afro-Asian Connections in Latin America and the Caribbean
Account: ns335141

Afro-Asian Connections in Latin America and the Caribbean

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Black Diasporic Worlds: Origins and Evolutions from New World Slaving

Series Editors: Antonio Tillis and Elizabeth West

Black Diasporic Worlds is a humanities series whose publications highlight the transnational Africana experience that has resulted from and/or emerged alongside European exploits in the Americas. Additionally, it encompasses contemporary and comparative contexts that are a byproduct of multidirectional shifting of Africana people over space and time. Further, the Black Diasporic Worlds series represents works that query the transcultural and transnational understandings of contemporary articulation and impact of "Africana" in Europe and other geographies outside of the Americas. Publications will look at African derived people/populations/cultures/civilizations resulting from the economic and political dynamics of new world slaving and the ways it has informed experiences, nationalistic and racial orientations, and shaped the western world on both sides of the Atlantic. With regard to geographical scope, publications in this series will thus include works focusing on blacks in the Americas, in Europe, and could conceivably extend to the experiences of blacks beyond the western world whose destinies have been shaped by the legacy or spillover of new world slaving.

Recent Titles

Envisioning Black Feminist Voodoo Aesthetics: African Spirituality in American Cinema, by Kameelah L. Martin

Receptions of the Classics in the African Diaspora of the Hispanophone and Lusophone Worlds: Atlantis Otherwise, by Elisa Rizo and Madeleine M. Henry

African Modernity and the Philosophy of Culture in the Works of Femi Euba, by Iyunolu Osagie

Between Two Worlds: Jean Price-Mars, Haiti, and Africa, edited by Celucien Joseph

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Afro-Asian Connections in Latin America and the Caribbean

Edited by
Luisa Marcela Ossa
and Debbie Lee-DiStefano

LEXINGTON BOOKS
Lanham • Boulder • New York • London

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Published by Lexington Books
An imprint of The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.
4501 Forbes Boulevard, Suite 200, Lanham, Maryland 20706
www.rowman.com

6 Tinworth Street, London SE11 5AL, United Kingdom

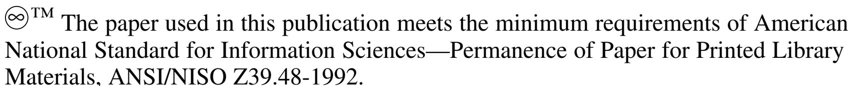
Copyright © 2019 by The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without written permission from the publisher, except by a reviewer who may quote passages in a review.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Information Available

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Ossa, Luisa Marcela, 1972- editor, author. | Lee-DiStefano, Debbie, editor, author.
Title: Afro-Asian connections in Latin America and the Caribbean / edited by Luisa Marcela Ossa and Debbie Lee-DiStefano.
Description: Lanham : Lexington Books, 2019. | Series: Black diasporic worlds: origins and evolutions from new world slaving | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2018048493 (print) | LCCN 2018050600 (ebook) | ISBN 9781498587099 (Electronic) | ISBN 9781498587082 (cloth : alk. paper)
Subjects: LCSH: Blacks—Latin America. | Blacks—Caribbean Area. | Asians—Latin America. | Asians—Caribbean Area. | Latin America—Race relations. | Caribbean Area—Race relations.
Classification: LCC F1419.N4 (ebook) | LCC F1419.N4 A398 2019 (print) | DDC 305.89608—dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2018048493


™ The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992.

Printed in the United States of America

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Contents

Acknowledgments vii

Introduction: Dethroning the Epics of Empire ix
Lisa Yun

PART I: IDENTITY AND NATIONAL DISCOURSES

Interlude I 3
Kathleen López

1 Afro and Chinese Depictions in Peruvian Social Discourse at the Turn of the Twentieth Century 7
Debbie Lee-DiStefano

2 Locating Chinese Culture and Aesthetics in the Art of Wifredo Lam 27
Mey-Yen Moriuchi

3 Afro-Asian-Caribbean Connections in Transnational Circulation: The Harlem Ashram as Chronotope 61
Malathi Iyengar

PART II: CONTACT ZONES, SOLIDARITY, AND SYNCRETISM

Interlude II 91
Kathleen López

4 Merging the Transpacific with the Transatlantic: Afro-Asia in Japanese Brazilian Narratives 95
Zelideth María Rivas

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

5 Parallels and Intersections: Afro-Chinese Relationships and Spiritual Connections in *Monkey Hunting* and *Como un mensajero tuyo* 115
Luisa Marcela Ossa

6 Erased from Collective Memory: *Dreadlocks Story* Documentary Untangles the Hindu Legacy of Rastafari 137
Linda Aïnouche

PART III: BODIES, GENDERS, AND IDENTITIES

Interlude III 171
Kathleen López

7 Body of Reconciliation: Aida Petrinera Cheng's Journey in *Como un mensajero tuyo* by Mayra Montero 173
Dania Abreu-Torres

8 "I Am Like One of those Women": Chinese Masculinity as Feminist Writing Strategy in Three West Indian Novels 193
Anne-Marie Lee-Loy

9 *La Mulata Achinada*: Bodies, Gender, and Authority in Afro-Chinese Religion in Cuba 209
Martin A. Tsang

Index 225

About the Editors 235

About the Contributors 237

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank our families for providing us the time and support to bring this project to fruition. Our thanks to Drs. Antonio D. Tillis and Elizabeth J. West for believing in our work. We also want to acknowledge the Southeast Missouri State University Center for Writing Excellence, Mr. Mickey Heath and Ms. Alison Manzella for their hard work assisting us with the final formatting and proofreading to make sure that our manuscript was in tip-top shape. Your assistance has been invaluable! We extend our gratitude to Emily Roderick, Courtney Morales, and the rest of the staff at Lexington Books for your support and guidance throughout the publishing process, and your professionalism. It has been a pleasure working with you. We also want to thank all of our contributors. This project could never have been realized without you. Finally, we thank the people, stories, and histories that inspired our research. Your journeys have not been forgotten.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Introduction

Dethroning the Epics of Empire

by Lisa Yun

In Lower Manhattan of New York City, there sits a magnificent architectural jewel, the Alexander Hamilton Custom House. Shippers, merchants, customs agents, and officials crossed paths here in one of the busiest ports of the world. Once a major hub for customs duties, the House provided the largest source of federal revenue by the early 1900s.[1] Today it no longer serves its original commission, but this seven-story building of 450,000 square feet remains one of the finest examples of Beaux-Arts architecture. Atop the main façade are twelve figures representing the great trading nations: Greece, Rome, Phoenicia, Genoa, Venice, Spain, Holland, Portugal, Denmark, Belgium, France, and England.[2] Additional signifiers of trade embellish the site, such as the wing-helmeted head of Mercury (signifying commerce), which perches atop each of the forty-four columns surrounding the building. Inside is a stunning rotunda with trompe l'oeil portraits of eight explorers to the Americas: Christopher Columbus, Amerigo Vespucci, Adriaen Block, Gaspar Corte-Real, Henry Hudson, Giovanni da Verrazzano, John Cabot, and Estêvão Gomes. Foregrounding this lavish venue is a most arresting sculptural quartet, which is considered the most significant feature of the exterior.[3] The *Continents* flanks the entrance and commands attention in contemporary tourism due to its impressive artistry and the fame of its sculptor, the illustrious Daniel Chester French, along with the prominence of his collaborator, architect Cass Gilbert.[4] French's monumental quartet serves as the allegorical foregrounding for a lavish tour of worlding, and today, serves as an exemplar of colonial narrative-making that continues to shadow cultural politics.[5]

With elaborate iconographies of voyaging, the Custom House lays open a spatial narrative of Western progress achieved with the scientific "discovery" of Other lands and peoples. The *Continents* provides an instructive prelude for entering this space. The figures of Europe and America are positioned at

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Figure 0.1 Alexander Hamilton U.S. Custom House. *Source*: Courtesy of Perkins Eastman.

the main entrance, regal and majestic, looking forward. Meanwhile, Asia and Africa sit at the corners, eyes closed. The knowing gaze emerges from the center. Europe, declared Gilbert, represents "the highest intellect."[6] Europe sits on the prow of a ship and rests her arm on a book and the globe. She gazes ahead, while behind her is the figure of History. It appears that Europe is at the helm of knowledge and maritime power, and one could say her book is the book of empire, drawn from many lands and peoples across the globe. To her right is America, whose facial features are rendered as European American, not indigenous American. With the fortitude to tame native peoples and lands, America represents the future. She looks to the horizon and leans forward. Her right hand carries the torch of liberty, while her right foot steps on Quetzalcóatl, the Mesoamerican god of creation. Under her right arm are sheaves of corn, while hunched behind her right shoulder is an aged American Indian.[7] Under her left arm is the kneeling figure of Labor, who pushes the winged wheel of progress.

Asia and Africa, in contrast, sit passively. Asia holds a Buddha, which Gilbert explained is a "symbol of false worship."[8] Behind her looms possible salvation through Christianity, in the form of a rising cross. Beside her

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

are a kneeling boy, an emaciated coolie with tied hands, a woman with an infant on her back, and a deferential tiger. Underneath her feet are human skulls. Asia's people are "hordes" with the "hopelessness of the life of so many of its inhabitants," French wrote. Asia appears ancient, submissive, and wretched. Africa is likewise ancient, and moreover, asleep. While America was designed to be "alert with vigorous action," Africa appears designed as the continent of unrefinement and indolence. Naked and slouched, she slumbers on a rock, accompanied by a sphinx and a sleeping lion.[9] Behind her is a shrouded figure with a hidden face, which scholars have compared to depictions of an Arab.[10] It is a figure of "mystery," French wrote, that "somehow we all associate with Egypt." French, however, endowed Africa's face with somewhat more "European" features. He explained that though "it is usual to depict the negro with a snub nose and exaggerated fullness of lips and in fact the lowest type of negro that exists . . . by the laws of composition the face is developed in a natural sequence that stands for beauty according to our European standards."[11] The face of Africa was thus adjusted to racialized standards of beauty.

In all, Europe and North America were cast as the stewards of knowledge, commerce, and industry. Meanwhile, Asia and Africa were cast as heathen and backward, and furthermore, isolated, unlike the cosmopolitan past and future of an outward-looking Europe and North America. Naturalized in this tableau are the hemispheric, racialized, and gendered perspectives that informed its making. Intercontinental trade was celebrated, but invisible are the bloody cost of war, conquest, slavery, indenture, and the extraction of natural resources that underwrote the missions of enlightenment and exchange. In fact, the Custom House was commissioned in 1899 and completed in 1907, in the immediate wake of such costs, with American conquests in the Caribbean and Asia: Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines.

The *Continents* articulates progress through colonial and orientalist narratives that continue to haunt our post/neocolonial present. Such narratives derive currency from the continued partitioning of peoples and cultures, what Stuart Hall once called "classification as a system of power."[12] Hidden are the global intimacies that intensified via liberal development of the Americas—with tremendous profits and labor from African slave and Asian coolie trades.[13] Hidden are the perspectives of Asian and African peoples who share uniquely conjoined histories in Latin America and the Caribbean. To suppose that Asia and Africa might have their own historical interrelationships, or that cultural and creative connections could exist between peoples of Asian and African descent, or that knowledge could be produced from the supposed periphery, would require an alternate construction of French and Gilbert's visual epic.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

To exist—to connect—is power. It is this alternate story of connectivity, an empowered interconnectedness, that disturbs the borders and classifications that we have inherited. Africans and Asians were regarded as products of inferior cultures, as commodities to be trafficked from distant lands, not understood as peoples with the propensity to envision their own destinies. The agency of African slaves and Asian coolies to creatively live and resist, to witness, to form alliances, to reshape the cultures of the colonies, to imagine otherwise, flew in the face of colonial logic. As a result of their resilience and creativity, and those of their descendants, new social relationships and cultural forms emerged under regimes bent on extracting their humanity. The struggles for social justice today hinge upon recuperating the wide interconnectedness of the past and present. But the national narratives in Latin America and the Caribbean, inscribed among the complex imperatives of independence and postcolonial nation-building, are left wanting in this regard. Little attention has been paid to the interrelations of non-European peoples and histories, and it is an elusive topic that demands a reconstitution of history, as this volume's editors Debra Lee-DiStefano and Luisa Ossa argue. Constituting a new history in the study of the Americas in this vein is a bold epistemological charge requiring innovative methods to match the challenge.

METHODOLOGIES: THE MANIFOLD EYE

Charting new ways of seeing and understanding is an inherently creative and political process: How and what do we remember, what story gets told, and to whom? The histories of Afro-Asian connectivity, of love and hate, of celebration and ambivalence, are a living legacy of the processes of transculturation and hybridity that complicate and surpass the astonishing barbarity of colonial projects. Yet, these interethnic connections are still largely unacknowledged or obscured. That mass numbers of Africans and Asians overlapped in the Americas as slaves and coolies creates copious challenges for engaging Atlantic-Pacific legacies in the post-slavery, post-indenture era. First is the material challenge of tracing legacies that were submerged under a sea of violence and neglect. Second is the psychic challenge of reconstructing bonds that were not initially born out of affiliation and solidarity. Rather, they were creatively forged in resistance to the social violence of colonial administrations that engendered interethnic conflict and competition.

Charting cartographies of subalternized cultural productions in Latin America and the Caribbean calls upon the unique skills of this volume's authors to engage dense convergences of independence and nation-making;

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

of ethnic nationalisms and transnationalisms; of diasporic and global revolutions; of micro/macro struggles in the politics of gender and sexuality; of *mestizaje* and colorism; of multiple languages and creolized forms; of generational loyalties and betrayals. A manifold eye is required to apprehend the granularities of the subject matter, articulate the larger arcs of comparison and relation, and develop new theoretical approaches. Always relational, as in the sense of Glissant's poetics of relation, cultural identifications (in this case "African" and "Asian" in multicultural/multilingual Latin America and the Caribbean) are dialogic constructions. Thus, one proceeds with reflexivity and double vision, knowing that the terms of identity serve manifold purposes and temporalities, in all their ironies and contradictions.

Using mindful research methods across fields and disciplines, these researchers undertake the immense challenge of conducting trans-work in a knowledge system entrenched along foundational lines, working with what Walter Mignolo described as "transdisciplinarity and knowledges that have been subalternized by modern epistemology and the institutional disciplinary structure."[14] This work requires not only the skill and stamina to move across areas, languages, and archives, but to forge new paths for the production and synthesizing of knowledge. With new pathways comes the labor of opening new lines of inquiry. This is the meta-work that these scholars also do by creating intellectual spaces for such research to be developed and heard. Headway has been made by scholars using transnational and connective approaches, such as historian Kathleen López, whose research on the Chinese of Cuba, and Asians of Latin America and the Caribbean, has informed the work of others who are recuperating communal histories in Asia and the Americas; and literary scholar Ignacio López-Calvo, whose literary and cultural studies on Asians of Latin America, alternative Orientalisms, and South-to-South dialogues, have been a sustained call to scholars to undertake new directions. Early on, historian Evelyn Hu-DeHart began the transgression of area boundaries in her foundational and transnational work on Asians of the Americas. Important are the collaborations and transdisciplinary dialogues conducted by those such as López, López-Calvo, Hu-DeHart, Ossa, and Lee-DiStefano. This connective work has fostered a growing community of researchers who carry on a generative approach and whose research provides sustainable narratives that enrich the imagination with the plentitude of human experience.

While forging a new direction in the field of Latin American and Caribbean studies, this volume importantly brings a fresh addition to another body, global Afro-Asian studies, which has developed on several fronts over the last six decades, largely (but not only) in disciplines of history, literature, cultural studies, ethnic studies, film, music, art, religion, and philosophy. Radical study on Afro-Asian connections vigorously launched with the

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

historic Bandung Conference of 1955. Research from various parts of the world coalesced around the activism of Black and Asian internationalisms, anti-imperialist radicalisms, and Third World anticolonial and independence movements. An additional body of work emerged post-Vietnam War, examining global realignments, and biracial/multiracial and gendered legacies, that resulted from wars and occupations in Philippines, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. In the 1990s and onward, increased attention was paid to intersectional histories of migration, ethnic conflict and resistance, and renewed scholarly activity emerged on global histories of Afro-Asian intellectual rapport. A wave of scholarship also turned to Afro-Asian co-influences in art, performance, and popular culture. More recently, in the early twenty-first century, due to a changing market economy and world order, research in political science, economics, and international relations has proliferated on the contemporary relations among Latin American, Caribbean, Asian, and African nations. This recounting is an incomplete chronology (and developments have preceded and overlapped others at different historical moments), which only points to the richness of this topic and couches this volume in dynamic intellectual company, as part of a long and wide conversation on Afro-Asian connections.

NOTES

1. "The Continents," *Chesterwood National Trust Historic Site*, accessed August 1, 2017, http://chesterwood.org/the-continents/.

2. For the historical background and descriptive detail, see Landmarks Preservation Commission, *United States Custom House*, New York City Landmarks Designation Report (New York: 1965), accessed August 1, 2017, http://s-media.nyc.gov/agencies/lpc/lp/0020.pdf and Landmarks Preservation Commission, *United States Custom House Interior*, New York City Landmarks Designation Report (New York: 1979), accessed August 1, 2017, http://s-media.nyc.gov/agencies/lpc/lp/1022.pdf. Also see "Four Continents," *Chesterwood National Trust Historic Site*, http://chesterwood.org/; Diane Durante, *Outdoor Monuments of Manhattan: A Historical Guide* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 2007); Michael Richman, *Daniel Chester French: An American Sculptor* (Washington, DC: Preservation Press, 1976); Kathryn Greenthal and Michael Richman, "Daniel Chester French's Continents," *American Art Journal* 8, no. 2 (1976): 47–58; and Michele Bogart, *Public Sculpture and the Civic Ideal in New York City, 1890–1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989). For teaching and useful summary, see "The Four Continents," *New York City Public Art Curriculum*, accessed August 10, 2017, http://www.blueofthesky.com/publicart/index.htm.

3. Deemed most significant per the GSA. See U.S. General Services Administration, "Alexander Hamilton U.S. Custom House, New York, NY," *GSA*, accessed August 2, 2017, https://www.gsa.gov/historic-buildings/alexander-hamilton-us-custom-house-new-york-ny.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

4. French completed large-scale federal projects, memorials, sculptures of prominent figures such as John Harvard and Ralph Waldo Emerson as well as Abraham Lincoln at the Lincoln Memorial, Washington, DC, see Chesterwood National Trust Historic Site.

5. I thank Russell Leong, editor of *CUNY Forum* at AARI, who heard my preliminary thoughts on the "Continents."

6. Bogart, *Public Sculpture*, 130.

7. The building is now partly occupied by the National Museum of the American Indian. This irony is addressed by the museum's former director, W. Richard West Jr., see "The Four Continents," *New York City Public Art Curriculum.*

8. Bogart, *Public Sculpture*, 131.

9. Landmarks, *United States Custom House Interior*, 4.

10. Greenthal and Richman, "Daniel Chester French's Continents," 56.

11. Ibid., 56.

12. Stuart Hall, "Race: The Floating Signifier" (lecture, Goldsmiths College, London, UK, 1997), www.mediaed.org/transcripts/Stuart-Hall-Race-the-Floating-Signifi er-Transcript.pdf.

13. Gary Okihiro, *Margins and Mainstreams* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994); Lisa Yun, *The Coolie Speaks* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2008); and Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015).

14. Walter Mignolo, "The Role of the Humanities in the Corporate University," *PMLA* 115, no. 5 (2000): 1244.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Part I

IDENTITY AND NATIONAL DISCOURSES

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Interlude I

Kathleen López

Immigrants have been central to the multifaceted processes of nation-building throughout the Americas. Yet they are portrayed, at best, as temporary outsiders who play a supporting economic role, and more often as undesirable detriments to national culture. Immigrants and the debates they engender reinforce or challenge prevailing discourses of national identity that are grounded in white settler colonialism. During the age of export economies from 1870 to 1930, as Latin American politicians and elites sought political stability, prosperity, and international legitimacy, they publicly debated how to integrate the nonwhite (indigenous and African) populations of former colonial societies. Some version of *mestizaje* (or racial mixing) became the foundation for emerging nation-states. This overarching concept at once extols and subsumes indigenous populations through a focus on cultural fusion with Spaniards through centuries of colonization. Moreover, it marginalizes the African and more recent Asian presence.

Collectively, the essays in this section reinterpret concepts of mestizaje to emphasize Afro-Asian centrality to nation-building, influence in national cultural icons, and cross-racial and transnational solidarities. An Afro-Asian approach disrupts overarching national discourses and reveals alternate processes.

Debbie Lee-DiStefano examines the foundational ideologies of a mestizo national identity that developed in Peru in the early twentieth century alongside the marginalization of people of African and Asian descent. In a qualified acceptance, Peruvian intellectuals sympathized with the socioeconomic exploitation of indigenous people and debated how best to redeem what was seen as their cultural backwardness. In contrast, they located blacks and Chinese, who had been imported for labor on coastal plantations or guano islands, as outside of the project, far removed from the Andean heartland and

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

detrimental to national unity. One of Peru's leading historians called attention to "a new mestizaje" among blacks and Chinese, considered peripheral to the long-standing process of intermixing between indigenous peoples and Europeans, but alarming enough to be worthy of comment.

On Caribbean islands such as Cuba that relied on African slavery through the nineteenth century, a counter-narrative to Andean mestizaje developed, based on large black and *mulatto* populations and the subtleties of racial mixing. In the late nineteenth century *José Martí* laid the ideological foundation for a nation born of blacks, whites, and mulatos. At the outset of the new republic, Fernando Ortiz pioneered the ethnographic study of Afro-Cuban cultures and conceptualized a "transcultural" Cuban society born of a union between Europeans and Africans. Nicolás Guillén's poetry found inspiration in this fusion of black and white, and Wifredo Lam's art melded Afro-Cuban culture with international avant-garde movements.

Today we still witness the enduring nature of paradigms such as mestizaje and *mulataje*. At a 2007 international Chinese diaspora conference in Beijing, Evelyn Hu-DeHart, the pioneering scholar of Asians in the Americas, displayed an image of the famous painting *La Jungla* (The Jungle) and posed a provocative question: *What do you see?* In response, some participants exclaimed "Bamboo!" while others—including Chinese Cubans—countered "Sugar Cane!" The animated exchange likely would have intrigued Wifredo Lam, who, Mey-Yen Moriuchi reminds us, wanted audiences to encounter his painting from different perspectives. The question remains an open-ended one. Indeed, Lam's work is known for its African elements and connection with Cubism and Surrealism. But as the mixed-race son of a Chinese trader in Cuba, he grew up in a multiracial sugar town that experienced the legacies of both African slavery and Chinese indenture. Moriuchi contends that scholars and art critics have failed to give full consideration to the possibility of Chinese-inspired elements in Wifredo Lam's paintings.

The discussions and debates on the status of blacks in American societies are inherently transnational. Through cultural and political encounters and exchanges since the nineteenth century, Afro-Caribbeans and black Americans have maneuvered to overcome the legacies of a shared history of enslavement and ongoing oppression. In the process, many have come to identify as part of a greater African diaspora that transcends linguistic and national boundaries.

Malathi Iyengar shifts our focus to the global aspects of domestic struggles for social justice through a discussion of African American, Puerto Rican, and Indian political solidarities. By the early twentieth century, Harlem had become home not only to diasporic African Americans from Haiti, Jamaica, Cuba, and Puerto Rico, but also to South Asians seeking refuge and community. As they do today, daily interactions had potential to shape concepts of

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

citizenship, belonging, and social equality. In a close "reading" of the activity at the brownstone known as the Harlem Ashram in the 1940s, Iyengar gives due recognition to the inspiration of the Indian anticolonial movement for parallel struggles of the era and demonstrates potential for cooperation and ability to work through conflict, as both pacifists and nonpacifists came to embrace the Puerto Rican nationalist party.

An Afro-Asian approach to decolonial political movements highlights points of commonality between multiple overlapping diasporas, lending new insights into black internationalism. Such an approach uncovers new layers of convergence and solidarity in the face of differences and colonial and postcolonial attempts to divide and rule along racial lines.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Chapter 1

Afro and Chinese Depictions in Peruvian Social Discourse at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*

Debbie Lee-DiStefano

The social and cultural dynamics of the juxtaposition of people of African and Asian descent has remained an elusive topic in the discourse of race/ethnicity/colorism in the context of the Americas. There has been some research conducted that starts to bridge this gap in education and inquiry, yet it is just the tip of the proverbial iceberg that has yet to be discovered.[1] Historically, these two groups have shared similar spaces for very similar reasons, the primary one being that they have served as a commodity of labor to be used at the behest of others who sought economic gain at their expense. Many essays in this collection will document the cultural, labor, and social interaction between these two groups in both the corporeal and artistic realms, searching for methods to help document how they find a place of agency within these shared spaces.[2]

The majority of discussions about Blacks and Asians stems primarily from a locus of opposition, meaning that they are viewed as competing for primacy within the aforementioned shared spaces. Each is viewed as a singular experience that excludes much mention of the comparative points of contact with the other. The essays in this collection strive to change this approach. The authors seek to find points of synthesis or overlap, by demonstrating how similar the predicaments of both groups were by comparing the experiences of the two within the space. This type of discussion fits quite well in geographical spaces where the shared space has both Blacks and Asians on the periphery of a white, Eurocentric hegemonic center.

* From Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality by José Carlos Mariátegui, translated by Marjory Urquidi, Copyright ©1971. Courtesy of the University of Texas Press.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

The question this essay wishes to pose is what happens to this discussion when another element is inserted: the indigenous one? How does one approach a comparison about three disparate groups with drastically different cultural backgrounds, practices, and chronological timelines being forced to occupy the same spaces? In an attempt to start to illuminate this question, this chapter will turn to a particular place, Peru, and will briefly examine the socioeconomic discourse that led to the writing of the *Siete ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana* by José Carlos Mariátegui. Mariátegui, considered one of Peru's preeminent thinkers regarding socioeconomic philosophy, wrote these essays after spending years developing a theory of socioeconomic and political action. The purpose of this essay is not to enter in a discussion of his theory on economy, but rather to examine how he viewed Blacks, Chinese, and Indians in this framework and how they could add to or detract from his proposed framework.[3] It is commonly understood among Latin American scholars that Mariátegui's goal was to bring back Tahuantinsuyu, the primetime per se of the Peruvian Indian that refers to the Inca Empire, yet to do so in a modern context, to re-inculcate the Indian in the Peruvian economy with agency. What this essay seeks to show is how Mariátegui subordinates Blacks and Chinese to the plight of the Indian and poses them as a threat to full indigenous incorporation, and that his claim that the problem is one of economics (primarily land distribution) and not race is one that is contradicted by his discourse. The reader should note that the purpose of this chapter is not to posit any of these three groups above the other, but rather to demonstrate how negative social discourse has inappropriately defined them all, and that such discourse has placed them in opposition to one another as competitors rather than in solidarity as allies. It is also important to bear in mind that this type of discussion is neither simple, given the complex histories of each group, nor devoid of controversy, given that there are very strong, personal feelings attached to any discussion regarding marginalization and subjugation, particularly when an individual identifies with one of these groups in particular. The intended outcome of this essay, which does not have enough words to fully describe the complexity of the topic, is to challenge each of us to rethink how we have been taught to view the concepts of race/ethnicity/colorism by viewing how this dynamic has unfolded in a particular historical context, and to question how can we change our approaches as scholars and as members of communities.

From the moment that Christopher Columbus set foot on Hispaniola, a system of hierarchy based on race/ethnicity/colorism was created that would lay the groundwork for all future genocides, systems of servitude, and abject subjugation and humiliation of peoples who did not emulate the colonizers. Indians, Blacks, and later the Chinese would all become elements of a system

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

that would simply reconstitute itself with the introduction of each new ethnic entity. To put it in the words of Jorge Basadre, one of Peru's most prolific historians of the early to mid-twentieth century, "Los conquistadores se convirtieron en nobleza de sangre y la nobleza de sangre tendió a trocarse en nobleza de funcionarios." ("The conquistadors became nobility by blood and nobility by blood tended to disguise itself as nobility of functionaries;"[4] 41–42).[5] In short, those who were in power would retain power based on the politics of blood and would ensure the survival of this structure through legislative means.

It is important to note that Peruvian national discourse was often guided by politics of blood. Javier Prado (1871–1921), who was very active in Peruvian politics, serving various commissions and as a senator (his brother was President Manuel Prado), is credited with authoring the collection *El estado social del Perú durante la dominación española* (1894). In this collection, he writes about the social, political, and economic development of pre-independence Peru, quoting many of the thinkers of the times. He engages in a discussion of the racial stratification of Peru and in doing so restates the ideas proposed by José Hipólito Unanue (1755–1833), a scientist and Peruvian politician who added greatly to the Peruvian Enlightenment, being considered a naturalist. In his discussions of race/ethnicity/colorism, Prado copies the following from Unanue's description of Europeans, Indians, and Blacks: Europeans have "facciones hermosas, solidez en el pensamiento, y un corazón lleno de una fiereza generosa." ("Beautiful features, solidity in thought, and a heart full of generous ferocity;" 124).[6] The Americano (Indian) has "facciones delicadas, aire melancólico, imaginación pronta y fuerte, corazón sensible y tímido." ("Delicate features, an air of melancholy, a quick and strong imagination, a sensible and timid heart;" 124). The Negro has "facciones salvajes, color negro y espíritu pesado y un corazón bárbaro." ("The Black has savage features, black in color, and heavy spirit and a barbarous heart;" 124). One could argue that Prado was merely reiterating historical ideas of race that were prevalent under the Viceroyalty, and that he does not subscribe to these ideas. However, later in the collection, as he discusses slavery, his references to Blacks continue being quite pejorative. He writes, "Los negros, considerados la mercancia comercial, debían regar la tierra con el sudor de su frente; pero, sin fecundarla, sin dejar frutos provechosos." ("The Blacks, considered commercial mercantile, had to water the earth with the sweat from their brow, without making it fertile, without leaving useful fruit;" Prado 167). The savagery and barbarism that Prado mentioned using Unanue's words are offset here by his description of uselessness, contrasting a frightening strength with weakness. Prado's words lead us to believe that he saw no contributions by Blacks to Peruvian society, outside of serving as a labor force. Given that the topic of the collection is the Viceroyalty,

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

the Chinese are not mentioned, although there would certainly have been some given the Spanish trade routes and *El camino Manila* (or the Manila Galleon).

Manuel González Prada, author of the essay "Nuestros indios" and a contemporary of Prado, brings to the forefront the Indian question. Prada and his ideas regarding indigenous incorporation are a precursor to Mariátegui's thought; however, unlike Mariátegui, he viewed race as an important aspect of the problem that needs to be addressed. In the following excerpt, he manages to address what he sees as some misconceptions about using race or color as a determinant regarding a group's characteristics or abilities:

> We constantly meet yellow men who dress, eat, live, and think like the suave gentlemen of Lima. We see Indians in legislatures, municipal governments, magistracies, universities, and scientific bodies who seem no more venal nor more ignorant than those of other races.
>
> Novicow is right in saying that the supposed inferiority of Yellows and Blacks is a chimera of diseased minds. Actually, there is no cultural activity which cannot be performed by some black or some yellow man, just as the most infamous act may be committed by some white. If, instead of comparing white-skinned masses with dark-skinned masses, we compare one individual with another, we see that savages and redskins at heart abound in the midst of white civilization. Suppose we name as flowers of the race, or representative men, the King of England and the Emperor of Germany. Do Edward VII and William II deserve to be compared with the Indian Benito Juárez and the Black Booker Washington? Those who lived in taverns, barracks, and brothels before occupying a throne, or from the summit of power ordered the pitiless massacre of children, women, and old people may be white in skin but hide blackness in their souls. (González Prada)[7]

His discourse is quite rational in the sense that he is proposing that one's color should not be a factor in determining destiny. He still depicts whiteness at the top of the hierarchy and the colors used to describe what is bad or evil are "black" and "redskin." However, as his discussion of the Indian problem continues, he inserts biases that he has just previously disavowed. He states, "During the time of black slavery there were no crueler overseers than the Blacks themselves. At the present time there are probably no harsher oppressors of the Indian than those very Indians who are Hispanicized and invested with some authority" (González Prada). This discourse is reminiscent to the proslavery discourse that wanted to legitimize the slave trade on the premise that slavery existed in Africa and was therefore acceptable. He mentions the "hispanicized" Indian as being crueler to other Indians. In fact, he continues to disparage people of mixed background, implying that Spanish blood is what debases Blacks and Indians:

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

> The real tyrant of the masses, who uses certain Indians to exploit and oppress the others, is the half-caste, including in this term not only the *cholo* or *mestizo* of the sierra but also the *mulatto* and *zambo*[8] of the coast. In Peru we see an ethnic stratification. Excluding Europeans and the small number of national or Creole whites, the population is divided into two parts, very unequal in quantity, the dominating half-castes and the dominated indigenes. One or two hundred thousand persons have been placed over three millions. (González Prada)

This attempt to place "pure blood" over those of mixed heritage suggests that his desire to disavow race/ethnicity/colorism as a determinant is contradicted when he sees these factors as a part of the problem. This is reminiscent of the previous assertion by Jorge Basadre regarding the installation of a nobility of blood system by the conquistadors that was made evident in the now infamous *sistema de castas*, or caste system, a chart that depicted one's place in the blood hierarchy according to the amount of "blood mixing" that had occurred. González Prada, in as much as he seems to want to balance the discussion of the three groups as equals, is opposing this by shifting the discussion from race/ethnicity/colorism to questions of purity. One could argue that González Prada is remarking on the Hispanicization of native groups, intimating that they should be allowed to simply be who they are. If this were the case, then a discussion focusing on culture rather than phenotype or parentage would be much more effective.

He continues his assault on people of mixed heritage. He blames them for the ill perpetrated on all marginalized groups:

> glacial cupidity of the half-castes to squeeze the blood out of human flesh. The suffering and death of their fellow creatures matters very little to them when that suffering and death yields them a gain of a few *soles*. They decimate the Indian with their assessments and forced labor (*mitas*); they import the Black to make him groan under the lash of the overseer; they swallow up the Chinese, giving him a handful of rice for ten and even fifteen hours of work; they bring the East Indian from his islands to let him die of nostalgia in the slave quarters of the haciendas; today they are trying to bring in Japanese. . . . The Black seems to decline [in numbers], the Chinese is disappearing, the East Indian has left no trace, and the Japanese gives no sign of lending himself to slavery. But the Indian remains, since three hundred to four hundred years of cruelty have not succeeded in exterminating him. The vile creature obstinately insists on living! (*Nuestros indios*)

Although González Prada seems to be aware of the abuse that all those who were marginalized had suffered, he pays particular attention to the plight of the Indian. His premise seems to be that the suffering of the Indian is more shameful and should take priority given their inherited right to the land and

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

the longevity of their suffering. González Prada, as one of the leaders of the *indigenismo* movement, clearly has an understanding of how race/ethnicity/colorism has played a role in the social and economic development of the country. He is also cognizant of the subjugation of these groups. His vision for a better future, however, does not include Blacks, Chinese, Japanese or South Asians, or even "half castes." As we continue the discussion and view similar statements further along in the discourse of Mariátegui, we will find that both writers will agree, with differing points, that the betterment of the life of the Indian and the Indian alone is the only way to better Peru as a nation.

Jorge Basadre briefly touches on the connections of race/ethnicity/colorism as he dives into the Peruvian past to try to define what it means to be Peruvian and how this definition has developed historically. As he revisits Peruvian history, when it comes to the question of race/ethnicity/colorism, he states, "Otro problema que no hemos resuelto es el de las razas. Seguimos siendo y continuaremos un país multicolor. . . . El indio es problema no en cuanto indio sino en cuanto persiste en una existencia marginal desde el punto económico, social y cultural." ("Another problem that we haven't resolved is the question of race. We still are and will continue to be a multicolor country. . . . The Indian is a problem not so much for being Indian but rather because he continues to live a marginal existence from an economic, social and cultural standpoint;" *Materiales para otra morada* 16–17).[9] Unlike González Prada, Basadre implies that the "mezcla o coexistencia de razas diversas" ("the mixing or coexistence of diverse races;" 43) is a part of Latin America's strength and diversity. He adds that they all belong to a society "a cuyas necesidades y transformaciones no podemos ser ajenos." ("To whose necessities and transformations we can't be indifferent;" 46).

Basadre's discussions of Peruvian history incorporate elements of the histories of Blacks and Chinese, but like González Prada and Mariátegui, his primary focus is the Indian. He states with particular reference to Blacks that "Esa historia de los peruanos necesitaría conceder atención a la introducción de los negros, y al vasto experimento de mestizaje que surgió desde los primeros momentos de la Conquista sin estar obligada a darle tampoco importancia exclusiva." ("That part of Peruvian history needs to devote some attention to the introduction of Negros, and to the vast mestizaje experiment that started from the first moments of the Conquest without being obligated to give it exclusive importance"; *La promesa* 87). In another work, he does offer historical attention to Blacks. As with González Prada, his discourse is often contradictory. He starts by stating the following:

> No se puede hablar de la campiña en la historia republicana y omitir a los negros. Su situación fue, en los primeros tiempos de la República, estacionaria

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

> pero tolerable. Trabajaban en las haciendas de la costa. . . . Además de peón de hacienda, el negro fué sirviente en las casas grandes. La descendencia española se crió entre nodrizas negras; negras hubo que se sentaron en el carruaje con las señoras. Algunos heredaron; otros se dedicaron a la medicina. Vendedores ambulantes, carretoneros, aguadores, caleseros fueron en Lima negros.
>
> ("You can't speak about the countryside in the history of the Republic and omit Negros. Their situation was, in the first years of the Republic, stationary but tolerable. They worked on the *haciendas* on the coast. . . . As well as being a peon on the haciendas, the Negro was a servient in the big houses. Spanish descendants were raised by black nannies; black women who were allowed to sit on the carriages with their mistresses. Some received inheritances; others dedicated themselves to medicine. There were black street venders, wagon makers, water boys and wagon drivers in Lima;" 234–235).[10]

The fact that Basadre states that the situation in which Blacks found themselves was "tolerable" reveals how uninquisitive he is about their marginalization and deplorable situation. Moreover, he seems to suggest the fact that the Spanish used Black nannies somehow gives them a place of importance. Basadre, writing in the mid-twentieth century, reveals through his discourse a rather myopic view of the past, a vision that he cautions us to avoid when he says that we can often see our past but not our present (*La promesa* 59). In this case, it is clear that Basadre doesn't do the history of Blacks sufficient justice or thoroughness. In fact, he continues the above quotation by discussing the negative attributes of Blacks: "También hubo muchos ladrones negros. Las cofradías de negros fueron algo interesante en Lima. Los cantos y bailes como la resbalosa y la zamacueca provienen de los negros; ellos fueron los maestros de bailes más afamados. En conjunto el aporte de esta raza fue un aporte de exuberancia vital, de sensualidad, y de superstición." ("There were also many black criminals. The black syndicates were something really interesting in Lima. Songs and dances such as the *resbalosa* and the *zamacueca* come from the Negros. They were the most famous masters of dance. In short, the greatest contribution of this race was a contribution of vital exuberance, of sensuality and of superstition;" *La multitud* 234–235). The vocabulary used to discuss Blacks is colored with the stereotypes of the time. Using the words "exuberance," "sensuality," and "superstition" brings to mind Unanue's and Prado's descriptions. Their contributions to society seem to be just song and dance. Moreover, the fact that equal attention is paid to their lawlessness as to their usefulness appears to be an attempt to appear rational by offering a supposedly complete view that is lost by both its brevity and lack of scope. Basadre inasmuch as asserts that Blacks were the partial cause for their subjugation. He is referring to various historical moments when slavery was in question, as well as the rights of slaves. He states, "Como el

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

esclavo ignoraba sus derechos o no tenía medios o deseos para defenderlos, esta legislación fue tan ilusoria como la legislación sobre los indios." ("Since the slave ignored his rights or didn't have the means or the desire to defend them, this legislation was as illusory as was the legislation about the Indian;" 235). Looking back on history seems disingenuous that any historian would assume that Blacks, Chinese, or Indians had any concrete ability to affect how they would be treated under the law, given the fact that the power of the law was never in their hands nor had their interests as a priority.

Basadre's discussions of the Chinese are quite similar to those of Blacks, although much more sparse. It is also important to note that Basadre lived through both Chinese and Japanese migration to Peru, yet in his historical accounts he makes little to no mention of the Japanese. He speaks very briefly of the historical migration and first introduction of the Chinese. According to Basadre, the lack of labor accentuated by abolition, the feudal mindset of the *hacendados*, and the inertia of the state brought about Chinese immigration (*La multitud* 237). Basadre describes the coolies as "de trenzas, traídos por la fuerza o por el engaño: población laboriosa aunque no vigorosa ni aspirante que pocas veces llega a la sierra y más bien se queda en la costa, sobre todo en la haciendas de azúcar, determinando un alto renacimiento agrícola o si nó, libertada de su labor esclavizada, se dedica en la ciudad al comercio al por menor." ("With braids, brought by force or by deceipt: laborious population although not vigorous or aspirational that seldom made it to the mountains, but rather stayed on the coast, mostly on sugar plantations, helping enact a high agricultural renaissance or if not, freed from their slave labor, goes to the city to work in business for the most part;" *La multitud* 237). Beyond a discussion of the end of the coolie trade, Basadre doesn't lend much to the discussion of the Chinese except to add that in Peru "se juega a chino por ficha de rocambor" ("Chinese are played like pawn in *rocambor*, a card game") and that a new mestizaje emerges in the lower classes "a pesar del odio que le profesa el negro." ("Notwithstanding the hatred the Negro professes to have for him;" 237). In these few words, Basadre opens the discussion to a question that he does not attempt to answer. A new mestizaje emerges that we can assume is between Blacks and Chinese given that he adds that it's happening even though Blacks supposedly hate the Chinese. He gives no mention to the dynamics of this mixing, neither physical nor cultural, and how this is viewed within the social contexts, both within the groups and in the national context as a whole. His description that this mestizaje happens in the lower classes seems to explain why: it is a phenomenon that is happening among the lower classes and is, therefore, unimportant to those who hold power. This point is important because it demonstrates a continued commodification of the Blacks and Chinese, that any discussion of them has importance only inasmuch as it affects the dominant, national culture.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

The tone of Basadre's discussions about the Indian is much more expansive and in depth, yet it is as equally pejorative as his discussions of Blacks and Chinese. Basadre states with firmness that Indian in Peru is a symbol and a history and that the modern-day Indian is a part of the Peruvian condition (*La promesa* 115). This hierarchical position that he attributes to the Indian is crucial because it gives an air of importance to discussions of the Indian, their place within the context of Peruvian national history and presumably its future. He seems to disagree to the approach that was taken historically by participants in the pro-indigenous movement when he writes that Peru would be drowning in "*indianismo*" (57). He adds that during the twentieth century there emerged a tendency to scientifically study the Indian and the Peru of the Inca (57). He attests to the fact that in *Nuestros indios,* Manuel González Prada declared the Indian to be the true Peruvian, and that Peru can't call itself a Democratic Republic when 2 million to 3 million people live outside the law (57). He continues alignment with González Prada by adding that "la cuestión del indio, más que pedagógica, es económica, es social." ("The Indian question is economic, is social in as much as it pedagogical;" 57) and that "todo blanco es, más o menos, un Pizarro." ("Every White person is, more or less, a Pizarro;" 57). He adds that there were many "moral defenders" such as Juan Bustamante and the *Sociedad Amiga de los Indios* (nineteenth century) as well as *La Asociación Pro-Indígena* headed by Joaquín Capelo, Pedro Zulen, and Dora Mayer. Basadre adds that Marxists would eventually take González Prada's ideas and formulate theories that would declare that any revolution would need to be agrarian and race-based, referring specifically to Quechua and Aymara nationalities (58).

According to Basadre, the Indians were never fully incorporated in the transition from colony to Republic and the lack of legislative inclusion, combined with the strength and power of the landed estates, kept them in agriculture (*La multitud* 237). He demonstrates, as he did with the issue of slavery, the legislative loopholes that were constantly keeping the Indian from inclusion and in a deplorable state.[11] In *La promesa de la vida peruana y otros ensayos,* Basadre undertakes a general discussion of the cultural practices of the Indians (237), descriptions that he does not add when discussing Blacks or Chinese. Essentially, the point of this discussion of Basadre's works is pertinent as he was a contemporary of Prado, González Prada, and Mariátegui. At some point, he would have read their works and inevitably had discussions with each of them in person. Even though he is writing after the deaths of all of them, he clearly has gained a historical approximation that is rooted in their ideas and theories; his revision of Peruvian history, particularly in the context of race/ethnicity/colorism, is influenced and colored by them. As the discussion moves to the thoughts of Mariátegui, the primary focus of this discussion, the reader will note that Basadre wrote the introduction to *Los siete*

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana and will provide the historical context for the collection. As stated at the beginning of this essay José Carlos Mariátegui (1894–1930) penned *Los siete ensayos de interpretación de la realidad preuana* (originally published in 1928), a collection of essays in which he discusses what he sees as the Peruvian problem and how it could be resolved, interpretations that are based in Marxist ideology. At the heart of Mariátegui's premise is what he sees as the root of the class problem in Peru: *gamonalismo*. Gamonalismo "is derived from *gamonal*, a word meaning a 'large landowner,' and it refers to the exploitation of the Indian population, mainly by landowners of European descent" (Britannica).[12] He writes, "The problem of the Indian is rooted in the land tenure system of our economy" (*Seven Interpretive Essays*, "The Problem of the Indian").[13] Much like Emiliano Zapata's *tierra y libertad* during the Mexican Revolution, which was a cry to break down the *latifundio*, or large estates, and redistribute land in Mexico, Mariátegui's lifelong challenge was to change the course of the Indian's trajectory that had been dominated by the large landholding class in Peru. He writes:

> There can be no illusions. The decent groups in the cities will never prevail against gamonalismo in regional administration. The experience of more than a century has taught us what to expect of the possibility that in the near future a democratic system will function in Peru that will fulfill, at least on paper, the Jacobin principle of "popular sovereignty." The rural masses, or the Indian communities in any case, would remain outside suffrage and its results. (*Seven Interpretative Essays*, "Regionalism and Centralism")

His collection *Siete ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana* was his formal attempt to put to paper his dictum on how this happened historically, what was happening in his immediate present and how he thought they should proceed toward bettering the life of the Indians and incorporating them as full citizens within the Peruvian nation. The purpose of this examination is not to evaluate Mariátegui's theories regarding socialism and its influence on this collection, but rather to explore how his discourse approaches the concepts of race/ethnicity/colorism of Blacks, Chinese, and Indians within the framework.

It is important to note from the start that Mariátegui did not view race/ethnicity/colorism as a viable reason for discussing the socioeconomic condition of any group. He writes:

> Mestizaje needs to be analyzed as a sociological rather than an ethnic question. The ethnic problem that has occupied the attention of untrained sociologists and ignorant analysts is altogether fictitious. It becomes disproportionately important to those who, abiding by the idea cherished by European civilization at its

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

> peak (and already discarded by that same civilization, which in its decline favors a relativist concept of history), attribute the achievements of Western society to the superiority of the white race. In the simplistic judgment of those who advise that the Indian be regenerated by cross-breeding, the intellectual and technical skills, the creative drive, and the moral discipline of the white race are reduced to mere zoological conditions. (*Seven Interpretive Essays*, "Literature on Trial")

Throughout the collection, Mariátegui makes many references to the concepts of White pride or White superiority. To his credit, he tends to discredit this manner of thinking, calling it a false narrative, one created by Eurocentrism, as he intimates above. He also seems to discount the ideas of José Vasconcelos and *La raza cósmica*, an essay in which Vasconcelos proposes that the future of the region is bound to the concept of mestizaje. Vasconcelos writes, "Sean cuales fueren las opiniones que a este respecto se emitan, y aun la repugnancia que el prejuicio nos causa, lo cierto es que se ha producido y se sigue consumando la mezcla de sangres. Y es en esta fusión de estirpes donde debemos buscar el rasgo fundamental de la idiosincrasia iberoamericana." ("Whatever the opinions may have been that were expressed regarding this, and still the repugnance that prejudice causes us, what is certain is that it has produced and continues to end in the mixing of blood. And it's in this fusion of lineage where we should look for the fundamental trait of the Iberoamerican idiosyncracy"; *La raza cósmica* 17–18).[14] Vasconcelos goes on to add that "lo que de allí va a salir es la raza definitiva, la raza síntesis o raza integral, hecha con el genio y con la sangre de todos los pueblos y, por lo mismo, más capaz de verdadera fraternidad y de visión realmente universal." ("This is the definitive race, a synthetic race or an integral race, composed of all the genius and blood of all the groups, and, at least, more capable of true fraternity and with a true universal vision"; 19). Whereas Vasconcelos is seeing mestizaje, which is a legacy of colonialism, as a synthesis by blending what he sees as the positive traits of the Indo and European worlds, Mariátegui wants to take race/ethnicity/colorism out the equation and focus instead on the cultural aspect, with particular interest in the socioeconomic aspect. He states:

> Although the racial question—which has implications that lead superficial critics to improbable zoological reasoning—is artificial and does not merit the consideration of those who are engaged in a concrete and political study of the indigenous problem, the sociological question is another matter. The contrast in color will gradually disappear, but the rights of the mestizo are legitimized in his customs, feelings, and myths—the spiritual and formal elements of those phenomena that are called society and culture. In existing socio-economic conditions, mestizaje produces not only a new human and ethnic type but a new social type. The blurring of that type by a confused combination of races

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

> does not in itself imply any inferiority and may even presage, in certain ideal mixtures, the characteristics of the cosmic race. (*Seven Interpretive Essays*, "Literature on Trial")

The last line of the above text is crucial to this discussion. Mariátegui makes direct reference to Vasconcelos's *La raza cósmica*, by suggesting that "certain ideal mixtures" might bring about the cosmic race, a concept he doesn't seem to discredit as a possibility under very specific circumstances. While Mariátegui appears to respect Vasconcelos for his ideals, he describes his vision as utopian and one that doesn't work as a framework for all of the Americas:

> The mestizaje extolled by Vasconcelos is not precisely the mixture of Spanish, Indian, and African which has already taken place on the continent. It is a purifying fusion and re-fusion, from which the cosmic race will emerge centuries later. For Vasconcelos, the mestizo in his present form is not the prototype of a new race and a new culture, but only its promise. The reflections of a philosopher, of a Utopian, are not bound by limitations of time or space. In his ideal construction, centuries are only moments.
>
> In Peru, because of the imprint of different environments and the combination of many racial mixtures, the meaning of "mestizo" varies. Mestizaje has produced a complex species rather than a solution of the dualism of Spaniard and Indian. (*Seven Interpretive Essays*, "Literature on Trial")

It is clear by the end of the above quotation that Mariátegui does not feel that Blacks and Chinese would be a part of this ideal, utopian mixture. His concern is that the term mestizo, rather than just meaning of mixed descent, is too fluid and that the "species" created in Peru is an aberration. Mariátegui demonstrates again how trapped he is by colonial discourse and by the colonial mentality. The "dualism of Spanish and Indian" is his concern, particularly with uplifting the state of the Indian, and Blacks and Chinese are a hindrance to this project and anti-utopian.

Mariátegui reemphasizes this notion as he continues his discussions. He describes the Indian as a complex character, one that is deep and profound, and cannot be represented by a simple trope or caricature. He writes:

> The Indian does not represent solely a type, a theme, a plot, a character; he represents a people, a race, a tradition, a spirit. It is impossible to consider and evaluate him from a purely literary standpoint, as though he were a national color or feature on the same plane as other ethnic elements in Peru. [. . .] I repeat that the genuine Indigenist does not concern himself with the Indian as a source of picturesque character and plot; if this were the case, the Zambo would be as interesting as the Indian to the writer or artist. (*Seven Interpretive Essays*, "Literature on Trial")

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

By the statement above, Mariátegui does not see Afro-Peruvians as interesting as the Indian, in literature or in any other aspect apparently. By stating this, he is minimizing Blacks not only as an element of Peruvian society but also as members of the human race. He is devaluing, as did his predecessors, the contributions of both freed and enslaved Afro-Peruvians to the cultural, social, and economic contexts of Peru. By stating that the Indian is not simply a "a national color or feature on the same plane as other ethnic elements in Peru," he is creating a hierarchy in which he places the Indian at the top of this minority ladder, and more importantly, implores that the Indian be seen as a whole person. He directly states as much when he writes, "Because of the conflict and contrast between his demographic predominance and his social and economic servitude, not just inferiority, the Indian deserves to be the focus of attention in present-day Peru" (*Seven Interpretive Essays*, "Literature on Trial"). Mariátegui is creating his own *sistema de castas*, as did Unanue, Prado, González Prada, and later Basadre, one in which Blacks and Chinese not only have no importance on the national scale when viewed alongside the Indian, but are also viewed as a hindrance and a complication to Mariátegui's theories as to how to better incorporate the Indian in a socialist economy.

Let's first examine Mariátegui's words with regard to Afro-Peruvians. It should be noted that he does not discuss Blacks and Chinese at much length. It is primarily in the last essay that he addresses the issues of slavery, the coolie trade, and the primarily negative consequences that these have had not only with regard to labor but also with regards to mestizaje. At many times, he extolls the horrors of slavery. However, his discussions focus more on how slavery corrupted the labor market rather than on the abuse the Blacks suffered under the hands of masters during slavery and later as forgotten citizens after abolition:

> In making reparation to the autochthonous race, it is necessary to separate the Indian from the Negro, mulato, and zambo, who represent colonial elements in our past. The Spaniard imported the Negro when he realized that he could neither supplant nor assimilate the Indian. The slave came to Peru to serve the colonizing ambitions of Spain. The Negro race is one of the human alluvia deposited on the coast by Spain, one of the thin, weak strata of sediment that formed in the low lands of Peru during the viceroyalty and the early period of the republic; and throughout this cycle, circumstances have conspired to maintain its solidarity with in the colony. Because he has never been able to acclimatize himself physically or spiritually to the Sierra, the Negro has always viewed it with distress and hostility. When he has mixed with the Indian, he has corrupted him with his false servility and exhibitionist and morbid psychology. (*Seven Interpretive Essays*, "Literature on Trial")

In the above section, Mariátegui uses nature to describe Blacks. He first refers to them as "human alluvia," as "one of the thin, weak strata of

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

sediment that formed in the low lands of Peru during the viceroyalty and the early period of the republic." This description reflects Mariátegui's low esteem of the Afro elements of Peruvian culture. Sediment is not solid rock; it is essentially loose material that flows with the rivers as they make their way to the sea to deposit the sediment far away. Blacks, and subsequently Chinese, are this loose material that doesn't pertain to the strong foundation of the Andes but rather to the coast. Historically, Blacks and Chinese were brought to work on the coasts or the guano islands, which is also the region primarily associated with the previously mentioned gamonales, the object of Mariátegui's true ire. Given that the gamonales have labor entrenched in a feudal system, and Blacks and Chinese served as objects in the labor structure, Mariátegui associates their presence with the continuation of this system as if they were willing participants in the deception. Moreover, by stating that Blacks couldn't acclimate to the sierra, which in this case is the Andes, or the backbone of Peruvian national pride and tie to nature, he is disconnecting them from any claim of being true Peruvians, of pertaining to the national identity, and therefore of having any real importance as either agent or object at the national level.

His opinions of post-abolition Blacks are not positive. He writes, "Since emancipation, the Negro has become addicted to his status of liberated slave. Colonial society turned the Negro into a domestic servant, very seldom into an artisan or worker, and it absorbed and assimilated him until it became intoxicated by his hot, tropical blood. The Negro was as accessible and domesticated as the Indian was impenetrable and remote" (*Seven Interpretive Essays*, "Literature on Trial"). The above passage demonstrates again that Mariátegui did not view Afro-Peruvians in good favor. They are seen as having bewitched the Peruvian colonialists by "intoxicating" them with their "hot, tropical blood," which is how they were assimilated so easily. They are described in terms that imbue weakness as opposed to the Indian who evoked images of strength: Blacks are "accessible and domesticated" whereas Indians are "impenetrable and remote." This description would serve as a basis for his previous claim that they are a weak addition to the mestizaje that happened in Peru. He essentially states this directly in another passage as he writes: "The contribution of the Negro, who came as a slave, almost as merchandise, appears to be even more worthless and negative. The Negro brought his sensualism, his superstition, and his primitivism. His condition not only did not permit him to help create culture, but the crude, vivid example of his barbarism was more likely to hamper such creation. (*Seven Interpretive Essays*, "Literature on Trial"). His appraisal is that Blacks have contributed nothing to Peruvian culture. This lack of cultural connection allows him to take them out of the discussion and view Blacks only in regards to how they have delayed the full inclusion of the Indian.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Mariátegui makes the same claim about Chinese with regards to how their presence has hampered the success of the Indian. He writes:

> The Chinese and Negro complicate mestizaje on the coast. Neither of these two elements has so far contributed either cultural values or progressive energies to the formation of nationality. The Chinese coolie has been driven from his country by overpopulation and poverty. He introduces into Peru his race but not his culture. Chinese immigration has not brought us any of the basic elements of Chinese civilization, perhaps because these have lost their dynamism and generating power even at home. We have become acquainted with Lao Tse and Confucius through the West. Probably the only direct importation from the Orient of an intellectual order is Chinese medicine, and its arrival is undoubtedly due to practical and mechanical reasons, stimulated by the backwardness of a people who cling to all forms of folk remedies. The skill of the small Chinese farmer has flourished only in the valleys of Lima, where the proximity of an important market makes truck gardening profitable. (*Seven Interpretive Essays*, "Literature on Trial")

Mariátegui's descriptions of Chinese are equally as pejorative as are his descriptions of Blacks. He compares the Chinese that arrived through the coolie trade as a bastardized version of the great civilizations of China whose majestic stories and feats helped embolden Orientalists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The only intellectual contribution they brought with them was Chinese medicine, which he describes as backward and as "folk" remedies. He uses the term "driven" when describing their exodus from China, which does not give them agency of action but rather as objects being moved by forces beyond their control, like the sediment mentioned in a previous quote. Even their skills as farmers are demeaned because they stayed close to Lima. This geographical positioning of placing the Chinese by Lima, on the coast, far from the Andes, is a metaphorical exclusion once again to remove, separate, and distinguish the Chinese from the true first inhabitants of Peru, or the Indian. As he does with Afro-Peruvians, Chinese Peruvians are being distanced from the concept of Nation; because they are not associated with the Indian, they are not Peruvian. He states this quite clearly when he says, "Neither of these two elements has so far contributed either cultural values or progressive energies to the formation of nationality" (*Seven Interpretive Essays*, "Literature on Trial"). His final description of the Chinese goes as follows:

> The Chinese furthermore appear to have inoculated his descendants with the fatalism, apathy, and defects of the decrepit Orient. Gambling, which is an element of immorality and indolence and is particularly harmful to people prone to rely more on chance than on effort, is mainly encouraged by Chinese

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

> immigration. Only since the Nationalist movement, which has had wide repercussions among the expatriate Chinese of this continent, has the Chinese colony shown signs of an active interest in culture and progress. The Chinese theater, almost exclusively reserved for the nocturnal amusement of people of that nationality, has made no impression on our literature except on the exotic and artificial tastes of the decadents. Valdelomar and the colonidas discovered it during their opium sessions, when they were infected by the orientalism of Loti and Farrere. The Chinese, in brief, does not transfer to the mestizo his moral discipline, his cultural and philosophical tradition, or his skill as farmer and artisan. His language, his immigrant status, and the criollo's scorn for him combine to act as a barrier between his culture and the environment.

The above description is replete with tropes about Chinese that were common in anti-Chinese propaganda in both the United States and Latin America. He describes them as gamblers and purveyors of opium. He scoffs at the Orientalist writers who made literary orientalism a popular genre by praising "oriental" culture. He insists that the Chinese who immigrated to Peru brought none of the positive, orientalist qualities. These attitudes, combined with the anti-Chinese and Japanese sentiment that were prevalent in Peru in the 1920s, provides Mariátegui with a rationale as to why the Chinese have not added to Peruvian culture. Their presence and the progeny produced by having coupled with both Black and Indian women have been nothing more than a complication to Mariátegui. He writes earlier in the collection, "The people of Asia, who are in no way superior to the Indians, have not needed any transfusion of European blood in order to assimilate the most dynamic and creative aspects of Western culture. The degeneration of the Peruvian Indian is a cheap invention of sophists who serve feudal interests" (*Seven Interpretive Essays*, "The Problem of the Indian"). Mariátegui attempts to disavow colonialism and its engraining of both feudalism and the dualism in Peruvian culture, yet perpetrates the same action. For as much as he wants to take race/ethnicity/colorism out of the discussion and solely focus on land and labor, by making statements regarding hierarchies like the one above and all those that preceded it, he is reproducing the same reductionist, feudalist approach and reinforcing the very structures of power put in place by colonialism that he vehemently wants to dismantle.

We are left with the question: What does all this mean? How does this discussion pretend to try to alter approaches to discussions of race/ethnicity/color when we are contending with multiple elements that live, work, breathe, love, and reproduce within the same space? First, it should be noted that the intent of this chapter is not to call the aforementioned social critics "racists," as Juan E. de Castro contends.[15] The writers, historians, and philosophers whose words we have just glimpsed at are all gentlemen who had a sincere desire to see progress within their nation of Peru,

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

focusing primarily on the abuse that the Indian has consistently suffered under the regimes of the colony and later the Republic. Each of these men was well-respected in his field and the collections of each are read by Peruvians today as a means of understanding their past, of how Peru developed socially to become what it is today. Many of the militant groups such as Tupac Amaru II and Shining Path base many of their premises on the teachings of González Prada and Mariáregui in particular. APRA (Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana, or now known as the Partido Aprista Peruano), whose founder Victor Raúl Haya de la Torre diverged from Mariátegui in 1928 after accusing him of Eurocentrism, shares many of Mariátegui's ideas as their founding principles (*Seven Interpretive Essays*, "Introduction by Jorge Basadre"). These words are still being read and synthesized by a modern public. However, Prado was synthesizing Unanue, Mariátegui was reenvisioning González Prada, and Basadre was refashioning the works of all of them. We saw no real divergence of anyone's premise, just some rearranging and perhaps a few additions as new elements were introduced. In sum, there has been no great divergence of thought over hundreds of years. The exegesis that was presented did not give voice to the groups because the systems of power are content to keep them as objects of discussion and not allow agency. Blacks, Indians, and Chinese were historically viewed as problems, as elements that needed to be redeemed (Indian) or dealt with (Blacks and Chinese). The purpose of this discussion was to show how these groups were viewed in national discourse at certain points in time.

An answer to the question postulated above is for an alliance of the marginalized to happen in both the corporeal and academic spheres. By providing discussions regarding the similarities of their marginalization as a whole, they can work together on behalf of all to produce counter-discourses through solidarity in order to confront the negative discourses and stereotypes, contest how they have been portrayed, and convey a new message of subjectivity in which they control the message. We see this happening particularly in the field of literature, but at the level of the individual groups. Academics should find ways to encourage these comparisons and to provide space for discussions between the groups in order to reveal the systems of power that are at the root of marginalization. This is not to say that individual stories should not be told; these are of great importance because they help reconstitute history, bringing to light atrocities, achievements, and accomplishments that hegemonic histories have excluded. However, the individual histories do not give us a complete picture. We need to examine the silenced moments of other marginalized groups to experience the full weight of hegemony and realize that the illusion of national culture has more holes in it than we as individuals could ever begin to comprehend.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

NOTES

1. There are two collections that serve as precursors to this collection. The first is a special collection of the *Afro-Hispanic Review*, 27, no. 1, Spring 2008. The second is *Afro Asia: Revolutionary Political and Cultural Connections between African Americans and Asian Americans*, editors Fred Ho, Bill Mullen, and Lisa Li Shen Yun, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008.

2. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

3. Although Japanese had already migrated to Peru by the time the collection was written, Mariátegui primarily references *chinos* and *culíes*. For the purposes of this essay I will reference Chinese instead of Asian. We can assume that Japanese Peruvians will be viewed in a similar manner as Chinese Peruvians.

4. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

5. Jorge Basadre, *La promesa de la vida peruana y otros ensayos* (Lima: Editorial Juan Mejía Baca, 1958).

6. Javier Prado, *El estado social del Perú durante la dominación española. Tomo 1* (Lima: Librería Gil, 1941). Prado states that he is taking these descriptions from Unanue's *El clima de Lima*.

7. Manuel González Prada, *Nuestros indios*, trans. Harold Eugene Davis. http://evergreen.loyola.edu/tward/www/gp/english/Indians.htm.

8. Italics are mine.

9. Jorge Basadre, *Materiales para otra morada: Ensayos sobre temas de Educación y Cultura* (Lima: La Universidad, 1960).

10. Jorge Basadre, *La multitud, la ciudad y el campo en la historia del Perú* (Lima: Editorial Huascaran, 1947).

11. The reader should review Jorge Basadre, *La historia de la República: 1822–1899* (Lima: Gil S. A, 1939). Basadre addresses constitutional changes, as well as legislation, that continued to affect Indians and Blacks.

12. Encyclopedia Britannica, s.v. "Gamonalismo," https://www.britannica.com/topic/gamonalismo.

13. José Carlos Mariátegui, Seven Interpretative Essays on Peruvian Reality, trans. Jorge Basadre (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1971), https://www.marxists.org/archive/mariateg/works/7-interpretive-essays/index.htm.

14. José Vasconcelos, *La raza cósmica* (Madrid: Agencia Mundial de Librería, 1925), http://www.filosofia.org/aut/001/razacos.htm.

15. The reader should read Juan E de Castro's essay that speaks against the idea that Mariátegui was a racist. "¿Fue José Carlos Mariátegui racista?" *A Journal on Social History and Literature in Latin America* 7, no. 2 (Winter 2010), 80–91.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Basadre, Jorge. *La promesa de la vida peruana y otros ensayos*. Lima: Editorial Juan Mejía Baca, 1958.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

———. *Materiales para otra morada: Ensayos sobre temas de Educación y Cultura*. Lima: La Universidad, 1960.

———. *La multitud, la ciudad y el campo en la historia del Perú*. Lima: Editorial Huascaran, 1947. https://www.britannica.com/topic/gamonalismo.

González, Prada, Manuel. *Nuestros indios.* Translated by Harold Eugene Davis, http://evergreen.loyola.edu/tward/www/gp/english/Indians.htm.

Mariátegui, José Carlos. *Seven Interpretative Essays on Peruvian Reality*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971. https://www.marxists.org/archive/mariateg/works/7- interpretive-essays/index.htm.

Prado, Javier. *El estado social del Perú durante la dominación española. Tomo 1*. Lima: Librería Gil, 1941.

Vasconcelos, José. *La raza cósmica*. Madrid: Agencia Mundial de Librería, 1925. http://www.filosofia.org/aut/001/razacos.html.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Chapter 2

Locating Chinese Culture and Aesthetics in the Art of Wifredo Lam

Mey-Yen Moriuchi

—Isabella, that Catholic queen,
Expels all new-made Christians
And empties all her prisons—
To people the New World.
So that they too may win their freedom:
Their freedom to tame the savages,
Exploiting them until they fall down dead.
The thirst for gold,
The urge to power
And independence.
Later came the others,
Catalans, Galicians,
And, last of all, Chinese,
Apart. Such are the ancestors
Wifredo Lam claims as his own,
For more than any man
He represents the heritage
Of the convulsion of mankind and the earth
The brave New World! The land of Cuba.[1]

Wifredo Lam (1972) © 2018 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

The artist Wifredo Lam (1902–1982) is acclaimed for his semiabstract, polymorphic paintings that draw on African motifs and the Santeria religion, in addition to avant-garde movements such as Cubism and Surrealism. Born and raised in Cuba, Lam's early travels to Europe exposed him to modernist styles, and important friendships with Pablo Picasso and André Breton secured his place among the Parisian avant-garde. The Parisian art world's

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

fixation with the primitive prompted Lam to explore the possibilities of his identity as an Afro-Cuban. His hybrid animal-human figures and fragmented, flattened compositions are linked to his Afro-Cuban culture, as well as to his experimentation with automatism and Surrealist games such as *cadavre exquis*. Scholarship has focused on Lam's art as a synthesis of Cubism, Surrealism, and Afro-Cuban religious traditions.

This chapter, however, seeks to understand the impact of another aspect of Lam's background that has not been fully addressed by scholars: his Chinese heritage. Lam's father, Enrique Lam Yam (ca. 1820–1926), was an immigrant from Canton, China, while his Cuban mother, Ana Serafina Castilla (1862–1944), was a descendant of ancestors from Congo and Spain. Why have scholars only emphasized Lam's African roots and his encounter with European Modernism? How did Lam's Chinese culture impact his art? Is there a convergence of Chinese and Afro-Cuban traditions that has been overlooked? An examination of the historical, political, and social context of the Chinese and African presence in Cuba will provide a framework for addressing and understanding the multicultural influences at stake in the artistic production of the Chinese-Afro-Cuban artist Wifredo Lam.

In Max-Pol Fouchet's biography of the artist, Lam recalled, "When I think of my father, the old Chinese, I remember him as a wise and secretive man. He used to sit and reflect, slowly waving his fan."[2] He later reminisced, "Wherever we went, my father carried the memory of all sorts of landscapes: Siberia, Mongolia, Tartary, the drama of Asia and the China Sea. In his eyes you could see the sunrise of an island in turmoil fighting for its freedom."[3] Lam's father was known to draw and hang ideograms on the walls of their home. Well-read and fluent in several Chinese dialects, he was an intelligent but quiet man. He was reputed to have maintained traditional, ancestral practices of making offerings to the dead and calligraphic scroll writing.[4] He cooked Chinese food and gave Chinese dolls to his children. His membership in the "Jóven China," the group that refused to wear the queue, or pigtail, a symbol of the old traditions, reveals his revolutionary spirit. At the end of the century, he supported the Chinese revolutionary movement of Sun Yat-sen.[5]

Because Enrique Lam Yam was an octogenarian when Wifredo was born, scholars have drawn the conclusion that the two of them were not very close. Instead, emphasis has been placed on Lam's African mother who is believed to be most influential in the development of her son's artistry. Fouchet has stressed that even if the presence of Lam's father was important, it was the reminiscences of his mother and his godmother, the Santeria priestess Mantonica Wilson, that had a greater impact on Lam's artistic development.[6] Lam has contributed to this narrative by also speaking out more vocally about the Afro-Cuban influences on his work.[7] Julia Herzberg has

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

interpreted Lam's paintings as exemplifying his Afro-Cuban worldview and has iconographically attributed his unique motifs and symbols to Santeria deities.[8] Although his father's teachings were important, according to Herzberg, it was his mother's cultural and religious beliefs that were "central to his formation."[9] And, as Suzanne Garrigues has posited, "While Lam was exposed to many diverse cultural influences during his childhood, the Black element, whether it be 'pure' or remotely African, played a dominant, if not the dominant role in the formation of his consciousness of himself, of his environment and of his relationship to his environment."[10] This predominant Afro-Cuban centric narrative has been reiterated in Lam scholarship until the present day.[11]

Although Lowery Stokes Sims has argued, "Lam's enduring contribution to world art history was the reclamation and projection of an African identity within mainstream art history,"[12] she has also attempted to address the elusive aspect of Lam's Chinese ancestry.[13] Her historiography of the brief scholarship on Lam's Chinese heritage has provided me with a critical starting point from which to begin my analysis.[14]

There has been some acknowledgment of the Chinese impact on Lam's work, though it has not been fully developed. In part, this has been due to the few words that Lam has shared about his Chinese ancestry. In his biography written by Antonio Nuñez Jiménez, Lam stated, "Tengo bastante sangre china en mis venas, pero . . . nunca me he sentido chino" (I have a lot of Chinese blood in my veins, but . . . I have never felt Chinese). He then added, "Mao Tse Tung dijo una vez que una gota de sangre china, en cualquier descendencia, prevalecía por sobre las otras corrientes étnicas" (Mao Tse Tung once said that one drop of Chinese blood, of any origin, prevails over other ethnicities).[15] Lam may have outwardly embraced more fully his Afro-Cuban ancestry; however, his Chinese heritage and culture should not be ignored.

Marta García Barrio-Garsd pointed out that Lam's interest in classic Chinese philosophy and the *I Ching*, a fact which remains little known, influenced his artistic production.[16] His second wife, Helena Holzer Benitez, believed that Lam's character and way of life had more to do with his Chinese heritage than his Afro-Cuban origins. According to Holzer, Lam's African background has been exaggerated, while the "Oriental traces" in his drawings have gone unnoticed.[17] Xing Xiao Sheng sees a relationship between Lam's use of line and Chinese artistic conventions, as well as connections between Lam's figures and Chinese mythological creatures in literary works by Po Songling.[18] Lam's great nephew, Juan Castillo Vázquez, and curator José Manuel Noceda believe that there exists an interesting link between Lam's ink drawings and Chinese calligraphy that has yet to be explored.[19] In this essay, I seek to expand upon these connections.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

What I propose is a reconsideration of the binary vision of Lam's oeuvre that emphasizes his Afro-Cuban and European Modernist influences in favor of a "third space" of cultural difference. Invoking Bhabha's theorization of hybridity I consider the productive space which enables other subconscious positions to emerge. Seeking to add to Lam's acknowledged representation of Afro-Cuban culture, not suppress it, I wish to recognize a hybrid, "third space that displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority."[20] Lam desired for audiences to engage on multiple levels with his work and to acknowledge that this engagement would be different from one encounter to the next. By reaffirming the Chinese presence in his oeuvre, I strive to recognize the construction of his cross-cultural pictorial language whereby the "process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different . . . a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation."[21]

CHINESE IN CUBA

Enrique Lam Yam was born circa 1820 (d. 1926) in Guangdong or Canton Province, located in southern China. He was eighty-two when Wifredo (Wifredo Oscar de la Concepción Lam y Castilla), his eighth child, was born. It is not certain the exact date he arrived in Cuba. Some records indicate he landed on Cuban soil sometime between 1872 and 1880 after spending time in California and Central America.[22] Others indicate that he immigrated directly to Cuba with his brother in 1860, fleeing the Taiping Rebellion.[23] Since generally newer Chinese immigrants tended to retain a Chinese surname, while those who had been baptized on Cuban sugar plantations used the surname of their former master, I speculate that Lam Yam arrived on the later side, around the 1870s. Juan Castillo Vázquez recounts that Lam Yam first landed in Cienfuegos with his brother Alberto where they had a bodega; they later settled in Sagua la Grande, where Lam Yam started a carpentry business. And, because Lam Yam spoke several Chinese dialects and was well versed in calligraphy, he worked as a scribe serving the local Chinese community.[24] These occupations that indicate he was a learned freeman, and not a *coolie* (indentured worker that was hired under a "voluntary" contract), also point to a later immigration date. In the third quarter of the nineteenth century, Lam Yam likely traveled from Guangdong to San Francisco, then Mexico, and finally Cuba.

The Lams lived in the Chinese neighborhood of Sagua la Grande, a town in Villa Clara province located in the north-central area of Cuba with the Atlantic Ocean as its northern border. It was a main area of sugar

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

production in the nineteenth century and was the location of both Chinese and African settlement due to the sugar trade. By the 1840s, Cuba was the preeminent sugar producer in the world surpassing its competitors: Jamaica, Brazil, and Puerto Rico.[25] To accommodate the global demand for sugar, African slaves and Chinese coolies were imported to work in the plantations. Between 1790 and 1867, Cuba imported 780,000 new slaves, surpassing the number of 700,000 Africans that were brought to the entirety of Spanish America between 1520 and 1780.[26] However, with the rise of nineteenth-century abolition movements and antislavery sentiment, sugar plantation owners sought to supplement their labor needs with other sources.[27] Chinese coolies were imported to Cuba to meet this demand. From 1847 to 1873 approximately 124,873 to 150,000 coolies arrived in Havana.[28] Coolies were more cost-effective than African slaves. They were easier to obtain and cheaper to purchase, making the coolie trade extremely profitable.[29] As Lisa Yun argues, coolie labor would mark "the world 'transition' from slavery to free labor, from premodern to modern production."[30]

Coolies have been viewed as ambivalent transitional figures, portrayed "as having something to do, but not having anything to say."[31] In her seminal study, Yun examines the testimonies and perspectives of 2,841 Chinese coolies in Cuba, noting that their experiences describe a slave society in the Americas despite their circumstances as "voluntary laborers." Chinese coolies were attractive because of economic reasons, production demands, and alarmist sentiments of African uprisings. Because plantation owners needed laborers for sugarcane production and coolies were less costly than African slaves, the Chinese coolie trade proliferated. Chinese coolies could be brought in as indentured laborers and then used as slaves. Agents procured gullible young men who lied to coolies about indentured servitude. They were lured into an eight-year contract with the possibility to be freed at the end of the term, but in reality, this was illusory as most coolies became financially indebted to their masters, preventing their freedom. The worker was responsible for value added, such as clothing, loss of labor time due to sickness, and the inconvenience of finding a future replacement. Thus, after the eight-year term expired, if the laborer survived, he would still owe his master an amount impossible to repay. In 1860, regulations closed off the options of freedom and forced Chinese laborers into sequential slavery under the recontracting rules. As Yun argues, "The 'contract' behaved as a globalizing institution that punitively enslaved new global labor: the coolies."[32]

Coolie labor played a major role in reshaping Cuba's sugar economy and its existing systems of production. In addition, the amplified presence of the Chinese in Cuba challenged existing paradigms of race and nation. Cuban

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

society was no longer strictly black-and-white. The growing Chinese population forced a reconsideration of this traditional binary vision of society and complicated notions of what constituted Cuban national identity.

Many of the Chinese settled in the sugar-producing provinces of the country, including Havana, Matanzas, and Villa Clara. The approximate dates of Lam Yam's immigration do not place him in this initial wave of Chinese coolie immigrants to Cuba. It is more likely that he came as a free man. During the 1860s and 1870s, several thousand free Chinese arrived in Cuba as merchants and craftsmen. Many came to Cuba by way of California. The little we know of Lam Yam secures him as a literate man, a shop owner, and a scribe. His more elevated social status would have placed him as an important member of the Chinese community. The Chinese section of Sagua la Grande was well established by the late nineteenth century. The runaway slave Esteban Montejo recounts in his autobiography his visits to the Chinese neighborhood of Sagua. He comments on the liveliness of the neighborhood, in particular, on Sundays when the Chinese community would congregate.[33] In Sagua's Chinese district, there were theaters painted in bright colors and multiple clubs where men read Chinese newspapers aloud. On Tacón Street, there were numerous shops with unique merchandise, where all the Chinese businesses, from tailors to opium dens, were located. It is possible that Lam Yam's carpentry shop was located on this street.

Chinese unions with black or "mulatta" women were more common than with white women. Lam Yam married Ana Serafina Castilla who was of African, Spanish, and Indian descent. Juan Castillo Vázquez's research into his family tree has revealed that due to the oppression and discrimination against the Chinese during the colonial period, Lam's seven siblings were only given the last name of their mother, Castilla, at birth.[34] Only the birth certificate of Wifredo, who was born in 1902, the year of Independence, properly assigns his father as Lam Yam.[35] This detail was only discovered by Wifredo when he was about to embark on his studies to Spain and saw his birth certificate for the first time. At this point he changed his last name to include his father's last name.[36] The name Wifredo Oscar de la Concepción Lam y Castilla asserted his mixed-race status. Although a subtle detail, I believe this act reveals the importance Lam gave to his Chinese heritage and his desire to reclaim this lineage.

Though the Lam family seems to have been comfortably established in Sagua la Grande's thriving Chinese community in the early 1900s when Wifredo Lam was born, the unfavorable and hostile history of Chinese indentured labor could not have been escaped or ignored. The lingering prejudices and racism against the Chinese in Cuba would have pervaded Wifredo's

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

upbringing. "Yellow mongoloids," "spies," and "coolie hordes" were just some of the phrases used to refer to the Chinese during this time. Chinese migrant laborers received constant verbal and physical abuse. Kathleen López's study reveals the Chinese were characterized as "clannish, corrupt, diseased, and unassimilable and were accused of competing unfairly with native Cuban workers."[37] Evelyn Hu-DeHart demonstrates the extent of sinophobia, antichinismo, or chinofobia in several documented cases.[38] Despite newer freedom and social mobility, the negative coolie stereotype persisted into the twentieth century. Lam would have not been able to avoid this chinofobia upon his return to Cuba. I posit that the artworks that Lam painted upon his return to Cuba in 1941 are informed by the oppression and discrimination faced by the Chinese, a subject that would have been top of mind as he attempted to reacclimate to his native country.

For example, Lam's renowned painting *The Jungle* (1943, Museum of Modern Art, NY), has often been described as representing the enslaved African rising amid the sugarcane, the source of his oppression. In speaking of *The Jungle*, Lam stated, "The title has nothing to do with the real countryside of Cuba, where there is no jungle but woods, hills and open country, and the background of the picture is a sugarcane plantation. My painting was intended to communicate a psychic state."[39] Lam's words describing the painting open up the possibilities of its meaning to include a more universal frame of mind. Could Lam's painting also depict the injustices suffered by the Chinese coolies—not just African slaves? Is it possible that Lam also represents the indentured servitude of the thousands of oppressed Chinese laborers in Cuba? If Lam's painting is understood as critiquing universal human oppression, then this is a plausible interpretation. Both African slaves and Chinese coolies worked the sugar plantations and were victims of violence, racism, and oppression. Lam's unique pictorial vision appeals on a primordial level to the plight of all human suffering.

Two principal events led to the Chinese liberation from the sugar plantations: the Wars of Liberation and the historic investigation of coolie conditions in Cuba by a commission sent from China in 1874. The Wars of Liberation, including the Ten Years' War (1868–1878), the Little War (1878–1879), and the War of Independence (1895–1898), helped the Chinese escape indentured servitude. Many Chinese laborers joined the rebellions to find freedom. In addition, the 1874 report by a Chinese commission which sought to document and expose the inhumane treatment of the Chinese migrant laborers eventually led to the cessation of coolie traffic in Cuba.[40] Later, the United States barred Chinese immigration to their shores under the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. This marked a decline in Chinese migration to the Americas. New technologies replaced coerced labor on the plantations,

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

leading to renewed profitability in the sugar industry. Today, it is the images of the Chinese freedom fighter and the Chinese merchant that are more well-known than that of the coolie. The coolie is a distant historical figure that was surpassed in national memory by the wars of independence and the eventual termination of the coolie trade around a century and a half ago. The Chinese who survived and remained in Cuba in the 1870s–1880s forward had more physical, occupational, and social mobility and became more enmeshed in Cuban culture.

Yun's study, which was the first to examine the 2,841 coolie testimonies that were gathered for the 1874 Chinese commission's report, provides a compelling framework in which to consider Lam's oeuvre. Yun argues that the words of coolies have remained in the margins, unlike slave narratives, but that coolie testimonies served as forms of resistance. The testifiers were Chinese laborers from Havana, Matanzas, and Santa Clara. These were the main sites of sugar plantations and *ingenios* (sugar mills) and included the largest populations of Chinese and Africans. Testimonies reveal coolies included highly skilled and educated workers—scholars, farmers, craftsmen, and merchants. Approximately 17.4 percent were farmers, over 80 percent were not.[41] The diversity of the coolies' occupations challenges predominant assumptions of the socioeconomic background of the Chinese labor forces.

In the 1874 commission, several testimonies stand out and recall the aggressive violence portrayed in Lam's compositions. Though Lam was not born yet, his father, living in the Chinese community in Sagua, likely witnessed the carrying out of the commission and heard news of the testimonies firsthand. It is probable that Lam heard these stories secondhand as they were shared among generations. Many of the verse-type petitions appeal aurally and emotionally like poetry. Lam admired poetry and considered his own paintings as visual poems. He stated, "I have never created my pictures in terms of symbolic tradition, but always on the basis of a poetic excitation. I believe in poetry. For me it is the great conquest of mankind. Revolution, for instance, is a poetic creation. I say everything through the pictorial image."[42] The lyrical testimonies (petitions) below share affinities with Lam's emotionally intense imagery as well his affirmation of the poetic in the visual. It is highly likely that Lam, by being a part of the Chinese immigrant community and aware of the history of Chinese oppression in Cuba, gained inspiration from these testimonials. Paintings like *Les Oiseaux Voilés* (1945, Private Collection), *Oiseau-Lumière, II* (1944, Private Collection) (fig. 2.1), or *The Fascinated Nest* (1944, Private Collection), form notable backdrops to the poetic words of pain expressed by the indentured Chinese coolies.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Figure 2.1 Wifredo Lam, Oiseau-Lumière, II, 1944, Oil on Paper Mounted on Canvas, 75 x 95 cm. Galerie H. Odermatt- Ph. Cazeau. Illustrated in Maria R. Balderrama, ed. Wifredo Lam and his Contemporaries, 1938–1952 (New York: The Studio Museum in Harlem, 1992), cat. 32. *Source*: © 2018 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

One petition states, "Thousands of words are under the sweep of our brushes, but they are too many to be put down in writing. Whips lash our backs; shackles chain our bodies. The young and strong can merely live with starvation; the old and weak die with unrighted wrong. From now on, if we remain alive, we will be cold and hungry men; if we die, we will be ghosts of the starved."[43] Another posits,

> What kind of crime have we committed to deserve being chained when we repair the roads? What kind of deed have we done to deserve being stoned when we walk the street? We are humiliated but whom can we appeal to? Food is no better than plantain and corn; person is no better than ox and horse. Pause for a moment, and they lash and reprimand us; stop for a rest, and they surely lock us up. We are birds in a cage that cannot fly with wings; fish in a net that cannot swim in a deep lake.[44]

Suffering and captivity is repeatedly evoked by the metaphor of birds being caged. Ren Shizen, the author of Petition 41, writes, "My flying wings were pinned down" and "I couldn't escape even if I had wings on my back."[45] The birds portrayed in *Les Oiseaux Voilés,* though they appear vertically with

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

wing-like structures, have wings that double as horns and their visual weight suggests the impossibility of flying. *Oiseau-Lumière, II* (fig. 2.1) also features a bird and a horselike creature. Instead of vertical, the bird lays horizontally in a verdant landscape oppressed by the large palm tree leaves. The branches and leaves restrain the animals from movement, eliciting a sense of entrapment. *The Fascinated Nest* depicts a hybrid bird-like creature being strangled by an enormous hand. The lines of the various creatures intersect, providing ambiguous distinctions as they intertwine and meld. Freedom is not secure, and a sentiment of desolation, oppression, and coercion permeate the compositions.

In Petition 25, a group of coolies characterized Cuban government officials as the mythological beasts of terror, Qiongqi and Taotie (fig. 2.2). Yun explains,

> Qiongqi appeared in Chinese mythologies in protean guises: as a fearsome beast, shaped like a cow, with hedgehog hair, making noises like a wild dog; as a beast shaped like a tiger with wings that eats humans from their heads, with another name congzu; and as an evil god who encourages bad deeds. Taotie has appeared as a terrifying figure since the Shang dynasty. Associated with eating and satisfying the dead, the image of the taotie has graced sacrificial vessels and has also appeared as a greedy human-eating monster, having a goat's body, a human face, eyes under its armpits, tiger teeth and human fingers.[46]

Figure 2.2 Horse Decoration in the Form of a Taotie Mask, ca. 1300–1050 BCE, China, Shang Dynasty (approx. 1600–1050 BCE). Bronze. Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, The Avery Brundage Collection, B60B647. *Source*: Photograph © Asian Art Museum of San Francisco.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Both mythological figures connoted evil, hybrid animals that were associated with devouring humans.

Paintings, such as *Song of Osmosis* (1945, Private Collection) or *Tropic* (1947) (fig. 2.3) recall Chinese mythological beasts like Qiongqi and Taotie (fig. 2.2). Polymorphic, monster-like figures gesticulate and motion with their various undecipherable limbs. In *Tropic*, there are multiple figures with penetrating eyes that appear in between foliage and geometric forms. Their beady eyes (under armpits?) stare greedily through the crowded, jungle-like landscapes. Could Lam's mythical, composite creatures portray Chinese mythological beasts of terror? I believe that these distressed, ambiguous animal motifs symbolize the suffering and captivity, incarceration and subjugation, of the colored laborer. This context would have been particularly of mind in the 1940s when Lam had recently returned to Cuba and was forced to reimmerse himself into his multiracial past.

Figure 2.3 Wifredo Lam, Tropic (Trópico), 1947, Oil on Canvas, 127 x 157.48 cm. Purchased with Funds Provided by the Bernard and Edith Lewin Collection of Mexican Art Deaccession Fund (M.2007.142). Los Angeles County Museum of Art. *Source*: Digital Image © 2018 Museum Associates / LACMA. Art Resource, NY. © 2018 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

CHINESE-AFRO-CUBAN-EUROPEAN TRADITIONS

When Lam was a teenager, he moved from Sagua la Grande to Havana to study law and painting at the Academy of San Alejandro. However, bored with law school and academic art classes, he sought adventure and artistic instruction abroad. In 1923, at the age of 21, he moved to Madrid. Lam found artistic inspiration among the Spanish, Dutch, and Flemish masters he encountered at the Prado Museum. Shunning his traditional academic training, Lam surrounded himself with the fanciful, nonsensical beings and wild, fantastical creatures of Hieronymus Bosch and Pieter Brueghel the Elder. He discovered paintings by Juan Gris, Joan Miró, and Pablo Picasso. In 1929, Lam married Eva Piriz, but shortly thereafter in 1931 she and their son died tragically of tuberculosis. Lam became involved in politics and fought alongside the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War. In 1938, at age thirty-five, he fled to Paris to escape the impending nationalists, and immersed himself among the French avant-garde. There he quickly became friends with Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, and other Parisian modernists. While in Paris, Lam reconnected with Helena Holzer, a German scientist whom he had met while living in Spain. The couple spent the next decade together, eventually marrying in Havana in 1944 (they divorced in 1950).

Lam's admiration of Picasso is evident in his early works as he began to experiment with Cubism. Lam's paintings during the late 1930s exhibit the fragmented, distorted geometric shapes that characterize the Cubist style. In her memoir, Holzer recalls that it was in Paris from 1938–1940 that Lam was exposed to primitive African and Oceanic sculptures, Cubism, and the old masters. Lam admired the authentic expression of "states of fervor and passion" in Oceanic and African sculptures.[47] His works from this early period in Paris demonstrate his fascination with African sculptures and Cubist forms and share affinities with Picasso's paintings from these years. In response to Picasso's influence, Lam claims that it was a "*pervasion of the spirit*. There was no question of imitation, but Picasso may easily have been present in my spirit, for nothing in him was alien or strange to me."[48] Lam's embrace of his Afro-Cuban roots is tied to the influence of Primitivism among the avant-garde artists and Picasso's obsession with African art at the time.

With the onset of World War II, Lam left Paris for Marseilles, entrusting Picasso with his paintings. While in Paris, Picasso had introduced Lam to André Breton, the founder of the Surrealist movement, and it was in Marseilles, while awaiting passage to the West, where Breton and Lam would develop a close friendship. During Lam's stay in Marseilles, and later during the difficult sea voyage to the Caribbean, Lam interacted daily with Breton and many Surrealist artists and poets.[49] The fanciful, peculiar, dreamlike imagery which had fascinated him from his Spanish days began to permeate

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

his work. Lam would combine dreams and reality in his paintings and drawings, and express irrepressible manifestations of the subconscious. He began to experiment more freely with automatism and nurture the irrational, spontaneous creations of his artistic mind.

In Marseilles, the avant-garde community gathered at Air Bel, a residence where Breton and select refugees lodged. On Sundays, Air Bel kept an open house where artists would drink tea and play games to pass the time, including games of truth, automatic writing, and cadavre exquis.[50] It was at Air Bel where Lam, Breton, and others created *Collective Drawing* (1940) (fig. 2.4). Almost all of the nine vignettes included in the drawing depict a collage mixing figurative and abstract elements. Of particular note is the center vignette which portrays a Chinese man with his eyes closed, lying next to a Chinese dragon mask with grotesque eyes and teeth. A railroad track runs across the upper strata of the composition. Though it is impossible to know with certainty which of the artists created this collage, the Chinese face, dragon mask, and railroad evoke Lam's Chinese-Cuban heritage. If the

Figure 2.4 Wifredo Lam, André Breton, and Anonymous: Jeu de Marseille, Collective Drawing, 1940, Photo Collage and Ink, 22.9 x 29.8 cm. AM1980-32. *Source*: Photo: Philippe Migeat. Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France. © RMN-Grand Palais /Art Resource, NY. © 2018 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

objective of producing cadavre exquis and collective drawing was to elicit the spontaneity and randomness of the unconscious mind, then this image perhaps alludes to the multiplicity of cultures that were never far from the surface of Lam's intellectual mind and artistic practice.

In 1942, Lam moved back to Cuba after living eighteen years abroad. When he returned to Havana, he expressed sadness at what he saw and felt the need to start over. Lam saw the poverty and degradation of Cubans of color from a foreign perspective, as if he were a tourist. He remarked, "What I saw on my return was like some sort of hell. For me, trafficking in the dignity of a people is just that: hell."[51] To escape, Lam fought back through his art. He denounced what he saw—an image became an exorcism, a weapon, a tool to fight injustice, oppression, and racism. Referring to other Afro-Cuban artists who were keen on representing picturesque Afro-Cuban traditions and culture at the time, Lam stated, "I refused to paint cha-cha-cha. I wanted to paint the drama of my country, but by thoroughly expressing the negro spirit, the beauty of the plastic art of the blacks. . . . I knew I was running the risk of not being understood either by the man in the street or by the others. But a true picture has the power to set the imagination to work, even if it takes time."[52]

Lam was introduced to the world of Afro-Cubans by his mother and *madrina* (godmother), Mantonica Wilson. Wilson was a healer and sorceress of the Santeria religion. Her healing remedies invoked Changó, the mythical ancestor of the Yorubas, master of thunder whose *ashé*—sacred power—is symbolized by a double-edged ax. Many of Lam's paintings suggest the forms of *orishas* (divine spirits) of the Santeria religion. Another influence was Cuban anthropologist and poet Lydia Cabrera, who befriended Lam when he returned to Cuba. As an authority on Santeria and Afro-Cuban religions, Cabrera published over one hundred books on the topic. The most important was *El Monte*, the first anthropological study of Afro-Cuban folklore. According to Cabrera, Lam did not know much about Afro-Cuban religions before they met and never spoke about his own personal history.[53] Cabrera exposed Lam to ritual ceremonies which they would attend as observers.

As previously noted, Lam grew up among the laborers who had arrived in Sagua to work on sugar plantations. Scholars, such as Julia Herzberg, have emphasized that Lam would have been immersed in African culture, failing to mention the Chinese community that also surrounded Lam. Lam lived in the Chinese colony; the poor, predominantly black neighborhood of Coco Solo was located a few blocks away from his house. According to Herzberg, the biomorphic imagery that was important to Lam's vision where human, animal, and plant kingdoms collide grew out of his Afro-Cuban worldview.[54] However, in Antonio Nuñez Jiménez's biography of the artist, Lam explained his state of mind after the Spanish Civil War:

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

> "Aquel despojo me impelió a recuperar todos mis recuerdos de la infancia, llenos de brujas, supersticiones, mitos heredados, y otros creados por mi propia imaginación. Ciertamente, lo único que me quedaba en aquel momento era mi viejo anhelo de integrar en la pintura toda la transculturación que había tenido lugar en Cuba entre aborígenes, españoles, africanos, chinos, imigrantes franceses, piratas, y todos los elementos que formaron el Caribe. Yo reivindico para mí todo ese pasado." (That plundering forced me to recover all of my childhood memories, full of witches, superstitions, inherited myths, and others invented by my own imagination. Certainly, the only thing left to me at that moment was my old desire to integrate into painting all the transculturation that had taken place in Cuba among aboriginals, Spaniards, Africans, Chinese, French immigrants, pirates and all the elements that make up the Caribbean. I claim for myself all of that past.)[55]

Lam felt the need to integrate in his art the transculturation that characterized Cuban society, a society that was comprised of not just Africans, but also included aboriginals, Spaniards, Chinese, and French immigrants, among others.

Upon their arrival in Havana, Holzer noted that Lam did not feel at home and was not integrated into the local artistic community. She also remembers visiting bookstores in Old Havana and finding books on Oriental philosophies and alchemy, "two exciting subjects dealing with the human quest for moral, spiritual and intellectual improvement."[56] According to Holzer, these Oriental philosophies enriched their conversations. Holzer and Lam also spoke at length about the symbolism of the number three in different cultures, "Three where the rhythm of life begins, where tensions arise, and three in Chinese philosophy: the two opposing forces Yin and Yang, and Tao."[57] Tao is the "conscious road," a direction which serves to regulate movements. Three in the *I Ching* is the symbol "Chun" which represents birth and new beginnings emerging from chaos. And, three in the Holy Trinity is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, indicative of life, sacrifice, and forgiveness. Following these conversations between Holzer and Lam, Lam began painting compositions with three figures, such as *The Eternal Presence* (1944, Rhode Island School of Design) (fig. 2.5), and *The Wedding* (1947, Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museum, Berlin). *The Eternal Presence* depicts a majestic, ambiguous, hybrid central creature accompanied by two fantastical, mythical beings. The figure on the left holds a bird and the one on the right holds a *palo congo*, the weapon of Changó, the warrior. Changó in Santeria is an orisha that is often syncretized with Saint Barbara or Saint Jerome. This triad of figures in *The Eternal Presence* is, according to Holzer, "a portrait of timelessness, or of time standing still, an instant in the course of mutation, the subjects in trance-like expectation of imminent happenings."[58] This painting has been traditionally interpreted as depicting

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Figure 2.5 Wifredo Lam, The Eternal Presence (An Homage to Alejandro García Caturla), 1944, Oil and Pastel over Papier Mâché and Chalk Ground on Bast Fiber Fabric, 216.5 x 195.9 cm. Nancy Sayles Day Collection of Modern Latin American Art 66.154. *Source*: © 2018 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris. Photography by Erik Gould, courtesy of the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence.

deities of Santeria or cult-like practices. Lam explained it later as portraying prostitution and racial prejudice in Cuba. Holzer argues that these explanations do not accurately reflect his feelings or intentions at the moment of its creation in 1944 for, "At that time it was a trinity representing the bird of love and the weapon of destruction (the opposites Yin and Yang) flanking the supreme Tao in the center."[59] This shared memory elucidates that Lam was indeed impacted by Chinese belief systems and that these ideas found pictorial expression in his oeuvre.

At the time of their marriage, Lam was interested in the subconscious, the *I Ching*, and alchemy. During the "Jungle" period (1942–1945), Lam merged his African heritage, the tropical vegetation of his native land, the Chinese philosophies of the Yin, Yang and Tao doctrine, and alchemical teachings into his visual representations. The latter exposed him to the belief that

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

sublimation could be achieved through transmutations, that spiritual and intellectual rejuvenation could arrive at the apogee of imagination.

Lam viewed art as a "dialogue between the figures on the canvas and the onlooker" that evoked "different sensations even in the same person from one day to the next, depending on his or her mood."[60] This is enhanced by the multiplicity and hybridity of Lam's symbolism, where one motif might connote various, diverse meanings, drawing on his multicultural heritage, influences, and interests.

In his works from the 1940s, Lam began to introduce a horselike motif. Sometimes referred to as the *femme-cheval*, or woman-horse, it appears in works continuously throughout the artist's lifetime. According to Herzberg, the horse motif should be understood within the context of Afro-Cuban culture. It can be interpreted as an incarnation of an orisha and its presence refers to the process of being possessed during sacred ceremonies. In Santeria rituals, the practicant is referred to as a "horse." The practicant enters into a trance during which time he or she is embodied by the personality and characteristics of the deity that is being celebrated in the ritual. This spiritual trance symbolizes an exchange of life between the practicant and the deity and is described as a transformation in which the deity or saint comes down to mount his horse, a transformation known as *bajarle el santo*.[61] Herzberg convincingly argues, "By infusing a Surrealist aesthetic with references to Afro-Cubanism, Lam established a special territory for himself in which he claims a personal and collective identity."[62] However, the horse holds multiple cultural references. It is likely that Lam's adoption of the horse motif also educes Chinese culture where it has a long history of pictorial and poetic representation.

For Lam, it may have also held personal significance. As the youngest child, Lam had a unique, affectionate relationship with his father. Lam fondly remembered how his father used to create *sombras chinescas* (Chinese shadows) to commemorate certain feast days. These silhouettes that were illuminated by light and projected along walls consisted of horses and riders; it appeared as if the whole room was galloping.[63] I consider the horse within the context of Chinese belief systems and history in order to contextualize the multicultural symbolism of the horse motif in Lam's oeuvre.

No animal has impacted China's history as greatly as the horse. It is an animal integral to Chinese political, economic, and cultural history. During the Shang dynasty (ca. 1600–1100 BC), horses were entombed with their owners. When Qin Shi Huang's Terracotta Army was discovered in 1974, pit number one contained 6,000 soldiers and horses.[64] Admired for their strength, beauty, and intelligence, horses were particularly revered because of their usefulness to human beings. China's survival relied on equestrian prowess. The relationships between horses and people were tied to military, political, economic, and symbolic reasons.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Horses also played an important role in the mythology of early China. Closely associated with dragons, it was believed that both horses and dragons were capable of flight and of carrying their riders to the "home of the immortals."[65] As close kin to dragons and supernatural beings, horses were also believed to have spiritual meaning and were known to guide believers on heavenly journeys. As early as the fourth century BC, painted images of horses began to appear on objects placed in tombs.[66] During the Han dynasty (206–220 AD), horses appeared in tomb murals and pictorial reliefs, but it was not until the Tang dynasty (618–907) that horse painting emerged as a distinct genre. Horse painting was shaped by imperial patronage. The poet Du Fu (712–770), one of the greatest poets of the Tang dynasty, wrote many poems about horses and horse painting. Han Gan (active ca. 742–756), one of the leading horse painters of the Tang dynasty, was known to capture the spirit of the horse, as well as its likeness (fig. 2.6).

Since dragons were believed to be the progenitors of superior horses, and dragons were symbolic of the emperor himself, horses too became associated with royalty, power, and authority. Horses and dragon-horse hybrid creatures became the subjects of numerous myths, poems, and prayers. A *longma*, a

Figure 2.6 Han Gan, Night-Shining White (detail), ca. 750, Tang Dynasty (618-907). Handscroll; Ink on Paper. Image: 30.8 x 34 cm. *Source*: Photo: Malcolm Varon. Image copyright © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image source: Art Resouce, NY.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

fabled winged horse with dragon scales, interconnected Chinese beliefs about the special, prodigious qualities of both horses and dragons.

During the Shang dynasty (ca. 1600–1050 BC) and Western Zhou dynasty (ca. 1046–771 BC) ornamental bronze masks were created for horses' faces. Sometimes a further mask was mounted above the ears. These stylized, simplified masks that emphasize the elongated nose of the horse, and the symmetry of the horse's eyes, share affinities with Lam's horse figures (fig. 2.2). These masks are called *taotie*, referring to the mythological beast discussed above. The use of the taotie masks on the horses gave them a fierce, powerful presence. The taotie mask also served as a form of protection for the horse and its rider. In *Canaïma* (1945, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris) (fig. 2.7), *Canaïma IV* (ca. 1947, Museo Nacional de Bellas Hartes, Havana), and *Tête* (1947, Private Collection), Lam depicts hybrid horselike figures that seem to converge horse-dragon images from Chinese philosophies and mythologies.

Lam's broad strokes of black ink also recall the lines of Chinese calligraphy and ink wash painting, perhaps influenced by his father's calligraphic practice and sombras chinescas. Lam's ink drawings, like Chinese ink wash

Figure 2.7 Wifredo Lam, Canaïma, 1945, Oil on Paper Mounted on Canvas, 110.5 x 91 cm. Musée National d'Art Moderne. © CNAC/MNAM/Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY. *Source*: © 2018 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

painting (also known as literati painting), utilize black ink applied in various concentrations. The objective of Chinese ink wash painting was not to simply represent an object's appearance, but rather capture its spirit. For example, to paint a horse, an artist sought to reflect the horse's temperament or mood. Chinese ink wash painting emphasized personal and expressive treatment of reality. Ink drawings, such as *Untitled* (ca. 1947, Castillo Vázquez Collection, Havana) (fig. 2.8), utilize various densities of black and colored ink to create subtle nuances in contours. The resultant hybrid horse figures are in motion, expressing a sense of captivity and an imminent sense of flight. Lam's ability to capture the spirit of the beasts is an endeavor that Han Gan also achieved during the Tang dynasty with images such as *Night Shining White* (ca. 750, Metropolitan Museum of Art) (fig. 2.6).

Sims views Lam's horse figures as femme-cheval or horse-woman characters that have spiritual connotations infused with powerful feminine presences.[67] Valerie Fletcher argues that Lam's horse-woman symbolizes the "individual's spiritual transformation within the context of Afro-Cuban rituals."[68] These interpretations are valuable; however, I suggest that Lam's

Figure 2.8 Wifredo Lam, Untitled, c. 1947, Ink, Gouache, and Watercolor on Ingres Paper, 24.5 x 32.7 cm. Collection Castillo Vázquez, Havana. *Source*: © 2018 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

horse motif stemmed from and connoted transcultural meanings drawing on the various spiritual and artistic ideologies that surrounded him, from Santeria to the *I Ching*, Surrealism to alchemy, and African to Chinese art. Paintings such as *The Betrothed of Kiriwina* (1949, Fondation Marguerite et Aimé Maeght) or *The Double Look* (1950, Private Collection), which feature a female-type figure with a horse face/mask, suggest that the mask (taotie inspired) that protects the female figure also guides her on a spiritual journey.

Religious and artistic syncretism surrounded Lam. Unions between Chinese men and African women facilitated religious syncretism. Due to familial mixing, Chinese and African people synthesized their diverse religious practices and developed intercultural relationships.[69] Martin Tsang has studied Chinese-Cuban practitioners of the Santeria religion and argues that Chinese Cubans have been integral to the religion's practice in Cuba. Preferring to use the framework of "interdiasporic cross-fertilization" instead of syncretism as a means to understand the complexity and "messiness" of the interactions of identity, culture, and religious exchange, Tsang points to the invisibility of the Chinese in dialogues about Afro-Cuban religions and their wrongful disappearance from this narrative.[70] In fact, many Chinese people practiced and continue to practice Santeria. The Chinese presence in Lukumi religions is constantly overlooked. As Tsang argues, "Sinalidad (Chineseness) was hardly ever acknowledged outside of a general appreciation of discernible popularized elements such as porcelain, food, and medicine."[71] Yet as one of his interviewees, a Chinese *babalawo* known as La China Obatalá, attests, "it was the Chinese, along with Africans and white people who made this religion what it is today."[72]

Since Santeria is an open religion, other influences were melded into it, even Roman Catholic deities and the concept of sainthood. The connections between Africa and Europe have been privileged by scholars, ignoring other cultural influences. Luisa Ossa has pointed out that "divination, polytheism and the veneration of ancestors, and the belief that a person's spirit 'lives on' after the death of the physical body are all found in both Santeria and a number of religious belief systems common to China."[73] The Chinese deity Sanfancón is an example of a syncretic form of worship that developed combining Chinese with Afro-Cuban traditions. The deity is the synthesis of the orisha Changó (Shangó, Xangô) with the cult of Kuan Kong (Guan Gong, Guan Yu), and Saint Barbara.[74] Changó is a god of thunder, lightning, and war, a mighty warrior, and patron of music and drumming. His symbol is the double-headed ax and his colors are red and white. Kuan Kong is the Chinese god of war, honor, and wealth. He too is a warrior and protects all good people. As a result, Kuan Kong became a protector of immigrants in Cuba. He is usually depicted as a figure with a reddish, purple face, brandishing a sword. Sanfancón shares characteristics of Kuan Kon and Changó. As Baltar

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Rodríguez argues, "El sincretismo y recontextualización de Kuan Kong fue un proceso lento, a través del cual ese antiguo ancestro venerado por los chinos y rebautizado en Cuba como San-Fan-Con, se integró al conjunto de nuestros seres míticos, convertido por la creencia popular en una deidad cubana" (The syncretism and recontextualization of Kuan Kong was a slow process, through which this ancient ancestor, who was revered by the Chinese and rebaptized in Cuba as San-Fan-Con, was integrated with our mythical beings. He was converted by popular belief into a Cuban deity).[75]

The word *san* could refer to both "saint" in the Roman Catholic tradition, as well as "alive" in Cantonese.[76] Sanfancón is an avatar of Changó, a product of Chinese integration in Cuba, a synthesis of Chinese, African, and Roman Catholic beliefs. As Frank Scherer has argued, "Chinese religion in Cuba today has less to do with long-standing 'Chinese' traditions, or even a return to 'religion' per se, but everything to do with the subaltern employment of strategies that allow for the opening of alternative spaces in which the construction of identities other than those prescribed by the state takes place."[77] Similarly, Lam's works can be seen as representing a third space of enunciation where synthesis of multicultural belief systems converge, where cultural meaning is not fixed, but evolving. Thus, paintings, such as *The Eternal Presence* (fig. 2.5), can be interpreted in the context of religious syncretism, where Sanfancón, the avatar of Changó, is also evoked.

CHINESE AESTHETICS

In 1946, Lam and Holzer spent several months in Haiti. Lam had been invited to exhibit his paintings, and Breton had been asked to give a lecture. As Holzer recalls, Breton informed the audience composed of intellectuals, the social elite, diplomats, and students that, "Wifredo had found the secret of uniting the perception of the *physical* with the *mental representation*, which is the permanent objective of surrealism."[78] Lam's work appealed to both physical and mental states and elicited such visceral responses. While in Haiti, Breton had suggested to Hector Hyppolite, a prominent Haitian painter, that Wifredo painted magic designs of the Voodoo cult. Hyppolite disagreed, replying, "No, no, Lam does not paint African symbols, he paints Chinese ones."[79] Hyppolite indicated Lam's oeuvre evoked "Chinese magic" as opposed to "African magic."[80] As Dawn Ades explains, Lam, upon his return to Cuba, remained primarily a *painter* of Santeria and not an *initiate* of the religious practice. And, although at times Lam painted specific Santeria deities, his figures are "more often more generalized: horned or masked, set within a tropical world, with titles like *The Dream*, *The Idol,* or *Secret Ritual*."[81] Lam evaded literal connections in his works. Often titles were

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

assigned much later by friends, like Cabrera or Breton. The titles were not meant to uncover the work's hidden symbolism, but rather they were meant to stimulate curiosity.

Other art critics and scholars have noted the "Chinese magic" in Lam's oeuvre. For example, Margaret Breuning, in a review of Lam's paintings at the Pierre Matisse Gallery in 1945, remarked that "some of the paintings suggest Chinese art in their delicacy and refinement of handling, diaphanous forms rhythmically playing on each other in nuances of grays and whites in a design that seems to grow gently upward into sweeping harmony of expression."[82] Breuning captures the diverse influences at work in Lam's oeuvre, stating the presence of Chinese, as well as African, artistic sensibilities. Santiago Amon, in a review of Lam's first exhibition in Spain in 1976, saw vast, vaguely colored, bright surfaces that recalled at once the orient.[83] Holzer, in reflecting on Lam's use of line over color, also asserted that Lam's initial charcoal designs always resembled Chinese calligraphy before color was applied.[84] Sims notes that paintings such as *Grey Figures* of 1974 (Private Collection) "show an isolation of the figures as discrete episodes within the background, approximating an approach to space that can be observed in Chinese painting."[85]

Sims has also pointed out that Chinese culture might be present in the chart of numbers that appears beneath the foot of the female figure on the left-hand side of *Belial, Lord of the Flies* (1948, Private Collection). According to Sims, this chart might reference the "Chifra or Chinese numbers, a system of numerology used to interpret dreams which was brought by Chinese laborers to the Caribbean."[86] Luís Manuel Nuñez, in his guide to Afro-Caribbean magic, provides a list of numbers and their symbolism.[87] Though, no direct interpretation can be made between the numbers in Lam's chart and their meaning as Chinese chifra, it is suggested that multiple sources, including Afro-Cuban, European, and Chinese symbolism, are at play in this fantastical painting.[88] The diversity of cultural and artistic influences in Lam's work contributed, and continues to contribute, to its wide appeal.

Even Fouchet, Lam's biographer who favored Afro-Cuban interpretations of Lam's oeuvre, commented that subtle, tender coloring in works such as *La fruta bomba* (Papaya, 1944, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid) (fig. 2.9) revealed Lam's Chinese sensibilities. Fouchet believed *La fruta bomba* demonstrated Lam's talent as a colorist, stating, "The colouring that is so intense in other paintings here becomes extremely subtle. The rhythm of verticals is present once again, but this time it is imbued with tenderness, as well as with mystery. It is undoubtedly in a picture like this that Lam's oriental heritage is most apparent."[89] *La fruta bomba* and a 1946–1947 series of washes share the lightness, delicacy, and ephemerality of Chinese watercolors. Lam's *La fruta bomba* recalls Chinese ink wash paintings, such as Zhao Mengjian's *Narcissus* (mid 13th c., Metropolitan Museum of Art)

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Figure 2.9 Wifredo Lam, La fruta bomba (Papaya), 1944, Oil on Canvas, 154 x 124.5 cm. Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia. Archivo Fotográfico Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía. *Source*: © 2018 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

(fig. 2.10), in which the soft, wispy lines of the foliage evoke a gentle sense of movement in the landscape. The layering of the translucent light and dark tones provides both scenes with a sense of luminosity.

In an interview with Gerardo Mosquera in 1980, Lam was asked to respond to a question about how his fantastic, imaginary world emerged from such traditional origins. Lam responded by reminiscing about his immersion in Spanish politics, his involvement with Surrealism, his memories of the large Chinese colony located near Tacón Street where he lived, and the mostly black neighborhood of Coco Solo that was a couple blocks away from his house.[90] Lam recalled that the sound of African drums could be heard in his house and he often watched "with trepidation the aggressive dances and

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Figure 2.10 Zhao Mengjian (1199-before 1267), Narcissus, 13th c. Section 2. Handscroll; Ink on Paper. Image: 33.2 x 347 cm. Ex coll.: C.C. Wang Family, Gift of the Dillon Fund, 1973 (1973.120.4). *Source*: Image copyright © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image *Source*: Art Resource, NY.

colorful festivals of the Africans."[91] All of these experiences impacted him as a person and as an artist. In another interview, Fouchet expressed surprise that Lam always painted to Classical music, not African music, or the drums of Sagua la Grande. To which Lam replied, "In these matters I feel Chinese. I must have a Chinese ear! For me music is a support. It helps me to keep vulgarity at bay."[92] These brief glimpses into Lam's life reveal the collective aspects of his worldview.

In 1948, Lam tried to attain permanent residency in the United States but was denied due to the quota for Chinese already being oversubscribed.[93] Chinese immigration into the United States had been highly regulated since 1882 when the Chinese Exclusion Act prohibited the immigration of all Chinese laborers. Lam, despite his avid traveling and cosmopolitan sensibility, experienced racial discrimination for being both black *and* Chinese.

Lam asserted that the figures in his compositions lacked a clearly identifiable race.[94] They were not meant to represent racial identities but rather universal social injustices and class struggle. They acknowledge an uncomfortable and disturbing history of colonialism, slavery, and indentured servitude. They were also meant to captivate the viewer, spark an emotional response, and place the viewer in a position of, as Bhabha theorizes, "liminality," that is, a "productive space of the construction of culture as difference, in the spirit of alterity or otherness."[95] If his paintings cause discomfort or anxiety, it is due to this transitional state. As Holzer explained to visitors of Lam's exhibition at the Matisse Gallery in 1948, "his rich ethnic make-up

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

enlivened and cross-fertilized his dreams and anguishes . . . his multiple ancestral memories formed new associations, which he presented in his pictures for our subjective analysis or intuitive appreciation."[96]

Lam's pictorial world divulges his poetic sensibility and creativity. As Breuning points out, "the world that Lam creates is an end in itself, an occult, mysterious universe governed not by the laws that regulate our cosmos, but by some undercurrent of magic that makes itself felt in every canvas."[97] There are tangible elements of Chinese history, culture, and art in Lam's oeuvre. Lam experienced the aftermath of the horrible history of the Chinese coolies in the neighborhood where he was raised, and it is highly likely that Lam heard about the disturbing, yet poetic, Chinese coolie testimonies. Lam's hybrid, mythological creatures share affinities with representations of Qiongqi and Taotie. His father's sombras chinescas of horses galloping and the ideograms he drew formed part of Lam's artistic development. His emphasis on line, his deliberate brushwork, and application of color reflect Chinese artistic practices, such as calligraphy and ink wash painting. The connections I have made suggesting the impact of Chinese culture and aesthetics on Lam's oeuvre provide a productive space in which to understand and interpret the diverse lenses that Lam brought to his artistic production. I believe that the visibility of Lam's mysterious universes is rooted in the multiple cultural, intercommunal, and transnational experiences that lie beneath the surface, waiting to be seen.

NOTES

1. Wifredo Lam, excerpt of the poem *Lumière* originally published in 1972, reprinted in Max-Pol Fouchet, *Wifredo Lam* (Barcelona: Ediciones Polígrafa, S.A., 1989 (1976), 33.
2. Fouchet, *Wifredo Lam*, 36.
3. Ibid.
4. Michel Leiris, *Wifredo Lam* (Milan, Italy: Fratelli Fabbri Editorial, 1970), 4–5.
5. Leiris, *Wifredo Lam*, 5; Fouchet, *Wifredo Lam*, 27.
6. Fouchet, *Wifredo Lam*, 36.
7. For example, see the biographies written by Fouchet and Nuñez Jiménez. Fouchet, *Wifredo Lam*, 124, 192; and Antonio Nuñez Jiménez, *Wifredo Lam* (Havana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1982), 64–67.
8. Julia Herzberg, "Wifredo Lam: The Development of Style and World View, the Havana Years, 1941-1952," in *Wifredo Lam and his Contemporaries,* ed. Maria R. Balderrama (New York: Studio Museum in Harlem, 1992), 31–51.
9. Ibid, 31.
10. Suzanne Garrigues Daniel, *The Early Works of Wifredo Lam: 1941–45* (PhD diss., University of Maryland, 1983), 10.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

11. For example, see the recent exhibition catalogue, *The Ey Exhibition: Wifredo Lam*, ed. Catherine David (London: Tate Modern), 2017.

12. Lowery Stokes Sims, "Lam's Femme Cheval: Avatar of Beauty," in *Wifredo Lam in North America,* ed. Paula Schulze (Milwaukee, IL: Haggerty Museum of Art, 2007), 27.

13. See Lowery Stokes Sims, *Wifredo Lam and the International Avant-Garde, 1923–1982* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 212–15.

14. I want to thank Lowery Stokes Sims for sharing her research on Lam's Chinese ancestry. This project is highly indebted to her scholarship and her work has enabled me to pursue this avenue of Lam's oeuvre.

15. Nuñez Jiménez, *Wifredo Lam*, 56. Translations are mine, unless otherwise noted.

16. Marta García Barrio-Garsd, "Wifredo Lam et l'alchimie," in *Wifredo Lam-dessins-gouaches-peintures, 1938–1950* (Paris: Galerie Albert Loeb, 1987).

17. See Barrio-Garsd, "Wifredo Lam et l'alchimie."

18. Xing Xiao Sheng, "Merveilles et Demons de Wifredo Lam," in *Weifuleiduo Lin ban hua zuo pin zhan lan. Les gravures de Wifredo Lam* (France and Beijing: Institut Central des Beaux Arts, 1991), 10–14.

19. My deepest gratitude to Juan Castillo Vázquez and José Manuel Noceda for sharing their time, knowledge, and insight with me on June 13, 2017 in Havana, Cuba.

20. Homi Bhabha, "The Third Space," in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 208.

21. Ibid., 211.

22. Fouchet, *Wifredo Lam*, 27.

23. "Wifredo Lam: Chronology 1902–1923," accessed May 30, 2018, http://www.wifredolam.net/en/chronology/1902-1923.html.

24. Catherine David, ed. *Wifredo Lam* (Paris: Centre Pompidou, 2015), 203. Lam recalls that his house was always full of Chinese people. They would hire his father to write letters or read them newspapers, as few Chinese immigrants knew how to read and write. Also, see Nuñez Jiménez, *Wifredo Lam*, 53.

25. Lisa Yun, *The Coolie Speaks* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2008), 12.

26. Kathleen López, *Chinese Cubans: A Transnational History* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 17–18.

27. Cuba would not abolish slavery until 1886.

28. Yun, *The Coolie Speaks,* 16.

29. For example, from 1845–1850, the cost of an African slave was 335 pesos versus 125 pesos for a Chinese coolie. From 1871–1875, the price 715 pesos to 420 respectively. See Yun, *The Coolie Speaks,* 17.

30. Ibid., xv.

31. Ibid., xvi.

32. Ibid., 29–30.

33. Esteban Montejo and Miguel Barnet, *The Autobiography of a Runaway Slave*. Trans. Jocasta Innes (London: The Bodley Head, 1968), 94.

34. Juan's grandmother, Eloisa, was Wifredo's sister. Juan Castillo Vázquez, "Con las cosas de casa," in *Lam en Cuenca, la Cuenca de Lam*, eds. Carmen Pérez García

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

and Miguel Ángel López Guerrero (Cuenca: Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha), 16–18.

35. Cuba gained independence from Spain in 1898 but was then occupied by the United States. Cuba acquired formal independence from the United States in 1902 and was subsequently recognized as the Republic of Cuba.

36. The rest of Wifredo's siblings continued to use Castilla as their last name as they did not go to the trouble of legally changing their birth certificates. Eventually Castilla was changed to Castillo, though the reasons remain unknown. It should also be noted that another name change occurs with Wifredo's first name. While in Spain, he changed it from Wilfredo to Wifredo because of the Spanish pronunciation. Castillo Vázquez, "Con las cosas de casa," 19.

37. Kathleen López, *Chinese Cubans: A Transnational History* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 5.

38. Evelyn Hu-DeHart, "Indispensable Enemy or Convenient Scapegoat? A Critical Examination of Sinophobia in Latin America and the Caribbean, 1870s to 1930s," *Journal of Chinese Overseas* 5, no. 1 (2009): 55–90.

39. Fouchet, *Wifredo Lam*, 202.

40. In 1877 Spain and China signed a formal treaty that terminated the coolie traffic and limited future recruitment of Chinese laborers. The Qing government established four consulates in Cuba to enforce treaties and protect the Chinese. After the 1877 treaty, new Chinese contract labor was prohibited.

41. Yun, *The Coolie Speaks*, 66.

42. Fouchet, *Wifredo Lam*, 208.

43. Petition 4, Shi Zhihe and fellow petitioners. Yun, *The Coolie Speaks*, 89.

44. Petition 15. Ibid., 90.

45. Ren Shizen, Petition 41. Ibid., 91.

46. Petition 25. Ibid.

47. Helena Holzer Benitez, *Wifredo and Helena, My Life with Wifredo Lam, 1939–1950* (Lausanne: Acatos, 1999), 27.

48. Fouchet, *Wifredo Lam*, 122.

49. Breton and his family would travel on the same freighter as Lam and Helena to the Caribbean. The Bretons would eventually make their way to New York, while Lam and Helena headed to Havana.

50. Holzer Benitez, *Wifredo and Helena,* 36–37.

51. Fouchet, *Wifredo Lam*, 192,

52. Recounted from a taped interview in Fouchet, *Wifredo Lam,* 192–93.

53. See footnotes 47 and 48 in Julia Herzberg, "Wifredo Lam: The Development of Style and World View, The Havana Years, 1941–1952," in *Wifredo Lam and his Contemporaries,* ed. Maria R. Balderrama (New York: Studio Museum in Harlem, 1992), 50.

54. Herzberg, "Wifredo Lam,"33.

55. Nuñez Jiménez, *Wifredo Lam*, 117–18.

56. Holzer Benitez, *Wifredo and Helena,* 104.

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid., 106.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

59. Ibid., 107.
60. Ibid., 122.
61. Herzberg, “Wifredo Lam,” 33.
62. Ibid.
63. Nuñez Jiménez, *Wifredo Lam*, 54.
64. Kentucky Horse Park, *Imperial China: The Art of the Horse in Chinese History* (Lexington, KY: Kentucky Horse Park, 2000), 66.
65. Kentucky Horse Park, *Imperial China: The Art of the Horse in Chinese History*, 28.
66. Robert E. Harrist Jr, *Power and Virtue: The Horse in Chinese Ar*t (New York: China Institute Gallery, 1997), 17.
67. Sims, “Lam’s Femme Cheval: Avatar of Beauty,” 33–34.
68. Valerie Fletcher, “Wifredo Lam: Art of Pride and Anger,” in *Wifredo Lam in North America*, ed. Paula Schulze (Milwaukee, WI: Haggerty Museum of Art, 2007), 54.
69. See Martin A. Tsang, “Yellow Blindness in a Black-and-White Ethnoscape: Chinese Influence and Heritage in Afro-Cuban Religiosity,” in *Imagining Asia in the Americas,* eds. Zelideth María Rivas and Debbie Lee-DiStefano (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2016), 13–33.
70. Ibid., 14–15.
71. Tsang, “Yellow Blindness in a Black-and-White Ethnoscape,” 18.
72. Rosario (Charo) Chen (La China Obatalá), quoted in Tsang, “Yellow Blindness in a Black-and-White Ethnoscape,” 18.
73. Luisa Marcela Ossa, “*Babalawos chinos*: Religion, Ethnicity and Identity in Mayra Montero’s *Como un mensajero tuyo*,” *Delaware Review of Latin American Studies* 12, no. 2 (December 30, 2011): 4–5.
74. Frank F. Scherer, “Sanfancón: Orientalism, Self-Orientalism, and ‘Chinese Religion’ in Cuba,” in *Nation Dance: Religion, Identity, and Cultural Difference in the Caribbean*, ed. Patrick Taylor (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 164.
75. José Baltar Rodríguez, *Los chinos de Cuba: Apuntes etnográficos* (Havana: Fundación Fernando Ortiz, 1997), 184.
76. Tsang, “Yellow Blindness in a Black-and-White Ethnoscape,” 27.
77. Scherer, “Sanfancón: Orientalism, Self-Orientalism, and ‘Chinese Religion’ in Cuba,” 166.
78. Holzer Benitez, *Wifredo and Helena,* 137. Italics original to text.
79. Ibid.
80. Hector Hyppolite, quoted in Dawn Ades, *Art in Latin America* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 230.
81. Lam, *Art in Latin America*, 233.
82. Margaret Breuning, “Lam’s Magical Incantations and Rituals,” *Art Digest* (December 1, 1945), 16.
83. Santiago Amon, “Wifredo Lam, por primera vez en Espana,” *El Pais* (November 19, 1976), 23.
84. Holzer Benitez, *Wifredo and Helena*, 138.
85. Lowery Stokes Sims, Excerpt from lecture, “Wifredo Lam’s Chinese Ancestry,” *Museum of Fine Arts*, Houston, June 2012. I thank Lowery Stokes Sims for

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

sharing this unpublished lecture with me. Also see Sims, *Wifredo Lam and the International Avant-Garde*, 213.

86. Sims, *Wifredo Lam and the International Avant-Garde*, 214.

87. Luís Manuel Nuñez, *Santería: A Practical Guide to Afro-Caribbean Magic* (Dallas, TX: Spring Publications, Inc., 1992), 110–111.

88. Lam discusses this painting in relation to European hermetic philosophy. See Cuban Art News, "Wifredo Lam: A Video Fragment," August 28, 2014. http://www.cubanartnews.org/news/wifredo-lam-a-video-fragment/3928.

89. Fouchet, *Wifredo Lam*, 210.

90. Wifredo Lam, "'My Painting is an Act of Decolonization,' an Interview with Wifredo Lam by Gerardo Mosquera (1980)," trans. Colleen Kattau and David Craven. *Journal of Surrealism and the Americas* 3, no. 1–2 (2009): 4.

91. Lam, "My Painting is an Act of Decolonization," 4.

92. Fouchet, *Wifredo Lam*, 196.

93. Holzer Benitez, *Wifredo and Helena,* 187.

94. Lam, "My Painting is an Act of Decolonization," 6.

95. Bhabha, "The Third Space," 209.

96. Holzer Benitez, *Wifredo and Helena,* 180.

97. Breuning, "Lam's Magical Incantations and Rituals," 16.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ades, Dawn. *Art in Latin America*. New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1989. Exh. Catalogue.

Americas Society Gallery. *Wifredo Lam: A Retrospective of Works on Paper*. New York: The Society, 1992.

Amon, Santiago. "Wifredo Lam, por primera vez en Espana." *El Pais*, November 19, 1976.

Balderrama, Maria R. ed. *Wifredo Lam and His Contemporaries*. New York: The Studio Museum in Harlem, 1992. Exh. Catalogue.

Baltar Rodríguez, José. *Los chinos de Cuba: Apuntes etnográficos*. Havana: Fundación Fernando Ortiz, 1997.

Béhar, Henry. *André Breton. Le grand indésirable*. Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1990.

Bhabha, Homi. "The Third Space." In *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, edited by Jonathan Rutherford, 207–221. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990.

Birrel, Anne. *Chinese Mythology: An Introduction*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.

Breuning, Margaret. "Lam's Magical Incantations and Rituals." *Art Digest* 20 (December 1, 1945): 16.

Bush, Susan. *Chinese Literati on Painting*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012.

Cabrera, Lydia. *El Monte: Igo, Finda, Ewe Orisha, Vititi Nfinda*. Miami, FL: Colección del Chicerekú, 1983.

Camayd–Freixas, Erik. *Orientalism and Identity in Latin America: Fashioning Self and Other from the (Post) Colonial Margin.* Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2013.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Castillo Vázquez, Juan. "Con las Cosas de Casa." In *Lam en Cuenca, la Cuenca de Lam*, edited by Carmen Pérez García and Miguel Ángel López Guerrero, 15–27. Cuenca: Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha. Exh. Catalogue.

Chuffat Latour, Antonio. *Apunte histórico de los chinos en Cuba*. Havana: Molina y Cia., 1927.

Cosme Baños, Pedro. *Los Chinos en Regla 1847–1997: Documentos y comentarios*. Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente, 1998.

Cuban Art News. "Wifredo Lam: A Video Fragment." August 28, 2014. http://www.cubanartnews.org/news/wifredo-lam-a-video-fragment/3928.

Cuervo Hewitt, Julia. "Aché, ewe, guedes, nganga, vititi nfinda y Orichas en "La jungla" de Wifredo Lam." *Afro-Hispanic Review* 26, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 59–74.

David, Catherine. ed. *Wifredo Lam*. Paris: Centre Pompidou, 2015. Exh. Catalogue.

Driskell, David C. *African American Visual Aesthetics: A Postmodernist View*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995.

Ferrer, Ada. *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868–1898*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999.

Fletcher, Valerie J. *Crosscurrents of Modernism*. Washington, DC: Hirshhorn, 1992.

Fouchet, Max-Pol. *Wifredo Lam*. Barcelona: Ediciones Polígrafa, S.A., 1989 (1976).

Fundació Joan Miró. *Wifredo Lam*. Barcelona: Fundació Joan Miró, 1993.

García Barrio-Garsd, Marta. *Wifredo Lam-dessins gouaches-peintures, 1938–1950*. Paris: Galerie Albert Loeb, 1987. Exh. Catalogue.

García Triana, Mauro and Pedro Eng Herrera. *The Chinese in Cuba, 1847–Now*. Edited and translated by Gregor Benton. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009.

Garrigues Daniel, Suzanne. "The Early Works of Wifredo Lam: 1941–45." PhD diss., University of Maryland, 1983.

Greet, Michele. "Inventing Wifredo Lam: The Parisian Avant-Garde's Primitivist Fixation." *Invisible Culture: An Electronic Journal for Visual Culture*, no. 5 (2003). https://ivc.lib.rochester.edu/inventing-wifredo-lam-the-parisian-avant-gardes-primitivist-fixation/.

Harrist Jr, Robert E. *Power and Virtue: The Horse in Chinese Art*. New York: China Institute Gallery, 1997.

Hernández Adrián, Francisco J. "Paris, Cuba, New York: Wifredo Lam and the Lost Origins of the Jungle." *Cultural Dynamics* 21, no. 3 (November 2009): 339–360.

Hess, Thomas B. "Spotlight on Lam." *Art News* 14, May 1948.

Holzer Benitez, Helena. *Wifredo and Helena, My Life with Wifredo Lam, 1939–1950.* Lausanne: Acatos, 1999.

Hu-DeHart, Evelyn. "Chinese Coolie Labour in Cuba in the Nineteenth Century: Free Labour or Neo-slavery?" *Slavery and Abolition* 14, no. 1 (1993): 67–86.

———. "Indispensable Enemy or Convenient Scapegoat? A Critical Examination of Sinophobia in Latin America and the Caribbean, 1870s to 1930s." *Journal of Chinese Overseas* 5, no. 1 (2009): 55–90.

———. "Multiculturalism in Latin American Studies: Locating the 'Asian' Immigrant; or Where are the Chinos and Turcos?" *Latin American Research Review* 44, no. 2 (2009): 235–242.

———. "Opium and Social Control: Coolies on the Plantations of Peru and Cuba." *Journal of Chinese Overseas* 1, no. 2 (2005): 169–183.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

———. "Race Construction and Race Relations: Chinese and Blacks in Nineteenth-Century Cuba." In *Encounters: People of Asian Descent in the Americas*, edited by Roshni Rustomji-Kerns, 108–111. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999.

Jensen, Lionel M. *Manufacturing Confucianism: Chinese Traditions and Universal Civilization*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997.

Kaufman, Jason Edward. "Wifredo Lam, Multicultural Modernist." *World and I* 8, no. 3 (March 1993): 130–135.

Kentucky Horse Park. *Imperial China: The Art of the Horse in Chinese History*. Lexington, KY: Kentucky Horse Park, 2000. Exh. Catalogue.

Lam, Wifredo. "'My Painting is an Act of Decolonization,' an Interview with Wifredo Lam by Gerardo Mosquera (1980)," translated by Colleen Kattau and David Craven. *Journal of Surrealism and the Americas* 3, no. 1–2 (2009): 1–8.

———. *Wifredo Lam*. Miami, FL: Miami Art Museum, 2008.

———. *Wifredo Lam. Early Works, 1942–1951.* New York: Pierre Matisse Gallery, 1982.

Lau, Maria. "'71' Series Photo Essay." *Afro-Hispanic Review* 27, no. 1 (2008): 247–50.

Laurin-Lam, Lou. *Wifredo Lam Catalogue Raisonné of the Painted Work, Vol. I 1923–1960.* Lausanne: Acatos, 1996.

Laurin-Lam, Lou and Lam, Eskil. *Wifredo Lam Catalogue Raisonné of the Painted Work, Vol. II 1961–1982.* Lausanne: Acatos, 2002.

Leenhardt, Jacques. *Wifredo Lam.* Paris: HC Editions, 2009.

Leiris, Michel. *Wifredo Lam.* Milan, Italy: Fratelli Fabbri Editori, 1970.

Leja, Michael. *Reframing Abstract Expressionism: Subjectivity and Painting in the 1940s*. New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1993.

Lo, Emily. "A Cuban-Chinese *Familia*." In *Cuba: Idea of a Nation Displaced*, edited by Andrea O'Reilly Herrera, 215–22. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007.

López, Kathleen. *Chinese Cubans: A Transnational History*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013.

Martinez, José. *Cuban Art and National Identity: The Vanguardia Painters, 1927–1950.* Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1994, 140.

McMullen Museum of Art. *Wifredo Lam: Imagining New Worlds*. Boston: McMullen Museum of Art, 2014.

Montejo, Esteban and Miguel Barnet. *The Autobiography of a Runaway Slave*. Translated by Jocasta Innes. London: The Bodley Head, 1968.

Mosquera, Gerardo. "Modernidad y africania: Wifredo Lam en su isla." In *Wifredo Lam*. Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Ministerio de Cultura, 1992, 21–42.

Murphy, Joseph M. *Santeria: An African Religion in America*. Bronx, NY: Original Publications, 1989.

Murrell, Nathaniel Samuel. *Afro-Caribbean Religions: An Introduction to their Historical, Cultural, and Sacred Traditions*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2010.

Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes. *Wifredo Lam 1902–1982*, *Obra sobre papel*. Mexico City: Centro Cultural/Arte Contemporáneo, 1992. Exh. Catalogue.

National Museum of Stockholm. *Wifredo Lam Grafik*. Stockholm: Nationalmuseum, 1993. Exh. Catalogue.

Nessen, Susan. "Multiculturalism in the Americas." *Art Journal* 52, no. 2 (Summer, 1993): 86–91.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Noceda, José Manuel. *Wifredo Lam en las colecciones cubanas.* Havana: Centro de Arte Contemporáneo Wifredo Lam, 2002.

———. ed. *Wifredo Lam, la cosecha de un brujo.* Antología de José Manuel Noceda. Havana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 2002.

Nuñez Jiménez, Antonio. *Wifredo Lam*. Habana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1982.

Nuñez, Luís Manuel. *Santería: A Practical Guide to Afro-Caribbean Magic*. Dallas, TX: Spring Publications, Inc., 1992.

Okihiro, Gary Y. *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994.

Ortiz, Fernando. *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*. Translated by Harriet de Onis. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1947. Reprint, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995.

———. *Wifredo Lam y su obra vista a través de significados críticos.* Havana: Publicaciones del Ministerio de Educación, 1950.

Ossa, Luisa Marcela. “Babalawos chinos: Religion, Ethnicity and Identity in Mayra Montero’s Como un mensajero tuyo.” *Delaware Review of Latin American Studies* 12, no. 2 (December 30, 2011): 1–11.

Parkinson Zamora, Lois and Wendy B. Faris. eds. *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*. Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1995.

Rivas, Zelideth María and Debbie Lee-DiStefano. eds. *Imagining Asia in the Americas.* New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2016.

Rodríguez Ruiz, Pablo. “Relaciones inter-étnicas e interraciales en el Barrio Chino de La Habana (Un estudio desde los chinos y sus descendientes).” *Catauro* 2, no. 2 (2000): 103–26.

Schulze, Paula. ed. *Wifredo Lam in North America.* Milwaukee, IL: Haggerty Museum of Art, 2007. Exh. Catalogue.

Scott, Rebecca J. *Degrees of Freedom: Louisiana and Cuba after Slavery*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005.

———. “Race, Labor, and Citizenship in Cuba: A View from the Sugar District of Cienfuegos, 1886–1909.” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 78, no. 4 (1998): 687–728.

———. *Slave Emancipation in Cuba: The Transition to Free Labor, 1860–1899*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985.

SDO Wifredo Lam. http://www.wifredolam.net/index_en.html.

Seligmann, Kurt. *Magic, Supernaturalism and Religion*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1948.

Sheng, Xing Xiao. “Merveilles et Demons de Wifredo Lam.” In *Weifuleiduo Lin ban hua zuo pin zhan lan. Les gravures de Wifredo Lam*. France and Beijing: Institut Central des Beaux Arts, 1991, 10–14.

Silberer, Herbert. *Hidden Symbolism of Alchemy and the Occult Arts*. Translated by Smith Ely Jelliffe. New York: Dover Publications, 1971.

Sims, Lowery S. “The Painter’s Line: The Drawings of Wifredo Lam.” *Master Drawings* 40, no. 1 (Spring, 2002): 57–72.

———. *Wifredo Lam and the International Avant-Garde, 1923–1982.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Taylor, Patrick. ed. *Nation Dance: Religion, Identity and Cultural Difference in the Caribbean*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001.

Tejeiro, Guillermo. *Historia ilustrada de la Colonia China en Cuba*. Havana: Editorial Hercules, 1947.

Traba, Marta. "Wifredo Lam." In *Art of the Fantastic. Latin American Art, 1920–1978,* edited by H. Day and H. Sturges. Indianapolis, IN: Indianapolis Museum of Art, 1987. Exh. Catalogue.

Vergara, Peggy. *Wifredo Lam et l'éternel féminin.* Paris: Editions L'Harmattan, 2015.

Wifredo Lam: Cartografía Íntima. Berlin: Instituto Cervantes, 2006. Exh. Catalogue.

Williams, C. A. S. *Chinese Symbolism and Art Motifs*. Rutland, VT and Tokyo, Japan: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1989.

Yau, J. "Please Wait by the Cloakroom." *Arts Magazine* 63 (December 1988): 56–59.

Yun, Lisa. *The Coolie Speaks: Chinese Indentured Laborers and African Slaves in Cuba*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2008.

———. "Signifying 'Asian' and Afro-Cultural Poetics: A Conversation with William Luis, Albert Chong, Karen Tei Yamashita, and Alejandro Campos García." *Afro-Hispanic Review* 27, no. 1 (2008): 183–211.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Chapter 3

Afro-Asian-Caribbean Connections in Transnational Circulation

The Harlem Ashram as Chronotope

Malathi Iyengar

INTRODUCTION: A MEMORABLE DINNER TABLE

Diasporas—as this volume demonstrates—are not static or monolithic entities, but ever-moving, converging, diverging and reconverging currents of human experience. The emphatic modifier in Paul Gilroy's description of diaspora as "a *changing* same"[1] prompts us to think about diasporas as unfolding dialectically through space and time—which reminds us that the geographical and conceptual space of *the Caribbean* historically has been not only a *site* of Afro-Asian diasporic connections, but also a *component* of further Afro-Asian diasporic connections that then take place elsewhere. The present essay examines one such "elsewhere," one example of how Afro-Asian connections in the Caribbean have been co-articulated and co-constituted with Afro-Asian-Caribbean connections in other parts of the world—specifically, in this case, 1940s Harlem.

As a chronotope[2] for reading the lived historical text of the Afro-Asian-Caribbean political and cultural crossroads of this particular space-time, I invite the reader now to consider an eight-room brownstone on Fifth Avenue near 125th Street, in the vicinity of Harlem's Mt. Morris Park. During the 1940s, this busy residence—located directly across from the local "Bucket of Blood" bar—was known as the Harlem Ashram. To get a sense of the flavor of daily life in this rather unusual domicile, we might turn to the inimitable prose of the well-known African American scholar-activist James Farmer, one of the establishment's erstwhile residents. As Farmer later explained in his autobiography, the Harlem Ashram was modeled after MK Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram; hence, it was intended by its founders to

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

be a place of "voluntary poverty" and prayer, along with anti-racist and anti-colonial thought and organizing.[3] For many of the committed social justice activists who inhabited the Ashram, however, the condition of "poverty" was not so much "voluntary" as it was a side effect of their chosen endeavors—that is, anti-racist and anti-colonial intellectual commitments and political praxes that were (in addition to being frequently criminalized) distinctly non-lucrative. As Farmer wryly notes in his memoirs, "My poverty was wholly involuntary."[4] Remembering the Ashram's cheaply prepared collective meals, Farmer relates a hair-raising anecdote:

> One day . . . the soup had more body than usual. A part of that body, was a large cockroach that had wandered into the pot and given up the struggle. . . . Having witnessed the insect's debacle, I caught Jay's eyes and, with a motion of my head, directed them to the soup. . . . [H]e ladled his bowlful first, including the inert beast. He took a spoonful of the concoction, as though tasting it for quality, smacked his lips, and nodded his head. The cockroach was no longer in his bowl. Jay then moved the pot around the table, starting with me. I passed, and sent it on its way.[5]

What makes Farmer's mealtime tale particularly evocative for the purposes of this essay is not simply the soup, but the company. That is to say, as we imagine this memorable pot of soup making its way around the table, we might consider the fact that the hands that passed it, and the faces that peered (hungrily? suspiciously?) into its contents, were representative of several intertwined intellectual and political movements—notably, for this chapter, movements originating in South Asia, the Caribbean, and the US African diaspora. The soup itself can be seen to represent the hardships these activists faced in the service of their anti-racist and anti-colonial ideals: not only unsavory meals, but also imprisonment and the threat of physical injury. And yet, as Farmer's humorous tone suggests, the faces around the table would not have looked miserable, but lighthearted and hopeful. The Ashram's residents and visitors, lively and adventurous individuals of all ages, saw themselves as part of a transnational and trans-imperial struggle toward liberation from racism, imperialism, and war.

This chapter examines the Harlem Ashram as a space where South Asian, Caribbean, and African American political movements converged during the 1940s. Founded by New York–based pacifists who were inspired by the nonviolent anti-colonial movement in India, the Ashram became a meeting place for several anti-racist and anti-colonial organizations during this era; it hosted political meetings and academic lectures on Indian independence, Puerto Rican decolonization, and African American civil rights, and was also a residential space where participants in these social justice movements could

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

live inexpensively as part of a pacifist community. Among those who resided in or frequented the Ashram were African American scholar-activists like James Farmer, Pauli Murray, and Wilson Head; Indian anti-colonialists like Haridas Muzumdar, Krishnalal Shridharani, and Ramkrishna Shahu Modak; and committed anti-racist white activists like Ruth Reynolds, Jean Wiley, and J. Holmes Smith. A connection with the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party was initiated when Julio Pinto Gandía came to the Ashram. Gandía introduced Ashram members to Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos (1891–1965), the renowned Afro-Puerto Rican labor leader, attorney, and educator who had been a central figure within the island's independence movement since the 1920s. The growing relationships between Ashram members and Albizu Campos added a significant new layer to a set of Indian-Puerto Rican interchanges that had begun two decades earlier, when Albizu Campos had met the famed philosopher-poet Rabindranath Tagore and the fiery anti-colonial nationalist Subhas Chandra Bose at Harvard.

The story of the Harlem Ashram provides a window onto the connections between concurrent decolonization movements in India and Puerto Rico, allowing us to trace a trans-imperial circuitry of anti-colonial resistance between South Asia and the Caribbean during this era. Further, the constitutive presence of African American activists within this circuitry speaks to the thoroughly transnational character of African American movements during the interwar period and World War II. While the letters and memoirs of Ashram residents paint an entertaining picture of a quirky, flaky sort of place, attracting strange characters and serving terrible food, this unique building in Harlem also emerges in these narratives as a key location for intellectual exploration and political organizing around overlapping and converging projects of racial justice and decolonization.

Piecing together bits of information gleaned from multiple archives, published primary sources, and secondary sources, my discussion here uses the Harlem Ashram as a prism for examining the connections between South Asian, Caribbean, and African American movements during the turbulent 1940s. To be clear, I am not arguing that the Ashram was the singular *cause* or *source* of the multiple Afro-Asian-Caribbean relationships discussed here; rather, the connections made in the Ashram were metonymic of a larger pattern of connections being forged during this era in multiple sites: the streets of Harlem, the city of New York more broadly, and numerous other physical and discursive spaces in which South Asian, Caribbean, and African American cultural and political currents were coming together through a series of border-crossings and diasporic fusions. Hence, by exploring the life of the Harlem Ashram, we can bring into view an intricate, multilayered web of ideas and events linking South Asia, the Caribbean, and Black America during this complex historical moment.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

THE ASHRAM CONCEPT: FROM INDIA TO HARLEM

The concept of the ashram in ancient South Asia referred to a simple habitation, usually in a forest or some other rural setting, in which a philosopher-sage lived a generally ascetic life focused on prayer and study, often accompanied by small groups of students who would live in the ashram in order to receive daily lectures and lessons from this *acharya* (wise-person/teacher). During the Indian independence movement, anti-colonial activists adapted the ancient idea of the ashram to the modern social context of the struggle for *swaraj*, or "self-rule," a term indexing various idealized understandings of decolonization and self-determination at multiple scales: the individual, the community, and the larger "imagined community" of the nation.[6] Students and other residents of these anti-colonial neo-ashrams, in addition to participating in prayer, attending lectures, and studying secular and religious texts, devoted themselves to various activities associated with the swaraj movement: experimental agriculture, spinning of cotton cloth, village education, and of course public protest and civil disobedience actions. In 1930, MK Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram was the starting point for the famous 240-mile Salt March to the Sea, which initiated the Salt Satyagraha[7]—the mass civil disobedience campaign in which tens of millions of people defied British imperial rule by illegally producing salt from seawater.

The Harlem Ashram was produced via a confluence of factors whereby the concept of the anti-colonial ashram made its way from India to the United States, and specifically to Harlem. One of those factors was *colored cosmopolitanism*—a term coined by historian Nico Slate to refer to the dense webs of relationships and discourses through which African American and Asian Indian thinkers throughout the first half of the twentieth century foregrounded and strengthened the links between their (incommensurate yet structurally imbricated) struggles against racial and colonial oppression. During this era, African American and Asian Indian activists and intellectuals forged a complex network of transnational and trans-imperial political alliances and cultural affiliations rooted in a shared opposition to global white supremacy. Multilayered constellations of personal friendships and organizational consociations during these decades linked—as Gerald Horne (2008) incisively puts it—"the largest 'minority' in what was to become the world's most powerful nation and the largest colony of the . . . British Empire."[8] At the height of overt Anglo-Saxon racial and imperial domination stretching across the Americas, Africa, and Asia, networks of African American and Asian Indian thinkers came together to fashion what Slate (2012) describes as "a colored cosmopolitanism that transcended traditional

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

racial distinctions, positioning Indians and African Americans together at the vanguard of the 'darker races.'"[9] While the term "cosmopolitanism," as I have noted elsewhere (Iyengar 2015), etymologically denotes a "citizen of the world," its usage within the phrase "colored cosmopolitanism" more specifically highlights the subversive nature of alliances formed outside of established borders and boundaries.[10] Colored cosmopolitans "fought for the freedom of the 'colored world,' even while calling into question the meanings of both color and freedom."[11]

The ashram concept became familiar to many African Americans during the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s through the extensive transnational connections of colored cosmopolitanism. Multiple African American intellectuals during these decades traveled to India and visited various ashrams, including Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram. Well-known Black public intellectuals like Dr. Howard Thurman, dean of Rankin Chapel at Howard University, and Dr. Benjamin Mays, dean of the School of Religion at Howard, spoke and wrote extensively during the 1930s about their mutually influential meetings and conversations with Indian anti-colonialists, including meetings that had taken place in ashram settings. Rabindranath Tagore's famous school at Shantiniketan—built around the ashram Tagore had established in 1901—was a rich site of intellectual and cultural exchange between African American and Asian Indian teachers and students during this era. Dr. Thurman and his wife Sue Bailey Thurman, after a 1936 visit to Shantiniketan during which they delivered a series of lectures and held long conversations with Tagore and other resident intellectuals, established a travel scholarship that enabled several African American students to spend time studying at Shantiniketan in the ensuing years.

These decades also saw numerous Indian anti-colonialists spending time in the United States. An attention to figures such as Haridas Muzumdar—a Gandhian disciple who was among the famous "first batch" of satyagrahis to march the full 240 miles from Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi in 1930, and who later helped to establish the Harlem Ashram—shows us how South Asian activists in the United States were influenced by their Afro-Caribbean as well as African American counterparts. Muzumdar took up his first period of residence in the United States as a very young man in the early 1920s, intending to publicize the cause of Indian independence. His anti-colonial perspective dramatically expanded as he was faced with the violent Jim Crowism of everyday life in the United States. After reading a news report of a lynching—an account that left him "unable to eat for two days"[12]—Muzumdar began seeking out opportunities to engage with African American freedom movements and to link these efforts with Indian anti-colonial organizing. As Sudarshan Kapur (1992) notes, the "opening for Muzumdar was

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

provided by Marcus Garvey, the flamboyant Caribbean leader" who had founded the famous Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in 1914 in his home country of Jamaica.[13] After moving to New York in 1916, Garvey had established a Harlem branch of the UNIA, which had quickly become "the largest and most dramatic black mass movement [yet] to exist in America;"[14] this mass organization sought freedom for African-descended peoples in the Caribbean, in the United States, and around the world. It is not surprising that Garvey, who "followed the Indian struggle closely and encouraged his followers to do the same," warmly welcomed Muzumdar's participation in the UNIA.[15] In the midst of the first Indian noncooperation movement (1920–1922), Garvey telegrammed Gandhi on behalf of the UNIA, sending best wishes "for the speedy emancipation of India from the thralldom of foreign oppression. You may depend on us for whatsoever help we can give."[16] Garvey invited the young Muzumdar to speak at a series of UNIA mass meetings in Harlem, and Muzumdar used these opportunities to highlight the links between African American, Afro-Caribbean, and South Asian freedom struggles. Muzumdar was just one among many South Asian activists (both from the subcontinent and from Indo-Caribbean diasporic populations) who became involved with the UNIA. Garvey's other South Asian associates included multi-diasporic figures such as Hucheshwar G. Mudgal, who had been born in India, migrated to Trinidad, and later moved on to the United States. Mudgal wrote for many of Garvey's publications over the years, and, as Horne (2008) notes, "served as editor of Garvey's newspaper, the *Negro World*, during one of its most militant phases."[17] Hence, Indian anti-colonialists like Muzumdar, through their participation in the UNIA in New York, had the opportunity to form relationships both with Afro-Caribbean and African American activists and with Indo-Caribbean diasporic activists like Mudgal. Muzumdar carried these influences with him when he returned to India around 1929. He reappeared in New York several years later, after having participated in the Salt March and the second noncooperation movement, and resumed his participation in US-based anti-racist and anti-colonial organizing. Muzumdar's path thus represents a circuitous set of diasporic entanglements between South Asia, the Caribbean, and the US African diaspora. And, of course, Muzumdar then brought all of these transnational influences into the Harlem Ashram.

Concurrently with the flourishing of colored cosmopolitanism, a number of white Christian pacifists were becoming interested in the nonviolent resistance tactics of the Indian independence movement, and in African American scholar-activists' inquiries into the possibility of adapting the idea of satyagraha to the racial struggle in the United States. These white allies of colored cosmopolitanism were a small minority within the white Christian pacifist movement of the 1930s and 1940s: the majority of white Christian

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

pacifists tended to think of "peace" as simply the absence of overt conflict, and thus were more interested in preventing confrontation—even nonviolent confrontation—than in challenging the racial status quo. A small number of white pacifists, however, embraced an understanding of peace as the absence of *oppression*, rather than the absence of *confrontation*. One such individual was Jay Holmes Smith—the same "Jay" who figures so prominently in James Farmer's immortal dinner table episode. According to Patricia Appelbaum, Smith had spent his youth as an "underworld gang" member before embracing Protestantism;[18] he went to India as a Methodist missionary but ended up being converted himself—to anti-colonialism and satyagraha. Forced to leave India because of his support of the independence movement, he continued his anti-colonial activism in New York. Smith liked to use the term "Kristagraha"—a term popularized by the Indian Christian poet Cyril Modak—to describe his Christian pacifist commitment to using satyagraha in resistance to colonialism, racism, and war. He worked with a close-knit cadre of similar-minded activists from the well-known Christian pacifist group FOR (Fellowship of Reconciliation). James Farmer, who as one of the few African American members of the FOR also played an important role in strengthening this particular cadre, later referred to this circle of assertive anti-racist FOR activists as the "young Turks," since their insistent advocacy of satyagrahic action against white supremacy—"direct action a la Gandhi," as Farmer put it—riled the white-dominated FOR establishment and ultimately overturned many of the organization's settled expectations regarding race relations and the meaning of nonviolence.[19]

It was within this broad context of colored cosmopolitanism and Christian pacifist liberation hermeneutics that the concept of the activist ashram made its way from India to Harlem. In attempting to specifically attribute the Harlem Ashram's founding to a single individual or a small set of individuals, scholars have produced conflicting accounts of whose particular initiative led to the Ashram's creation: Many accounts emphasize Jay Holmes Smith as the driving force, and he certainly played a central role in overseeing the establishment's daily functioning; however, as Horne (2008) notes, Smith himself gave credit to "Indians in [the United States] like Krishnalal Shridharani and Haridas Muzumdar" for bringing the ashram concept to the United States, and highlighted the significance of the existing connections between Indian and African American freedom struggles.[20] In any case, the present chapter is interested not in attributing the Ashram's origin to some particular individual or individuals, but in understanding the Ashram as a chronotope, a Bakhtinian "optic for reading"[21] various cultural and political circulations between South Asia, Black America, and the Caribbean—a set of circulations that *produced* the Ashram, and that the Ashram's participants then *carried forward* through their own evolving relationships, insights, and political praxes.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

DIASPORIC CONFLUENCES, POLITICAL CROSS-POLLINATION

"There are three peoples in the world today whom we regard as having specially redemptive possibilities. They are the peoples of India and Puerto Rico struggling for freedom from imperialistic exploitation, and the Negro people of America striving to be free from that white domination which is akin to it."

Harlem Ashram update, 1944.[22]

As Nishani Frazier (2017) notes, the Harlem Ashram was a "site of cross-pollination" between and among multiple liberation movements.[23] It was the weekly meeting place for the New York chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and a site of regular gatherings and lectures associated with the Indian independence movement. Members worked closely with J. J. Singh's India League of America and with the Free India Committee of the FOR. The March on Washington Movement (MOWM), led by the famous African American labor leader A. Philip Randolph, educated its members in nonviolent direct action through training sessions at the Ashram.[24] Randolph himself served as an advisor to the Ashram, joining a diverse advisory group that also included, among other members, Dr. William Stewart Nelson of Howard University, A. J. Muste of the FOR, and the Reverend Ramkrishna Shahu Modak, the influential Marathi Christian pastor from Ahmednagar. The Ashram later became the birthplace of the American League for Puerto Rico's Independence, which operated under the guidance of Pedro Albizu Campos and included such prominent supporters as Mary MacLeod Bethune, president of the National Congress of Negro Women; Willard S. Townsend, president of the United Transport Workers' Union; and Wallace Nelson, the renowned African American peace activist. Albizu Campos also came to serve as one of the Ashram's advisors. As Ashram participants increasingly understood the links between the different issues and movements with which they were concerned, the parameters and contours of their organizing efforts reflected these growing relational understandings. For example, on the symbolic "Indian Independence Day" of January 26, 1944, Ashram members organized a demonstration not just against British rule in India, but more broadly against the "*coalition of British and American imperialisms*" that constituted "a menace which we must oppose with all our might."[25] In a "two-pronged" demonstration against this transatlantic combination of Anglo-Saxon imperialisms, Ashram participants traveled to Washington, DC, and carried out a poster-walk through the streets of the capital, after which they picketed the British Embassy to demand Indian independence and then picketed the Capitol Building to demand "Puerto Rico's independence and the release of her patriots from our prisons."[26]

All this being said, the existence of a junction of influences from India, Black America, and Puerto Rico during this era was not unique to the

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Ashram. In fact, the bustling Harlem in which the Ashram "set up shop," so to speak, in 1940, was already a site of contact and cooperation between African American, Puerto Rican, and South Asian diasporic groups—and to a much greater extent than most of the Ashram's participants probably realized. As Vivek Bald (2012) extensively demonstrates in *Bengali Harlem and the Lost Histories of South Asian America*, African American and Puerto Rican neighborhoods in Harlem during the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s became spaces of refuge and community for "illegal" South Asian migrants who entered the United States for a variety of reasons—sometimes fleeing British persecution, sometimes simply trying to earn a living, sometimes both.[27] As "aliens ineligible for citizenship," South Asians were racially barred from US immigration under the Asiatic Barred Zone Act of 1917. Nevertheless—and contrary to the long-standing assumptions of historians who have tended to take the "barred" status at face value, and thus to assume that there was no migration to the United States from South Asia during this era—Bald's work shows that South Asians throughout these decades continued to arrive in US port cities such as New York, where they would evade the notice of authorities by simply "blending in" to African American and Afro-Caribbean neighborhoods. Stigmatized and demonized by white American society, and rendered "illegal" by US policy, covert South Asian migrants were able to survive, thanks to their acceptance in these "colored" neighborhoods, where they could find work and housing, form personal friendships, and generally participate in community life. Working-class African American and Puerto Rican communities in Harlem thus became home to many South Asian arrivals during the barred zone era. Some of these migrants stayed in the United States for just a few years before returning to the subcontinent or moving on to third countries. Others stayed permanently—marrying African American or Puerto Rican spouses, establishing families, and becoming part of the fabric of the communities of color that had given them safe haven and allowed them to pass under the racial radar of US officials. As Bald notes, "What these [South Asian] migrants of color found in black diasporic neighborhoods was what George Lipsitz, drawing on the African American religious scholar Theophus Smith, has called a 'world-traversing and world-transcending citizenship,' forged by peoples 'cut off from ancestral homelands [and] denied full franchise and social membership in the United States.'"[28] In other words, a colored cosmopolitanism of the streets, whereby different diasporic peoples (South Asian, Puerto Rican, US African diaspora, and others), excluded from formal and/or substantive citizenship in the US *polity*, could become *colored cosmo-politans*: citizens of a colored world . . . difficult and precarious though the daily life of such a world might be.

How much did the Ashram residents—who celebrated the interracial, transnational, and trans-imperial solidarities between Indian, Puerto Rican,

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

and African American movements led by well-educated activists—ever notice or understand about the implicit forms of interracial, transnational, and trans-imperial solidarity that some of their working-class neighbors were enacting at the mundane level of everyday life? By sheltering "illegal" South Asian migrants, working-class African American and Puerto Rican communities in fact performed a sort of civil disobedience against white-supremacist US immigration law, though without the fanfare of demonstrations and without actually using the term "civil disobedience." Did the Harlem Ashram participants contemplate this point? If so, that contemplation was not memorialized in their archives.

This is not to say that the Ashram's residents ignored their neighbors. As Paul Dekar (2013) notes, Ashram participants actively sought to become productive members of the "local Harlem community."[29] In this regard, "They helped southern African Americans migrating to the North find housing; investigated the use of violence by the police in strikes; created a credit union run by and for African Americans, Puerto Ricans, and other minority persons; organized neighbors into a cooperative buying club; and conducted play activities for children on the streets of African American and Puerto Rican neighborhoods."[30] At one point, some "older young men" from the area asked the Ashram participants to help organize a block party.[31] If the Ashram members' accounts are to be believed, the party was a smashing success: the "older young men" and Ashram participants, after raising $25, mostly in the form of "ten or fifteen cent gifts" from local residents and dollars from local shopkeepers, put together the "staging, illumination and other decorations" and brought in a "12-piece Spanish band," and on the evening of the party the street was packed with merrymakers, so that "the block appeared from the top of a building to be one swarming mass."[32] Occasionally, groups of revelers were doused with water from the rooftops, but no one seemed terribly angered by it. The party appears to have marked a moment when Ashram participants felt they had become part of the local community, as they happily spent the evening "'razzing gently with a smile on your face,' slapping backs, and even scuffling."[33]

It is clear from the archives that local residents helped shape the Ashram's activities. A campaign to eliminate racial segregation in downtown YMCA facilities, for example, was launched after local men repeatedly identified these facilities as sites of exclusion. Neighbors may have also played a role in shaping Ashram members' political orientations and concerns on a broad transnational level: while the Ashram's engagement with the Puerto Rican *Partido Nacionalista* per se began after Julio Pinto Gandía introduced participants to Pedro Albizu Campos in 1943, earlier records indicate that Ashram members were already somewhat engaged in generally critiquing US colonialism in Puerto Rico, possibly due to the influence of their working-class Puerto Rican neighbors. One 1941 letter,

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

written by J. Holmes Smith, mentions an "opportunity to learn what our Puerto Rican friends think of our American imperialism in their island home."[34] The "Puerto Rican friends" referred to here are local residents of 113th street between Fifth and Madison Avenues, a block Smith describes as "one of the most neglected areas of our city."[35] What insights might the working-class residents of this congested city block have shared with Ashram members about "American imperialism in their island home?" The import of Ashram members' extensive dialogues with nationalist leaders like Albizu Campos has been diligently archived through interviews and the preservation of documents, but the content of their conversations with working-class Puerto Rican neighbors has been rendered a matter of historical conjecture.

CIRCLE OF PARTICIPANTS

My discussion thus far has at times referred to the Ashram's "residents," or sometimes "members," but has preferred the term "participants." This choice of terminology is deliberate. It is worth taking a moment here to clarify the importance of tracing *participants* as a way of outlining the Afro-Asian-Caribbean connections woven through the life and afterlife of the Harlem Ashram. Doing so will help us understand how it ultimately came to be that the non-pacifists *and pacifists* of the Ashram embraced the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party, despite the party's refusal to renounce violence in the struggle for independence.

In 1940, as an initial group of potential Ashram members made plans for what they at first called a "New York Ashram," Jay Holmes Smith wrote a statement to the FOR, explaining the group's project and seeking the FOR's endorsement. "India," the statement began broadly, "which has contributed so greatly to the pacifist cause through Mahatma Gandhi and others, has developed in the ashram a social pattern which seems to be peculiarly adapted to the pacifist way for the whole of life."[36] He then defined the term "ashram" for his readers as "a small community of kindred spirits, living together in a deeply sharing and disciplined fellowship, and pursuing common spiritual and social ends."[37]

Smith's initial definition of an ashram departs in some ways from the traditional ashram concept. It leaves out the figure of the acharya, the teacher, and it foregrounds the idea of a "small community . . . living together." At the end of his statement, however, Smith mentions something that implicitly and importantly connects back with Indian anti-colonial ashrams such as Sabarmati Ashram and Shantiniketan. "We hope," he writes, "to enlist a large number of associate members of the ashram from among those who feel a

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

spiritual kinship with it, and desire to try to apply its principles so far as possible in their own life and work."[38] Why is this statement important? Because it reflects the fact that what matters about this type of ashram is not just the people who live on its premises, but the wider group of people who contribute to its activities and are shaped by its understandings. Places like Sabarmati Ashram and Shantiniketan Ashram were *sites of circulation*: these places had their established residents, certainly, but people also came from around India and the world to spend varying periods of time in these places—to teach, to learn, to participate, to discuss, to argue, to share. And these ashrams were designed to reach out to the surrounding villages and towns, in a give-and-take of knowledge between the acharya, his students, visitors from afar, and local communities. Whereas these ashrams were centers of *knowledge*, the knowledge was neither produced nor consumed exclusively by those who lived in them. Whereas these ashrams were centers of political *action*, the action was neither envisioned nor carried out exclusively by those who lived in them. The Harlem Ashram, like these Indian anti-colonial ashrams, was a site of circulation and an outward-reaching project. It had residents, but it also had other "members," "associate members," and "advisors;" it hosted guest speakers and visitors; and it inspired intense levels of participation from individuals who had no formal affiliation with the establishment—that is, people who were neither residents nor members, but who came to the Ashram regularly and played central roles in some of its most significant activities over the years. I have thus chosen here to historicize the Ashram in terms of its participants, rather than focusing simply on residents.

One key figure who became an avid Ashram participant, though never a resident or a formal member, was the fiercely independent-minded African American Marxist attorney Conrad Lynn, whose association with the Ashram would lead to a lifelong involvement in the Puerto Rican anti-colonial movement. Lynn's law offices were in the same building as the headquarters of A. Philip Randolph's Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and Lynn served on the executive committee of the youth group backing Randolph's March on Washington Movement during the early 1940s. It was perhaps through these connections that he became acquainted with the Ashram. Never a pacifist, he nonetheless found himself irresistibly drawn to the brownstone on Fifth Avenue, where committed pacifists like Bayard Rustin—an Ashram member with whom Lynn also worked closely in the MOWM—"held forth" on a range of topics.[39] "Their undeviating opposition to war fascinated me," Lynn later recalled. "Were there really those whose principles never wavered?"[40] He admired the "selflessness and courage" of the Ashram's members, but—he later wrote—"my conviction that underlying populations would never win their freedom by nonviolent means prevented me from joining them."[41] And yet, despite never "joining them" as a formal member, Lynn was a

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

regular at the Ashram and a central figure in some of its most dramatic efforts, including a 240-mile march for racial justice, and—as I will discuss in greater detail later—a close relationship with Pedro Albizu Campos, leading to many years of work for the decolonization of Puerto Rico. It is notable that Lynn's autobiography, in referring to the "dedicated egalitarians of the Harlem ashram," does not use the pronoun "they," but rather "we."[42]

Lynn's involvement with the Ashram illustrates the complex ways in which the circle of Ashram participants—members and non-members, pacifists and non-pacifists—worked together to combat interlocking systems of oppression, particularly British and US imperialisms and US domestic racial apartheid, while maintaining an ongoing dialogue that highlighted their philosophical and ideological commonalities as well as their differences. The historical moment in which the Ashram was founded—which is to say, the World War II era—brought to the fore participants' phenomenological agreements and disagreements about violence, nonviolence, and the search for justice. African American Ashram members like James Farmer, Bayard Rustin, and Homer Nichols refused military participation on two grounds: they were pacifists, but they also—and independently of their pacifist convictions—made a point of rejecting the hypocrisy of the US racio-military policy that would have them serve in segregated regiments to fight a so-called war for democracy. Lynn's perspective both converged with and departed from the stance of anti-racist pacifists like Farmer, Rustin, and Nichols. "As much as I detested Hitler," he later wrote, "my conception of World War II as a savage struggle between competing imperialist powers prevented me from volunteering for service."[43] Lynn's family, a close-knit crew of siblings, also had "very strong feelings about the government's humiliating conscription practices,"[44] which not only forced African Americans into segregated units, but also frequently subjected them to degrading assignments, inferior food, and other forms of abuse. When Lynn's brother Winfred received an order to report for military induction, Winfred—though by no means a pacifist—refused to join the Jim Crow army and was jailed. This situation sparked a chain of events in which Conrad, as an attorney, became deeply embroiled in a complex legal and social battle against segregation in the US military.

Lynn had a "youthful fascination with war,"[45] and would happily have joined the army to fight Hitler if the United States had ended its own racist and imperialist policies. The pacifists of the Ashram, by contrast, maintained absolute opposition to war and militarism under any and all circumstances. Nevertheless, the Ashram officially endorsed and worked with what became known as the Lynn Committee to Abolish Segregation in the Armed Forces—a distinctly non-pacifist endeavor. At the same time, Lynn embraced a commitment to nonviolence in his Ashram-related activism. Like the other participants in Ashram-sponsored marches, demonstrations, and

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

civil disobedience actions, he "pledged to complete nonviolence" in these activities, agreeing not to retaliate even if physically attacked.[46] He engaged repeatedly in actions bound by pledges of nonviolence, putting his own life in danger in the service of nonviolent direct action—but never wavering in his simultaneous belief in violent revolution. Lynn consistently maintained his conviction that oppressed populations (or, as he put it, "underlying" populations) would "never win their freedom" through exclusively "nonviolent means."[47]

The cooperation of pacifist and non-pacifist participants in the Ashram's anti-racist and anti-colonial projects did not mean that points of disagreement were simply silenced or brushed aside. Different participants continually engaged in dialogue and debate, even in the midst of joint action. Such philosophical argumentation was evident, for example, during a 240-mile march to protest racial discrimination, as participants from varying ideological backgrounds did not shy away from discussing their divergent views, even while supporting each other in solidarity through grueling days of bleeding feet and threats of white-supremacist violence. A closer look at this march gives us a clearer view of the experiences and conversations that helped to pave the way for a complex alliance between the Ashram—including its pacifist members—and a group of Puerto Rican nationalists who did not hesitate to use violence in opposing the US occupation of their island. In the following section I discuss this 1942 march, after which I turn to an examination of the Ashram's association with Pedro Albizu Campos, which began in 1943.

PILGRIMAGE TO WASHINGTON

The distance of the march, or "pilgrimage," from Harlem to Washington, 240 miles, was the same distance as the famous Salt March from Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi. At the end of the pilgrimage, the participants would seek to deliver to President Roosevelt a 3,000-signature petition demanding federal action on issues such as employment discrimination, poll tax laws, Jim Crow statutes, and lynching. The marchers would stop in cities and towns all along the way to Washington, passing out leaflets, giving speeches, and attending meetings that had been arranged in advance by local organizations. Local allies found them places to sleep at night, usually in churches. In a memo on behalf of the "Pilgrimage Committee" at the Ashram, J. Holmes Smith wrote, "We may regard the pilgrimage as a kind of traveling seminar, a step in the direction of a movement that may set a significant trend in the field of race relations." This "traveling seminar" was surely intended to be educational for the people, who heard the speeches and read the flyers, but the marchers

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

themselves were also students in the seminar, developing new understandings based upon their interactions with each other and with the people they encountered along the route. This traveling satyagrahic seminar certainly played a role in allowing some of the pacifists from the Ashram to understand the complexities of violence and nonviolence within the context of systematic oppression, such that they were later prepared to work closely with the revolutionary Puerto Rican Nationalist Party—whose members were clearly not averse to using violence—while simultaneously retaining their personal convictions regarding pacifism.

A small group of fourteen to sixteen marchers set out from Harlem early one morning in September of 1942. Due to injury and other issues, only twelve of the original pilgrims made it all the way from Harlem to Washington. (Other marchers joined in for varying distances along the way.) In addition to Ashram residents like J. Holmes Smith, Ruth Reynolds, and Jean Wiley, and other Harlem-based participants like Conrad Lynn and Homer Nichols, this group of twelve who traversed the entire 240 miles included activists who had traveled to New York from out-of-state specifically to join the pilgrimage. Hope Foye, for example—the African American soprano and multitalented performing artist who would later work (both musically and politically) with Paul Robeson and Pete Seeger—temporarily set aside her musical studies in Connecticut to travel to Harlem and join the march.

While everyone in the group had pledged not to retaliate if confronted with violence, different ideas emerged as to what it meant to avoid "force" altogether. In New Jersey, after police stopped a group of hostile whites from attacking the marchers, Conrad Lynn found himself debating some of the pacifist pilgrims on "the principle involved in allowing the police to employ force in their behalf."[48] Most of the group, like Lynn, agreed that police protection from attackers was welcome, but a few individuals "felt it was inconsistent to permit the police to protect us physically," and that a true "demonstration of Satyagraha" required that they absorb bodily attacks rather than accept police protection.[49]

The group marched about fifteen miles to twenty miles per day, carrying or wearing large signs bearing phrases like "Race Discrimination is a Part of Hitlerism."[50] They were greeted in different cities by groups from varied organizations: NAACP members, Quakers, and followers of the charismatic Father Divine. The Black press covered the group's progress in detail, noting acts of racist hostility against the pilgrims as well as supportive responses from local organizations. On September 19, the *Chicago Defender* reported that the marchers were "undaunted by blistered feet, thrown stones and highway signs demanding that they be stopped."[51] The *Defender* went on to note that a "group of white 'hoodlums'" outside of Laurel, Maryland, had "stoned the marchers and informed them they were now below the Mason Dixon

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

line and that they had better realize it."[52] Fortunately, the article continued, the "calmness and presence of mind of one of the Negroes in the party" had "averted a more violent demonstration against the marchers until the Maryland state police arrived."[53] The *Baltimore Afro-American* reported a separate incident in which the "driver of an auto bearing a Southern license tag warned the marchers not to come near Virginia 'because we'll lynch you there.'"[54] The same article observed that "Members of the group walk in pairs, colored and white, side by side," and also took note of some of the more curious aspects of the procession: "The men address each other as 'Brother' and when a member of the group is about to impart information he begins: 'The tidings I bring are. . . .'"[55]

For Lynn, a key moment in the march occurred about nine miles outside of Wilmington, Delaware. As Lynn recalls,

> A group of nine or ten white youths began to threaten us. . . . They were young racist toughs and their courage was buoyed by the realization that no one would fight back. Here it comes, I thought!
>
> Just at that moment a black WPA worker who had been stolidly swinging his pick walked over to me. "Don' git scared, he said. 'Ain' nobody gonna hurt ya. Don' git scared."
>
> He was so determined that he was ready to die, and everybody sensed it, not the least the Delaware boys. Without saying another word they turned and walked away down the street with exaggerated casualness.
>
> It was one of the thrilling moments of my life. The march, the belief in the dispossessed, the essential rightness of it all—it was worthwhile. We walked into Wilmington unmolested. I will never forget that brave WPA worker.[56]

Lynn's response to this pickaxe-wielding worker's spontaneous defense of a peaceful anti-racist march would have evoked various forms of agreement and disagreement among his fellow pilgrims. Some of the pacifists probably would have dogmatically insisted that the worker had been in error, and that his implied use of "force" in protecting the marchers was inappropriate. Most of the pilgrims, however, were gaining more nuanced and context-specific understandings of "force" versus "nonviolence," attentive to larger structures of power rather than fixated on the immediate interpersonal scale.

Lynn's perspective and approach—using satyagraha while rejecting pacifism—can be seen to resonate with the position outlined by Dr. Krishnalal Shridharani in his famous *War Without Violence.* Shridharani had been a student of both MK Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore, had participated in the Salt March to the Sea, and had subsequently spent several months locked up in British prisons; he was a frequent speaker at the Harlem Ashram, and his 1939 *War Without Violence* was closely studied and intensely discussed by many Ashram participants. Shridharani explicitly distinguished satyagraha

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

from pacifism, aiming a series of critiques at certain factions of pacifists who focused exclusively on the avoidance of conflict or force, ultimately functioning to "maintain an unjust *status quo*."[57] Further, Shridharani's position with regard to satyagraha itself was not to prescribe this approach as a moral imperative, but to suggest it as a technique, a praxis whose value lay in its effectiveness rather than moral virtue. "As a form of mass action directed toward the attainment of desired social ends," Shridharani wrote, "satyagraha is just another technique which mankind can use at will. According to the present writer's judgment, it has no claim to moral superiority over other methods of solving group disputes . . . . [I]t is useless to prescribe Satyagraha on the grounds of moral superiority, notwithstanding the efforts of Gandhi and his ardent disciples."[58] Instead, satyagraha should be assessed with respect to its potential efficacy within a specific movement. "Satyagraha is not *Aladdin's Lamp*. It cannot win victories by itself. Like war, it is only a technique. . . . No social end is gained by simply waving the magic wand of either Satyagraha or war. It rests upon the men [*sic*] who have to fight, violently or nonviolently."[59]

Some of the pilgrims "were hardly able to walk" by the time the group reached Washington, but they forged onward to the White House.[60] Roosevelt refused to meet with the group. (The *Baltimore Afro-American* took note with the headline "F.D. Snubs N.Y. to D.C. Pilgrimage."[61]) An "obscure secretary at the White House" accepted the petition that the group had walked 240 miles to deliver.[62]

Lynn was happy to note after the march that "some of the black youths were radicalized by the experience and deserted the pacifists to become revolutionary Marxists. They no longer believed that America afforded any real possibility of assimilating the Negro as a human being." This comment, however, only makes sense if we understand the expression "deserted the pacifists" as indicating a philosophical desertion, rather than a physical one. That is to say, there is no record that any of the march's participants or supporters subsequently turned to violent methods. It seems that Lynn simply means some people came to intellectually espouse Marxism rather than pacifism as a theoretical framework for understanding the world. Even Lynn himself, despite his assertion that "only in an overthrow of the existing social structure by violent means was there any hope for the underlying population," actually never committed a violent act in his life. In fact, just a few years after the 240-mile march to Washington, Lynn—together with pacifists like Bayard Rustin, Wallace Nelson, and others—undertook another, even riskier satyagrahic pilgrimage, the Journey of Reconciliation.

Just as Lynn's experiences with the Ashram drew him into these extensive engagements with satyagraha despite his simultaneous belief in the ultimate need for violent revolution, some of the pacifist Ashramites were beginning

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

to understand that the line between "violence" and "nonviolence" was not as clear as it may have seemed, and that it was mere hypocrisy to condemn the retaliatory violence of the oppressed while ignoring the systematic and naturalized violence of the status quo. The growth of these different understandings would take off dramatically in 1943, the year after the pilgrimage to Washington, when the Ashram circle expanded to include revolutionary Puerto Rican nationalists.

"WHY NOT FREEDOM FOR PUERTO RICO?"

As with so many other aspects of the Ashram's history, it is difficult to trace a linear origin story of exactly how participants became involved in Puerto Rican independence activism. We do know that in the summer of 1943, Ashram member William Allen Winslow brought Julio Pinto Gandía, a Puerto Rican lawyer and former president of the Partido Nacionalista, to dinner at the Fifth Avenue brownstone. This seems to have been the Ashram's first contact with the Nationalist Party per se—though not with Puerto Rican decolonization efforts more generally.

Winslow and Gandía had met in prison. Winslow, a Quaker, had been one of the earliest individuals to resist military conscription during World War II. In 1941, after publicly refusing to register for the draft, he had been incarcerated for eighteen months. There he got to know Gandía, who was imprisoned for quite different reasons. Gandía's imprisonment stemmed from an event in 1937, a few months after the infamous Ponce Massacre in which nineteen Puerto Ricans were killed and more than two hundred more (including many children) badly wounded by police who opened fire on a peaceful Palm Sunday parade. A few months after the massacre, a group of men fired on a US judge in Puerto Rico, presumably in retaliation for the Ponce killings. The judge could not identify any of his attackers, but US authorities took the opportunity to arrest ten nationalist leaders, including Gandía. These different chains of events led to a crossing of paths, and eventual friendship, between "Al" Winslow, a pacifist and conscientious objector, and Gandía, an advocate of violent revolution against US imperialism. By most accounts, it was Gandía who then introduced the Ashram participants to Pedro Albizu Campos.

A slightly different narrative, however, emerges from a biography of Ruth Reynolds, an Ashram resident who would come to be remembered as "the most consistent North American supporter of the Puerto Rican anti-colonial cause."[63] In this version of the story, it was working-class Puerto Rican community members who "implored [Reynolds] and other members of the Ashram to pay a hospital visit to Harvard-educated lawyer and leader of the

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Puerto Rican Nationalist Party, Pedro Albizu Campos, serving out the end of a ten-year prison sentence for 'seditious conspiracy' against US occupation of his homeland."[64] So perhaps Ashram members had already been contemplating a meeting with Albizu Campos, even before meeting Gandía. Or perhaps they asked for Puerto Rican community members' opinions before accepting Gandía's invitation to meet Albizu. Based on the Ashram archives, it is clear that some conversations about US imperialism in Puerto Rico had taken place between Ashram participants and their Puerto Rican neighbors as early as 1941. Albizu Campos, with his history as a massively successful champion of labor rights as well as an anti-colonial nationalist, was adored by many working-class Puerto Ricans in the diaspora as well as on the island, so it would not have been unexpected for the Ashram's working-class neighbors to suggest that Ashram participants try to meet Campos. Regardless of how the meeting with Albizu came about, the Ashram's Puerto Rican neighbors had long "pushed residents to attend to US as well as British imperialism."[65] Another link had also previously been made through Ashram member Bayard Rustin, who had spent August of 1941 in Puerto Rico as part of a Quaker delegation investigating the issues faced by Puerto Ricans who refused military conscription. In short, the Ashram-Albizu connection seems to have come about through a confluence of factors.

When the Ashram participants met Albizu Campos, he was both a patient and a prisoner at Columbus Hospital. How had he ended up there? To understand this story, we need to look at the larger picture of Albizu's life. Born in 1891 in Puerto Rico, Campos had distinguished himself as a student, graduating from Harvard in 1916 and enrolling in Harvard Law School. During World War I he volunteered for military service with the 375th Infantry Regiment, a segregated unit of Afro-Puerto Rican soldiers. His wartime experiences apparently sharpened his critical stance toward US racism. Traveling by US warship en route to Paris, "At a Southern port, when he saw how Negroes were treated he refused to travel further; later, rejecting a reserve commission, he declared that Puerto Ricans should not be the Sepoys of the American army."[66]

The "Sepoy" metaphor, as Hunter and Bainbridge (2005) note, is a telling one.[67] Sepoys were Indian soldiers serving in the British army in India. Clearly, Campos was already thinking in terms of a parallel between British and US imperialisms. From this point forward, he increasingly made connections between the US occupation of Puerto Rico and other colonial-imperial situations. Returning to Harvard after the war, he became president of the Cosmopolitan Club, an organization that hosted lectures by international speakers. Through the Cosmopolitan Club he met Rabindranath Tagore and Subhas Chandra Bose. During this time he also got to know several Irish nationalists and supported their cause.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

In 1921, Albizu graduated from Harvard Law School at the top of his class, but a professor delayed one of his exams in order to prevent the "embarrassment" of having an Afro-Puerto Rican valedictorian. Campos subsequently turned down several prestigious job offers in the United States in order to return to his colonized home of Puerto Rico. His anti-colonialism and labor activism evoked the ire of big capital and the US occupying forces. In 1930, Campos was elected president of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party. Over the next several years, nationalist activity and labor struggle increased and US reactionary repression became increasingly violent. In 1937, Albizu was imprisoned at the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary—part of an attempt to crush the Nationalist Party. In 1943, he became seriously ill in the Atlanta prison and was transferred to Columbus Hospital in New York, where he remained—both patient and prisoner—for the next several years. This is where his path intersected with the Ashram.

Albizu Campos challenged Ashram members: they were involved in movements promoting freedom for India, so, "Why not freedom for Puerto Rico?" The Ashram embraced this perspective, and multiple participants began spending several days a week with Campos. They were not alone; Campos' hospital room was frequently filled with associates and admirers. Often people would bring him money, which he then circulated to others working for decolonization—both in Puerto Rico and elsewhere. Many decades later, Manorama Modak, wife of the Reverend Ramkrishna Shahu Modak, recalled a scene in which she and her husband met with Campos:

> He was ill in a hospital room, surrounded by his countrymen. Ramkrishnapunt's . . . sympathy for the Puerto Rican people [was] fully accepted by Campos. When we arose to leave him, Campos sent everyone else out of the room, and from under his pillow drew out one hundred dollars [about $1,300 by 2017 standards], pressed it into Ramkrishnapunt's hands, and with tears in his eyes, said, "It is for India. Use it as you like."

He asked Ramkrishnapunt to pray for Puerto Rico. . . . It was inspiring and heart-warming to know this brave man who had suffered for a noble cause.[68] Conrad Lynn described Campos as "the most charismatic personality I was ever to know. [H]e had . . . large luminous eyes and—almost always—a warm, infectious smile. Albizu was unselfish, brave, deeply religious."[69] Among the Ashram associates who spent the greatest amounts of time with Campos were Ruth Reynolds, Jean Wiley, Thelma Mielke, and Jay Holmes Smith, along with Lynn. Smith was fond of calling Albizu the "Puerto Rican Gandhi." Some of the pacifists from the FOR balked at this appellation, since Albizu flatly refused to renounce violence. For mainline US pacifists, the most important thing about Gandhi was his insistence upon absolute nonviolence.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

But for Smith and the Ashram activists, the connection between Albizu and Gandhi was that they both were charismatic and highly effective leaders in anti-colonial struggles against interlocking Anglo-US imperialisms.

In 1944, Ashram members founded the American League for Puerto Rico's Independence (ALPRI). The League carried out public demonstrations against the US occupation of Puerto Rico, published articles on the Puerto Rican struggle, pushed for the release of Puerto Rican political prisoners, and sent its representatives to make speeches at meetings and events. In addition to receiving guidance from Albizu Campos and other Puerto Rican nationalists in New York, the group worked closely with Vito Marcantonio, the democratic socialist congressional representative for New York's eighteenth district. Marcantonio, a popular figure in Harlem, had devoted a great deal of attention to the status of Puerto Rico.

One of the League's flyers, printed on both sides of an 8½x11 sheet of yellow paper, carries the headline "LET'S FREE PUERTO RICO NOW!" followed by a series of all-caps subheadings ("WE TOOK PUERTO RICO BY INVASION!" . . . "WE HAVE DENIED PUERTO RICANS EVEN INTERNAL SELF-GOVERNMENT"), each of which is then followed by an informational paragraph containing dates and statistics. Under the subheading "WE HAVE RUINED PUERTO RICO ECONOMICALLY," the text notes that Puerto Rican industries are "almost entirely owned by American absentees," that "More than 90% of the average Puerto Rican family's income must go for food, averaging 25% higher than what is paid in New York City for the same products," and that "Half of the children are not in school, for lack of schools." At the end of the flyer, readers are encouraged to write to the president and to two key congressmen, and to get in touch with the ALPRI at the Ashram if they'd like to get involved. Partners listed at the end of the document also include the New York CORE and the Socialist Party U.S.A.[70]

By spring of 1945, the Puerto Rican anti-colonial struggle and the Indian independence movement were being discursively linked in multiple organizational spaces. On April 14, 1945, the four hundred attendees of the first "World Congress of Dominated Nations" discussed the need to make the concerns of colonized peoples heard at the upcoming United Nations conference in San Francisco. As Ramkrishna Shahu Modak, who had organized the meeting, declared, "What can be done must be done, and promptly, to focus the attention of the San Francisco Conference on the necessity of ending imperialism now in India, Puerto Rico, Africa, Indonesia, Korea, the British West Indies, Burma, Malaya, the Guianas, and everywhere else that it exists. Lovers of peace and freedom must not allow the World Security Conference to sidestep this issue."[71] The World Congress of Dominated Nations subsequently designated Modak and Julio Pinto Gandía as delegates to the United

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Nations Conference at San Francisco. Though Modak and Gandía, not being representatives of officially recognized nations, had no official standing at the San Francisco conference, they managed to confer with officials of the Secretariat of the Conference and to meet with representatives from multiple national delegations. According to Brenda Gayle Plummer (1996), Modak and Gandía also "addressed large black meetings in the bay area."[72]

In 1945, Ashram member Ruth Reynolds traveled to Puerto Rico to study economic conditions on the island. In 1946 and 1947 she lobbied the United Nations on behalf of Puerto Rican independence. At the request of Albizu Campos, Ashram member Thelma Mielke became an official UN observer on behalf of Puerto Rico. Jean Wiley, Reynolds' roommate at the Ashram, also continued her close involvement with the Puerto Rican independence struggle, later writing a book with short biographies of multiple Puerto Rican anti-colonialists. These pacifists of the Ashram had developed complex and nuanced understandings of violence and nonviolence within the context of racist colonization and anti-racist resistance. Their commitment to peace would be questioned over the ensuing decades: as Ruth Reynolds would write in 1954, "Whenever any Puerto Rican patriot out of desperation fires a gun, [people around me say] that I am not a pacifist or I would not know people who fire guns, I would not associate with members of the political group to which they belong, I would stay out of situations pregnant with violence."[73] Reynolds, by this time, had narrowly survived death from mistreatment in prison as a result of her peaceful work for Puerto Rican decolonization. In response to her critics, she wrote that a true pacifist "keeps his sense of values, and, while he condemns violence on either side, he realizes that *Empire is in itself the basic violence*, and that to oppress with violence is worse than to resist oppression with violence."[74]

THE ASHRAM'S AFTERLIFE

As a residential space, the Ashram closed sometime around 1947 or 1948. In the ensuing years and decades, its various participants continued their work in multiple spaces—in the United States, India, Puerto Rico, and elsewhere.

The story of the Harlem Ashram could be told in many different ways, depending on the priorities of the storyteller. My discussion here has focused on the Ashram as a chronotope for reading some of the intersections of South Asian, African American, and Caribbean movements as they converged in Harlem during the 1940s. I do not suggest that the Ashram caused or created all of these convergences; rather, I have shown how a look at this one brownstone on Fifth Avenue reveals a complex set of connections between multiple parts of the globe, multiple diasporic individuals and communities.

The Harlem Ashram was short-lived, but it had a long afterlife. In closing, we might attend to one particularly resonant moment of that afterlife. In 1950,

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Pedro Albizu Campos and Ruth Reynolds were arrested in Puerto Rico on trumped-up charges. Conrad Lynn flew to the island to represent them in court. It was his first trip to Puerto Rico, but it would not be his last; as he notes in his autobiography, "In all, I would fly to Puerto Rico more than thirty times on these two cases."[75] Without relating the details of the cases—both of which were drawn out for years—I commend to the reader's attention the following scene from one of the trials.

Conrad Lynn is in the courtroom, with his client Pedro Albizu Campos. Outside, crowds of Campos' supporters have gathered. The courtroom does not have glass windows, but "spaces in the wall"[76] to allow for air to circulate. The prosecution begins to play a tape of one of Albizu Campos' speeches, as a piece of evidence against him. This tactic backfires, as the people outside can hear the speech—thanks to the spaces in the walls—and begin to cheer. "It seemed as if all Puerto Rico was outside the courtroom that day," Lynn later wrote, "and soon they were cheering Albizu's words."[77]

As the roar of the crowds increases, two members of the African diaspora continue to sit side-by-side: Conrad Lynn, and Pedro Albizu Campos. An African American and an Afro-Puerto Rican. As it happens, the Harlem Ashram—an experiment inspired by the Indian independence movement—was part of what had brought them together at this table. The life and afterlife of the Ashram represent a microcosm of 1940s Harlem: a city where African American, Caribbean, and South Asian populations, ideas, practices, and movements creatively converged in the 1940s, with effects that rippled irrepressibly outward, across the United States, back to India, back to the Caribbean, and forward into the future.

NOTES

1. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993), xi (emphasis in original).

2. My line of thinking here follows Gilroy's (1993) usage of the Bakhtinian notion of the *chronotope* as "a unit of analysis for studying texts according to the ratio and nature of the temporal and spatial categories represented. . . . The chronotope is an optic for reading texts as x-rays of the forces at work in the culture system from which they spring." M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. and trans. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 426. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 225.

3. James Farmer, *Lay Bare the Heart: An Autobiography of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Arbor House, 1985), 150.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. For an extensive discussion of the concept of swaraj, see M. K. Gandhi, *Indian Home Rule or Hind Swaraj* (Ahmedabad, India: Navajivan Publishing House, 1938).

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

For a discussion of the nation-form as an "imagined community," see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

7. *Satyagraha,* a term composed of the Sanskrit *satya*, meaning "truth," and *agraha*, meaning "holding to" or "insisting upon," has been variously glossed in English as "insistence upon the truth," "holding to the truth," "truth force," "soul force" (a strategic translation coined by Gandhi), or simply "nonviolent resistance." Ashram participants' understanding of this term followed the anti-colonial writer Krishnalal Shridharani's translation of satyagraha as "nonviolent direct action."

8. Gerald Horne, *The End of Empires: African Americans and India* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2008), 1.

9. Nico Slate, *Colored Cosmopolitanism: The Shared Struggle for Freedom in the United States and India* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 2.

10. Malachi Iyengar, "Colored Cosmopolitanism and the Classroom: Educational Connections Between African Americans and South Asians," in *Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory*, ed. M. A. Peters (Singapore: Springer, 2015), 1.

11. Slate 2.

12. Qtd. in Sudarshan Kapur, *Raising Up a Prophet: The African American Encounter with Gandhi* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 22.

13. Kapur, 16.

14. Qtd. in Bidyut Chakrabarty, *Confluence of Thought: Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 11.

15. Kapur, 18.

16. Qtd. in Kapur, 18.

17. Horne, 13.

18. Patricia Appelbaum, *Kingdom to Commune: Protestant Pacifist Culture between World War I and the Vietnam Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 150.

19. Interview with James Farmer. In James Leonard, Jr. and Lula Peterson Farmer papers, Box 2R635, Folder titled "Literary Productions: James Farmer: Transcripts of Interviews."

20. Horne, 173.

21. See endnote #2.

22. "The Work of the Harlem Ashram." Harlem Ashram papers from the Fellowship of Reconciliation-USA, Section II, Series A, Subseries A-3, Box 13.

23. Nishani Frazier, *Harambee City: The Congress of Racial Equality in Cleveland and the Rise of Black Power Populism* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2017), 231.

24. David Lucander, *Winning the War for Democracy: The March on Washington Movement, 1941–1946* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2014), 139–140.

25. "Dear Comrade" letter from the Harlem Ashram. January 15, 1944. Harlem Ashram papers from the Fellowship of Reconciliation-USA, Section II, Series A, Subseries A-3, Box 13 (emphasis added).

26. Ibid.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

27. Vivek Bald, *Bengali Harlem and the Lost Histories of South Asian America* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2012).
28. Bald, 226.
29. Paul R. Dekar, "Forging Bonds and Obligations: The Fellowship of Reconciliation, Nonviolence, and Martin Luther King, Jr," in *"In an Inescapable Network of Mutuality": Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Globalization of an Ethical Ideal,* eds. Lewis V. Baldwin and Parl R. Dekar (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2013), 113.
30. Ibid.
31. "Our Play Street." c.1942. Harlem Ashram papers from the Fellowship of Reconciliation-USA, Section II, Series A, Subseries A-3, Box 13.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. "Dear Fellowship Friend" from the Harlem Ashram. Oct. 4, 1941. Harlem Ashram papers from the Fellowship of Reconciliation-USA, Section II, Series A, Subseries A-3, Box 13.
35. Ibid.
36. "A Memorandum Concerning a New York Ashram." (n.d.) Harlem Ashram papers from the Fellowship of Reconciliation-USA, Section II, Series A, Subseries A-3, Box 13, Swarthmore College Peace Collection.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. Conrad Lynn, *There is a Fountain: The Autobiography of Conrad Lynn* (New York: Lawrence Hill Books, 1979), 86.
40. Lynn, 85.
41. Ibid., 86.
42. Ibid., 87.
43. Ibid., 92.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid., 86.
46. Ibid., 87.
47. Ibid., 86.
48. Ibid., 88.
49. Ibid.
50. See photo, "En Route to See President Roosevelt." *Baltimore Afro-American*, September 12, 1942, 8.
51. "Petitioners Against Discrimination Walk From New York to Washington." *The Chicago Defender*, September 19, 1942, 4.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.
54. "The Force Behind the Pilgrimage." *Baltimore Afro-American*, September 12, 1942, 8.
55. Ibid.
56. Lynn, 89.
57. Krishnalal Shridharani, *War Without Violence* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1972 [c. 1939]), 274.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

58. Shridharani 1939, 314.

59. Ibid., 320.

60. "Petitioners Against Discrimination Walk From New York to Washington." *The Chicago Defender*, September 19, 1942, 4.

61. *Baltimore Afro-American*, September 19, 1942, 27.

62. Lynn, 90–91.

63. Elizabeth Betita Martinez, Mandy Carter, and Matt Meyer, eds., *We Have Not Been Moved: Resisting Racism and Militarism in 21st Century America* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2012), 548.

64. Ibid.

65. Andrea Friedman, "The Empire at Home: Radical Pacifism and Puerto Rico in the 1950s," in *A New Insurgency: The Port Huron Statement and its Times,* eds. Howard Brick and Gregory Parker (Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan Publishing, University of Michigan Library, 2015), n.p. Accessed online 4/9/2017 at http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/maize/13545967.0001.001/1:8.3/--new-insurgency-the-port-huron-statement-and-its-times?rgn=div2;view=fulltext.

66. Stephen Hunter and John Bainbridge, *American Gunfight: The Plot to Kill Harry Truman—and the Shootout that Stopped It* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 27.

67. Ibid.

68. Manorama Modak, *The World is my Family: Biography of Rev. Ramkrishna Shahu Modak* (Bombay: Dinkar Sakrikar for Thacker & Company, 1970), 185–186.

69. Lynn 1979, 123.

70. "FREE PUERTO RICO NOW!" September 1944. "Puerto Rico" folder in Fellowship of Reconciliation-USA, Section II, Series A, Subseries A-3, Box 15, Swarthmore College Peace Collection.

71. Qtd. in Modak 1970, 199.

72. Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935–1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 150.

73. Ruth Reynolds, "Responsible Pacifism and the Puerto Rican Conflict," 1954 [Reprinted Elizabeth Betita Martinez et al., eds., *We Have Not Been Moved: Resisting Racism and Militarism in 21st Century America* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2012)], 52.

74. Reynolds, 54. (emphasis added)

75. Lynn, 129.

76. Ibid., 133.

77. Ibid., 134.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* London: Verso, 1991.

Appelbaum, Patricia. *Kingdom to Commune: Protestant Pacifist Culture between World War I and the Vietnam Era*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Bakhtin, M. M. *The Dialogic Imagination*. Edited and translated by Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.

Bald, Vivek. *Bengali Harlem and the Lost Histories of South Asian America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012.

Chakrabarty, Bidyut. *Confluence of Thought: Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Dekar, Paul R. "Forging Bonds and Obligations: The Fellowship of Reconciliation, Nonviolence, and Martin Luther King, Jr." In *"In an Inescapable Network of Mutuality": Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Globalization of an Ethical Ideal,* edited by Lewis V. Baldwin and Paul R. Dekar. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2013.

Farmer, James. *Lay Bare the Heart: An Autobiography of the Civil Rights Movement.* New York: Arbor House, 1985.

Frazier, Nishani. *Harambee City: The Congress of Racial Equality in Cleveland and the Rise of Black Power Populism*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2017.

Friedman, Andrea. "The Empire at Home: Radical Pacifism and Puerto Rico in the 1950s." In *A New Insurgency*: "*The Port Huron Statement" and its Times,* edited by Howard Brik and Gregory Parker, chap. 19. Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan Publishing, 2015. http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/maize/13545967.0001.001/1:8.3/--new-insurgency-the-port-huron-statement-and-its-times?rgn=div2;view=fulltext.

Gandhi, Mohandas. *Indian Home Rule or Hind Swaraj.* Ahmedabad, India: Jitendra T. Desai, Navajivan Publishing House, 1938.

Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. London: Verso, 1993.

Horne, Gerald. *The End of Empires: African Americans and India.* Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2008.

Hunter, Stephen and John Bainbridge. *American Gunfight: The Plot to Kill Harry Truman – and the Shootout that Stopped It*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005.

Iyengar, Malathi. "Colored Cosmopolitanism and the Classroom: Educational Connections Between African Americans and South Asians." In *Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory,* edited by M. A. Peters. Singapore: Springer, 2015.

Kapur, Sudarshan. *Raising Up a Prophet: The African American Encounter with Gandhi.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1992.

Lucander, David. *Winning the War for Democracy: The March on Washington Movement, 1941–1946*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2014.

Lynn, Conrad. *There is a Fountain: The Autobiography of Conrad Lynn*. New York: Lawrence Hill Books, 1979.

Martinez, Elizabeth Betita, Mandy Carter, and Matt Meyer. eds. *We Have Not Been Moved: Resisting Racism and Militarism in 21st Century America*. Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2012.

Modak, Manorama. *The World is My Family: Biography of Rev. Ramkrishna Shahu Modak.* Bombay: Thackers, 1970.

Plummer, Brenda Gayle. *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935–1960.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Reynolds, Ruth. "Responsible Pacifism and the Puerto Rican Conflict." Written in1954. *We Have Not Been Moved: Resisting Racism and Militarism in 21st Century America,* edited by Published for the first time in Elizabeth Betita Martinez et al. Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2012.

Slate, Nico. *Colored Cosmopolitanism: The Shared Struggle for Freedom in the United States and India.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012.

Shridharani, Krishnalal. *War Without Violence.* New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1939; Reprint, New York: Garland Publishing, 1972.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Part II

CONTACT ZONES, SOLIDARITY, AND SYNCRETISM

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Interlude II

Kathleen López

The overlapping diasporas of Asia and Africa in the Americas engendered "contact zones" of cultural conflict and solidarity, of borrowing and syncretism. New, distinctly Afro-Asian forms of religion, language, politics, and philosophical outlook emerged from these multiple, sustained exchanges over time. Official historical archives and national literary canons elide the mundane interactions among Asian immigrants and local people. The chapters in this section turn to cultural production in Latin America and the Caribbean to explore the common conditions of bondage under which people of African and Asian descent arrived in the region and the cultural fusions that developed from their interactions.

Zelideth Rivas opens a window onto interracial intimacies among Japanese in Brazil through encounters over multiple generations. Her analysis of Japanese Brazilian literary works overturns a dominant view of Japanese in Brazil as insular, one that extended to Asians across the region. Even as they used racial labels and subscribed to stereotypes for black Brazilian characters, Japanese writers reveal underlying processes of sexual encounters, friendships, and daily exchanges. Japanese immigrants in Brazil used language as a mechanism for settling in an unfamiliar Brazilian landscape. They searched for a new vocabulary closely tied to the landscape and their senses, adapting Portuguese words to their needs and incorporating them into colloquial Japanese, thus producing a new Japanese-based Portuguese pidgin (known as *colonia-go*). This language expressed other forms of hybridity, such as interracial marriages and dual national identifications. Similarly, Jamaican writers have fused patois with Cantonese dialects to capture the nature of the daily interactions among black and Chinese Jamaicans.

Cuban American novelists also incorporate Afro-Asian themes into their literature to reflect on the intertwined histories and legacies of these

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

overlapping diasporas. In her essay, Luisa Ossa discusses the interconnections between people of African and Chinese descent in Cuba through two recent works. For Cristina García and Mayra Montero, the Chinese connection is central, not peripheral, to what it means to be Cuban both historically and today. We know from government records that despite Spanish colonial authorities' disdain for interracial unions, intimacies between indentured Chinese laborers and enslaved black women occurred, especially as both groups moved out of bondage. Historical archives, however, are mostly silent as to how solidarity and syncretism emerged from a colonial context of violence. Ossa examines the emotional and spiritual worlds that made such unions possible. The development of a diverse set of syncretic Afro-Chinese-Cuban religious practices is not surprising when one considers parallels among African and Chinese societies. This spiritual landscape permeated Havana's Barrio Chino in prerevolutionary Cuba and forms a backdrop to the interracial relationships that the Cuban writers under consideration explore—between a former indentured laborer and a former slave, and between a *mulata* woman of African, Chinese, and European descent and an Italian international opera singer.

Alongside the relationships formed between Japanese and Brazilians and between Chinese and Cubans came participation in political struggles dating back to the nineteenth century abolition and decolonization movements. Despite substandard conditions, maltreatment, and abuse, most Asians had no choice but to remain in the region after the end of the indenture system. Linda Aïnouche's documentary film *Dreadlocks Story* (2014) explores the influence of Indian immigrants on Jamaican culture and society and connections between the Hindu Sadhu and Jamaican Rasta, including spirituality, ritual, food, and dreadlocks. Scholarship on Indian indentured laborers in the Caribbean has focused on the larger populations in British Guiana, Trinidad, and Suriname. Despite their smaller numbers in Jamaica, East Indians have influenced an Afrocentric Jamaican culture, including Rastafari, through settlement and intermixing. More Indian than Chinese females made the passage to the Caribbean, a significant difference that resulted in the ability to pass language, cultural, and religious elements on to later generations. Just as Chinese indentured laborers brought their cultural practices to Cuban and Peruvian plantations, Indian indentured laborers introduced their religious traditions and thought to the British Caribbean. Over time, interactions developed between Indians and Afro-Jamaicans, both relegated to the bottom of plantation hierarchies. Single Indian women and Afro-Jamaicans entered into relationships, and Hindus and women counted among the initial followers of the Rastafari founder of early twentieth century Jamaica.

As Aïnouche comments, there is resistance to the exploration of Indian roots of Rastafari, a resistance grounded in the more contemporary political

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

linkage of the movement with blackness and Africa. An Afro-Asian approach compels us, as students and researchers, to re-examine what we know, keeping an eye out for connections in unexpected places. Like Chinese influences in iconic Afro-Cuban art, religion, and thought, exploring Indian influences in Rastafari need not undermine the political foundation of the movement. One of the film's interlocutors captures this sentiment with a statement that Indians and Africans intermingled and created something "predominantly African, influenced by Indians, but totally Jamaican." Something entirely new was born out of opposition and resistance to state oppression, marginalization, and silencing.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Chapter 4

Merging the Transpacific with the Transatlantic

Afro-Asia in Japanese Brazilian Narratives

Zelideth María Rivas

The most famous Japanese Brazilian writer is José Carlos Ryoki de Alpoim Inoue, known as *Guinness World Records*' "most prolific author" (awarded in 1996 when he had 1,058 novels).[1] In 2006, he published the Portuguese-language novel *Saga: A história de quatro gerações de uma família japonesa no Brasil* (Saga: The history of four generations of a Japanese family in Brazil) that introduced readers to four generations of the Fukugawa family. When Ryumi Fukugawa, the fourth generation, starts dating Maria Rita Pereira Bartelli, a mulatta (mixed-race Black and White woman), he becomes fascinated with her upbringing. Having lost her parents when she was young, she grew up in a Japanese Brazilian household and maintains Japanese cultural ties. One morning, he sees her wearing a *yukata* (a cotton kimono) and "was thinking how great it would be to imagine himself in Japan accompanied by a geisha . . . a mulatta one."[2] When Maria Rita asks Ryumi if she finds it shocking to see her in yukata, he responds lengthily,

> Not for me . . . A kimono or a yukata are clothing just like anything else. A mulatta or even a Black woman using a yukata is as shocking as if she were to use . . . a Léonard dress or even simple jeans. In the same way, a blonde dressed as a Japanese or Chinese doesn't stop being shocking, of being minimally . . . different. If you were to think ethnically, a Japanese shouldn't ever use suits, Black women should use those colored African clothing . . . and so on!

Ryumi took a sip of tea and continued:

> That type of thinking is typically prejudiced. There is nothing shocking about the fact that a mulatta likes Nipponese food, clothing, and customs! (ellipses included in original text).

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Superficially, Ryumi believes that clothing choices should not be limited by a person's ethnicity. And yet, his first observation of Maria Rita limits her by positioning her as a doubly hypersexualized partner. He fantasizes about her as a mulatta, born of the jezebel stereotype that depicted the Black woman as having "an insatiable appetite for sex."[3] He also labels her a geisha, women who have been depicted historically in the Western imaginary as submissive, servile, and sexually promiscuous. While both of these stereotypes are similar, Ryumi's ruminations suggest that Maria Rita's connection with Japanese culture is exotic because she is mulatta, or, more specifically, Black. According to Ryumi, "it's not common that Blacks, even those with a high cultural level, concern themselves with learning about oriental habits and customs."[4] This statement denies Afro-Asian intimacies while also reifying an existing stereotype in Brazilian society that the Japanese Brazilian community is insular and incapable of forming intimate relationships outside of the community. And yet, the very example of these two characters also depicts this intimacy as a prevalent possibility. This chapter will explore these intimate encounters in Japanese Brazilian literature in order to move past existing stereotypes that separate these two communities and establish a genealogy that affirms the Japanese Brazilians as Brazilians that encounter, live, and love alongside other Brazilians.

Afro-Brazilian and Japanese Brazilian encounters exemplify the management of race, not only historically in Brazil, but also intimately within the Japanese Brazilian community. In this chapter, I will present a brief genealogy of these intimacies, using Japanese Brazilian texts written in Portuguese and Japanese, such as Ryoki Inuoe's *Saga*, Oscar Nakasato's *Nihonjin* (Japanese, 2011), Onodera Ikuko's "Uruwashiki gogatsu ni" (A splendid May, 1997), Tahata Saburō's "Yasei" (Wilderness, 1950), and Endō Isamu's "Kuroi mago" (Black grandchild, 1980). I argue that despite the labeling of Black Brazilians as *moreno, mulatto,* or *kokujin* in Japanese Brazilian fiction, their "contact zones" on plantations and in schools allowed for intimate encounters: interactions, trysts, friendships, and love that are ostensibly absent from historical narratives. These intimate encounters emphasize the movement of peoples from the transpacific and the transatlantic, underlining the role of governmental laws on labor and racial classifications. Moreover, my genealogy emphasizes how Afro-Asian interactions create a framework that challenges ideas of literary histories, race, and national histories in global networks.

The examples in this chapter depict how transpacific literary history accompanies existing transatlantic narratives, becoming Afro-Asian contributions, a term that scholars use to understand the contradictions and comparabilities of two regions and peoples across a south-south forum. Using anthropological, affect, and intimacy theories, such as those by Mary Louise Pratt, Lauren

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Berlant, and Lisa Lowe, this genealogy depicts a rearticulation of Japanese Brazilian literature, not as something that emerged out of an isolated community, but as an intimate conversation with others in their contact zone. In her book *Imperial Eyes,* Mary Louise Pratt describes contact zones as "the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations."[5] While Pratt specifically uses this term to discuss "conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict," I will extend her term to foreground Lisa Lowe's research on intimacy.[6] In particular, Lowe emphasizes the "global processes of settler colonialism, slavery, and imported colonial labor" that must be examined alongside labor, government, and nation formation.[7] This chapter examines intimate encounters: moments in which Japanese Brazilian writers describe the intimate relations of laboring alongside each other, having sexual relations (both coerced and consensual), intermixing of languages, and, finally, addressing mixed-race children in the Japanese Brazilian community.

I argue that although these two peoples have historically been measured against each other in national narratives, these examples depict Afro-Asian intimate encounters of labor, love, and language. First, I return to Ryoki Inoue's *Saga* in which he describes the first Afro-Asian contact zones on Brazilian plantations. Oscar Nakasato's *Nihonjin* continues narrating Afro-Asian labor by highlighting solidarities and antagonisms on plantations. Next, Onodera Ikuko's "Uruwashiki gogatsu ni" provides examples of Japanese Brazilian linguistic adaptation to Afro-Brazilian culture. Tahata Saburō's "Yasei" moves from a public representation of labor to intimate, albeit sensitive, encounters that include Afro-Asian trysts, rape, and marriage. Finally, Endō's short story, "Kuroi mago," depicts the embodiment of "the intimacies of four continents" by portraying a mixed-race grandchild. These examples depict the intimate encounters that merge the transpacific Japanese Brazilian immigration experience alongside the transatlantic movement of African slaves and European immigrants to Brazil where they lived alongside indigenous Brazilians.

WRITING AFRO-ASIAN POSTCOLONIAL CARTOGRAPHIES

The possibility for the Afro-Asian encounters I will discuss arose through patterns of colonization, slavery, and immigration that gave space for the four continents to meet and, more importantly, gave Japanese immigrants new understandings of race, class, and gender. The arrival of the Portuguese in Brazil in 1500 initiated the first intimate encounter between Portuguese and indigenous people. More than 4.8 million slaves from Africa, forced to

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

settle in Brazil between 1500 and 1822, were also forced to interact with the Portuguese on plantations.[8] Finally, in 1908, Japanese immigrants arrived to Brazil, becoming the last link for "intimacies of the four continents," as Lisa Lowe so aptly captures in the title of her book.[9] These intimacies were all-encompassing, moving past the encounters of labor and production to become examples of friendship, love, and racial mixing. While scholars in Afro-Asian fields, such as Bill Mullen, Gary Okihiro, and Vijay Prashad, emphasize the political solidarities between African American and Asians or Asian Americans, they often do so from a post-1965 stance that emphasizes the 1964 Civil Rights Act, 1965 Voting Rights Act, and the 1969 establishment of Ethnic Studies as an academic department.[10] Japanese Brazilian writers, on the other hand, while engaging in Afro-Asian connections, broke out of "ethnonationalist identity politics" in order to imagine a new postcolonial cartography in which laborers on plantations recognize others' socioeconomic class positionality as a point of solidarity.[11] And yet, oftentimes, these examples are not included in Asian, Latin American, or transpacific literary histories because of linguistic limitations that hinder engagement within a multilingual and multicultural discipline. The Japanese Brazilian narratives that I will highlight here, therefore, create not only a genealogy of Afro-Asian contact zones in Brazil but also demonstrate the intimacies of labor, love, language, and mixing.

This genealogy of Afro-Asian intimate encounters disavows established stereotypes that label the Japanese Brazilian community as insular and inassimilable to Brazilian society. Past scholars, such as Claude Lévi-Strauss and Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, established this stereotype. For example, in 1955, Lévi-Strauss published *Tristes Tropiques*, an anthropological survey of Brazil that has since established the subfield of structural anthropology. In his chapter "Towns and Countryside," he describes São Paulo and the various immigrants that lived there. He writes, "There were also a lot of Japanese around São Paulo, but they were more difficult to approach. . . . The immigrants spent long periods there [in inland farms], in an isolation that was partly voluntary and partly encouraged by the system . . . . The whole vast project was organized so as to give them the feeling of never having left Japan."[12] Similarly, in describing Brazilians in his seminal 1936 work *Roots of Brazil,* Buarque de Holanda juxtaposes Brazilian social relations as being the opposite of Japanese politeness.[13] This juxtaposition, alongside Lévi-Strauss's description of the immigrants, depicts the Japanese Brazilians not only as insular but also as being excluded from the categorization of Brazilian. And yet, as Jeffrey Lesser argues in *Immigration, Ethnicity, and National Identity in Brazil, 1808 to the Present*, "national identities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries [were] not just generated at home; [they] were also formed abroad. Immigrants to the Americas did not simply arrive labeled as Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Japanese, Syrian, or Korean. They became actors who imbued

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

these words with new meanings."[14] In other words, Japanese immigrants, upon arrival to Brazil, did not become Japanese Brazilians but, instead, took on new identitarian stereotypes, one of which described the community as insular. This stereotype shaped perceptions of Japanese Brazilians and their community, disavowing the intimate encounters that occurred in which they, as Brazilians, interacted with other Brazilians. Most importantly, for the point of this chapter, the stereotype made it difficult for others to acknowledge the intimate encounters between Afro-Brazilians and Japanese Brazilians. This genealogy, however, depicts these moments, omnipresent in Japanese Brazilian literature, as moments that establish this seemingly insular community as an immigrant community that is ultimately Brazilian.

INTIMATE LABORERS: AFRO-ASIANS ON THE PLANTATIONS

Inoue's *Saga* begins this genealogy by depicting an example of how these intimate encounters emerged with the arrival of Japanese immigrants to Brazil. The first generation of Fukugawas arrived in 1908 aboard the *Kasato Maru*, the historical first ship that bore Japanese immigrants. Fukugawa and other Japanese compatriots, dismayed at the conditions of and their treatment on a Brazilian plantation, choose to move to another plantation. Inoue describes how the scouts perceived the plantation's living conditions.

> The two Japanese didn't like the accommodations that were marked for the group: it was the old plantation slave quarters and, when Ryuiti found out that slaves had lived here, men deprived of their liberty, he was not in the least impressed.
>
> "How can we make our families live in a place that was already a prison?" he asked, protesting. "A place where there was suffering, and probably many violent deaths . . . ."[15]

The narrator's depiction of Ryuiti's reaction to the former *senzala,* or slave quarters, on the Santa Isaura plantation is matter-of-fact: "[H]e was not in the least impressed." He then goes on, however, to admonish the history of slavery, unlinking it from the specificities of this plantation and Brazil and, instead, extending its reality to immigrant labor. This focus on labor specifically emphasizes freedom by defining slaves as "men deprived of their liberty." Lowe describes the states' disavowal of human conditions as a precursor for establishing the state in a system of global economy. She argues that freedom and "modern liberal humanism is a formalism that translates the world through an economy of affirmation and forgetting within a regime of desiring freedom."[16] Inoue's description of the slave quarters as a "prison"

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

refuses to forget the slaves' contribution to Brazilian economy and state formation. Moreover, it reminds readers that Japanese immigration to Brazil only became possible twenty years after the abolishment of slavery in Brazil. Their positionality as immigrant labor was bound to the plantations due to unfair labor contracts and oftentimes resulted in *yonige*, or escapes during the night. These yonige resembled past forms of active resistance enacted by slaves in Brazil and created yet another imagined association between Afro-Brazilians and Japanese immigrants.[17]

Yonige became the only way that Ryuiti and his fellow Japanese could escape the unfair and dangerous conditions that they endured in Santa Genoveva for almost two years. While the labor itself was difficult, the management's refusal to improve the laborers' living conditions exacerbated their displeasure. When the management refuse to assist two sick children (which leads to their deaths), the Japanese community immediately actively searches for another plantation. Although this escape aligns the Japanese immigrants' escapes with slaves' escapes to *quilombos,* or maroon settlements, in the reader's imaginary, the exploitation of Japanese immigrant labor was inherently different. The forceful kidnapping and trading of slaves did not establish goodwill or diplomatic relationships between Brazil and African countries. The involvement of both governments in this immigration route changed Brazilian society from one of "colonial mercantilism to . . . the expansion of international trade."[18] Despite this change in politico-economic conditions, immigrant labor remained linked to slavery in plantation owners' imaginaries; not only were they working the same land, they also lived in the same quarters, as Inoue's novel depicts. Plantations, therefore, become the first contact zone that produces Afro-Asian intimate encounters.

Plantations also provided the setting for further intimate encounters between Japanese immigrants and Afro-Brazilians. Oscar Nakasato's *Nihonjin,* the winner of the 2012 Jabuti Prize for best novel, one of the most important literary prizes in Brazil, tells the story of a fictitious Japanese Brazilian family through multiple generations as they adapt to life in Brazil. The first generation, Hideo and Kimie, live on the plantation alongside other laborers, one of which is Maria. Maria introduces herself to Kimie.

> "I'm Maria. I came to welcome you."
>
> Frightened and with misgiving, Kimie shut the door with force. What type of people were these? And she went to speak to her husband who opened the window. And then they saw, relieved, that the woman was going away, walking with steady steps without looking back.
>
> "Don't get involved with those people," said Hideo. "They told me that the Blacks were slaves in Brazil and that they have a hatred for all those who are not like them. They are a lower people, of lower value."[19]

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

This example of a first encounter on a plantation between a Black Brazilian and a Japanese immigrant emphasizes the Japanese genealogy of race that Japanese immigrants to Brazil carried with them. In his article, "Race and Reflexivity: The Black Other in Contemporary Japanese Mass Culture," John Russell writes:

> A brief survey of literary and visual representation of Blacks in contemporary Japan reveals the persistence of racial stereotypes which ascribe to Blacks the following characteristics: (1) infantilism, (2) primitivism, (3) hypersexuality, (4) bestiality, (5) natural athletic prowess or physical stamina, (6) mental inferiority, (7) psychological weakness, and (8) emotional volatility. But this tendency to dehumanize and belittle Blacks disguises another tendency, particularly in literary works, to employ the Black Other as a reflexive symbol through which Japanese attempt to deal with their own ambiguous racio-cultural status in a Eurocentric world.[20]

Russell's analysis of Black representations in Japan reminds the reader that the Japanese immigrants imported an understanding of race, colorism, and sociocultural understandings from Japan. Upon arrival in Brazil, while some sympathized with the former slaves due to their own position as exploited labor on the plantations, others showed a racial prejudice based on these previous stereotypes. Russell's explanation of Japanese racial prejudices suggests that Kimie's reaction and Hideo's warning to her stem from the perspective of those who are newly arrived from Japan and retain these perspectives.

And yet, the immigrants also withdrew these racial prejudices and conditions when they began acclimatizing to Brazil. Soon after Kimie and Hideo close the door on Maria, Kimie begins to be intrigued by Maria. Nakasato writes, "Kimie regretted having shut the door on that woman's face. That smile, those words, were probably a greeting. And after seeing her many times, always caring with her children, walking hand-in-hand with her husband, carrying hoes and harrows, she grew accustomed to her color and was no longer scared of her."[21] Months later, Kimie approaches Maria to apologize for being rude when Maria first approached her and they soon become friends, speaking whenever Hideo was not around.

Hideo's dismissal of Maria becomes more important when the reader returns to the opening of *Nihonjin,* in which the narrator states, "I know little about Kimie."[22] The narrator's grandfather had a first wife, Kimie, when he immigrated to Brazil. She died soon after her arrival. The narrator has only heard rumors of who she was as a person and must, therefore, create a character that puts her at odds with his grandfather. Kimie's friendship with Maria is the first step in this conflict. When Kimie first becomes ill, "Maria appeared at Kimie's house without being called" and insisted on helping

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Kimie.[23] She tells Hideo that she will blame him for Kimie's death if he refuses her entry. After Maria helps Kimie, Hideo accompanies his wife to thank her friend. Nakasato writes, "Hideo understood a little, understood that she liked his wife, and said in Japanese, mixed with some Portuguese words, that it was his duty to repay, that it would be very shameful to owe a favor, and he thought that the shame was greater when you owed a favor to someone inferior, to a Black woman who was a descendant of slaves, but he didn't say that."[24] This moment, in which he thanks Maria for helping Kimie through her sickness while also disapproving of her because of her race, depicts Kimie as a willfully strong character who goes against her husband's wishes. Additionally, it shows Kimie's adaptation to Brazil, one in which she understands that survival in a new country and new environment will require help from those who are already familiar with the environment, the labor conditions, and the typical sicknesses that occur on plantations. Finally, and most importantly, it depicts how personal engagements between Japanese immigrants and former slaves were at odds with existing Japanese racial ideologies. These were oftentimes pushed aside as immigrants adapted to their new lives in Brazil and became Brazilian, pushing back against ideologies that would only hold true in an insular Japanese Brazilian community. It is at these moments that the Afro-Asian genealogies in Japanese Brazilian texts move from intimacies centered on labor to those that blossomed into friendships.

INTIMATE LANGUAGE: COLONIA-GO AND SLAVERY

As these friendships became stronger, Japanese immigrants began to understand and explore Afro-Brazilian identity and culture, leading to a stronger example of Afro-Asian intimacies in Brazil. For example, incorporating Onodera Ikuko's "Uruwashiki gogatsu ni" in a Japanese Brazilian genealogy of Afro-Asian intimacies allows readers to explore linguistic intimacies by featuring *colonia-go,* or a pidgin Japanese with Portuguese.

"Uruwashiki gogatsu ni" introduces slavery to the Japanese Brazilian community through the eyes of Maria do Carmo Geronimo, a 124-year-old woman. Maria was seventeen when slavery was abolished in Brazil (1888) and, therefore, lived through the various proclamations leading up to its abolition. This short story depicts Maria's life until the abolition of slavery. It resumes when she is 71 years old in order to explain how she came to live with the Guimarães family and, finally, concludes in the present-day when she travels to Rio de Janeiro at the age of 124. Written in Japanese, Onodera includes Portuguese words and phrases that have specific historical references to slavery in Brazil. These are transcribed in *katakana* with a translation or

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

explication of the word or phrases in Japanese. By including these Portuguese words alongside a Japanese translation, the reader is able to access a linguistic contact zone through which they can further examine Afro-Asian intimacies and move away from stereotypes that label the Japanese Brazilian community as insular.

Upon arrival in Brazil, Japanese immigrants spoke very little to no Portuguese. Although Portuguese was necessary for day-to-day labor practices on plantations, Japanese remained the language spoken at home and on the fields when family members worked near each other. Despite this, parents believed that children should be educated in Portuguese, the language of their new country.[25] What they found, however, was that only the bigger plantations had access to education on the plantations themselves. The immigrants soon learned that if they wanted their children to have access to education, they would have to establish schools and teach the children themselves. This resulted in two decades of Japanese-language instruction and strong linguistic ties within the first and second generation of immigrants to Brazil. Despite later decrees that emphasized Portuguese-language education and publications, many first- and second-generation immigrants retained Japanese as their primary language. These immigrants began to insert Portuguese-language words into their everyday speech, creating a pidgin Japanese, colonia-go. While colonia-go is typically used for common, everyday Portuguese words, such as *peixe* (fish), *queijo* (cheese), and *vinho tinto* (red wine), Onodera's text explores new layers of colonia-go that are not typically accessible to all Japanese immigrants. These new layers of colonia-go become intimate Afro-Asian encounters because they establish the Japanese-speaking Japanese Brazilians, despite language differences, as Brazilians who are not insular.

In this short story, Onodera includes two tiers of Portuguese words that portray slavery: common nouns and proper nouns. The common nouns that Onodera uses are words such as *índio* (Indian), *fazendeiro* (owner of a large estate or farmer), *senzala* (slave quarters on a plantation), *moleque* (Negro boy), and quilombo (maroon communities). These words allow Onodera to provide her readers with the setting of her short story: late 1800s Brazil. The words also point to the racial tension on plantations between the White Portuguese plantation owners and their Black slaves, presenting Onodera with an opportunity to jump to a higher tier in her code switching. The proper nouns that Onodera includes in her narrative are all names of laws that moved Brazil toward the gradual abolition of slavery. She mentions *Lei Sexagenário*, which was passed in 1885 and declared that all slaves over the age of sixty were free people.[26] Toward the end of the short story, she references *Lei Áurea.* This law, passed in 1888, officially abolished slavery in Brazil. All of the names of these laws are rendered into *katakana* and followed by a

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

few sentences that explain the significance of the particular law and its particular influence on Maria's life. For example, her first mention of a law that worked toward slavery's abolishment is *Lei ventre livre.* She writes,

> 1871, the year that Maria was born, was the year that they passed the *ventre livre* law that became the forerunner for Brazil's emancipation. Since *ventre* refers to the abdomen, this meant, briefly, that the children who were born after this proclamation were no longer slaves. However, that law was passed in September and, unluckily, at that time Maria was already six months old and could not bask in that privilege.[27]

In this paragraph, Onodera provides her readers with deeper context about Maria's history; she was born a slave at the historical moment of Brazil's move toward slavery's abolishment. Her advanced age provides Onodera the ability to explain this specific historical context to her Japanese-language readers who may not be familiar with Brazilian history. More importantly, however, she does this from a distance; unlike most Japanese Brazilian authors, she depicts Maria's story from her point of view, delivering the history and plot directly to the Japanese-language reader without an intermediary Japanese Brazilian character. This, therefore, "inspire[s] the pity of the responsive reader [and] engage[s] them in the antislavery cause."[28] This distance promotes sentimentalism in the Japanese-language reader, which allows access to a new aspect of Afro-Asian intimacy. In other words, by confronting the Japanese-language reader with the horror of slavery, Onodera's Japanese-language reader "must take into account the role of blackness in constituting their identities."[29] When the readers consider blackness, they imagine themselves within a Brazilian national framework, moving past stereotypical representations of the insular Japanese Brazilian community.

The readers further explore the blackness in this story as a search for freedom. The story begins with Maria's interview by a Brazilian newspaper that seeks to confirm her as the oldest living woman for the *Guinness Book of World Records.* The Japanese Brazilian reader experiences Maria's frustration as anti-slavery law after anti-slavery law is passed without giving her freedom. In creating this intimate Afro-Asian encounter, Onodera's text "does the work of subjugating the history of the collective enslaved within a regulative temporality in which slavery is only legible as a distant origin out of which the free modern subject can emerge."[30] Even as an elderly person, Maria longs for a true freedom—one that gives her the agency to go where she wants to go and escape from her enslaved past. She roots this freedom in her dream to see the ocean, something she finally achieves at the end of the short story.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

As Maria immerses her feet in the ocean, the reader understands the trip to the ocean as a symbol of a former slave's ultimate freedom. Onodera writes,

> Realizing her wish, the satisfied Maria, when asked her impression after finally knowing the ocean, immediately answered, "God." Isn't wanting to know what you don't know still a positive intention? To only summarize with one word, "God," the impression of knowing the ocean, the feet that you soaked in the ocean yourself . . . . Even as an illiterate descendant of slaves, she didn't have any dim-wittedness and was a natural poet. (ellipses included in original text)[31]

Here, the reader encounters this new characterization of Maria as a poet, a contradiction of other information in the short story. Born a slave, Maria has lived her life following others' orders. Even after the abolishment of slavery, her life did not change, moving from place to place while still taking care of others' children. This moment at the ocean, however, she succumbs to her own desire to "know[ing] the ocean" and soak her own feet into the ocean. This freedom to see her own desires realized is what she calls "God." Unlike the religion imposed upon her by a slave owner as a child, this moment brings her a true liberation, becoming the ultimate freedom.

It is here, while looking at the ocean, that she can liberate herself from the "time of slavery" and render it visible for the Japanese-language reader. Saidiya Hartman explains the "time of slavery" as one that emphasizes a homecoming, mourning, and remembrance. In particular, she writes that "[m]ourning makes visible the lost object, variously defined as the homeland, authentic identity, and/or the possibility of belonging. It also addresses itself to the dismissal of grief as whining and the repression of slavery from national memory."[32] Onodera's inclusion of this short story in her compilation of short stories encourages the Japanese-language reader to witness and remember in order to "center the marginalized presence of the transatlantic slave trade."[33] By "suffering the past" alongside Maria, the Japanese-language reader "grasp[s] hold of [this] elusive freedom and make[s] it substantial," which ultimately allows for the creation of a new Afro-Asian intimate encounter in Brazil.

This new encounter emphasizes labor exploitation by creating a new linguistic opportunity for Afro-Asian intimacy. While reading about Maria looking out to the ocean, the readers, who are mostly Japanese Brazilians, empathize with Maria's character because they are reminded of their family's own immigration story; they were oftentimes exploited laborers who longed for the freedom that they felt on the immigration boats as they crossed into Brazil full of hope for the future. This labor-rooted empathy becomes another example of intimate Afro-Asian encounters that only become accessible linguistically through the inclusion of common and proper Portuguese nouns

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

in this Japanese-language short story. These nouns guide the reader toward a deeper understanding of Brazil, its history, its people, and how the "time of slavery" is still present today. "The single general motivation for making marked choices is to negotiate a change in the expected social distance holding between participants, either increasing it or decreasing it," argue Mendieta-Lombard and Cintron in their article, "Marked and Unmarked Choices of Code Switching in Bilingual Poetry."[34] Indeed, Onodera's short story illustrates the decreasing social distance of Afro-Brazilians and Japanese Brazilians by depicting a linguistic adaptation to Brazil. This example, therefore, moves the genealogy of Afro-Asian intimacy from linguistic encounters that were only accessible to Japanese-language readers toward more visible intimate encounters that identify the Japanese Brazilians as Brazilians who are a part of a larger Brazilian community.

INTIMATE LOVE: INTERRACIAL RELATIONSHIP AND MIXED-RACE CHILDREN

Living alongside other Brazilians oftentimes involved working in agriculture, as Tahata Saburō's 1950 short story, "Yasei," depicts. This story provides readers with more visible intimate encounters by setting Japanese characters alongside Blacks. Here, they not only encounter one another but interact and intertwine intimately through depictions of love. In the story, the narrator captures the everyday life of a Japanese Brazilian boy, Kunio. The story centers on the wilderness that surrounds the community, weaving its way among the various residents whom Kunio befriends, and becoming a snapshot of life in the interior of the state of São Paulo.

The story opens with Kunio accompanying José to pick up his sister Benedita. The narrator describes Benedita first through Kunio's eyes: "Kunio surreptitiously glanced at the overprotected girl whose breasts seemed to burst out of her brown skin though she was only 14."[35] Although short, the narrator's physical description of Benedita is exponentially more than that of other characters. Moreover, it includes a mention of her racial marker: her skin is brown (*katsushoku*). Other characters appear in the narrative without any description. Tahata's inclusion of this description signals to the reader that Benedita is important to the plot of the short story.

As the narrative continues, the narrator compares Benedita to the other "Japanese" women that are part of the local gossip: Namiko, Hatsue, and Fumiko. Namiko ran away with a contracted laborer (道路工事の土方); Hatsue was raped by a Black laborer (黒人の雇人); and Fumiko is dating a foreigner (毛唐).[36] None of the situations are elaborated on nor are the women allowed a voice. Instead, while there is both an inclusion of and

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

absence of racial markers or these men, they are all categorically “Other” and not Japanese Brazilian. The gossip emphasizes how the “intimate spheres of domesticity” within the Japanese Brazilian community were ruptured.[37]

In other words, the short story depicts the stereotypical insular Japanese community affronted with Brazilianness. More specifically, when the external public domain of Brazil enters the internal private Japanese Brazilian community, the intimacies formed emerge as unconventional forms of attachment. Thus, the three Japanese Brazilian women betray the intimacy of the community by engaging with non-Japanese Brazilians. Namiko’s tryst seems to be with a White Brazilian who is of the same socioeconomic class as her. By running away with him and physically disassociating herself from the Japanese community, she ruptures the intimate sphere of the community. Hatsue, on the other hand, is a victim of rape. The narrator identifies her assailant as “Black,” or kokujin. The characters explain this rupture in the community as a ruptured fantasy—Kunio discusses the size of Hatsue’s breasts and buttocks with a friend at the same moment that he discusses how João, the Black watermill, “did it to her.”[38] These boys do not see the trauma in the rape and, instead, see Hatsue’s body as a sexual fantasy that has been ruptured by a racial “Other.” The final woman who appears as an object of the community’s gossip is Fumiko. Fumiko is dating a foreigner, or *ketō*, and seems to prefer these because “foreigners hold you close to their breasts when you dance.”[39] The narrator’s descriptions of these women are important not only because they physically place the Japanese community within intimate proximities with “Brazilians” but also because, from the point of view of Kunio and the other characters that gossip, these men who date and have sexual relations with the Japanese Brazilian women are dangerous, hypersexualized “Others” who have ruptured the “intimate spheres of domesticity” within the Japanese Brazilian community.[40]

Benedita, who could also be labeled an “Other,” is not immediately otherized. The narrator includes her in the community’s intimate sphere because of Kunio’s feelings for her. The only other female non-Japanese Brazilian in the story, Francisca, is also hypersexualized, accosting Kunio when they are walking and forcing him to kiss her. This scene occurs after another Kunio and Benedita scene, immediately juxtaposing these two women. Unlike Francisca, Benedita does not speak in the short story. Instead, the reader perceives her characterization through other characters’ interaction with her. For example, when she arrives in the community, Kunio helps her find a job working for his friend Mitsuo’s family. After a lapse of a few months in the narrative, the rumor mill in the community begins again, this time bringing attention to a non-Japanese female: Benedita. Kunio overhears someone saying, “Hey, Dita from Mitsuo’s place has a big tummy.”[41] As the conversation continues, Kunio finds out that Benedita is pregnant with Mitsuo’s child. Benedita’s

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

family, allowed inclusion in the community, makes demands of Mitsuo's family: he must marry her. Here, they seemingly shift the community's construction of intimacy as something that must remain private. That is, by demanding that Mitsuo marry Benedita because she is pregnant with his child, Benedita's family suggests that the separation of public and private spheres is, instead, a "racial mirage" that emerges out of the dominant Japanese Brazilian community in order to "supply[ing] a specific phobia to organize" its community.[42]

At Mitsuo and Benedita's wedding, blame moves from one person to another. All are guilty and no one is spared. Mitsuo's father tells Mitsuo to drink up because it is his (the father's) own fault. The mother, on the other hand, blames Benedita, claiming that Mitsuo is introverted and Benedita is flirtatious. These moments shift the reader's attention away from the wedding ceremony itself to the intimate sexual act that has resulted in Benedita's pregnancy. This intimate moment is "publicly mediated" at the wedding, moving the reader away from Kunio's fantasy zone of Benedita and into an imaginary place where Mitsuo is the victim and Benedita is recategorized as the "Other."[43] Neither Benedita nor Mitsuo are allowed a voice. Instead, the narrator shares Mitsuo's parents' thoughts and conversation. This example, therefore, suggests that despite an adaptation to Brazil, the Japanese Brazilian community maintained a racial hierarchy that placed "African Barbarity and Savagery" as the lowest example.[44] Moreover, this recategorization of Benedita as "Other" dismisses both the interracial Afro-Asian marriage that takes place in the short story as well as the mixed-race child that Benedita carries.

This dismissal of the interracial relationship as well as the mixed-race child shifts the conversation of Afro-Asian intimacy from one of intimate encounters to that of "intimate distance," a phrase coined by anthropologist Michelle Bigenho. She defines "intimate distance" as "the way both Japanese and Bolivians claimed closeness with and distance from the others with whom they engaged.[45] While oftentimes the stereotypes regarding the Japanese Brazilian community categorized the community as insular, they also published "photographs of 'Brazilian'-looking children who were, at least ostensibly of Japanese and Brazilian or European parentage . . . .All showed Japanese men married to White Brazilian women (or White European immigrant women) who had produced White children."[46] And yet, Japanese Brazilian first- and second-generation writers depict interracial relationships and mixed-race children, specifically those with a Brazilian parent of African descent, as belonging to the community but always at a distance. The inclusion of these narratives in an Afro-Asian genealogy invoke a racialized paradox that seeks to highlight Afro-Asian intimate encounters while these encounters maintain an intimate distance from the community itself.

The mixed-race grandchild, therefore, pays the price for his grandparents' rejection of his parents' marriage. Endō Isamu's Japanese-language short

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

story, "Kuroi mago," discusses the grandchild's burden of race from the first-generation grandparent's point of view. Here, he introduces Augusto, son of Akira, a Japanese Brazilian, and Nilda, a morena (light-skinned Black Brazilian). The story explores Augusto's relationship with Momoe, his Japanese Brazilian grandmother. Although she loves him, she represents intimate distance when she stops spending time with Augusto. She does this because Kazuo tells his mother that Augusto's race causes his wife, who is pregnant, distress: "Neighbors look at her with a weird face" every time he comes to the house.[47] Kazuo asks his mother to stop inviting him to play with his cousins. Momoe agrees without considering how this rejection may affect Augusto.

Momoe reacts to public perceptions of her grandchild's connection to his family and creates an intimate distance for Augusto. Indeed, it is the public sphere, "as much defined by intimacy and public feelings as it is by the rational discourse it is imagined to have," that traumatizes Augusto.[48] This trauma becomes a burden that moves from being a private, intimate trauma to one that is public and consumable by others. Endō introduces this trauma after Kazuo asks Momoe to stop bringing Augusto to the house. He writes:

> Reflecting that sensitivity of those adults close to him, Augusto soon lost his liveliness. . . . Surprisingly, he began to wet his bed at night, which he hadn't done in a while.
>
> "What's going on, Augusto? There's no excuse for not waking up." But even when Nilda scolded him, he would only flinch without replying.[49]

In this passage, the narrator presents the reader with Augusto's bodily reactions to the intimate distance of and rejection by his family: he begins wetting his bed at night and when confronted, he flinches. In this example, Augusto's body gives an involuntary reaction that makes public his private, intimate trauma. This trauma, more specifically, causes his body to regress. Not only is he wetting his bed at night, he is also unable to express his feelings through any conversation with his mother. His inability to communicate with his mother allows the short story, instead, to focus on his relationship with his Japanese Brazilian grandmother. In other words, this short story is not interested in how Augusto understands and inhabits his body and mixed race. Written from the perspective of a first-generation Japanese immigrant, this short story strives to highlight the intimate distance that impedes his acceptance as a mixed-race Afro-Asian child in the Japanese Brazilian community. This suggests that the despite the intimate encounters of later generations that identify predominantly as Brazilian, the first generation retains previous Japanese racial projects that invoke intimate distance. They must move past this in order to understand and accept the mixed-race grandchild.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

CONCLUSION

A genealogy of Afro-Asian intimate encounters in Japanese Brazilian literature allows the reader to understand the movement of these encounters from labor to language as representative of a shift away from stereotypical representations of the Japanese Brazilian community as insular. The depiction of love and its representation in the figure of the mixed-race Afro-Asian child invoke intimate distance, most specifically in Japanese-language texts. The earlier generations of Japanese immigrants, who write predominantly in the Japanese language, strive to move past racial prejudices that they carried with them from Japan while not immediately embracing their own Brazilianness. These representations peripheralized the former slaves as new encounters that would be relegated to the public sphere. When these encounters, however, entered into the private sphere, a split between the two generations occurred. In his book, *Literatura Negra-Brasileira* (Black Brazilian Literature), Cuti discusses representations of race in Brazilian literature writing: "When the writer produces his text, he manipulates his memory, where his prejudices live. And that is how it produces a vicious cycle that feeds already existing prejudices. The ruptures of this circle are principally realized by the victims themselves and for those who do not refuse to deeply ponder racial relations in Brazil."[50] While the earlier generations, represented by Endō's and Onodera's short stories, struggled to reconcile these intimate encounters and created intimate distances, the later generations, depicted in Inoue's and Nakasato's novels, portray these intimate encounters as something natural that happened early on. These Portuguese-language works demonstrate a superficial understanding of the complex negotiation of family, socioeconomic class, nation, and race from the point of view of a first-generation Japanese Brazilian immigrant. Read together, though, these works create a genealogy that allows the reader to understand Afro-Asian intimate encounters, the characterization of the Japanese Brazilian community as insular, and representations of intimate distances. While these examples depict how the transpacific merges with the transatlantic and creates a framework that challenges notions of race, history, and literary boundaries, they only do so from the point of view of the Japanese Brazilian writer. More research into this topic would show how Afro-Brazilian writers depict Afro-Asian intimate encounters with a specific focus on the Japanese Brazilian community.

NOTES

1. While news reports state that this has gone to L. Ron Howard in 2006, the *Guinness World Records* website lists Howard as having the "most published works

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

by one author." See *Guinness World Records*, http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/search/applicationrecordsearch?term=hubbard&contentType=record. To date, Inoue is listed as "most prolific novelist." See http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/search/applicationrecordsearch?term=ryoki&contentType=record.

2. Ryoki Inoue, *Saga: A história de quatro gerações de uma família japonesa no Brasil* [The history of four generations of a Japanese family in Brazil] (São Paulo: Editora Globo, 2006), 267.

3. David Pilgrim, "Jezebel Stereotype," Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia, edited 2012, http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/jezebel/.

4. Inoue, *Saga*, 268.

5. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 2nd ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 8.

6. Ibid.

7. Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of the Four Continents* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 20.

8. Jeffrey Lesser, *Immigration, Ethnicity, and National Identity in Brazil, 1808 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 11.

9. See Lowe, *Intimacies*.

10. Colleen Lye, "The Afro-Asian Analogy," *PMLA* 123, no. 5 (October 2008), 1734. See also Bill V. Mullen, *Afro-Orientalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004); Gary Y. Okihiro, "Is Yellow Black or White?" in *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994), 31–63; and Vijay Prashad, *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting: Afro-Asian Connections and the Myth of Cultural Purity* (Boston: Beacon, 2001).

11. Andrew F. Jones and Nikhil Pal Singh, "Guest Editors' Introduction," *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 11, no. 1 (Spring 2003), 3.

12. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, trans. John Weightman and Doreen Weightman (New York: Atheneum, 1973), 109.

13. Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, *Raízes do Brasil* [Roots of Brazil], 26th ed. (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2007), 147.

14. Lesser, *Immigration*, 89.

15. Inoue, *Saga*, 92.

16. Lowe, *Intimacies*, 39.

17. Other forms of active resistance among slaves included the establishment of *quilombo* settlements and insurrections that sought an exchange of power, see R. K. Kent, "Palmares: An African State in Brazil," in *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas*, ed. Richard Price (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 171.

18. Lowe, *Intimacies*, 28.

19. Oscar Nakasato, *Nihonjin* [Japanese] (São Paulo: Benvirá, 2011), 24.

20. John Russell, "Race and Reflexivity: The Black Other in Contemporary Japanese Mass Culture," *Cultural Anthropology* 6, no. 1 (February 1991), 6.

21. Nakasato, *Nihonjin*, 25.

22. Ibid., 9.

23. Ibid., 28.

24. Ibid., 30.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

25. Comissão da Elaboração da História dos 80 anos da Imigração Japonesa no Brasil, *Uma epopéia moderna: 80 anos da imigração japonesa no Brasil* [A Modern Epic: 80 Years of Japanese Immigration in Brazil] (São Paulo: Sociedade Brasileira de Cultura Japonesa, 1992), 212.

26. This was later changed to sixty-five when the age of retirement was set by the Brazilian government.

27. Onodera Ikuko, 小野寺郁子, "Uruwashiki gogatsu ni" うるわしき五月に [A splendid May Day], *Onodera Ikuko sōsaku senshū: tokiori no shō* 小野寺郁子創作選集—ときおりの章 (São Paulo: Nitimai Sōsho Projeto Editorial, 2004), 215.

28. Lowe, *Intimacies*, 53.

29. Julia H. Lee, *Interracial Encounters: Reciprocal Representations in African and Asian American Literatures, 1896–1937* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 6.

30. Lowe, *Intimacies*, 50.

31. Onodera, "Uruwashiki," 229–230.

32. Saidiya Hartman, "The Time of Slavery," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 101, no. 4 (Fall 2002), 770.

33. Ibid., 770.

34. Eva Mendieta-Lombardo and Zaida A. Cintron, "Marked and Unmarked Choices of Code Switching in Bilingual Poetry," *Hispania* 78, no. 3 (September 1995), 569.

35. Tahata Saburō, "Yasei" 野生 [Wilderness] in *Koronia shōsetsu senshū* コロニア小説選集 [A Collection of Colônia Short Stories] 1 (São Paulo: Koronia Bungakukai, 1975), 225.

36. Ibid., 228–229.

37. Lauren Berlant, "Intimacy: A Special Issue," *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 2 (Winter 1998), 284.

38. Tahata, "Yasei," 229.

39. Ibid.

40. Berlant, "Intimacy," 284.

41. Tahata, "Yasei," 233.

42. Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, "Sex in Public," *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 2 (Winter 1998), 549.

43. Ibid., 553.

44. Russell, "Race and Reflexivity," 6.

45. Michelle Bigenho, *Intimate Distance* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 123.

46. Lesser, *Immigration*, 162.

47. Endō Isamu 黒い孫, "Kuroi mago" ┌い孫 [Black grandchild], *Koronia shōsetsu senshū* コロニア小説選集 [A Collection of Colônia Short Stories] 4 (São Paulo: Koronia Shibunkai, 1996), 58.

48. Marita Sturken, "Feeling the Nation, Mining the Archive: Reflections on Lauren Berlant's *Queen of America*," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 9, no. 4 (2012), 354.

49. Endō, "Kuroi mago," 64.

50. Cuti, *Literatura Negro-Brasileira* [Black Brazilian Literature] (São Paulo: Selo Negro, 2010).

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Berlant, Lauren. "Intimacy: A Special Issue." *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 2 (Winter 1998): 281–288.

Berlant, Lauren and Michael Warner. "Sex in Public." *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 2 (Winter 1998): 547–566.

Bigenho, Michelle. *Intimate Distance.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012.

Comissão da Elaboração da História dos 80 anos da Imigração Japonesa no Brasil. *Uma epopéia moderna: 80 anos da imigração japonesa no Brasil* [A Modern Epic: 80 Years of Japanese Immigration in Brazil]. São Paulo: Sociedade Brasileira de Cultura Japonesa, 1992.

Cuti. *Literatura Negro-Brasileira* [Black Brazilian Literature]. São Paulo: Selo Negro, 2010.

Endō Isamu 黒い孫. "Kuroi mago" ┌い孫 [Black grandchild]. In Vol. 4 of *Koronia shōsetsu senshū* コロニア小┌選集 [A Collection of Colônia Short Stories], edited by Koronia Shibunkai コロニア詩文会, 56–68. São Paulo: Koronia Shibunkai, 1996.

Hartman, Saidiya. "The Time of Slavery." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 101, no. 4 (Fall 2002): 757–777.

Holanda, Sérgio Buarque de. *Raízes do Brasil* [Roots of Brazil]. 26th ed. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2007.

Inoue, Ryoki. *Saga: A história de quatro gerações de uma família japonesa no Brasil* [The History of Four Generations of a Japanese Family in Brazil]. São Paulo: Editora Globo, 2006.

Jones, Andrew F. and Nikhil Pal Singh. "Guest Editors' Introduction." *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 11, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 1–9.

Kent, R. K. "Palmares: An African State in Brazil." In *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas*, edited by Richard Price, 170–226. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

Lee, Julia H. *Interracial Encounters: Reciprocal Representations in African and Asian American Literatures, 1896–1937*. New York: New York University Press, 2011.

Lesser, Jeffrey. *Immigration, Ethnicity, and National Identity in Brazil, 1808 to the Present.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *Tristes Tropiques*. Translated by John Weightman and Doreen Weightman. New York: Atheneum, 1973.

Lowe, Lisa. *The Intimacies of the Four Continents.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015.

Lye, Colleen. "The Afro-Asian Analogy." *PMLA* 123, no. 5 (October 2008): 1732–1736.

Mendieta-Lombardo, Eva and Zaida A. Cintron. "Marked and Unmarked Choices of Code Switching in Bilingual Poetry." *Hispania* 78, no. 3 (September 1995): 565–572.

Mullen, Bill V. *Afro-Orientalism.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004.

Nakasato, Oscar. *Nihonjin* [Japanese]. São Paulo: Benvirá, 2011.

Okihiro, Gary Y. *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture.* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Onodera Ikuko 小野寺郁子. *Onodera Ikuko sōsaku senshū: tokiori no shō* [Selections of Onodera Ikuko Creative Works: Occasional Chapters] 小野寺郁子創作選集—ときおりの章. São Paulo: Nitimai Sōsho Projeto Editorial, 2004.

Pilgrim, David. "Jezebel Stereotype." *Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia.* Last modified 2002. Accessed January 9, 2017. http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/jezebel.htm.

Prashad, Vijay. *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting: Afro-Asian Connections and the Myth of Cultural Purity.* Boston: Beacon, 2001.

Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation.* 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2007.

Russell, John. "Race and Reflexivity: The Black Other in Contemporary Japanese Mass Culture." *Cultural Anthropology* 6, no. 1 (February 1991): 3–25.

Sturken, Marita. "Feeling the Nation, Mining the Archive: Reflections on Lauren Berlant's *Queen of America*." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 9, no. 4 (2012): 353–364.

Tahata Saburō 田畑三┌. "Yasei" 野生[Wilderness]. In Vol. 1 *Koronia shōsetsu senshū* コロニア小説選集 [A Collection of Colônia Short Stories], edited by Koronia Bungakukai コロニア文学会, 223–236. São Paulo: Koronia Bungakukai, 1975.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Chapter 5

Parallels and Intersections

Afro-Chinese Relationships and Spiritual Connections in Monkey Hunting *and* Como un mensajero tuyo

Luisa Marcela Ossa

The experiences and histories of people from non-European backgrounds in Latin America are often treated as an aside and are not integrated into general discussions of Latin American histories, societies, and cultures. When acknowledged, their experiences are often discussed in isolation, separating them from their society at large. In the case of nineteenth-century Cuba, while there has been a general acknowledgement of the African slave trade in Cuba and the influence of people of African descent in Cuban society, the Chinese coolie trade to Cuba and the impact of Chinese people on Cuban society have received much less attention. Furthermore, there has been limited attention paid to the interconnectedness of the lives and experiences of all of these groups in Cuban society. In describing the objectives of her book, *The Coolie Speaks*, Lisa Yun states that her intentions are

> not to recuperate the "coolie" of Cuba as a "minority American" subject, which rehearses a kind of cultural imperialism and enacts a naïve homogenization of experience, history, and identity politics in the Americas. Rather, my aim is to excavate and consider perspectives within the global and local context of slavery and nineteenth-century philosophical and political economy. The study, therefore, conjoins several areas of Asian, African, Caribbean, Latin American and American studies.[1]

It is in this vein that I wish to examine the experiences of people of African and Chinese descent in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Cuba. In this study I will focus on the interactions between these groups, parallels

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

and similarities between their experiences. Moreover, these interactions and parallel experiences open the door for us to recognize and examine religious and spiritual affinities and exchanges between these groups. Utilizing Cristina García's novel *Monkey Hunting* and Mayra Montero's *Como un mensajero tuyo*[2] as avenues to explore the shared and parallel experiences of Africans and Chinese in nineteenth century, as well as similarities among their spiritual beliefs, I aim to contribute to discussions that move beyond "two-dimensional othered" identities often ascribed to these groups.[3] The examination of the experiences of these groups, and furthermore, their contributions to religion and spirituality in Cuba is important because as Martin Tsang notes, in Cuba, "the contributions of the Chinese are collapsed into labor and service, and the Chinese are underrepresented in terms of their direct contributions to forming ideas of community and religiosity" (25). He goes on to say, "The Chinese indentured laborers or coolies, were effectively treated as slaves, sharing the same social standing as their African counterparts, and becoming targets for racism and xenophobia" (25).[4] Furthermore, these groups did not exist in isolation, and their histories were intertwined. In *Chinese Cubans: A Transnational History*, Kathleen López stresses:

> The nineteenth-century system of Asian indentured labor must be examined within the context of slavery and colonial empires in the Americas. As the shackles of African slavery came undone, from 1791 in French Saint Domingue (Haiti) to 1888 in Brazil, the demand for labor in the European colonies and newly independent republics of Latin America and the Caribbean remained high. The recruitment of Asians under contract offered a potential solution to the approaching end of slave labor. African slaves and Asian coolies therefore became historically linked through a global network of international labor migration, "kinsmen and women in that world created by European masters."(5)[5]

During the struggle to abolish slavery in Cuba during the nineteenth century, the Spanish begin to look for workers in other places. The Spanish began to bring workers from Asia, China in particular, under a "contract system" (Ossa 2).[6] However, it is important to note as Yun has pointed out, that the Chinese workers were not simply replacements for African slaves.

> Despite the fact that Spain and Great Britain agree to end the slave trade to the American colonies in 1820, it is actually during the 19th century when the largest numbers of African slaves are brought to Cuba. More than 600,000 African slaves are brought to Cuba during the 19th century, and a great number of these slaves are brought after 1820 (Knight 13). The slave trade does not actually end until 1865 (Helly 10), although it is not officially abolished until 1886. (Yun 11)[7]

Furthermore, the notion that the Chinese were brought to Cuba as contract laborers must be questioned. Yun suggests that coolie laborers are

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

traditionally described as contract laborers because it implies mutual agreement among the parties involved and implies that the workers entered in to the contracts voluntarily (xx). However, is a contract valid when it's not understood, or people are coerced into signing, as is documented in the *Cuba Commission Report*? Yun argues that "the contract's particular use was to produce mobile slaves" (xx). She goes on to say that "coolies were marketed, sold, re-sold, rented-out, lent-out, and named and renamed by owners, traders, and police. They were moved to plantations, prisons, depots, railways and listed as dead, disappeared or hired all at the same time—coolies were owned for life by one and many" (xx).

Jesús Guanche in his book *Componentes étnicos de la nación cubana*[8] points out that Chinese laborers lived and worked alongside African slaves, and the *Cuba Commission Report* also provides evidence that Chinese laborers received treatment similar to African slaves. Louis A. Pérez Jr. in "Dying to Be Free: Suicide on the Plantation," notes, "The similarities of Chinese contract labor with African slavery were striking."[9] He cites Antonio Gallenga from 1873 who explains that Cubans never talk about hiring Chinese workers, but instead, bluntly proclaim to be "buying a Chino" (57). Gallenga goes on to say that the Chinese "have been reduced to a condition identical to that of the negroes" (57). However, though both groups were subjected to terrible cruelty and exploitation, it is important to recognize the differences between slavery and contract labor. Though the contracts often were not honored one main difference that López notes is that the contracts were a sale of labor, not of people, which is a crucial difference, "Technically, the sale was for the contract of indenture, rather than the laborer, marking a legal difference from the system of African slavery" (27). Later she explains:

> There were, nonetheless, key differences between slavery and indentured labor. Unlike slavery, indentured labor was not inheritable and in many cases came to termination. The Chinese were in a distinct category from the slaves who were chattel for life. Coolies were legally allowed to, and did, file complaints against their masters and local authorities for violation of contracts or regulations. (52)

The preceding historical and cultural discussion serves to contextualize and facilitate my analysis of Cristina García's *Monkey Hunting*. The novel tells the story of Chen Pan, a poor Chinese man who goes to Cuba seeking a better life, and subsequent generations of his family.[10] While it is a work of fiction, it is greatly informed by history. In an interview by Scott Shibuya Brown, García explains an incident that inspired her to write the novel:

> When I was growing up in New York, my parents took me to my first Chinese-Cuban restaurant on the Upper West Side. A Chinese waiter came over, took our order in Spanish, and to my utter delight, I was able to get Cuban

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

> black beans with my pork-fried rice. I thought this was the greatest thing that ever happened to me. But when I asked my parents how and why the Chinese and the Cuban dishes could go together like this, they couldn't tell me. So this book, in part, in an exploration of "why?" (257–258)[11]

Through the character of Chen Pan we see the treatment of Chinese indentured servants, their work alongside African slaves, and their interactions and relationships with people of African descent. Yu-Fang Cho reads *Monkey Hunting* as a

> re-narration of transnational histories of multi-racial formations as a critical response to the long tradition of Euro-American travel writings and Orientalist narratives which reproduce White Euro-Americans as the privileged subjects and the authority of colonial enterprises (see, e.g., Lowe, Critical; Mills; Rafael; Said). Through creative re-narration that foregrounds transnational cross-racial formations, in *Monkey Hunting* García takes up the critical project of the reconstruction of colonial histories in comparative and global frames. (2)[12]

The "reconstruction of colonial histories" described by Cho in the novel is achieved, in part, by showing how African slavery and Chinese indentured servitude coincided in order to sustain Cuba's economy. Pérez points out that while coffee production was important to Cuba's economy, sugar was the leading force behind Cuban prosperity in the nineteenth century:

> But it was sugar production that registered some of the most spectacular advances. The scope and speed with which land passed under sugar cultivation was stunning. Forests and woodlands disappeared almost overnight, to be reborn as vast expanses of sugarcane fields. The total amount of new land to pass under sugar cultivation nearly doubled from 510,000 acres in 1831 to almost 1 million acres in 1842, and increased again to nearly 1.5 million acres by 1852. The number of sugar mills (ingenios) increased threefold from 484 in 1778 to 1,442 by 1846. Exports increased in spectacular fashion, doubling from 28,400 tons in 1800 to 58,000 tons in 1809, nearly tripling to 162,000 tons by 1841. By midcentury, good times were buoyed by a record harvest of nearly 264,000 tons. (27)

However, all of this "prosperity" was at the cost of human dignity and lives. Pérez explains, "Cuban prosperity was achieved through unimaginable human suffering, derived from the coerced labor of hundreds of thousands of enslaved Africans" (27). He goes on to say, "Africans consigned to sugar production toiled under execrable circumstances. Tens of thousands of men and women were worked remorselessly: six days a week, eighteen hours a day, often for five and six months at a time" (27). This inhumane treatment

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

resulted in astonishing mortality rates: "slave mortality rates reached staggering levels as the combination of ill-treatment and illness claimed the lives of many men and women. Death rates between 10 and 12 percent annually were not uncommon" (31). Pérez goes on to stress that upon arrival to the island, life expectancy for an African slave was approximately seven years (31–32). Suicide contributed to these mortality rates, as it "implied choice over chance, a common and compelling exercise of will, the deployment of life as a means by which to register protest and transcend circumstances of powerlessness. This is to view the deed of suicide as an act of willed death passed into the realm of agency as a means through which to affirm control over one's life—even if it meant ending it" (33). According to Pérez, newly arrived Africans, known as *bozales*, "were especially prone to take their own lives. One midcentury estimate calculated that as many as twenty percent of all Africans committed suicide within the first year on the island."[13] He goes on to explain that while data on slave suicide in Cuba is fragmented, the pieces available suggest it was a common occurrence (40–42), and that it reached "epidemic proportions during the early decades of the nineteenth century" (41). Pérez cites that between 1839 and 1845, out of 1,337 suicides in the jurisdiction of the Western Department of the island, 1,171 of them, or approximately 87.6 percent of them, were among slaves (41). His description of the mistreatment and deaths of Chinese laborers demonstrates how African slavery and Chinese indentured servitude overlapped, leading to similar consequences for the Chinese. Pérez explains that due to the diminishing supply and rising costs of African slaves, Cubans searched for alternative sources of "cheap agricultural labor" (53), and Chinese laborers became that source. According to Pérez, using these workers resulted cheaper than purchasing slaves and they were considered in abundant supply (53–54). However, as a result of the exploitation and abuse, "death came swiftly to the Chinese in Cuba. The number of workers who perished on the plantations was at least as great as the number who survived" (55). He goes on to explain, "Death arrived from many sources. Large numbers of Chinese workers succumbed to overwork and malnutrition. Many died from an assortment of tropical diseases and illness associated with climate. But it was suicide that accounted for the largest single cause of death" (55). According to an 1862 census, the Chinese suicide rate was "a staggering 500 per 100,000" (55).[14] However, it should be emphasized, as Pérez demonstrates in "Dying to Be Free," that suicide served not only as an escape from enslavement, but also as a form of resistance for both Africans and Chinese. Suicide granted individuals the opportunity to take control of their destinies by deciding to take their own lives, while simultaneously taking power and financial gain away from their owners.[15] In reference to African slaves he states, "to contemplate suicide was to detect in death the potential freedom unavailable in life. But slaves

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

also understood the act of suicide signified the diminution of planter wealth and power, and in this sense awareness of the possibility offered by suicide a source of consciousness of agency" (46). In regard to Chinese laborers he observes, that "for many, suicide was the most readily available alternative to unrelieved suffering" (60), and furthermore, "was a mode of resistance and a means of revenge, specifically to choose to die as a way to retaliate against the planter and avenge past wrongs" (61). However, there is one more commonality that transcended the shared suffering and search for freedom that is often overlooked. As I will elaborate in my forthcoming discussion, a similar view of death was shared between African and Chinese populations in Cuba. Both groups commonly believed that death was a way for their souls to return home. Therefore, suicides not only ended their suffering and served as retribution, but also allowed them to return to their beloved homelands.

Monkey Hunting depicts the aforementioned exploitation of African slaves and Chinese laborers and the tragic consequences, through the eyes of the protagonist. Chen Pan is a poor man who is frustrated with his life, and while he is in search of a way to improve his circumstances, he is convinced into going to work in Cuba by a man dressed in a Western suit, who promises him women and great wealth in Cuba (4–6). However, instead of being a paid laborer with opportunities to build wealth, he is bought by a Cuban and forced to work alongside African slaves cutting sugar cane on a plantation. As soon as Chen Pan boards the ship to Cuba, he realizes that he has been deceived. The ship "was outfitted like a prison, with irons and grates. The recruits were kept belowdecks, like animals in a pen. The shortest among them couldn't stand upright. Soon Chen Pan's neck ached from stooping" (8). The novel goes on to describe how the captain and crew spoke little Chinese and that "they threatened the recruits with muskets and cutlasses and rattan rods and shacked those whom the rods didn't tame" (8). The novel also describes the lack of food and water for the laborers:

> The men got beef jerky and rice gruel to eat . . . the lack of adequate water made him desperately thirsty . . . . Chen Pan watched men drink their own urine, lick moisture from the walls of the ship. A few swallowed seawater until their stomachs swelled and they choked in their own filth. (9)

This inhumane treatment led to the suicides of numerous men who preferred death to the fate that awaited them in Cuba. During his voyage to Cuba, Chen Pan counts six suicides. Some men jumped into the sea, while others chose other methods such as poisoning and hanging (14). The descriptions in the novel echo the testimonies of Chinese laborers in the *Cuba Commission Report*. For example, the report indicates that Li Chao-ch'un and 165 others stated that, "'we proceeded to sea, we were confined in the hold below; some

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

were even shut up in bamboo cages, or chained to iron posts, and a few were indiscriminately selected and flogged as a means of intimidating all others'" (42). The report goes on to say that "Ts'ai A-lu deposes, 'the water was insufficient and many died from thirst; and besides, three men threw themselves into the sea' while "Liang En deposes 'both water and rice were insufficient and we were not allowed to go on deck'" (43).

The treatment received by Chinese workers on the voyage to Cuba is very similar to accounts of the experiences of African slaves brought to Cuba. In *Los negros en Cuba,* Jorge and Isabel Castellanos discuss how slaves were transported chained to each other in the ship's hold (26).[16] Furthermore, they state that slaves were treated like animals, as many slave traders believed the more slaves they could transport at once the better, and in turn crowded as many people as possible into the ships hold, despite knowing that this would lead to many deaths due to the transmission of diseases (27).

The cruelty experienced by African slaves and Chinese indentured servants often led to death either directly from the physical abuse, or by serving as the motivation for suicide. *Monkey Hunting* explicitly depicts these harsh realities. In addition to presenting the harsh deaths and suicides of the Chinese laborers, as discussed previously, the novel also depicts these realities for African slaves. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Pérez notes that recently arrived slaves, referred to as bozales, were most prone to taking their own lives, and this is depicted in the novel. "Sometimes an African hanged himself from the mahogany tree wearing his Sunday rags. The bozales, the newly arrived Africans, were especially prone to suicide. They threw themselves into the well or the boiling sugar cauldrons, swallowed mouthfuls of dirt, or suffocated themselves with their own tongues" (25).

But beyond the deaths themselves, it is important to address that death had a deeper meaning beyond escaping immediate suffering for many of the Africans and Chinese that were part of the slave and indentured servant trades. Manuel Barcía, in the article "'Going Back Home:' Slave Suicides in Colonial Cuba," discusses how many African slaves committed suicide both during the voyage and once in Cuba.[17] However, he points out that while many committed suicide as a way to escape slavery, others committed suicide because they viewed this as the way for their souls to "return home." In West African belief systems life and death are commonly viewed as cyclical, and it is believed that though the physical body dies, the soul of a person lives on. Louis A. Pérez Jr. asserts:

> Suicide among Africans responded to a combination of complex but interrelated adaptive strategies. Comments by contemporary observers concerning the ritual practices attending suicide alluded to religious beliefs related to the idea of death as a means of resurrection and return to Africa, and hence freedom. The

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

> proposition of suicide suggested the possibility of a new mode of being, no less than the emancipation of the soul and its transmigration to Africa, and often implied the power of physical transport. (37)

The previously cited passage from *Monkey Hunting* that described slaves hanging themselves in their "Sunday rags," is an allusion to these beliefs. In Pérez' in-depth study of slave suicides he explains that because Africans believed they could return home after death, when hanging themselves they often dressed in their best clothes and gathered their few prized possessions and placed them below the tree they chose to hang themselves.[18] Evidence shows that many Chinese that went to Cuba held similar beliefs. In the introduction to The *Cuba Commission Report*, Denise Helly explains that many Cantonese that went to Cuba believed that, "the spirit of a person, detached from the body at death, carries on an autonomous and human existence" (19). In his book, *The Religious System of China*, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Dutch sinologist Jan Jacob Maria de Groot discusses Chinese religious beliefs and practices that try to call home the souls of those who have died elsewhere. "We understand that the Chinese since remote times should try to get back to their homes the souls of those of their dead whose bodies had been lost, or could not be taken home from foreign parts because of the great distance or for some other reason. They called upon the souls to return home" (847).[19] These shared views of life and death among many Chinese and Africans are presented in *Monkey Hunting*. For example, after one of his shipmates is killed by the guards and dumped in the sea, Chen Pan, "wondered if the dead man's ghost would find its way back to China. Or would it wander forever among the unvirtuous and the depraved?" (12). Similarly, in a scene depicting the death of an African slave after a fight with another slave the narrator states, "At the funeral the slaves chanted and clapped over the lifeless body, clamoring for the dead man's safe passage to Africa" (29).

Examining the world-views and spiritual beliefs of Africans and Chinese in nineteenth-century Cuba paints a more complete picture of groups and their contributions to Cuban society. It enables us to see commonalities among groups that are often seen as very different. Furthermore, borrowing from Tsang, it demonstrates that their contributions to Cuban society reached far beyond their forced labor and, in turn, their critical role to the Cuban economy. It allows us to see "their direct contributions to forming ideas of community and religiosity"[20] in Cuban society, contributions that will be further examined later in this piece in my discussion of Mayra Montero's *Como un mensajero tuyo*.

The brutality of the African slave trade, its dehumanization of its victims, and their treatment as merchandise has been documented by many. However, it is still important to emphasize these harsh truths. As Castellanos

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

and Castellanos explain, slaves were inspected like merchandise and valued "based on the needs of the market, age, sex, physical condition, and social acclimation" (27).[21] Just as African slaves were inspected and sold like merchandise upon arrival, the same holds true for Chinese laborers. The *Cuba Commission Report* documents that, "The petition of Li Chao-ch'un and 165 others states, 'at Havana, after a detention at the quarantine station our queues were cut, and we awaited in the men-market the inspection of a buyer, and the settlement of a price'" (48), while the petition of Yeh Fu-chün and fifty-two others claims that they were forced to remove all of their clothing so that they could be examined and the price fixed (48). Chen Pan's experience is presented similarly in the novel:

> Chen Pan was forced to strip and be examined for strength, like the horses or oxen that were for sale in the country districts of China. . . . One hundred and fifty pesos was the going rate for a healthy chino. A Spanish landowner paid two hundred for him, probably on account of his height. (21)

As mentioned previously, Africans and Chinese worked and lived side by side on Cuban sugar plantations and faced the same treatment and conditions. This reality is depicted in *Monkey Hunting*. "Chen Pan arrived at La Amada plantation in time for the sugar harvest. He was thrown together with slaves from Africa, given a flat straight blade to cut the sugarcane" (22). The narrator goes on to say that, "From his first hour in the fields, it was clear to Chen Pan that he was in Cuba not as a hired worker but as a slave, no different from the Africans. That he had been tricked into signing his life away" (24). Furthermore, he lives in slave quarters described as "a fetid honeycomb of rotting wood—dirt and stink, rats and lice aplenty. . . . Rooms were filth holes with hard planks or hammocks for beds. A miserable guard in a grillwork lookout had the only key. The mayoral lived nearby with his fortress of firearms" (24). The novel once again mirrors the historical testimonies present in the *Cuba Commission Report*. The Report presents example after example of abuses suffered by Chinese laborers and numerous claims that the Chinese were treated the same as African slaves. For example, "the petition of Chao K'un and 95 others states, 'we suffer from insufficient nourishment, excessive labour enforced night and day, flogging and chaining in the day, and imprisonment and confinement in the stocks at night'" (49). Meanwhile Hu Ju explains, "I have been here twenty-seven years. The inhabitants truly desire to reduce the Chinese into slaves for life," and according to Liu A-t'ang, "on plantations, the Chinese are treated exactly like the negro slaves" (89).

The lives of people of African and Chinese descent in nineteenth-century Cuba are very much intertwined. Both groups were enslaved and forced to

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

work side by side on sugar cane plantations to benefit wealthy plantation owners. Therefore, it should not be surprising that these groups would build relationships and mutually influence each other, as well as their society at large. The majority of Chinese that came to Cuba were men, which led to many relationships between Chinese men and women of African descent. In *Chinese Cubans*, Kathy López points out that, "Despite official and social opposition, Chinese men did settle and form families. From their time as coolies on plantations, through their transition to freedom in Cuban society, Chinese mixed with local women" (90). In the case of *Monkey Hunting*, Chen Pan is able to escape the plantation and start a new life in Havana. While in Havana, his fortunes change for the better, as one day he saves the count of Santovenia from an attack. In return, the count awards Chen Pan his freedom, and a large sum of money. Chen Pan uses this money, along with gambling winnings he has saved up, to open a shop that sells knick-knacks. His new life leads him to meeting the love of his life, Lucrecia, the daughter of a female African slave and her white slave master. As López describes, "The relationship begins with the former indentured laborer purchasing the woman for help with domestic chores and business and gradually evolves into a lifelong partnership" (90). However, it is important to note that Chen Pan never wants Lucrecia to be his slave. When he sees the ad selling Lucrecia, he goes to the location listed to find out more because, "He'd seen notices for slaves before, next to rewards for runaway servants and ads for horses and plows, but never a mother for sale with her baby" (61–62). When he does purchase her he thinks to himself, "If he bought the girl and paid her a small salary, would she still be considered a slave?" (68–69). He also treats Lucrecia's son as his own, and he lets her know she is free to leave if she wants, but she chooses to stay (78).

The relationship between Chen Pan and Lucrecia is a very positive one. It is based on love, respect, and mutual admiration. López notes, "In her novel *Monkey Hunting*, Christina García evokes the possibilities for interracial marriages between Chinese ex-coolies and black slave women" (90).

As in the case of *Monkey Hunting*, *Como un mensajero tuyo* is a work of fiction greatly inspired by historical realities.[22] Montero, as a number of scholars such as Vitalina Alfonso and Madeline Cámara have noted, is known for blurring the lines between fact and fiction in her works.[23] Aida Cheng, the novel's protagonist is a woman of Chinese, African and European descent. The novel takes place in Cuba in 1952, when Aida is on her deathbed:

> The story . . . deals with the lives of Aida Cheng, a Chinese mulatta, and Enriqueta, Aida's daughter with the famous Italian opera singer Enrico Caruso. Aida is a terminally ill older woman who decided to tell her daughter Enriqueta about some of the most important events in her life before she dies. Enriqueta, in turn decides to transcribe what her mother tells her. The novel; therefore, is

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

> the transcription of the stories Aida tells Enriqueta along with interviews and follow-up investigations that Enriqueta conducts to verify her mother's story, juxtaposed with chapters narrated by Aida (Aida in her own words telling her daughter about her life). (Ossa)

In particular, Aida's narrative focuses on her short-lived romance with Caruso, from which Enriqueta was born. However, beyond its love story, the novel brings to light the active roles of people of African and Chinese descent in Cuban society. Moreover, we see the depiction of the relationships between Chinese men and women of African descent, which, as noted previously, López discusses as an important and often omitted part of Cuban history. *Como un mensajero* also delves into the religious interactions and exchanges between these groups, what Tsang suggests should be called, "interdiasporic cross-fertilization" instead of syncretism, to understand "the complex and often messy ways that plural diasporas interact in terms of identity, culture and religious exchange" (15). "Messy" is a fitting term in the case of *Como un mensajero*, as it depicts both harmonious interactions as well as conflict between Afro and Chinese Cubans.

Before delving further into the interactions between the two groups in the novel, it is worth acknowledging that, as in the case of *Monkey Hunting*, *Como un mensajero* also presents the hardships faced by Chinese laborers during their voyages to Cuba, as well as their treatment as slaves. In the novel Yuan Pei Fu, a *babalawo* of great repute, is a friend of Aida's family who turns out to be her biological father. According to Aida, he set voyage with his father from China to Cuba on the ship the *Oquendo* in 1847 (39). This serves as an example of Montero's blurring of fact and fiction, as *Oquendo* is the name of the vessel that brought the first large group of Chinese laborers to Cuba in 1847 ("Barrio Chino").[24] Aida's description of the voyage highlights the suffering faced by Chinese laborers traveling to Cuba. She explains, "se desató la enfermedad, el cólera o el tifus, y los hombres se morían en cubierta, boqueando y saltando como pescaditos. Noventa y seis cadáveres tuvieron que tirar al mar, y el padre de Yuan Pei Fu estuvo entre ellos" (39). "Illness was unleashed, cholera or typhus, and the men would die in covers, gasping and heaving like little fish. They had to throw ninety-six cadavers into the sea, Yuan Pei Fu's father being among them." The dehumanization and abuse faced by those who survived the trip is made clear by Aida's description of Yuan Pei Fu's arrival: "La gente, al principio, se reía: era la primera vez que veían esclavos chinos, encadenados como negros, pero más andrajosos y desesperados, con los ojos hundidos y los pies hinchados por el mar" (39). "At first, people laughed: it was their first time seeing Chinese slaves, chained like blacks, but more shabby and desperate, with their eyes sunken and feet swollen because of the sea."

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

As *Como un mensajero* depicts, the interactions and relationships between those of Chinese and African descent continued after indentured servitude ended in 1877 (Lopéz 50) and slavery was abolished in 1886. López explains:

> Contrary to the image of an enclosed Chinatown, seething with hawkers and vice, that has been portrayed in travelers' descriptions of San Francisco and Havana, Chinese settlements in the Cuban provinces were rather porous. The Chinese interacted with native Cubans, European immigrants, blacks, mulattos, and other Chinese on a daily basis. (10)

She goes on to explain these relationships as complex, stating that, "Both interracial tensions and cross-racial alliances that existed during the period of indenture continued as blacks and Asians interacted in the market for labor and services" (99). She also claims that, "Instances of cooperation between black and Asians were as common as those of strife" (99–100). It is these types of complex interactions that we see depicted in *Como un mensajero*, particularly via the character of Domitila, Aida's mother. While Domitila has a daughter with a Chinese man and appears to have relationships with members of the Chinese community, she also harbors a great deal of racism toward Chinese people. Aida says, "Un chino, según decía mi madre, era lo peor con lo que se podía casar una mujer, pero lo único a que podía aspirar una muchacha como ella, pobrecita y con el pelo duro" (31). "A Chinese man, my mom would say, was the worst thing a woman could marry, but the only thing a poor girl with coarse hair like her could aspire to." As I noted in my previous work on *Como un mensajero*, "This statement is important for a number of reasons. First, because Domitila acknowledges the discrimination she herself faces because of her ethnicity and economic class. On the other hand, though she herself is marginalized because of her ethnicity and economic class, this does not stop her from demeaning Chinese people, who are also victims of discrimination in Cuban society" (Ossa). In the novel, it is revealed that Domitila has good reason to resent Noro Cheng, because her parents sold her off to him when she was only sixteen years old. However, her resentment toward him seems to lead to a generalized prejudice toward Chinese people. Yet, despite these feelings toward Chinese people, she also chooses to have a relationship with Yuan Pei Fu, Aida's biological father, and though Aida does not learn that he is her father until she is an adult, he has been present her entire life as a close family friend. In addition, after Noro Cheng's death Domitila becomes involved with another Chinese man (31).

Previously, I explored how *Monkey Hunting* shows the similar views of death shared by African slaves and Chinese indentured servants. However, religious and spiritual interactions and exchanges between these groups play an even more prominent role in Mayra Montero's *Como un mensajero tuyo*.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

This is of importance because as Tsang suggests, "These Afro-Sino hybridities have been omitted or ignored from the majority of ethnographic and phenomenological examinations of African-derived religions in Cuba" (25). Religion is an integral part of the novel's plot. More importantly, we see the intermingling of Lukumí religious practices with Chinese religious practices.

Before delving further into the role of religion in the novel, it is important to give some context on Lukumí and Chinese religious beliefs and practices. According to Tsang, "Lukumí is the emic name given to the worship of orisha, deities brought to Cuba by enslaved and free persons from West Africa, including the Oyo, Egba, Ijesha and Ondo, who are collectively known today as Yoruba" (14). He continues, "Initiation, trance, possession, celebrations, sacrifice and divination are some of the articulations of worship Lukumí religiosity is renowned for" (14). He also notes that it is a religion in which "ancestors and elders are venerated" (19). The Lukumí religion is commonly referred to as Santería (which Tsang considers pejorative, while many others, including many practitioners, do not), as well as La regla de Osha (also spelled La Regla de Ocha or Ochá). Tsang explains that *Osha* is a contraction of *Orisha* (14). In his article he argues against the use of the term "Afro-Cuban religion," viewing it as, "a catch-all designation that includes several distinct religions" (19). He also cautions defining Lukumí and other religions in Cuba based in African practices as syncretic. In his article, Tsang argues the term is often racialized, and in terms of the Lukumí religion specifically, is racialized in a binary white/black way that does not allow for the discussion of other influences on Lukumí practices such as Chinese religious practices. Furthermore, he notes that the designation of syncretic often comes from the outside and not from the religions practitioners. While I myself have used the terms *Santería* and *syncretism* in my previous work on *Como un mensajero*,[25] I concur with Tsang's assertion that the label *syncretic* is problematic when discussing the Lukumí religion (Regla de Ocha), and I believe that Tsang's "interdiasporic cross-fertilization" framework (15) allows for the grades and nuance necessary to discuss the religious influences that people of African descent and Chinese descent have on each other in Cuba.

In regard to Chinese religious practices, they are often the combination of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. Daniel L. Overmyer explains, "Popular religious practices and beliefs were shared in common by a wide range of the population of traditional China, and continue to be carried out today both on the mainland and in overseas Chinese communities" (315).[26] He continues: "At the most self-consciously literate levels distinctions between traditions can be made, but in ordinary practice they can be difficult to discern. Ethical values first advocated by Confucius and his followers can be found in all other traditions, and annual festivals came to be shared by all who could afford to participate, as were divination, funeral rituals, feng-shui (geomancy)

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

and veneration of ancestors" (315). Tsang concurs, saying that the popular Chinese religion practiced in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan

> is comprised of the "Three Teachings" referring to the three main religions practiced by the Chinese: Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. The multiplicity of religions, ceremonies, and pantheons of deities and texts overlap within religious practices of mainland Chinese communities. Gregor Benton informs us that there is a consensus in the hospitable and osmotic nature of these three institutionalized religions, and that they "cooperate in ritual, worship, and texts, and are marked by exchanges rather than discontinuities" (27).

As we examine Tsang and Overmyer's descriptions of Lukumí and Chinese practices, the parallels quickly become evident. Celebrations, divination, veneration of ancestors, and the worship of many deities are integral parts of both traditions.

Previously, I discussed the role of Chinese men and women of African descent in Cuban society. Tsang points to these unions as one of the main contributors to religious exchanges between these groups. According to Tsang, "From these relationships began the formation and introduction of religious communities that were premised on and inclusive of Chinese elements in worship" (24–25). Domitila's Lukumí and other West African roots are discussed in *Como un mensajero*. Aida offers the following description of her grandmother, Domitila's mother: "su madre era de nación lucumí y su padre, mi bisabuelo, era mandinga" (30). "Her mother was from the Lucumí nation, and her father, my great grandfather, was Mandinga." Furthermore, Domitila is the conduit to the interaction between black and Chinese babalawos. Babalawos are priests of the Lukumí religion. Lukumí and Chinese religious practices are depicted as complementary, as Domitila introduces José de Calazán, Aida's Godfather and a Lukumí babalawo of African descent, to Yuan Pei Fu. When they talk they realize all the commonalities between their beliefs: "Los santos son iguales en todas partes, son los mismos en China que en Guinea. A esa conclusion llegaron José de Calazán y Yuan Pei Fu, el día que mi madre los juntó para que conversaran" (41). "Saints are the same everywhere, they are the same in China and in Guinea. José de Calazán and Yuan Pei Fu arrived at that conclusion the day my mother got them together to talk." Yuan Pei Fu, in particular, decided to explore the connections between African and Chinese belief systems in his later years, "en su vejez se había dedicado a cultivar la virtud: la virtud de los negros mezclada con la virtud de los dragones. El resultado de esas dos virtudes era un guerrero envuelto en humo: Sanfancón" (38). "In his old age he had dedicated himself to virtue: the virtue of black people mixed with the virtue of the dragons. The result of those two virtues was a warrior wrapped in smoke: Sanfancón."

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Tsang describes Sanfancón as the hispanicized name for the most popular deity of the Qing Dynasty, Guan Yu, also known as Guan Di (Emperor Guan) and Guan Gong (Lord Guan) (27).

In the year 220 in China, the Han dynasty had divided into factions that were fighting over power. According to José Baltar Rodríguez,[27] Guan Yu was a revered warrior, known for his valor and loyalty to the emperor (Ossa). He later became deified, and as Tsang notes, became extremely revered during the Qing Dynasty. He also points out that Guan Gong is worshipped in Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism (27). According to Tsang there are two theories regarding the name Sanfancón. One is that *San* comes from the Spanish for *Saint*, while others believe it is rooted in the Cantonese word for alive (27).[28] While Tsang generally believes that Sanfancón is the Spanish name for Guan Gong, he does acknowledge that he can be a syncretized figure in Cuba. Many view him as the union of Guan Gong and the Orisha Changó, both who are revered as warriors, as well as often associated with the color red (Ossa). It is the syncretic version of Sanfancón that is depicted in the novel. After his father's death during the voyage to Cuba, Yuan Pei Fu is charged with protecting the image of Guan Gong that his father brought with him and that others aboard the ship prayed to during the trip. As noted earlier, after Yuan Pei Fu dedicates himself to the study of both Lukumí and Chinese practices, Sanfancón is revealed to him. Furthermore, throughout the novel there are references to Sanfancón, and he is respected by both Chinese and non-Chinese characters, and Aida refers to him as, "el Changó de los Chinos" (184), "the Chinese Changó."

Divination, which is a part of both Lukumí and Chinese traditions, plays a pivotal role in the novel. It is through divination that Aida's pending romance with Caruso is foretold. Divination sessions also reveal that Caruso is destined to die in the near future. The relationship is first predicted in a divination session with José de Calazán. In the session, he predicts that a man will come into her life (romantically), but he also warns that the man is marked for death, "no viene a morirse; viene ya muerto" (28). "He's not coming to die; he's coming dead." Concerned for her daughter's safety, Domitila turns to Yuan Pei Fu, who is viewed as even more powerful than Calazán, for another divination session. In the session, he confirms Calazán's predictions and provides additional information, saying the man is already nearby. The man turns out to be Enrico Caruso, and he and Aida have a short-lived but passionate relationship that results in their daughter, Enriqueta. The prediction that death looms near for Caruso also results true, as he is very ill and returns to his native Naples, Italy, to die. This brings us back to the shared views on death discussed earlier. In my discussion of *Monkey Hunting*, I discussed how many African slaves as well as Chinese laborers brought with them the idea that while the physical body dies, the spirit lives on, and its goal is to return

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

"home." They also share ideas of life and death being cyclical and the idea that we have the ability to communicate with ancestors that have passed away (Ossa). As noted earlier, Helly points out the prominent belief among Cantonese laborers in Cuba that the spirit of a person can carry on an existence after death (19), and how de Groot explains that in China there was a common expectation for a person to die in their homeland or for their soul to return home if the person died away from home (847). Marta Moreno Vega points to similar beliefs among practitioners of Santería (she is a practitioner herself and this is the term she uses). According to Moreno Vega, "We believe that our ancestors live among us and must be honored daily before our altars" (17).[29] She also explains, "The omnipresence of ancestral spirits helps guide our daily lives, allowing the ancestors to share their wisdom with us" (17). These views of death become very visible in the novel when Caruso passes away. Aida tells Enriqueta about the events of the night of August first when Enriqueta was 5 months old. She says that Enriqueta was very restless that night until around 2:00 a.m. She and her mother Domitila were also restless even after Enriqueta fell asleep, so they stayed up to have coffee and talk. They suddenly hear footsteps, and when they look outside, they see a blurry figure of a man. When they look again, the figure is gone, but they hear footsteps again. Enriqueta suddenly wakes up crying in a way she has never cried before, "Tú te despertaste y empezaste a llorar. No era un llanto por hambre, ni llanto para que te cogiera en brazos. Era otra cosa, no lo podíamos comprender, como si te doliera algo por dentro. Tenías tan solo cinco meses, pero llorabas como una persona mayor" (245). You woke up and started crying. It wasn't a cry of hunger or to be picked up. It was something else, we couldn't understand, it was as if something inside (emotionally) hurt. You were only five months old, but you cried like someone older." A couple of days later, Aida finds out that Caruso died in Naples, and she realizes that his time of death coincides with the timing of the footsteps and the mysterious figure she and her mom had seen a couple of nights before. Aida tells Enriqueta of her discussion of the incident with Calazán:

> Mi padrino respondió que, en el momento en que alguien muere sin arreglar sus cuentas, un mensajero del alma sale del lugar de la muerte y vuela hacia el lugar de su destino. El lugar de su último destino era mi casa, lo había sido desde siempre. Las almas tienen sus viajes contados, y ese mensajero suyo había venido a verte, Enriqueta, a despedirse de nosotras dos, con pena y con amor. (245)

> My Godfather answered that, the moment someone dies without settling their debts, a messenger of the soul leaves its place of death and flies toward its destined place. His place of destiny was my house, it had always been. Souls have their travels numbered, and that messenger had come to see you Enriqueta, to say goodbye to us, with sorrow and love.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

In this scene we clearly see the idea of the spirit being autonomous being reflected. In addition, Enrico's soul longed to return "home" or to its destiny, in this case, with his love Aida, and his daughter Enriqueta.

Monkey Hunting and *Como un mensajero tuyo* recognize people of African and Chinese descent as an integral part of Cuban society. In *Monkey Hunting*, we see their shared suffering and exploitation as slaves and indentured laborers, but in the novel's representation of these realities, all of their labor on sugar plantations is also recognized. We also see the similar views on life and death among many African slaves and Chinese laborers. Many committed suicide as an act of resistance to their enslavement. And whether they died due to suicide, or illness, or murder, many shared the belief that the souls of the dead would try to return home. Importantly, the novel goes beyond the painful experiences of these groups and also depicts their personal relationships. Through Chen Pan and Lucrecia's relationship, we have an example of the many relationships developed between Chinese men and women of African descent in Cuba during the nineteenth century. In the case of *Como un mensajero tuyo*, we see how the close ties between Chinese, black, and people of mixed ancestry continued during the twentieth century. The novel presents these relationships as complex, as we see through the character of Domitila, a woman of African and European ancestry with close ties to the Chinese community. While on the one hand she has a daughter with Yuan Pei Fu and maintains a friendship with him, on the other hand, she harbors a great deal of prejudice toward Chinese people. However, the novel also delves deeply into the spiritual affinities between the groups and shows the interactions between practitioners of Lukumí and Chinese belief systems. This is important, because these belief systems and traditions have had an impact on Cuban society at large, as the Lukumí (Santería) religion is widely practiced in Cuba. Tsang notes that while statistics on number are practitioners of the Lukumí (Santería) religion are difficult to find due to the government's anti-religion stance, it is a religion that has "a very significant following" (14). Phil Clarke Hill concurs, stating that the religion is increasingly popular and that there is "participation coming from all levels of society."[30] Noting the impact of the novel in Cuba itself, López states that, "When Mayra Montero's novel *Como un mensajero tuyo* (translated as *The Messenger*) became available to Cubans in 2001, the fictionalized account of internationally acclaimed opera singer Enrico Caruso and his mulatto Chinese Cuban mistress, set in the Barrio Chino in 1920s Havana, generated buzz among its residents" (245). As works of fiction, these novels are important, because they reach both an academic and non-academic audience. They help bring attention to all of the people that helped form Cuban society and continue to be a part of it today. *Monkey Hunting* and *Como un mensajero* contribute to presenting a more complete picture of both yesterday's and today's Cuba.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

NOTES

1. Lisa Yun, *The Coolie Speaks: Chinese Indentured Laborers and African Slaves in Cuba* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2008), xxi. It is important to note that the use of the term coolie can be controversial, because while it is often used to denote 19th-century Asian laborers who, in particular, went to the Caribbean to work, it is offensive to many. As Yun notes in her book, "The term 'coolie' has been reclaimed and appreciated as one of deep cultural significance, such as by scholars and writers who have explored the 'coolie odyssey' and the diaspora-related history and culture that it formed; but 'coolie' has a long history of pejorative connotations" (xix). For a detailed examination of the complexities of this term, see Yun's book, especially pages xix–xx.

2. For brevity, I will generally refer to this novel as *Como un mensajero*.

3. Martin Tsang, "Chinese Influence in Afro-Cuban Religiosity," in *Imagining Asia in the Americas*, ed. Zelideth María Rivas and Debbie DiStefano (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2016), 13–33. On page 25, Tsang uses the "two-dimensional othered identity" description in reference to Chinese in Cuba; however, in this context, it is applicable to both Africans and Chinese, as I will demonstrate in this article.

4. Ibid.

5. Kathleen López, *Chinese Cubans: A Transnational History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 5. At the end of this passage, López cites Gary Okihiro from the book, *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture*.

6. Luisa Marcela Ossa, "*Babalawos chinos*: Religion, Ethnicity and Identity in Mayra Montero's *Como un mensajero tuyo*," *Delaware Review of Latin American Studies* 12, no. 2 (2011).

7. Ibid., 2. This quote references Franklin W. Knight, "Migration and Culture: A Case Study of Cuba, 1750–1900," (presentation, Historical Society Conference on Migration, Diaspora, Ethnicity, and Nationalism in History, Baltimore, MD, June 2008); Denise Helly, Introduction to *The Cuba Commission Report: A Hidden History of the Chinese in Cuba; The Original English-Language Text of 1867* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1993), 10; and Yun, *The Coolie Speaks*, 11.

8. Jesús Guanche, *Componentes étnicos de la nación cubana* (La Habana: Fundación Fernando Ortiz, 1996).

9. Louis A. Pérez, Jr., "Dying to Be Free: Suicide on the Plantation," in *To Die in Cuba: Suicide and Society*, eds. H. Eugene and Lillian Youngs Lehman Series (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 57.

10. Cristina García, *Monkey Hunting* (New York: Ballentine, 2004).

11. Scott Shibuya Brown, "A Conversation with Cristina García," in *Monkey Hunting* (New York: Ballentine, 2004).

12. Yu-Fang Cho, "Reimagining 'Tense and Tender Ties' in Cristina García's *Monkey Hunting*," *Comparative Literature and Culture* 14, no. 5 (2012).

13. Pérez references: Congressional Globe, 35th Cong., 2nd sess., February 1859, 1080; María Poumier Taquechel, "El suicidio esclavo en Cuba en los años 1840," *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 43 (1986): 73.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

14. Pérez references: Cuba, Capitanía General, *Noticias estadísticas*; Ortiz, *Los negros esclavos,* 359–360; Juan Pérez de la Riva, *Los culíes chinos en Cuba* (Havana: 2000), 186.
15. Pérez, “Dying to Be Free.”
16. Jorge Castellanos e Isabel Castellanos, “Raíces africanas de los negros de Cuba,” in *Cultura afrocubana, tomo 1* (Miami, FL: Universal, 1988).
17. Manuel Barcía, “‘Going Back Home’: Slave Suicides in Colonial Cuba,” *The Harriet Tubman Seminar*, September 28, 2010.
18. Pérez, “Dying to Be Free,” 37–40.
19. Jan Jakob Maria de Groot, “Internment of Evoked Souls,” in *The Religious System of China, Its Ancient Forms, Evolution, History and Present Aspect, Manners, Customs and Social Institutions Connected Therewith.* Volume III, Book I, Part III, “The Grave” (second half). Leide, 1897. Google Books.
20. Tsang, “Chinese Influence,” 25.
21. Translations and paraphrasing of quotes in Spanish are mine unless otherwise noted.
22. Mayra Montero, *Como un mensajero tuyo* (Barcelona: Tusquets, 1998).
23. Madeline Cámara, “Prólogo: Bojeo literario a Mayra Montero,” in *La narrativa de Mayra Montero: Hacia una literatura transnacional caribeña*, eds. Kevin Sedeño Guillén and Madeline Cámara (Valencia: Aduana Vieja, 2008), 11–22. Vitalina Alfonso, “Realidad y ficción en la novelística de Mayra Montero,” in *La narrativa de Mayra Montero: Hacia una literatura transnacional caribeña*, ed. Kevin Sedeño Guillén and Madeline Cámara (Valencia: Aduana Vieja, 2008), 25–38. Serie: Escrituras Peligrosas.
24. “Barrio Chino: Chinatown in the Caribbean,” *Chinese Historical and Cultural Project*, http://chcp.org/virtual-museum-library/barrio-chino-chinatown-in-the-caribbean/.
25. See Ossa, “*Babalawos chinos*.”
26. Daniel L Overmyer, et al., “Introduction,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 54, no. 2 (1995): 314–321.
27. José Baltar Rodríguez, *Los chinos de Cuba: Apuntes etnográficos* (La Habana: Fundación Fernando Ortiz, 1997).
28. Here Tsang references research conducted by Ignacio López-Calvo.
29. Marta Moreno Vega, *The Altar of My Soul: The Living Traditions of Santería* (New York: One World, 2000).
30. Phil Clarke Hill, “Santería is Cuba’s New Favorite Religion,” *Vice*, April 21, 2014, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/santeria-in-cuba-phil-clarke-hill.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alfonso, Vitalina. “Realidad y ficción en la novelística de Mayra Montero.” In *La narrativa de Mayra Montero: Hacia una literatura transnacional caribeña*, edited by Kevin Sedeño Guillén and Madeline Cámara, 25–28. Valencia: Aduana Vieja, 2008.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Baltar Rodríguez, José. *Los chinos de Cuba: Apuntes etnográficos.* La Habana: Fundación Fernando Ortiz, 1997.

Barcía, Manuel. "'Going Back Home': Slave Suicides in Colonial Cuba." *The Harriet Tubman Seminar*. September 28, 2010. www.tubmaninstitute.ca/sites/default/files/Barcia%20Slave%20Suicides%20in%20Cuba.pdf.

"Barrio Chino: Chinatown in the Caribbean." *Chinese Historical and Cultural Project*. http://chcp.org/virtual-museum-library/barrio-chino-chinatown-in-the-caribbean/.

Brown, Scott Shibuya. "A Conversation with Cristina García." In *Monkey Hunting*, 257–266. New York: Ballentine, 2004.

Cámara, Madeline. "Prólogo: Bojeo literario a Mayra Montero." In *La narrativa de Mayra Montero: Hacia una literatura transnacional caribeña*, edited by Kevin Sedeño Guillén and Madeline Cámara, 11–22. Valencia: Aduana Vieja, 2008.

Castellanos, Jorge e Isabel Castellanos. "Raíces africanas de los negros de Cuba." In *El negro en Cuba, 1492–1844,* edited by Tomo I of Cultura afrocubana, 17–58. Miami, FL: Universal 1988. http://www.hispanocubano.org/cas/cul1c1.pdf.

Clarke Hill, Phil. "Santería is Cuba's New Favorite Religion." *Vice*. April 21, 2014. https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/santeria-in-cuba-phil-clarke-hill.

Cho, Yu-Fang. "Reimagining 'Tense and Tender Ties' in Cristina García's *Monkey Hunting*." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 14, no. 5 (2012): 2–9, https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2145.

de Groot, Jan Jakob Maria. "Internment of Evoked Souls." In *The Religious System of China, Its Ancient Forms, Evolution, History and Present Aspect, Manners, Customs and Social Institutions Connected Therewith*, 847. Volume III, Book I, Part III, "The Grave" (second half). Leide, 1897. Google Books.

García, Cristina. *Monkey Hunting*. New York: Ballentine, 2004.

Guanche, Jesús. *Componentes étnicos de la nación cubana*. La Habana: Fundación Fernando Ortiz, 1996.

Helly, Denise. Introduction to *The Cuba Commission Report: A Hidden History of the Chinese in Cuba; The Original English-Language Text of 1867*, 3–30. Translated by Sidney W. Mintz. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1993.

Knight, Franklin W. "Migration and Culture: A Case Study of Cuba, 1750 –1900." Presented at the Historical Society Conference on Migration, Diaspora, Ethnicity, and Nationalism in History, Baltimore, MD, June 2008. https://www.bu.edu/historic/conference08/Knight.pdf.

López, Kathleen. *Chinese Cubans: A Transnational History*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013.

Montero, Mayra. *Como un mensajero tuyo*. Barcelona: Tusquets, 1998.

Moreno Vega, Marta. *The Altar of My Soul: The Living Traditions of Santería.* New York: One World, 2000.

Ossa, Luisa Marcela. "*Babalawos chinos*: Religion, Ethnicity and Identity in Mayra Montero's *Como un mensajero tuyo*." *Delaware Review of Latin American Studies* 12, no. 2 (2011). http://udspace.udel.edu/handle/19716/19703.

Overmyer, Daniel L., Gary Arbuckle, Dru C. Gladney, John R. McRae, and Rodney L. Taylor. "Introduction." *Journal of Asian Studies* 54, no. 2 (1995): 314–321.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Pérez, Louis A., Jr. "Dying to Be Free: Suicide on the Plantation." In *To Die in Cuba: Suicide and Society*, edited by H. Eugene and Lillian Youngs Lehman Series 12, 25–64. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005.

Tsang, Martin. "Yellow Blindness in a Black-and-White Ethnoscape: Chinese Influence in Afro-Cuban Religiosity." In *Imagining Asia in the Americas*, edited by Zelideth María Rivas and Debbie DiStefano, 13–33. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2016.

Yun, Lisa. *The Coolie Speaks: Chinese Indentured Laborers and African Slaves in Cuba.* Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2008.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Chapter 6

Erased from Collective Memory

Dreadlocks Story *Documentary Untangles the Hindu Legacy of Rastafari*

Linda Aïnouche

BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

I mused on the documentary *Dreadlocks Story* in terms of triggering a keen reaction concerning the Indian cultural influences on the Rastafari movement and lifestyle that have been erased from collective memory. I produced and directed this ethnographic film by looking from the outside at the encounters between cultures, ones that had not yet been addressed in cinema. I deliberately created the film to be informative by generating several layers of fundamental elements; by embracing the aesthetics of visual clarity, I was able to explore the themes of identity, cultural heritage, human movement, discrimination, history and social stereotypes.

Over the course of three years, *Dreadlocks Story* has already been seen in more than 50 countries, and many times in some of them; reached remote villagers and esteemed university populations; passed through world-famous film festivals; and been rewarded with multiple Best Feature Documentary awards.[1]

Entitled *Dreadlocks Story*, this documentary would automatically mislead everyone on its subject. This 123-minute film was neither thought, let alone made, to express or satisfy an exclusively Rastafari point of view. Rather, in restoring thoughts and understanding of our World History, it underscores the ignorance on Indian enslavement in the Caribbean. It places them under the spotlight of those who were also routinely oppressed by the British Colonists.

This documentary's cogitation pivoted on the agreed idea that Leonard Percival Howell, recognized as the founding father of Rastafari, used a Hindu pen name to sign his teaching pamphlet in the 1930s. The encounters between

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Indians and Afro-Jamaicans are considered in terms of anthropology and unveiled as such. This film displays a horizontal construction between the similarities of Hindu and Rasta ways of life, enlivened and completed by the context of the emergence of the Rasta movement and the reasons for Indian presence in Jamaica in the colonial era of bygone days.

The cultural meeting of two sets of people, African and Asian, documents their fascinating exchange and certifies the critical role of the sociology of the British Empire in the inception of the Rastafari movement. This is how *Dreadlocks Story* casts a twin process: (1) discover Indian history in Jamaica which is barely known, for lack of research, interest and possibly sources; (2) underscore the complex attitude toward culture in Jamaica at large through an anthropological perspective.

A recollection of cultural elements and interplay between cultures are key components of *Dreadlocks Story*. It presents the reconciliation of African and Asian descendants, encountered in an ethnocultural space, that the experience of corresponding histories allowed the creation of a new cultural system to state an identity. This rapprochement is important from the social perspective, from the point of view of living together, and of sharing a past, present, and future.

This chapter provides a discussion of *Dreadlocks Story*'s content, illustrated with excerpts of participants' interviews. It addresses the importation of thousands of Indian indentured workers by the British to the Caribbean basin, an examination of the Hindu Sadhu lifestyle, and the subsequent influence that Indians had on the culture and social climate of Jamaica, notably the emergence of Rastafari which came to irrevocably shape Jamaican society during the British period.

JAMAICA IN THE COLONIAL AGE

Jamaica had a long history as an occupied land. It began in 1494 when Christopher Columbus disembarked on the island, met the indigenous peoples, and proclaimed it the property of Spain. In 1501, the Spanish crown authorized the importation of enslaved Africans to Hispaniola,[2] initiating the Atlantic slave trade to the Americas. The institution of slavery touched Jamaica in 1511, permanently altering the demographic configuration of the island.

British colonial rule lasted for more than three hundred years on the island of Jamaica. The earliest British colonization was in 1655 when the English captured the country from the Spanish after 146 years of rule; it was formally ceded by Spain in 1670. Eventually, the island became a British Colony (1707–1801) and then a Crown Colony until the island gained independence in 1962.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Jamaica under English suzerainty experienced a significant expansion of the plantation system, with sugarcane as the principal crop, and a tremendous increase in the trade of enslaved Africans. It became infected with racism and prejudices based upon economic status and class position. Many Jamaicans, who enjoyed financial and professional success from the plantation systems, looked upon the enslaved Africans, mired now at the bottom of the society, with prejudice equally as crass as that of the British. In this class stratification, some people of African descent paradoxically abused those who were colored and subjected them to prejudice.

The end of slavery does not entail the end of colonization. Despite emancipation occurring in 1838, Jamaica was shaped by the preceding years in the colonial age, and was a country still not exorcised of unseen devilish forces, barely out of slavery. Theoretically, as soon as the African slave trade had been abolished, no slaves were to land in any English colony from any ship whatsoever. British participation in the trading of slaves did not end there. Slowly, as slaves died off without being replenished, sugar plantations showed signs of losing profits. The British had absolutely no alternative workforce in Jamaica. Plantation owners turned to their other colonies for workers.[3]

Slavery dominated every aspect of life in Jamaica. It made plantations possible, determined social and familial relations, as well as dominating the laws and politics of the island. Slavery produced both a system and an attitude of mind. Naturally, the abolition of slavery represented a radical change in the island life. A couple of decades later, the British were forced to create entirely new societies while their revenues were rapidly falling. Although the Empire was the first to put a permanent end to slavery, and emancipation was a momentous event in the history of the British colonies, it was the first to metamorphose into a formal colony of the British crown in 1858, in which a "new system of slavery," in the form of apprenticeship named indenture, was arranged.[4] Its purpose was to carry people from one country to another. But it incorporated many of the repressive features of the old system that had chained Africans. South Asian workers were also involved in a human trade with extremely exploitative conditions quite similar or worse than those shipped across the Atlantic in the slave trade system. The resemblance in the recruitment methods and labor conditions permit an interpretation of the new indentured labor as an extension of African slavery. Ironically, the new indentured labor system was conceived as a progressive step toward free labor.

The colonial system swiftly erected a system of indentureship and forced migration to enable the exportation of the workforce from India, uncompromising in its unpalatability and harshness: legal servitude and economic servitude were identical upon the plantation. The British perceived the

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

primordial characteristics of the foreign Indians, frequently called "coolies,"[5] to be their inherent cheapness and exceptional farming skills. The British government further found Indians ideal workers since its officials in the colony could closely supervise their recruitment. This is how the indentureship system from Asia intensively took place, containing a great deal of deception and injustice.

INDIAN INDENTURED WORKERS IN JAMAICA

The forced migration of Indians to Jamaica commenced in 1845 and ended in 1917, though indentureship continued until 1921.[6] India filled the role of supplying the British Empire with low-priced and disposable workers on the plantations. Three authorities were directly responsible for the passage of Indians, those: (1) in India; (2) in the British Metropole and (3) in Jamaica. Because the Indian government took a staunchly impassive stance throughout most of the period of the operation of the indentureship system, the majority of Indians had the impression that the Jamaican government was the employer. Many of the workers were treated as inferiors and excluded from ordinary civic rights in India. At first, a considerable number of individuals were attracted by the idea of being of assistance for the country. The situation of food productions was even so complex in India in the nineteenth century. Some made the decision to migrate with the wrong expectation of fair laboring opportunities. The attitude of "laissez-faire" with regard to the emigration of Indian labor by India was associated with the conviction that those Indian migrants were invariably "free" workers. Colonial planters thereby avoided the stigma correlated to the recruitment of Africans, suspected of being former slaves.

Interviewed for *Dreadlocks Story*, Verene Shepherd, Professor of Social History and author of outstanding studies covering the experiences of Indians in the Caribbean, corrects some imaginary perceptions on the indentureship system in Jamaica: "Even though the Indians arrived as indentured workers, it wasn't a system of voluntary labor. There were kidnapping, especially of women, there were bribery. Post-contract, most of Indians settled in Jamaica, and they have made great contributions to our country."

All of those who arrived from India were mainly poor farmers from remote villages. Aside from having an agricultural background, they had an understanding of small-scale community functioning. Their impacts in Jamaica have been in many sectors: agriculture (introduction of the technology of cultivating rice, flowers, fruits, vegetables) and religion (thoughts and expressions, Revivalists and Rastafari)[7] to only name two.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

The researchers, Laxmi and Ajai Mansingh, equally interviewed for the film, did tremendous pioneering investigations on Indian presence in Jamaica. Their work presents the most complete picture of the arrival of Indians on the island. The first ship arrived on May 9, 1845, landing in Old Harbour on the south coast of Jamaica on May 10, carrying a load of 261 persons, 76 percent (199) of which were men, 11 percent (28) women, and 13 percent (33) children under 12 years old. In total, 36,412 workers were transported from India to Jamaica from 1845 to 1917 under the auspices of the colonial government; only about one-third of them were women. Indian workers shipped from South and Northeast India faced four or five months at sea to Old Harbour. During the first forty years to about 1870, the main port of embarkation was Calcutta, after which the Malabar Coast became a source of recruits.

In the aftermath of their landing, Indians were brought across the island of Jamaica to work on plantations possessed either by the colonial system or local owners. The workers were contracted to perform work primarily on sugar plantations in the parishes of Saint Catherine, Clarendon, Westmoreland, and in Kingston, then on banana plantations when the banana industry took off by 1890 in Saint Mary, in Portland, and in Saint Thomas. Indians worked for a specific amount of time before they were allowed to return home. After their "contracts" expired, 12,109 were able to return to India, while the rest made Jamaica or another Caribbean country their permanent home.[8]

"Why is it interpreted as voluntary whereas the Indians were ill-treated, whether they were kidnapped?" asks Shepherd. Indians had to sign a contract to come to Jamaica even though their terms and conditions were barely observed. Most of them were not literate, certainly not in English, and ignored what it was they had to sign. How much did they understand about the life they were now accepting for three years or perhaps a lifetime? Initially, the contract period for both men and women was one year, with optional renewal. Later the period was extended to three years, then five years. In an interview but also in her brilliant book *Transients to Settlers: The Experience of Indians in Jamaica, 1845-1950,* Shepherd insists on the complex story of the conditions in which Indians were compelled relocating to Jamaica. Those Indian immigrants, recruited fraudulently, were sequestered, captured, and forced on board. Negatively portrayed and maligned, Indians had been assigned the status of "neo-slave;" the planters were unlikely to abandon their attitudes of oppressors. Indian movement and migration to Jamaica were not intended or willing. Their conditions on the plantations were not good. They could not purchase their freedom by payment of an indemnity. Ultimately, the Indian labor system appeared to be the most sensational kidnapping operated by Colonists over the world; children and women were more carried off than men.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

The British trusted that Indian men worked more efficiently and productively than women. The first recruitment focused solely on male workers. Over time, the need for women—still not highly valued for their productivity and considered uneconomical—started to change. Planters required a gender balance from their recruiters in India, to satisfy the governmental pressure to conform a ratio of 40 women for 100 men; children could not be indentured before the age of 16. The ratio of women slightly increased during female indentureship, and even the post-indentureship years, but overall the Indian male population emerged more important to the system than the female Indian population.

Aside from the fact that the British overlooked women as unproductive, it was generally difficult to get a gender balance among those who were shipped. Women were particularly as disinclined than recalcitrant to come to Jamaica. By 1900, recruiters were encouraged to send more women, avoiding single and unaccompanied women. Recruiters did trick and cheat individuals including young men of relatively affluent background, and not only lower-class people, by playing a fake role of "employers" through lying and constraint. A report on the stereotype of the recruiter and the helpless Indian published in India in 1871 painted how the coolies were entrapped:

> The recruiters entice the villagers with a wonderful account of their place for which the emigrants are wanted and bring their victims from long distances. On arrival at the sub depot, the intending emigrants are told the exact facts of their prospects, and on hearing them, decline to proceed. The wretched coolie may be a hundred miles from his home, and finding that he has the option of returning penniless and of emigrating, chooses the latter alternative; but this is not voluntary emigration.[9]

The unscrupulous recruiters caught more women. The general rumor went around that they would become rich in a few years in a nonexistent, idyllic Jamaica. The gender balance was sought to increase the settlement of Indian families rather than affording their expensive repatriation. To induce more women, their contracts were sometimes shortened. Toward the end of the indentureship period, migration of whole families was encouraged.

Hopeless Indians were utterly ensnared by greedy recruiters. Duped, their repatriation was not systematically respected either; the laws were regularly changed, and legally the last workers were not allowed to leave Jamaica, not before 1930. In practice, free return passages were abolished by 1910 because the colony was bankrupt and could not pay to charter the ships. Indians had to pay to return home—men half of the cost and women a third of it. Many of them chose to stay in Jamaica. Some women who came as a single were henceforward married to Afro-Jamaicans, resulting in the majority of

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Indians settling in the island, increasing de facto the Indo-Jamaican population by the time indentureship was abolished.

Trapped as if they were prisoners on the plantations, Indians were in the hands of the employers to whom they were bound. Not only were they in a totally dependent position, maltreated as drudges, but also, they were terrorized with fear that they would be imprisoned in case of misconduct. Perceived as sweet-tempered and submissive, in practice, Indian migrants were gentle hard-workers connected to their native culture. They sought to reaffirm customary values and principles, as a means of protection against exploitation and intrusion. Like the African slaves before them, they acquired two gains from their voyage to the Caribbean: fortitude and a sense of comradeship, even brotherhood, for those who had shared the passage with them.[10] These assets merely helped them bear their new life condition in Jamaica, and in the same manner, lent a hand to develop their relationships with the Afro-Jamaicans and other African workers.

Hinduism dominated among the Indian community of those who came to Jamaica, with a majority of 87 percent. The account of Muslims was 12 percent and three people were Christians. Parochial Hinduism and its literature that had always nurtured the workers simultaneously became their mental and spiritual refuge as well as their social and cultural cement. A lot of Hindus contributed positively to the spreading of their way of life during the indentureship period. The role of the recreation of "traditional" cultural values was indicated by the prominence in the reconstruction of a religious life. They recreated some semblance of the lost India to survive through a strong affirmation or persistence and obstinacy. The preservation of their local languages and, to the same degree, the practice of a mix of philosophy, mythology, and superstition were outright due to this persistence and resistance. In substance, they brought a lot of books on religion, music, and culture with them on their journeys to the Caribbean.

HINDUISM AND SADHUS' WAY OF LIFE

Known as a way of life that started to develop between 1750 BCE and 300 CE, Hinduism is an ancient, complex, unorganized Indian religion, with multileveled interpretations, intermingling myths and rituals. It is seen divided among many traditions: Vaisnavism, Shaivism, Smartism, and Shaktism.[11] Polytheistic and pantheistic, based on the laws of nature (animism) with over 330 million gods, although many have faith that only one prevails, Hinduism equates God with the universe. It refers to a rich cumulative tradition of texts without a systematic approach to teaching its value system. The Vedas Scriptures are esteemed as the ultimate authority for containing revelations received by ancient sages.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Among all the variations of Hinduism, some key beliefs are prominent to understand the following discussion.

- Everyone should strive to follow the right conduct, righteousness, moral law, and duty (*Dharma*).
- Individual souls (*Atman*) are immortal, neither created nor destroyed; have always been, are, and will be.
- *Brahman* is the one true God who is formless, limitless, all-inclusive, eternal, truth, and reality.
- Truth (*Sat*) is eternal as the very essence of the universe and the only reality.

Hindus believe in one, all-pervasive Supreme Being who is both Creator and Unmanifest Reality, immanent, and transcendent. They conjointly believe in *karma,* the law of cause and effect by which everyone creates his own destiny by his thoughts, words and deeds, the law of action and reaction that leads to reaching the pinnacle of consciousness where man and God are one.

Estimated as the oldest religion in the world, Jainism has introduced vegetarianism in the Indian sub-continent, influencing at first Buddhism (emerging 5–4 BCE), then Hinduism. Jain sources allege that the principle of non-violence toward animals was an established rule as early as the 6th century BCE, perhaps even older. The practice of non-violence (*ahimsa*, literally no hurting) is seen as the main religious duty of Jains. Their diet is vegetarian, and plausibly the strictest form of religiously motivated diet regulation in the Indian subcontinent. Technically, Hinduism does not require a vegetarian diet. Its massive literature does not explicitly prohibit eating all animal-derived foods, and yet *ahimsa* is strongly recommended. From this point forward Hindus prefer a vegetarian lifestyle, and methods of food production that are in harmony with nature, and are compassionate and respectful of other life forms, a practice stemming from a contact with Jainism.

Asceticism

Since very early prehistoric times, asceticism has been a prevalent and persistent feature of the Indian civilization. Holy Hindu people are called in Sanskrit *Sadhus* ("good man"). Sadhus live apart from society, leaving everything behind, detaching from the mundane world, to devote themselves exclusively to religious pursuits. They are separated from their birth social status, from all worldly rules and materialistic things, and abandon family life. Although outside the social system—they symbolically "die" with regard to their previous social identity—Sadhus are linked to households at multiple

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Figure 6.1 Hindu woman and Rasta man are doing a pûjâ, an oblation to Gods by way of a set of rituals. They, here, particularly adore and venerate Lord Shiva at Sanatan Dharma Mandir (Temple) in Kingston, Jamaica. *Source*: Credit: Linda Aïnouche.

social levels for economic support, notably. They practice a life of continual renunciation, focused on a spiritual uplifting meditation and preaching. Sadhus use symbolic rituals, all of which are signs of asceticism. Conspicuously, as "marginal" people, they find a new alternative identity, enrolled in a sacred world, separated from the "profane" world. Admitted as being at the highest stage of spiritual embodiment in Hinduism, the status of has changed into what is known as an "established breaking situation;" outsiders who behave as such follow only holy rules.

Sadhu Haribansh sums up in *Dreadlocks Story* that becoming a Sadhu is to be born again. It is like passing from one lifestyle into another. It means leaving everything learned before and gained behind, while at the same time embracing a new way of life and acquiring different knowledge. Sadhu Darshan narrates what henceforward matters to him:

> I was not satisfied to be a part of society. I started having the Almighty in mind. Worshipping God is the right path for me. It is the route to Salvation. It is the purification of the soul. Hence, I slowly became a Sadhu. This is my personal choice to reach my ultimate destination. Materialistic pleasures do not matter to me anymore. I stay away from mundane consumerism. I live in my own world!

Populated with a myriad of gods and goddesses, Hinduism offers to anyone the liberty to focus on a chosen deity who is invoked for God realization. Each

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

person has his personal deity called an *Ishta deity.* In practice, many Sadhus follow Lord Shiva. The early ascetics were predominantly devotees of him.

Jata

Hindus hold a belief that Shiva is equally the Supreme Power because the universe was born out of him. The third member of the Hindu Trinity beside Brahma and Vishnu, complementing one another, Shiva nurtures a regenerative destructive power necessary to make renewal possible at the end of each cycle of time, equaling 311.04 trillion years. Hindus customarily invoke Shiva before the beginning of any religious endeavor. He has become a major worshipped deity. Owing to Sadhus' embodiment of Shiva, many Hindu followers look at Sadhus as an incarnation of Shiva.

One of the 1,008 epithets of Shiva is *Jatadhara*, the one who bears a crown of matted hair. Those who worship Shiva mirror his image in allowing their hair to become long-locked known as *Jata*, a sign of both asceticism and status. According to an episode in a famous Hindu myth, the Ganges, the holiest river in India, was manifested by the goddess Ganga who descended from heaven through Shiva's three Jatas. They respectively represent the physical, the mental, and the spiritual aspect of life. By extension, Sadhus Jata is seen to be the seat of their spiritual powers. They symbolize the ability to control natural and physical forces, as a code and conduct of their way of life, just like for Shiva.

Laxmi Mansingh evokes in front of the camera that Sadhus who have the matted hair are called *Jatavi*. They typify keeping themselves with nature in a natural way. Atma Degeyndt, Sanskrit Theorist, interviewed on linguistic specifications, expounds that the Hindu word Jatavi comes from *Jatadhara*. Jata is a reference to hair that has been matted and intertwined where *Dhara* means support, life supporting and strength.

Interviewee Sadhu Aaditya explicates: "The hair is like our makeup. It is our "gear." It enhances our appearance. This is the way we adorn our existence. Just like a police or an advocate is identified through their uniform, likewise, hair identifies the divine persona of a Sadhu." Whether matted hair alludes to Shiva, it is not an indispensable standard for being a Sadhu, imparts Sadhu Darshani: "Shiva captured the Ganga River with the strength of his locks of hair. We similarly possess strength in our hair. Keeping locked hair exhibits our only wish and will. It is not mandatory to be pious!"

The Jata of Sadhus solidifies their identity as outsiders. It signifies that they have forsaken participation in all worldly activities. Whereas it is quite uneasy to generalize about their wearing of Jata, all Sadhus without exception follow a vegetarian diet. They eschew consumption of animals that violates the ethical injunction of *Ahimsa* (non violence). In essence, you are what you eat.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Cannabis

The use of cannabis in India is very old, originating in the Indus Valley Civilization (3300–1700 BCE) when people exploited it both for commercial and medicinal purposes. Since then, it is taken for a psychoactive, excitant and medicine. In some Hindu customs, the practice of smoking cannabis is considered a type of *Sadhana*, a method for attaining God-realization, and the resulting intoxication is interpreted to be God's blessings *(Darsana).* Over time, Shiva turned into the God of Cannabis. Myths involve him in the origin of the plant. Sadhus smoke cannabis in worshipping Shiva thereby emulating his consciousness. They accept the ritual of using cannabis as a sacrament, a religious approach to transcendence.

While recording, the Medical Geographer Sunil Aggrawal recalls a myth according to which Shiva created *Ganja* (*Cannabis Sativa*) from his own body to purify the elixir of life, produced from the churning of the ocean by demons and gods. Degeyndt again explains that Ganja is the popular term in Hindi for cannabis. It comes from the Sanskrit *Ganjaka*. The root *Gan* means to pay attention to something, while *Jaka* is a plant.

The cannabis plant is thought to have originated in Central Asia, roughly 36 million years ago. Aggrawal urges that everywhere where the cannabis plant is today in the world, it arrived there due to the fact that humans have brought seeds with them in waves of global migration. Indian indentured workers brought cannabis seeds and genetic material strains that produced drug products on the ships to Jamaica.

Akshai Mansingh, who used to take part in his parents' research in Jamaica, declares for *Dreadlocks Story* that aside from giving indentured workers personal comfort, as a means of culture and entertainment, Hinduism was a means of socialization, a process by which cultural and behavioral patterns of Indian society were transmitted for social perpetuation. Smoking cannabis during the indentured era allowed Indians to get together, worship and recite verses, providing them with a positive framework to manage the frustrations and miseries of their living conditions under British rule. At the same time, several workers embraced the Sadhu's lifestyle, giving them a new purpose in life, either to escape from the planters' yoke or to pursue another goal to live for those who were unable to return to India. They likewise induced, absorbed and spread Hindu customs in their new Caribbean environment, all in wearing matted, long-locked hair.

All human societies have well-defined strategies for surviving oppressive conditions, including a system of values, beliefs and norms. Smoking cannabis in Jamaica has, then, contributed to making life conditions bearable throughout harsh times, and the practice continues on for various purposes.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

The continuing use of Indian languages and rituals of a homeland, reduced to be more and more mythical, remained an important marker of identity, especially as the notion of return faded. Sacred texts happened to be popular among the Hindu indentured workers, in particular, the *Ramayana*, an ancient epic poem of some 24,000 verses. It narrates the combat of the prince Rama to rescue his wife Sita from the demon king Ravana. Its central themes of exile, suffering, struggle and eventual return resonated with the experiences of the workers. These themes eventually gave them conceptual tools to make sense of their predicament. Hinduism and the Indian mystical tradition were introduced within Jamaica through these workers, creating a cross-cultural intermingling that would come to have a profound influence on the development of the new cultural movement of Rastafari. Various factors are assumed to be responsible for the close relationship between Indians and Afro-Jamaicans upon the arrival of Indians in Jamaica. The Mansinghs enumerate them as follows: an equal socio-economic status, the development of a mutual respect from working alongside one another in the sugar cane and banana fields, an analogous sense of religious beliefs based on nature (through animism) and a general camaraderie fostered through their minority status in the country from the outset.[12]

Ras Moqapi Selassie, an activist Rasta, evokes the genesis of Rastafari: "There are Africans taken out of Africa and brought down to the Caribbean, and there are Indians taken out of India and brought down to the Caribbean, and they corresponded, and out of that correspondence has come something new." Accordingly, Shepherd concludes: "It is quite possible that there was this transfer of cultural customs between Indians and Afro-Jamaicans."

The encounters of two groups of people from different origins in a foreign land displayed patterns of behaviors. Both Asians and Africans shared the experience of being forced to travel by sea from their homelands. They committed to finding a new vision of identity once in Jamaica. This certitude not only corroborates the possible assumption of an Indian influence on Rastafari but also leads to an examination of religious syncretism and the unanticipated cross-cultural influences that occurred as a result of British colonialism.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF RASTAFARI

Jamaican society had never been quiescent, neither in slavery nor freedom, but the 1930s saw a quickening of the people's energy. If the British had not offered to Jamaicans any protection or demonstrated any sustained interest in improving their condition in the hundred years after slavery ended, one of the worst effects to workers was around the issues of identity.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Despite the British authorities having possessed Jamaica for 300 years, some men were beginning to discover themselves and their power to build the country anew. The most prominent of these men was Leonard Percival Howell, alias "The First Rasta" (1898–1981). The Jamaicans, who had been freed after emancipation, were abandoned, without support systems, all over the island. Since they did not have a way to survive, some left to work on the Panama Canal, on the railway tracks in Costa Rica or in factories in New York City. Leonard Howell was one of those who went to work elsewhere. When he returned to Jamaica in 1932, he rejected the appalling conditions that had imprisoned people, unquestionably poor and mentally persecuted. They were excluded from the larger society, challenging the oppressive status quo. These peoples, descendants of enslaved peoples of African origin, did not experience a fundamental change in their life chances once slavery was abolished in 1838. With a visceral refusal to be silenced and to co-exist with the oppressive colonial government, Howell began to speak about Rastafari. He is known as the first who uttered the word "Rastafari" in the island of Jamaica.

Born in the hills of Jamaica in the early 1930s, Rastafari encourages a response from African heirs to recover and rebuild their culture that had been suppressed by the brutal, stupefying European domination. It centrally promotes the belief that everyone is able, divine and equal to the figure of the Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia (1892–1975). By his 1930 coronation, Haile Selassie I was awarded the other titles, traditionally given to all Ethiopian Emperors, "King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Elect of God and Light of the World," the same title that the Bible gives to the Apocalyptic Hero who will lead Black people to Redemption.[13] These titles placed Haile Selassie I in the lineage of King Solomon, further added to his prophetic mystique, and for believers continue to serve as proof of his divinity.

With Rastafari, Howell challenged all forms of control. He called for a modern and free society, seething with rage and bravery against the oppression administered by the island's government. He struggled to establish Black consciousness and cultural identity. He sought to empower and liberate his fellow countrymen. He pushed them to take responsibility and eschew dependency through self-sufficiency. By its nature, Rastafari rejects slavery, colonialism, imperialism and capitalism, all of which branded around the issues of identity. The movement's insightfulness has nowadays several components (religious, social and political) with subversive intention.[14]

Rooted in the Baptist and Back-to-Africa movements, Rastafari sets out an organic and developing worldview movement. In Jamaica, William Knibb (1803–1845) was one of these notable English ministers and missionaries who took an active role in the anti-slavery movement. He supported the

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

creation of "free villages" rural communities where emancipated slaves could farm their own land, centered around Baptist churches. The Back-to-Africa movement originated in the United States in the nineteenth century and encouraged African descendants to return to their ancestors' homelands. "From the moment Africans were brought to the New World, they started to want to return to their homeland" says Hélène Lee in the film who is the author of the distinguished biography on *The First Rasta. Leonard Howell and the Rise of Rastafarianism.*[15]

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Jamaican-born Marcus Mosiah Garvey (1887–1940) conceived a new way to look at the Black struggle. Taken for the founder of the Back-to-Africa movement, it was seen as the solution to the problems of Black people who had been denigrated because of their skin color and ancestral heritage. Garvey started the Universal Negro Improvement Association, or the UNIA, in 1914 in Kingston, though soon after, moved to New York City. This association promoted the uplifting of the peoples of African descent everywhere. It eventually ended up the largest Black movement in history. Denouncing racial discrimination and segregation, and condemning violence directed at Black people, Garvey simultaneously promoted the idea of Black self-reliance. He believed that Black people should develop their own economic and social system, where they were dependent only on themselves. He implored Jamaicans to proudly affirm their human worth and dignity. In *Dreadlocks Story*, Garvey is spoken of by Sister Sharon Alves as having "restored our pride;" Rasta Rocki perceives him as "a great prophet who came to liberate the mind of the people." On another side, Ras Moqapi Selassie recites one speech on confidence to invoke his influence.

These sons of slaves, who did not have any knowledge either about their own history or the history of the world, suddenly, with Garvey, acquired a wider view of the situation of the Black people in the world. Prominent during this era, Garvey led an enormous movement of six million people to improve their living conditions. The American government naturally started to worry about his influence and promptly expelled him back to Jamaica in 1927. Leonard Percival Howell was deported five years later.

Seen as the charismatic founder of the Rastafari tradition, Leonard Percival Howell was a Jamaican farmer, who travelled by boat for eighteen years. He was purported to have had a close relationship with Garvey in the United States and, chiefly, with the Indians in Jamaica. This latter connection is presumed to have sown the seeds of eastern mysticism in him. Mired in hopelessness, alienation and despair, Howell realized once he was back in Jamaica that the people, who lived in abject poverty and under stifling authority, needed to be internally galvanized to experience confidence, pride and self-esteem. They were still bounded in mental slavery. "In 1932 a Black

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

person in Jamaica that was poor was treated like an animal," highlights Monty Howell, his elder son, in the film.

Howell attracted a lot of people with his enlightened lessons that spoke of the hope that Emperor Haile Selassie I could protect Black people from the New World, instead of Great Britain's King George V (1865–1936). From this following, the Rasta movement was born. Howell clustered his activity outside of Kingston, moving to the parish of Saint Thomas. Situated at the southeastern end of Jamaica, Saint Thomas had an anti-colonial history, multiple people were steeped in Black consciousness, and a great number of escaped slaves and refugees of the Maroon revolts resided in the area. Howell quickly ran into conflicts with the British colonial system. His basic tenets included strong statements about racial issues. As Garvey had before him, Howell introduced new questions into Jamaica's societal and psychological consciousness. It was not a development that many welcomed, finding much discomfort in the airing of matters relating to race.

Both in her book and in interview, Lee insists on the fact that at the beginning, the Rasta movement was absolutely not a religion. People who were uneducated functioned only through religion. They interpreted the teachings of Leonard Howell as mystical thought, even though he had never verbalized that Haile Selassie I was God. In affirming him to be the only ruler worthy of the allegiance of Black people and asserting that everyone is divine, Howell only authenticated that Haile Selassie I was to the same degree divine. The early Rastas made this newly crowned emperor the source of their spiritual and cultural heritage while transforming him into God.

Once out of Kingston, Howell gathered still more backers, in particular, a lot of women and Hindus. Besides immersing himself in Indian culture, and mingling with philosophers and Sadhus, Howell was assisted by Laloo, an Indian, who was simultaneously a bodyguard and a sort of guru who is credited with helping him to stir an intermediate culture borrowed from mystical Hindu beliefs, practices and language. Laloo would have also given Howell a Hindu identity by changing his name to Gagunguru Maragh. According to the Mansinghs, it derives from the Hindi words *Gyan* (knowledge), *Guna* (virtue), *Guru* (teacher), and *Maharadj* (king).[16] For the expert Degeyndt, this name literally means in Sanskrit: the Great Teacher who can see beyond the nature of matter. And for Hill, "The English translation of the conjoined words is 'teacher of famed wisdom.'[17] Howell used this name as a pen name when, in 1935, while in jail for two years for suspicion of seditious activities because the authorities viewed his principles as imminently dangerous, he published *The Promised Key*, a compilation of ideas found in Back-to-Africa movements that existed earlier.

Throughout Howell's arrests, his followers were intimidated. They had to flee their homes. The wise, elderly Bongo Shephan Frazer gives to

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Dreadlocks Story a precious testimony: "At the start, I have gone through all kinds of tribulations. I am here from the time when Rastas could not take a bus! We were excluded from society, in all forms because we were a menace." Sister Sharon Alves wholeheartedly agrees with him: "No one liked us! People called us all types of names. It was the way we ate, the way we carried ourselves, the way we dressed." Local attitudes denied Rastas, deprived their intellect, and bracketed them from conventional society.

In spite of this societal segregation, in 1939, Howell became the first Black man in Jamaica only to purchase a specific land know as Pinnacle, a good ten miles from Kingston. Withdrawn from mainstream society, he designed there a free self-reliant community for his followers that stood at an ideological distance from the Establishment. Plenty of the ritual components of Rastafari began to manifest in Pinnacle, marking a new stage in the movement, solidifying its ideas and happening to resemble its present form. Born and raised in Pinnacle, Bill and Monty Howell, the sons of "The First Rasta," recount in front of the camera how the community was fruitful. All kind of crops, cannabis plants included, were cultivated.

Rapidly, Pinnacle became the subject of murky persecutions. The colonial government committed acts of violence against Howell. The revolutionary nature of his radical instruction and the cultivation of cannabis, deemed as a dangerous drug, seen one of the worst attacks toward the British system. Police raided Pinnacle multiple times. They arrested several Rastas. In 1954, a major raid occurred that radically weakened the community. A successive raid in 1958 was even more destructive: the police totally destroyed Pinnacle, causing an exodus of Rastas throughout Jamaica and forcing hundreds to settle into the slums.

From the start of his movement, and through the tribulations of societal and governmental cruelty, Howell never lost sight of the central importance, and responsibility, of enhancing the people's minds through culture. In line with the founder of cultural anthropology, Edward Burnett Taylor, Howell felt that culture was a significant medium by way of which people could be convinced, and emboldened, to liberate themselves from physical and mental servitude for the creation of identity, because "culture gives you designs for living and patterns of interpreting reality."[18]

Rastafari is an anti-colonial and Pan-Africanist movement centered on the divination of Emperor Haile Selassie I. It together offers a meaningful cultural outlet and a constructive release from oppressive social and psychological conditions. Taken as a way of life without dogma or strict boundaries, Ennis Edmonds, professor of religious studies, author of a few essays on Rastafari and interviewed for the documentary, stresses that there is "a distinctive ethos" of the movement,[19] into which the level of participation is variable and attractive for many, especially those who are wary of constraining

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

hierarchical structures. The most significant is that each adherent builds and fashions one's own lifestyle according to a common sense of evil and a common sense of identity.[20] Regardless that Rastafari was fiercely disavowed during its initial stages, throughout the years it has grown into a movement that sustains itself.

RASTA LIFESTYLE

The following conversation reveals how there were significant interconnections between the behaviors of Afro-Jamaicans and Indians that ultimately led to the Rasta lifestyle. All of the elements are encoded with symbolic significance. The components of culture are known as cultural universals: symbols, language, values, and norms. Human beings in social life create a reality of meaning and transform the elements into symbols to identify to others.

Cuisine & I-tal food

How does one explain that Rastas came to follow a natural diet? There was no emphasis on organic food in the period of enslavement, and yet *I-tal food*, a diet of natural unprocessed foods, is central to the Rasta way of life.

The knowledge about enslaved Africans' diet is often lacking in micro details. Nonetheless, it is known that on the plantations, the food regimen was pretty much fixed. The enslaved Africans were given a steady diet of salted meat and fish. Notwithstanding that the Jamaican soils were highly fertile, plantation owners were so eager to maximize profits from sugar and bananas that they preferred to import victuals rather than lose land by growing food. It is very unlikely that there would have been a large group of vegetarians among enslaved Africans. The food was so limited that they received what was around. Every now and then, they were permitted small gardens to grow food but these were not large enough to subsist. Only a few products supplemented their diet.

The diet of Indian indentured workers was highly inspired by Indian cuisine in spite of the limited variety of fruits, pulses, vegetables, and spices (tamarind, ginger, turmeric, black pepper, and cloves) available in Jamaica. Roti, rice, and vegetables were part of the daily meal, spiced with chutney and pickle.[21] Indian cultivations during the indentureship period were prosperous and various.

Contextualization plays a crucial role in cultural transfer research. The fascination of Howell with Hindu practices and the rejection of colonial demeanors would have resulted in cultural transfer and given rise to a new coherence: the Rasta dietary standard. Rejecting and repudiating the oppressive British

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

rules and cultural image of White behaviors, the natural plant-based cuisine of Indian cultures became an opportunity for Rastas. The Rastafari cuisine is undoubtedly the result of interactions between Afro-Jamaicans and Indians after 1845.

Today, most Rastas would say that their dietary practices are related to a legacy of African ways. And yet, Indian immigrants to Africa, particularly in South Africa, brought vegetarianism with them, an exchange that has been documented as far back as 1895.[22] In a personal interview, Monty Howell spells out that even though his father could have eaten meat, he was promoting a plant-based diet by reason that all types of crops could be grown on Pinnacle's fertilized land.

Rastas have adopted vital cuisine based on Indian practices, revealing the hybrid and composite nature of the cultural phenomena of Rastafari. In the landscape of *Dreadlocks Story*, cultural transfer constructs a bridge between research approaches of diverse origin. As for Hindus, in essence, for Rastas it is the same: you are what you eat.

Ganja

The famous quote of Hippocrates (460–370 BC) "Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food" has found resonance within the Rastafari movement. One regularly summons it, stretching the notion up to the cannabis plant. Known as a medicinal herb in the provenance of India, the use of cannabis in Jamaica is doubtless the result of Indian influences and Hindu rituals.[23]

Cannabis use has a long history in Hindu practices as a sacrament. This is arguably where Rastas borrowed the usage with a focus on spiritual redemption. Between 1300 and 1400 BCE in India, before the introduction of smoking, the cannabis plant was roasted, then chewed while referring to the deity Indra. It was tenuously suggested that the plant appeared in the *Atharva Veda* (perhaps 1000 BCE), a Vedic hymn, as one of the "five kingdoms of plants having *Soma* as their Chief." In the Vedas, *Soma* is the beverage called after the cannabis plant, the Nectar of Gods, also named "Indra food." A source of happiness, a liberator, it contains formidable healing proprieties. The emergence of Hinduism slowly has provided a critical sacramental status to the *Soma* beverage, henceforward called *Bhang,* becoming a component of the ascetic ritual structure. Although the use of intoxicants is an individual matter, it generally shared among all the Sadhus.

Cannabis is seen as a gateway to understanding, a source of inspiration, a meditative tool, conduit to mystical experiences, and part of a sacrament in Rastafari; Sadhus perceive and use it in much the same way.

With a congenial humor, Akshai Mansingh affirms that the usage of cannabis by Rastas demonstrates the cultural transfer stemmed from interactions

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

with Indians: "Ganja was legal in Jamaica until the 1920s, and it was primarily used by Indians. Therefore, it was not a social problem. The biggest mistake that took place was when Afro–Jamaicans started smoking Ganja, and Indians started to drinking alcohol. All hell broke loose, but that's a different issue!"

Rastas today defend the blessings of cannabis as a part of the Tree of Life mentioned in the Bible. Plenty of them refute its origins in the cultural transfer from Indian practices. Moreover, Rastas' use of cannabis is an individual matter. It often involves the sharing of a pipe or joint, creating the performance of a spiritual practice and serving as a focus for the maintenance of Rasta identity and social relationships. It is exactly reflective of how the Sadhus' use of Ganja encompasses their identity and tightens their social connections.

The erroneous appropriation of the use and meaning of Hindu words to name cannabis is quite eloquent to ascertain an Indian influence on the Rasta usage of this plant. "They called the most important form of Ganja as Kali, because they were confused when they heard the word. Kali and Kalī (Kalee). Two are very different. The bud of the flower is called Kalī (Kalee). Kali is the goddess, Kali" expounds Ajai Mansingh in facing the camera.

Although the Hindu origins of Ganja have been forgotten in Rastafari, the similarities within the rituals are apparent. Cannabis opens up the mind to be cognizant of the connection between oneself and God. This plant became the primary sacrament of Rastas while its ritualized smoking is paramount to their way of life. It is more than likely that the Rasta tendency for smoking cannabis is rooted in the culture of Indian workers. Indians consumed cannabis in *chillum* pipes or *bhang* preparation (often beverage), traditions that have been well-settled into Rastafari since then.

Indentured workers were known to smoke the cannabis plant, as it calmed them and amounted to a small form of resistance against the British. In a similar fashion the Rastas, according to Mickael Barrett,[24] first began using cannabis as a reaction to the oppression of Blacks in Jamaican society, assessing that it helped free one's mind from the power of the Establishment.

Dreadlocks

"Even the physical appearance of Rastafari, the dreadlocks can be traced back to influences from India" asserts Shepherd. For Ras Ossie Dellimore, the custom of growing hair naturally in India had started long before seeing people with it in the Caribbean: "that's why Yogis (Sadhus) live a lifestyle which looks similar to Rasta lifestyle." Ras Arthur Newland declares: "how looking at a photo book of Sadhus in the Himalayas was as looking into the face of Rastafari for all intents and purposes. Some of them look like Rastamen that

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

I know here in Jamaica. Then, I looked again and I said: "No, man, these are all face of Sadhus in the Himalayas."

The visual argument of Sadhus and Rastas wearing matted hair is indisputable. In a rich informative article illustrated with a photo of Sadhu taken in Jamaica in the 1910s,[25] Ajai Mansingh mentions how the original Rastas called their long intertwined hair *Zatavi* before the word "dreadlocks" was formulated. In *One Love: Rastafari History, Doctrine and Livity,* Jah Bones reminisces how with a couple of friends, they had not only invented the word "dreadlocks" in a Jamaican yard in 1959, preferred instead of *fear-locks*,[26] but also how since then the word "dreadlocks" has been adopted in Rastafari.

The guardians at Pinnacle slowly let their hair grow naturally to scare off potential thieves as well as to express their total freedom in the face of the successive authoritarian attacks operated upon the community. Until those violent attacks, Howell suggested to his followers to not stand out; the first Rastas did not wear long matted hair. These later guardians' long hair was a sign of protection, a rebellion against the Establishment norm of short hair, and a symbol of unity with nature.

Uncombed hair emerged as a more popular practice once Pinnacle had been wholly burnt out. Being scattered around the island, Rastas started wearing dreadlocks to defend and distance themselves from all forms of brutal and despotic attitudes. Wearing dreadlocks gained more popularity during the 1960s and 1970s when it acquired an even more prominent anti-establishment status. They appeared as a sign of riposte, a means of defiance and a channel of protection in ghettos. Ras Arthur Newland proclaims in the movie:

> Dreadlocks' appearance then became a symbol of dissonance, of disagreement, of opposition to and order that was still deeply founded in the racism of the Slave colonial period. So the dreadlocks was really a way of saying: We are not like you and don't want to be! And we, by our very appearance, are intent on discommoding you, so long as you represent an order that marginalizes and silences us.

Christian Bromberger, a French Anthropologist who completed extensive research on cultural hair significance, reiterates: "Rastas have utterly become aware of the importance that hair has in conveying a message: a message of identity protestation, a message of revolt, a message of being outside the Establishment." Dreadlocks accordingly solidify Rastas' identity as a manifestation of difference, ingrained as rebels. They express a discontent building upon a culture of resistance. The consciousness of Rastafari forges an identity that triggered a dramatic cultural change, stamped with rejecting normative social conventions and physical markings to represent the history of struggle, survival and contention.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

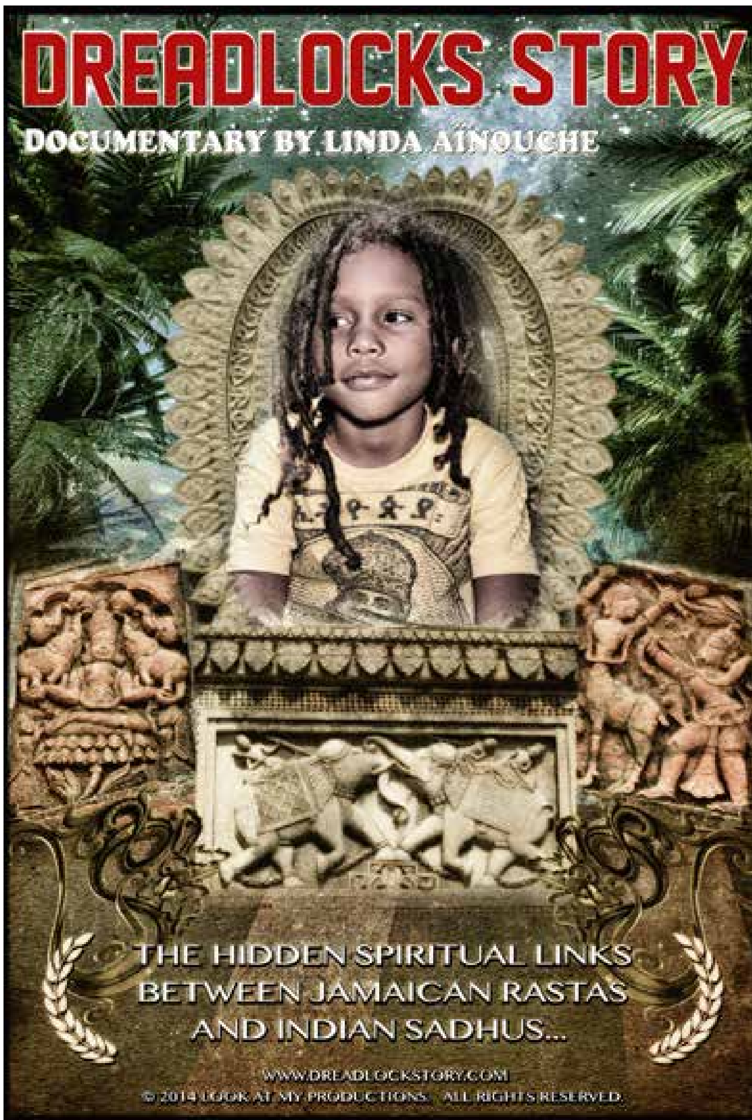


Figure 6.2 Official Poster of Dreadlocks Story documentary. Its World Premiere Screening occurred in Amsterdam, the Netherlands in December 2014. www.dreadlock-story.com. *Source*: Credit: Linda Aïnouche.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Wearing long matted hair is not a prerequisite for one to embrace Rastafari. Dreadlocks represent central principles of Rastafari—not interfering with nature, the idea of lack of restriction, autonomy, deliverance, emancipation, independence, liberty, freedom, release, self-government and forsaken social activities. As with smoking cannabis and eating natural food, Sadhus and Rastas engage in these behaviors as representative of their belief systems even though these usages, neither Hinduism nor Rastafari, require these behaviors as dogma.

Confusing theories without convincing arguments on wearing dreadlocks have surfaced over the years. Their emphasis has tended to ignore significant aspects of Indian culture, particularly the institution of renunciation. Rastas and various scholars speak of the hairstyle in such a way as to trace it back to Africa. They emphasize the image of the African warriors who represent the ideal of defiance in Jamaica. Rastas glorify what they consider to be the African origins of dreadlocks: (1) the mane of the lion in the Lion of Judah, which was made the royal symbol of Haile Selassie I, (2) referencing the Nazarites of the Bible, and (3) the hairstyle of the Masai tribesmen of Kenya, weaved in thinly braided strands.[27] In the line of the Mansinghs' report and Bromberger's research, it is noteworthy that the shape of hair does not imply what hair means.[28] Men with locked hair existed in Jamaica before the emergence of Rastafari in 1930 and the move Back-to-Africa movement. The tradition of wearing locked hair in Rastafari seems purely Jamaican in origin and adopted from the Hindu indentured workers as well as from the pictures of Sadhus and Shiva which used to be in Hindu homes.

There has not yet been a conclusive investigation proving that Rastas were directly inspired by African cultures in their wearing of dreadlocks. There is, however, a strong possibility that they were inspired by Sadhus' hair that they saw in Jamaica. Most Rastas now relate the wearing of dreadlocks back to African roots. The tendency to deny the Indian connection is strong. This may not be due to a denial of Indian influence, but instead, a lack of awareness; the knowledge on India was in its infancy. The connection remains unquestionably powerful: Jata for Sadhus mark their freedom and detachment from normative society when dreadlocks for Rastas ensure their fight against dominating society and imposed behaviors.

Creed & Spirituality

At the turn of the twentieth century, those who arrived in Jamaica from India, particularly Hindus, maintained a unique mindset. They brought with them new cultural practices, while the island grappled with domination, oppression, authority, discrimination, depression, and poverty. Jamaica at that time was in the social and cultural emergency of recreating itself. Hinduism had been present in Jamaica for almost an entire century prior to the coronation of

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Haile Selassie I in 1930. Ajai Mansingh bears out that Rastafari was so possible in Jamaica in the wake of contacts with Indians who were more recently arrived in Jamaica than as those of African descent. This point of view is not supported as one of the most resonant in Rastafari studies, but remains one of the most palpable cultural trends in the movement; as such, it should demand more attention from those who study the Rasta phenomenon.

Hinduism is a complex system of beliefs, holding that at the core of all human beings and living creatures, there is an eternal, innermost, essential, and absolute something called a soul, the self that is divine (*Atman*). Hindus operate in a system whereby the human being can become divine, if he lives well, and through rituals and sacraments create a communion with God. According to Ajai Mansingh, Hindus had created a niche in the Afro-Jamaican psyche of an African God incarnated, in seeing God everywhere and in everyone, as an immortal soul.

Reincarnation is an evolutionary process made up of ten stages based upon the logical notion that life on earth did not emerge suddenly but evolved gradually. It started with fish and ended with human forms who have been taken in Hindu mythology as God incarnated. Hindus cherish the belief that all souls reincarnate, evolving through experience over long periods of time. Death does not end existence but frees each soul to pursue an even greater development. When Haile Selassie I was crowned emperor, some viewed him as God incarnated, the God of Africa, eternal and immortal.

In the word of Ajai Mansingh, the Afro-Jamaican definition of spirituality is similar to the Hindu definition of spirituality: "raise yourself above all man-made distinctions, seek oneness with each other and then with the Creator." The Afro-Jamaican people found a couple of features in the Indian culture that impressed and inspired them: (1) the Independence of God, (2) the Soul is divine, and (3) God pervades everything that is created.

Rastas give credence that at the core of each individual there is a divine self. This is accurately the initial teaching of Howell who alleged that all sons of slaves were not slaves, but children of God.

Assembling all these facts, Mansingh endorses that "Afro-Jamaicans found a new religion, which now has Haile Selassie, their own name, their rituals adopted from Hindus and the nature worship." Meanwhile, Rastas have faith in a heterogeneity of beliefs, which pervades the philosophy of Rastafari. They regard themselves as the genuine Israelites, exemplified by their adherence to Old Testament laws. Haile Selassie I is the Living God, The Black person is the reincarnation of ancient Israel, who, at the hand of the White person, has been in exile in Jamaica. If some Rastas take these beliefs literally, others interpret them with more nuances.

This precursory investigation into Hinduism and Rastafari brought a lot of troubles to Laxmi and Ajai Mansingh in the early age of their work on

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Indian presence in Jamaica. Today, it still fails to inspire a lot of researchers but the belligerence is not on the agenda anymore. This process of cultural transfer is not yet fully recognized by Rastas and in Rastafari studies, on one hand, possibly due to a lack of knowledge on Hinduism and Indian migration culture in the West Indies, and the other hand definitely due to the desire of Rastas to maintain a fusion with a latently rooted African identity. Some sparse research has been published from the late 1950s, especially since the 1980s; however, a wide array of information about Indians in Jamaica and their experiences being relocated by the British to the Caribbean remains largely unexplored.

Rastas concede themselves, primarily, as the descendants of Africans. And it is in the light of the African cultural background and subsequent historical experiences that Rastafari has attracted people since its emergence. Rastas still continue to face local and international predicaments. Though Rastafari prevails to be a lifestyle which everyone is free to plug into for different convictions, the consciousness of one's divine identity remains.

Rastafari is not a homogenous movement with the ability to regulate the beliefs and behaviors of its members, determined to fashion an identity based on the hatred of a White conspiracy and the re-appropriation of an African heritage.[29] Rastafari marks a distinctive development in Afro-Jamaicans' struggle for self-definition and self-identity. For that reason, Rastas define their identity as Black people, united to Africa and connected to Emperor Selassie I.

While some are repulsed by the ideas of Indian influence, others are aware of its presence in Jamaica, but often they do not avow that Rastafari could have arisen from a historical and forced encounter between Africa and Asia as a result of hegemonic and homogenizing British imperialism. It is possibly troubling to grant that, among others, African descendants owe a part of their socialization to Hindu characteristics. Rastas defend a positive affirmation of Africa as the source of their heritage enlivened by the symbolic coronation of Haile Selassie I. But, as Edmonds calls to mind: "a lot of what African descendants try to recreate is a mythic Africa, not necessarily the historical or contemporary Africa." Religion is about making myths. Mythology expresses a culture's worldview related to a timing environment: that is, a people's conceptions and assumptions about humankind's place in nature and the universe, and the limits and workings of the natural and spiritual world. In this sense, Jalani Niaah, lecturer at UWI, probes "that the Movement may be understood as a religio-pedagogy, by which is meant a system to link the knowledge of self-empowerment."[30] In Jamaica, the struggles of the African diaspora are best exemplified by essential positions and elements that fed the Rasta movement: Marcus Garvey, Afro-Christianity and Ethiopianism.[31] The crowning of Haile Selassie I in Ethiopia signified the appearance of the

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

messiah who would restore the glories of Ethiopia (Africa) and liberate all of its children who had been dispersed by colonialism. He was a key in the rise of rediscovery and re-appropriation of Africa in the expansion of the Rasta movement. Looking to Africa (Ethiopia) serves to give the Rastas a sense of common identity.

Rather than solely exploring the corresponding rituals between Hinduism and Rastafari, *Dreadlocks Story* aims to reveal that Sadhus had aroused Rastas to seek a similar goal in their conception of normative society. Their perpetual common existence in a symbolic state placed both, Sadhus and Rastas, in a marginal cultural space, existing in polar opposition to the rest of their respective societies.[32] This documentary contributes to the assertion that the links between Hinduism and Rastafari cultures show a powerful symbol of perseverance and persistence against all forms of enchainment as well as a stand for an idiosyncratic individuality of oneness.

AFTERWORD

British colonists ruled in Jamaica until 1962 and in India until 1947. Slavery ended in Jamaica in 1838 whereas the Indian indentureship system was run on the island from 1845 to 1917. Both Afro-Jamaicans and Indians were kidnapped and sent to work on plantations throughout Jamaica where they created positive relationships through their common hardships. The desire of the British to colonize numerous nations around the world eventually led to the intermingling of a wide array of cultures.

The documentary *Dreadlocks Story* exhibits the strength and magnificence of a movement grounded in anti-slavery and anti-imperialist struggles. It is dual gazes at cross-cultures and at the same times a reflection on the belief that colonialism is an immoral system, a harmful atrocity for all. The Rastafari movement is one of resistance—and at its core, the film aims to show people that in the face of adversity there is still hope, beauty, and the possibility of something new. Three components have been unreservedly shown: the Rasta movement's own internal development of an ethos, the correspondence of Rastafari and Hinduism, and the rapprochement between Asian Indian and those of African descent in the wider Jamaican history.

As an anthropologist, I foremost had a duty to unveil human experiences. I intended to reveal how the content of the film was induced by the people with whom I spoke and my relationships with them. The film brings to light the notion of the sea voyage of African and Asian descendants, central in both cases, as a traumatic and regenerating experience. Under the horrors and burdens of slavery, forced migration, oppression and persecution, Indians and Afro-Jamaicans, treated as "objects," committed to creating a new

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

form of self-expression and founding a new vision of identity that led to a transcultural awareness. I have first touched upon some of the difficulties in confronting an "anthropology of lifestyle." I secondly questioned Sadhus and Rastas to know what they have to say about the matters of conduct. *Dreadlocks Story* excavates the history of the people at the societal margins who provided the catalyst for the inception of the Rastafari movement, the original and unique way of life arising from the cultural mixing between the sons of African slaves, and African and Indian forced workers "under contracts" on the plantations. The role played by Indians in Jamaica further reminds that abducted people in the Caribbean have not come only from Africa. The vile organized system of labor export from India to Jamaica depended upon three factors: (1) It happened in the aftermath of the end of slavery, yet African descendants were also included; (2) It procured a means of supply that workers could satisfy; (3) It echoed the ethical and economic beliefs of the British that needed to be contented. While some persons protested, most Indians did not refuse to obey or did not revolt against the treatment inflicted on them by their "employers." Cases of protestations in Jamaica were isolated and insignificant. Their survival depended largely on their own powers of resilience. Despite the little work that has previously covered the whole field of the indentureship system in Jamaica, there are several studies of Indian communities in different territories and historical accounts of different aspects of the migration that have been an enormous help in carrying out the research for *Dreadlocks Story.*

The connected influences between Asians and Africans, Sadhus and Rastas, involve disagreements. In spite of the fact that modern Rastafari relies heavily on Christianity, Hinduism has a profound influence on its inherent mysticism, and not in the least, in its reverence for all things in their natural state. Leonard Percival Howell concocted a syncretic tradition including political, social and religious movements present in Jamaica before the genesis of Rastafari, associated with the fact that Sadhus had a presence across the country during its formative years.

The social acceptance of Indian culture in Rastafari raises points and counterpoints. If socialization is the process by which society achieves cultural continuity and perpetuates itself, then it is counterproductive to exclude elements of Hinduism from the framework that is to be imparted to Rastafari posterity. The historical documentation is significant enough that it would have been a grave missing to not show the relationship on film.

If it were not for British Colonial rule, Hindu culture, and a myriad of other global factors, dreadlocks might have never existed and been worn by Rastas. Dreadlocks are often misunderstood. There is a multifaceted history behind them. They embody the tenacity against the most atrocious system that human beings have had to face. They intrinsically illustrate a propensity toward

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

social resistance. Marginalized and battered by the brutish circumstances of their lives, people, Rastas, made the most of their situation, surviving as best they could, transforming a rebellious spirit into a redemptive universe.

A hundred years after the end of slavery, the peoples of African descent remained the exploited and marginalized citizens of their homeland. Slavery's physical shackles had been removed, but the majority of the island's people still bore the scars. The birth of Rastafari did not destroy all the wrongs that bedeviled Jamaican society, but it was surely a good beginning.

NOTES

1. Before embarking upon the discussion, I owe a considerable credit to the large production team, up to 40 members of which are located in India, in Jamaica, in France and in the United States, who have agreed to collaborate on this challenging film project.

2. Hispaniola is the current double country-island formed by Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Hispaniola was discovered by Columbus in 1492, then was colonized by the Spaniards, who ceded the western part (now Haiti) to France in 1697. Haiti became independent in 1804, marking the first Black republic in the world. The Dominican Republic, on the eastern part of the island, was formed in 1844.

3. Planters also attempted to recruit Africans freed from the slave trade in the British colony of Sierra Leone (1808–1961). The number of Africans in the new indentured migrations was quite modest in comparison to those from India. And, under the conditions of emancipation, the African former slaves were bound as apprentices to their old masters for a period of seven years (subsequently shortened to four years).

4. Hugh Tinker's pioneering work entitled *A New System of Slavery* was the first to recast the overseas Indian laborer as a subject of academic study in the early 1970s. His title alone revealed his sentiments and sparked numerous other studies that, like Tinker, emphasized deception in recruitment and slave-like working conditions. Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery the Export of Indian Labour Overseas 1830–1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), 18.

5. "Coolies" was the stereotype at first used by colonial officials to designate Indians in an offensive and unjustified term. For many years, the "coolies" were a symbol of economic degradation and social submissiveness. The descendants of Indians for a long time felt themselves to be equally stigmatized, exoticized and ostracized. The term was officially forbidden in Jamaica in the 1950s.

6. Indentureship was declared at an end in 1917 and legally abolished in 1920. Mahatma Gandhi intervened to end this abominable system that worked with all kind of abuses, but ultimately, most Indians had to stay in Jamaica or go to another island in the Caribbean. A few of them returned home and this only from 1921 onward.

7. Edward Seaga, "Revival Cults in Jamaica," *Jamaica Journal* 3 no. 2 (1969); Mansingh, Laxmi and Ajai, "The Impact of East Indians of Jamaican Religious Thoughts and Expressions," *Caribbean Journal of Religious Studies* 10, no. 2 (1989).

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

8. Laxmi and Ajai Mansingh, *Home Away From Home: 150 Years of Indian Presence in Jamaica* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publications, 1999): 1.

9. Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery The export of Indian Labour Overseas 1830–1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974): 123.

10. Laxmi and Ajai Mansingh, *Home Away From Home,* 2.

11. Richard Burghart, *Indian Religions* (London: Curzon Press, 1985).

12. At that time, newspapers reported on this new unexpected friendship which started with the arrival of Indians. Laxmi and Ajai Mansingh, "The Impact of East Indians of Jamaican Religious Thoughts and Expressions," 40.

13. The invocation and celebration of Ethiopia by Africans and peoples of African descent derives its legitimacy from biblical verses.

14. Jalani Niaah, "Sensitive Scholarship: A Review of Rastafari Literature(s)," *Caribbean Quarterly. Cultural Studies Initiative* (2008).

15. The original version, written and printed in French in 1999, is called *Le Premier Rasta*. Paris: Flammarion.

16. Laxmi and Ajai Mansingh. "The Impact of East Indians of Jamaican Religious Thoughts and Expressions," 48–49.

17. Robert Hill, "Leonard P. Howell and Millienarian Visions in Early Ras Tafari," *Jamaica Journal* 16, no. 1 (1983): 38–39.

18. On the first page of *Primitive Culture* (1871), Taylor provides a definition which is one of his most widely recognized contributions to anthropology and the study of religion: "Culture, or civilization, taken in its broad, ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom* (New York: Gordon Press 1974[1871]). Leahcim Semaj, "Rastafari: From Religion to Social Theory, Rastafari," *Caribbean Quarterly* (1985): 23.

19. Ennis Barrington Edmonds, *Rastafari: From Outcasts to Culture Bearers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003): 67.

20. Ibid., 72.

21. Laxmi and Ajai Mansingh, "Indian Heritage in Jamaica," *Jamaica Journal* 10 no. 2/4 (1976): 16 & 18. Mansingh, Laxmi and Ajai, *Home Away From Home,* 62.

22. John Charles Hawley, ed., *India in Africa, Africa in India*: *Indian Ocean Cosmopolitanisms* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2008).

23. Before officially being banned in 1913, the cannabis plant grew freely in the provision lands and plantations, and was used without much intervention.

24. Leonard Barrett, Sr., *The Rastafarians: The Dreadlocks of Jamaica* (Kingston: Sangster's Book Stores, 1977).

25. "A survey of all pre-1930 photographs and paintings at the National Library of Jamaica has failed to provide any evidence of Afro-Jamaican "locksmen." Laxmi and Ajai Mansingh. "Hindu Influences in Rastafarianism," *Caribbean Quarterly. Rastafari: A Monograph* (2000).

26. Jah Bones, *One Love: Rastafari History, Doctrine and Livity* (Kingston: Voice of Rasta, 1985): 30–31.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

27. Horace Campbell, *Rasta and Resistance: From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rodney* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1987): 42; Ennis Barrington Edmonds, "Dread 'I' In-a-Babylon: Ideological Resistance and Cultural Revitalization," *Chanting down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader,* edited by Nathaniel Samuel Murrell, William David Spencer, and Adrian Anthony McFarlane (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press 1998): 31–32; Adrian Anthony McFarlane, "Epistemological Significance of 'I-an-I' as a Response to Quashie and Anancysim in Jamaican Culture," *Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader,* edited by Nathaniel Samuel Murrell, William David Spencer and McFarlane Adrian Anthony (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1998): 115; Neil Savishinsk, "African Dimensions of the Jamaican Rastafarian Movement," *Chanting down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader,* edited by Nathaniel Samuel Murrell, William David Spencer, and Adrian Anthony McFarlane (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press,1998): 133.

28. Laxmi and Ajai Mansingh, "Hindu Influences in Rastafarianism"; Christian Bromberger, *Trichologiques. Une Anthropologie des cheveux et des poils* (Paris: Bayard, 2010).

29. Clinton Hutton and Nathaniel Samuel Murrell, "Rastas' Psychology of Blackness, Resistance, and Somebodiness," in *Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader,* ed. Nathaniel Samuel Murrel, William David Spencer, and Adrian Anthony McFarlane (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1998): 40–49.

30. Jalani Niaah, "Sensitive Scholarship: A Review of Rastafari Literature(s)," *Caribbean Quarterly. Cultural Studies Initiative* (2008): 74.

31. Ethiopianism is an Afro-Atlantic literary-religious tradition that emerged out of the shared political and religious experiences of Africanism in the aftermath of British colonies during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It is the movement of the people of Ethiopian/African descent at Home and in the Diaspora. It is non-classist, non-confessional, non-irredentist and non-colonial. It is a project of a kingdom in the land of internal or external exile.

32. Prior to 1960, the relationship between Rastas and society was resistance/ repression. Since the 1970s, Rastafari passed through the phase of accommodation/ assimilation and has today become the object of cooptation and commodification.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adderley, Rosanne Marion. *New Negroes from Africa: Slave Trade Abolition and Free African Settlement in the Nineteenth-Century Caribbean*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006.

Aïnouche, Linda. *Le don chez les Jains en Inde*. Paris: Harmattan, Recherches Asiatiques, 2012.

Barnett, Michael, ed. *Rastafari in the New Millennium: A Rastafari Reader*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2012.

Barrett, Leonard E. Sr. *The Rastafarians: The Dreadlocks of Jamaica*. Kingston: Sangster's Book Stores, 1977.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Berg, Charles. *The Unconscious Significance of Hair*. London: Goerge Allen and Unwin, 1951.

Bhagat, Mansukh Ghelabhai. *Ancient Indian Asceticism*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1976.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Press, 1984.

Bromberger, Christian. "Hair: From the West to the Middle East through the Mediterranean," *Journal of American Folklore* 121 (2008): 371–399.

———. *Trichologiques.Une Anthropologie des cheveux et des poils*. Paris: Bayard, 2010.

Burghart, Richard. *Indian Religions*. London: Curzon Press, 1985.

Campbell, Horace. *Rasta and Resistance: From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rodney*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1987.

Carter, Marina and Torabully Khal. *Coolitude. An Anthology of the Indian Labour Diaspora.* London: Anthem South Asian Studies Press, 2002.

Chakhraborti, Haripada. *Asceticism in ancient India, in Brahmanical, Buddhist, Jaina and Ajivika Societies from the Earliest to the Period of Sankaracharya.* Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1973.

Chevannes, Barry. *Ratafari: Roots and Ideology*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1994.

———, ed. *Rastafari and Other African Caribbean Worldviews*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998.

Clinton Hutton, Michael Barnett, D. A. Dunkley, and Jahlani Niaah, ed. *Leonard Percival Howell and the Genesis of Rastafari.* Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2015.

Deal, William and Beal Timothy. *Theory for Religious Studies*. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Derrett, Martin. "Religious Hair," *Man* 8, no. 1 (1973): 100–103.

Doniger, Wendy, ed. *Encyclopedia of World Religions*. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1999.

Dumont, Louis. "World Renunciation in Indian Religions," *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 4 (1960): 3–62.

Duvall, Chris. *Cannabis.* London: Reaktion Books, 2015.

Edmonds Ennis. "Dread 'I' In-a-Babylon: Ideological Resistance and Cultural Revitalization," *Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader,* edited by N. S. Murrell, W. D. Spenser, and A. A. McFarlane, 23–35. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1998.

———. *Rastafari: From Outcasts to Culture Bearers*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

———. *Rastafari, A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Forsythe, Dennis. *Rastafari: For the Healing of Nation.* Kingston: Zuka Publications, 1977.

———. "West Indian Culture Through the Prism of Rastafarianism," *Caribbean Quarterly*, Kingston: University of the West Indies (2008): 153–176.

French Version. *Le Premier Rasta*. Paris: Flammarion, 1999.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Gelder, Ken. *Subcultures: Cultural Histories and Social Practice*. London: Routledge, 2007.

Gross, Robert Lewis. *The Sadhus of India*. New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 1992.

Hamid, Ansley. *The Ganja Complex: Rastafari and Marijuana.* Oxford: Lexington Books, 2002.

Hartsuiker, Dolf. *Sadhus: Holy Men of India*. Singapore: Thames and Hudson, 1993.

Hawley, John, ed. *India in Africa, Africa in India, Indian Ocean Cosmopolitanisms.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008.

Hebdige, Dick. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. London: Routledge, 1979.

Hill, Robert. "Leonard P. Howell and Millienarian Visions in Early Rastafari," *Jamaica Journal* 16, no. 1 (1983): 24–39.

———. *Dread History: Leonard P. Howell and Millenarian Visions in the Early Rastafarian Religion*. Chicago: Research Associates School Times Publications, 2005.

Hutton, Clinton and Nathaniel Samuel Murrell. "Rastas' Psychology of Blackness, Resistance, and Somebodiness." In *Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader,* edited by Nathaniel Samuel Murrel, William David Spencer, and Adrian Anthony McFarlane, 36–55. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1998.

Jah Bones. *One love: Rastafari History, Doctrine and Livity*. Kingston: Voice of Rasta, 1985.

Jones, Dylan. *Coupes et looks: De la choucroute à la banane*. Paris: Robert Laffont, 1990.

Hiltebeitel, Afl and Barbara Miller, eds. *Hair. Its Power and Meaning in Asian Cultures*. Albany: State University of New York, 2008.

Lee, Hélène. *The First Rasta: Leonard Howell and the Rise of Rastafarianism*. Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2002.

Levi-Strauss, Claude. *The Savage Mind.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966.

Mansingh, Laxmi and Mansingh Ajai. "Indian Heritage in Jamaica," *Jamaica Journal* 10, no. 2/4 (1976): 10–20.

———. "Rastafarianism. The Indian Connection," *The Sunday Gleaner: Kingston* (July 18, 1982): 12 & 19.

———. "The Impact of East Indians of Jamaican Religious Thoughts and Expressions," *Caribbean Journal of Religious Studies* 12, no. 2 (1989): 36–52.

———. *Home Away From Home; 150 Years of Indian Presence in Jamaica*. Kingston: Ian Randle Publications, 1999.

———. "Hindu Influences in Rastafarianism," *Caribbean Quarterly. Rastafari: A Monograph* (2008): 105–135.

McFarlane, Adrian Anthony. "Epistemological Significance of 'I-an-I' as a Response to Quashie and Anancysim in Jamaican Culture." In *Chanting Down Babylon: The Ratsafari Reader,* edited by N. S. Murrell, W. D. Spenser, and A. A, McFarlane, 107–124. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1998.

Nettleford, Rex. *Identity, Race and Protest in Jamaica*. New York: William Morrow & Company, 1972.

———. *Introduction to Dread: The Rastafarians of Jamaica by Joseph Owens*. Montego Bay: Sangster's Book Store, 1976.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Nettleford Rex, Salter Veronica, eds. "Caribbean Quarterly," *A Journal of Caribbean Culture*, *Rastafari: A Monograph,* Kingston: University of the West Indies 46, no. 2 (2000): 4–13.

———. "Caribbean Quarterly." *A Journal of Caribbean Culture*, *Rastafari: A Monograph,* Kingston: University of the West Indies 54, no. 1–2 (2008): 55–71.

Niaah, Jalani. "Sensitive Scholarship: A Review of Rastafari Literature(s)," *Caribbean Quarterly. Cultural Studies Initiative* (2008): 73–100.

Nichols Terry. *Rastafari: A Way of Life.* Lebanon: Anchor Press, 1979.

Northrup, David. *Indentured Labor in the Age of Imperialism, 1834–1922*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

O'Flaherty, Wendy Doniger. *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Shiva*. London: Oxford University Press, 1973.

Owens, Joseph. *Dread the Rastafarians of Jamaica.* Montego Bay: Sangster's Book Store, 1976.

Rogizinski, Jan. *A Brief history of the Caribbean: From the Arawak and the Caribe to the Present.* New York City: Penguin, 1999.

Savishinsky, Neil. "African Dimensions of the Jamaican Rastafarian Movement." In *Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader,* edited by N. S. Murrell, W. D. Spenser, and A. A. McFarlane, 125–144. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1998.

Seaga, Edward, "Revival Cults in Jamaica," *Jamaica Journal* 3, no.2 (1969): 3–13.

Semaj, Leahcim. " Rastafari: From Religion to Social Theory, Rastafari," *Caribbean Quarterly,* Kingston, (1985): 22–31.

Shepherd, Verene and B. Brereton. *Transients to Settlers: The Experience of Indians in Jamaica, 1845–1950.* Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 1994.

———. *Engendering History. Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995.

———. *Maharani's Misery: Narratives of a Passage from India to the Caribbean*. Kingston: The University of the West Indies Press, 2002.

Siddhantashastree, Rabindra K. *Saivism Through the Ages*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1974.

Tinker, Hugh. *A New System of Slavery The Export of Indian Labour Overseas 1830–1920.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974.

Tripathi, Bansi Dhar. *Sadhus of India: The Sociological View*. Varanasi: Pilgrims Publishers, 2007.

Tylor, Edward Burnett. *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom.* New York: Gordon Press, 1974 [1871].

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Part III

BODIES, GENDERS, AND IDENTITIES

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Interlude III

Kathleen López

The Afro-Asian connection is perhaps nowhere more in/visible than in the body, a site of history, memory, resistance, reconciliation, cultural fusion, and creation. The chapters in this section offer alternate readings of Afro-Asian intimacies that complicate stereotypes of the *mulata* figure and of Asian males.

In Cuba, the figure of the *mulata* is recognized as a symbol of the Cuban national mother through its fusion of black and white. Dania Abreu-Torres offers a close reading of the mulata body in the Cuban prerevolutionary era through Mayra Montero's novel *Como un mensajero tuyo* (translated as *The Messenger*). Montero positions the Afro-Chinese mulata at the center of her narrative of Cuban history, memory, and identity. The main character Aida Petrinera Cheng's body is infused with the spirituality of both African-derived *orishas* and Chinese *babalawos*, becoming a site of reconciliation for Cuba's multiple pasts. As a diasporic subject writing about prerevolutionary Cuba, Montero presents alternatives to mixed-race identities as represented by the Cuban revolution, which subsumed discussions about race to ongoing struggles against foreign imperialism and class inequality. She explores the nuances of Cuban identity as it intersects with race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. To add to these complexities, Aida's daughter Enriqueta confronts silences as she investigates the gaps in her mother's life story in the Barrio Chino. This quagmire is one encountered by descendants of Chinese Cubans today who seek to restore a history that has been buried by revolution and decay. It is through the present generation's efforts that the Chinese component of the Cuban nation can be restored.

Mulataje, formed as a reaction to dominant ideologies of national and cultural belonging, has the potential to resist colonialism and imperialism and to claim space for blacks. Taking us one step further, the Chinese mulata is

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

generative of new discourses within the broad category of Afro-Cuban religion. Colonial Spanish authorities did not expect Chinese coolies to stay, and they were even less prepared for the inevitable racial mixing among Chinese males and local women. Martin Tsang notes that the participation of Chinese, especially female practitioners, has made a permanent imprint on Afro-Cuban spirituality. From the perspective of the Lukumí religion, the Afro-Chinese mulata (*or la mulata achinada*) deviates from the trope of exotic seductress that prevails in Cuban popular culture. Tsang presents an Afro-Chinese mulataje that focuses instead on wisdom and spiritual power.

The fictional character Aida Petrinera Cheng and the female practitioners of Chinese-Afro-Cuban religious traditions are the product of unions between Chinese fathers and mothers of African descent, a pattern occurring throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Chinese men were stereotyped as weak and effeminate, but also malicious and self-serving. Anne-Marie Lee-Loy analyzes the portrayal of Asian men in recent West Indian fiction from Jamaica and Trinidad. The novels she discusses present some of the complex realities of Afro-Asian intimacies. The writers avoid "yellow peril" stereotypes of weak, effeminate, and sinister foreigners. Instead, the Chinese characters they create embody a nuanced femininity that undergirds meaningful relationships with black West Indian women. In this sense, the Chinese characters resist violent and oppressive colonial structures of masculinity based on domination of enslaved or indentured bodies. These structures of hypermasculinity continue through the period of independence into the Caribbean today. Set during the mid-twentieth-century independence movements in Jamaica and Trinidad, the novels present, on the one hand, a portrayal of Afro-Asian relationships grounded in everyday interactions, and on the other hand, an alternative to the role of men and masculinity in West Indian societies. Recent scholarship has debated the extent to which Asian immigrants—especially merchants—can be characterized as "settler colonials" who patterned their behavior on white elites, serving as middlemen for lower classes of immigrants and exploiting locals, including women. Evidence from the historical narratives suggests that the nuanced picture in these novels played out through Chinese shopkeepers caring for neighborhood children and entering long-term partnerships with black Caribbean women.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Chapter 7

Body of Reconciliation

Aida Petrinera Cheng's Journey in Como un mensajero tuyo *by Mayra Montero*

Dania Abreu-Torres

Much has been written about Cuban-Puerto Rican writer Mayra Montero's novel *Como un mensajero tuyo* (*The Messenger*).[1] Many studies on the novel, for example those by Yvette Fuentes[2] and Luisa Marcela Ossa,[3] focus on the Caribbean spirituality that is mixed throughout the narration, a syncretism of santería, Regla de Ocha and Chinese beliefs in SanFanCón. Others, such as Jorge Marbán[4] and Dolores Alcaide Ramírez,[5] have called attention to the different intertextualities that construct the novel, from the use of Giuseppe Verdi's opera *Aída*, to Lydia Cabrera's ethnographical accounts *El monte* (1954) and *La Laguna Sagrada de San Joaquín* (1973). Continuously in the narrative, reality and fiction are negotiated, and, though these topics are still in need of a deeper historical analysis (especially due to new research coming out on Chinese-Cubans) my objective on this article is to shift the focus of the context to the person in context: the main character, Aida Petrinera Cheng.

Spirituality and intertextualities are experienced through Aida's body as she moves in her Cuban life in Havana. Both African and Chinese influences take root in her, as she is the goddaughter and daughter of two important babalawos, one from Regla de Ocha and, the other, from Chinese Santería. Aida calls herself a "mulata-china," evoking the mythical mulata, but adding a new postmodern and postcolonial twist in the traditional Caribbean mulata representation as Mother-Nation. Aida's body becomes a fetish for the decadent Enrico Caruso and her community, very similar to what Doris Sommer establishes in her book *Foundational Fictions* (Sommer 1991),[6] as Aida and Caruso represent a potential romantic couple that may bring a son or daughter as the future of the nation. However, and following Josephine Lee's article "Bodies, Revolutions, and Magic: Cultural Nationalism and

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Racial Fetishism," Aida is also a racial body that transforms in her cultural nationalism "as a ritualized enactment that would bring forth the 'true' self."[7] By pressing on difference and diversity, the racial body will be able to transform its surroundings and be a fetish, a transformational center, which would

> be rebellious and subversive, their extreme demonstration of dress, hair, language, and movement a direct affront to the erasure of racial difference. . . . [A]lso meant to be redemptive, to link their users to powerful sources of power, pride and spirituality. The racialized body itself became a source of political and artistic "magic," a generative creativity that fuels both artist and activist with a sense of domestic and diasporic collective identity.[8]

This notion of the fetish as an "affront" and "redemptive" figure has its roots in Modernism and its yearning to renovate Occidental culture through the primitive and the exotic. Though racial differences in Modernism were "flattened out into a singular iconic spectacle of the exotic primitive,"[9] in *Como un mensajero tuyo*, Aida is not the fetish to be consumed—as Jean Baudrillard warns[10]—but the one that resists being consumed and, instead, becomes the repository of racial nuances that coexist in Cuba and that, until the novel's publication in 1998, had not been emphasized enough. Though Aida's power is constricted to her own story, she is able to transform her narrative, on her own terms, through the hand of her daughter Enriqueta.

Considering these two approaches of Aida's body as a mulata-china and a fetish, my objective is to analyze how she disrupts the traditional ideas of the mulata as a mythical Mother-Nation and object of desire, stripped from historicity, and how Montero's inscription of her avoids falling into the fetish ploy, the "fetishism of the signifier . . . [in which] the subject is trapped in the factitious, differential, encoded, systematized aspect of the object."[11] Through my analysis of Montero's narrative strategies, the main question to consider would be if the novel is successful in its goal to not fetishize Aida's body. By all means, Aida is not a traditional mulata nor is she separated from her historical development. However, the magic of Santería and Chinese beliefs surrounds her, and the colonial relationship with Caruso permeates throughout the narration. Still, I argue that it is Aida's agency that confronts these influences and allows her to distance herself from becoming just another myth, another fetishized body in the Caribbean. Instead, she may belong to a new historical process that enhances or amplifies, stretches or challenges Cuban definitions of race and racial influences.

My analysis of the novel will focus on two specific details of the story: Aida's self-awareness of her body giving her the agency necessary to break from the fetish rationality of passiveness, and Enriqueta's act of writing her

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

mother's testimony. It is through Enriqueta that Aida's torrid affair with Caruso is historicized, and therefore, does not stay in the realm of possible fantasy or fetishism. Rather, Enriqueta's writing depends on interviews and historical accounts of the affair. It is at this juncture of self-awareness, testimony and memory that the main question arises of whether Aida is successful in avoiding the fetish trap. I argue that, instead of a clear conclusion, there is a negotiation between self-awareness, testimony, and memory that through Aida is able to become a body of reconciliation.

THE CUBAN FETISH

The main plot of Mayra Monyero's *Como un mensajero tuyo* is based on Enrico Caruso's visit to Cuba in the summer of 1920, during which he performed various concerts around the island. While he was performing in the Teatro Nacional in Havana, a bomb exploded, causing commotion, confusion, and several accounts about what happened to Caruso and why the bomb exploded. Considering the multiple accounts of this event, Montero benefits from this historical silence and confusion to construct her narrative.

Aida's narration[12] starts with a revelation. It was foreseen by her babalawos—who are also her godfather and father, José Calazán and Yuan Pei Fu, respectively—that a man, Caruso, "will come to crown you and tell you that you are the queen of his thoughts."[13] This revelation triggered her senses and, when Caruso came into the Hotel Inglaterra after the bomb detonated while he was performing the opera *Aída*, she immediately knew who he was. Factually, it was reported that Caruso arrived in Havana on May 15, 1920, and he performed *Aída* on June 13 at the Teatro Nacional. After the bomb exploded, he ran from the theater still dressed in Radamés costumes. In the official reports, he was arrested due to "public indecency" and the Italian ambassador had to intervene; in other accounts, Caruso hid in the Hotel Sevilla and, for several days, went missing. According to Montero's imagination, in the novel, he hid in the kitchen of the Hotel Inglaterra, where he met a "mulatachina" with whom he had an affair. Eventually, she saved him from the Mano Negra, an Italian mob trying to kill him, and helped him to confront his imminent death against the odds given by her orishas. Aida and Caruso's encounter in the hotel was not only love at first sight, but was sailing in the Santería deities, Yemaya's water and SanFanCón's foresight. They were meant to be, but would not be able to remain together.

We, as readers, receive Aida's story through her daughter's written words. Too old and sick, Aida relies on Enriqueta to write her testimony about the passion and love she found in Caruso, and, also, to provide evidence of it.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Enriqueta, through interviews and other testimonies, is able to weave a narration that, though pristine in its presentation of the events, becomes chaotic in its corroboration. Following the theory of chaos that Antonio Benítez Rojo based his essays on his book *The Repeating Island*,[14] it comes to the reader to find the pattern that will provide sense and meaning to the novel. I suggest this pattern is on Aida's body and actions through it.

Aida's body representation is related to the construction of the mulata figure rooted in the Caribbean imaginary. This figure started to develop in Caribbean art and literature in the seventeenth century, but it was not until the literary avant-garde movement that it took a center place, particularly in the Hispanic Caribbean national literary portrayals. With Puerto Rican writer Luis Palés Matos and Cuba's Nicolás Guillén's poetry (the Negrismo movement), the mulata became both an object of desire while also Antillean mother. Palés Matos would sing in "Mulata-Antilla:" "Eres ahora, mulata, / todo el mar y la tierra de mis islas. / Sinfonía frutal, cuyas escalas, / rompen furiosamente en tu catinga."[15] The mulata is the Caribbean nature; on her body all the fruits and the geography of the island becomes one, a dream of national harmony. The poet goes on by stating that "[e]res inmensidad libre y sin límites, / eres amor sin trabas y sin prisas; / en tu vientre conjugan mis dos razas / sus vitales potencias expansivas."[16] She is the object of desire, sensual and lovely, in which a new race would be able to exist and belong in the Caribbean. Both African and Spanish blood allows her to be a body of reconciliation in her own way, as she is the piece to be negotiated in order to make African influences acceptable in pigmentocratic societies in the Caribbean. However, as Carole Sweeney states in her book *From Fetish to Subject: Race, Modernism, and Primitivism, 1919-1935*,[17] the figure of the mulata, just like the black woman, belongs to a broader context in which its historical positionality is stripped of meaning.

The mulata figure flourished in the poetry movement Negrismo, which was related to the interwar artistic Vanguard and Modernism. During the interwar period (1930s–1940s), a disillusionment with the historical paradigms pre-World War I began to developed and defined the beliefs and creative manifestations of artists, intellectuals and writers. A need for renewal motivated a search beyond Occidental culture to focus on the primitive and the exotic, particularly African and Asian influences. According to Sweeney, "[t]he trope of the primitive seemed to offer a redemptive mythological space in which time was still whole and had escaped the alienation of modernity."[18] The modernist society, in Europe and the Americas, longed for a better past, a place in time where ingenuity was still hopeful, as opposed to the authoritative narratives that created the war debacle. Sweeney goes on by affirming: "Thus, the time and space of the primitive other existed in an alternate historical continuum that was seen as real, or natural, time, uninterrupted by the shock of the

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

modern."[19] Hence, in the Negrismo movement, the mulata is often represented as a figure of renovation and hope, with no history and place of her own, as she is the symbol of the islands and the possibility of a better future. She becomes a fetish, a go-to object and metaphor that would enable the (white) writer to depict a more positive perspective free of social inconveniences (such as racial prejudice and war) and consolidate a harmonious national identity.

These observations by Sweeney are in agreement with how Melissa Blanco-Borelli defines the mulata in her article "'¿Y ahora qué vas a hacer mulata?': Hip choreographies in the Mexican *cabaretera* film *Mulata* (1954)."[20] According to the author, the mulata is a "narrative trope" whose "body is read as if it separate from its inhabitant,"[21] an interpretation related to the more common mulata representations as "fatherless, poor, virtuosic dancer, sexualized yet infantilized and, of course, tragic."[22] The mulata's agency is limited to what is imposed by the writer or film or theater director, similarly to how the fetish lost its original meaning (historicity) to became a magical object that may be used conveniently for anyone's purpose or benefit: "Today [the fetish] refers to a force, a supernatural property of the object and hence to a similar magical potential in the subject, through schemas of projection and capture, alienation and re-appropriation. But originally it signified exactly the opposite: a *fabrication* [*sic*], an artifact, a labor of appearances and signs."[23] Stripped of any connection to its historical origins, the fetish and the mulata are embedded with mythical and primitive assumptions that allow them to linger in an atemporal place and essentialism.

In her article, Blanco-Borelli disrupts this essentialism by re-connecting the mulata to her body, thus bringing her back to current times through the concept of "corpo-mulata:"

> Caught within the *mulata* [*sic*] trope, a corpo-mulata has situational agency, not projected agency. She cannot completely decide for herself how she wants to be seen because her body pertains to an economy of visibility which it is assigned loaded signifiers . . . yet they do not speak a body into being, only into knowing . . . a corpo-mulata exterting hip(g)nosis allows the body to dialogue and even overtake the battery of signs over-working the body even when it is still . . . she can contest the fixity of the mulata-sign and mobilize it in order to dismantle the tragedy inherent in it.[24]

By being aware of her body, of how she can reach to a place of the here and now, the corpo-mulata achieves a "situational agency" that allows the mulata to redefine herself and recreate a new history. Likewise, the fetish can be rescued from its magical place by acknowledging it is a fabrication, a "generalized code of signs, a totally arbitrary code of differences."[25]

In *Como un mensajero tuyo*, Aida is able to rescue herself from being just a fetishized mulata by having awareness of her body. Still, her awareness does

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

not come by acknowledging the primitive African signs that are attached to the mulata, nor by dancing or exoticizing her body, but by breaking with the traditional tragedy of the mulata and connecting with both sides of her inheritance: the African and the Chinese. When told that a man would come to "crown her, " she is also warned that she should not follow him. In Santería, "to crown" or "coronar" means that an orisha will get hold of the body of one of its daughters or sons and will legitimize his or her existence in the Santeros community. The man that her godfather, José Calazán, sees is Caruso, and he knows that he is Changó. Eventually in the novel, in a ceremony to help the body of Caruso to heal, he is identified with Changó, while Aida is the Santera daughter of Yemayá. In this formula, the question remains if Aida's destiny is to let Caruso possess her body, to legitimize her in order to belong to her community. I would argue that to some extent Aida allows Caruso to possess her, but by allowing it Aida is not naive. Aida's body was still struggling from a previous relationship, also with a white man, Baldomero, whom left his wife to be with Aida. With Baldomero she had a daughter, but their happiness did not last. He died suddenly one day, and their daughter died not too long after. This episode in her life would have made Aida a tragic mulata and confined her to the limited spaces this figure traditionally possessed. However, with the advent of Caruso, older and sick, her situation changes. He would be a relief from her tragedy and grief, subverting the ideals of modernity—the primitive mulata as the relief for a decadent European body—and Aida makes the choice to follow him. She embraces the possibility negatively marked by her godfather, but trusting in the orishas.

Aida's choice is strengthened with her trust in a second set of beliefs and loyalties: to her father Yuan Pei Fu and SanFanCón, the Cuban-Chinese divinity related to Changó. When she saw Caruso for the first time and realized that her fate was sealed, she glanced to his feet and reflected: "I think I began to love him because of the tips of those small toes that seemed like women's toes to me. Many days later . . . I caress those toes and confessed in a whisper that it had all started there, in the place where the Chinese babalawos say you can find the tail of the soul."[26] Just as she was intertwined between a Changó vision while being Yemayá's daughter, Aida also felt that the Chinese divinities were telling her to go on, to be completed and relate her soul to his. She is the one who takes action, and does not listen to her patriarch protectors (Calazán and Pei Fu) when warned that her death may come through Caruso, but instead believes in her spirit and in the orishas surrounding her.

Although the spiritual connection may be a trap in which Aida can be fetishized, it is not unrelated to her body and her agency. Montero is able to safeguard her protagonist in a nuanced and historical mode by creating Aida's

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

body as a place of allocation and dislocation. When explaining part of her Chinese inheritance at the beginning of the novel, she says:

> From Noro Cheng [whom so far she believed was her father] . . . I got my eyes and hair, and that's why people called me "Chinita." My mother didn't like it . . . she always became very offended. . . . Then she would comfort me—*I think she was comforting herself*—telling me that as time passed, people would call me by my right name. But time passed and it got worse, and we both became resigned, or pretended we were resigned: my Chinese part was the first thing people saw. (My emphasis)[27]

By allocating Aida's identity at this juncture of conformity and discomfort with her Chinese inheritance, Montero is able to create a protagonist that is highly aware of her body and how it impacts anyone that sees her. Aida's awareness is not dislocated from her self-definition, rather it is dislocated from society and how society treats her and her Chinese community. Aida's mother is the one uncomfortable with what her daughter's body represent: a Chinese "other," a group that during Aida's childhood was still struggling to construct a community, to belong and be part of Cuban society in some way.

The Chinese started to arrive in Cuba due to the "coolie trade," an international arrangement in which cheap labor was acquired via indentured resolutions with China. Most of the Chinese work force was indentured; nonetheless, between them there were also businessmen and traders, whom also benefitted from, or worked against, the international contracts. According to Kathleen López,

> [a]lthough South China had a long-standing tradition of emigration, new developments, including European incursions, overpopulation, natural disasters, and ethnic conflict, motivated Chinese to leave their villages. . . . [Also] [a]n anti-dynastic millenarian movement . . . the Taiping Rebellion (1851–1864) nearly toppled the Qing dynasty. . . . Displaced rebels escaped capture . . . by boarding ships bound for Southeast Asia, the Americas, and Hawaii. Local Qing authorities also used the coolie trade to rid themselves of hundreds of Taiping rebels.[28]

By the end of the 19th century, between 125,000 and 145,000 Chinese (that are known of) arrived in Cuba mostly as forced labor. The abuses and systemic discrimination against Chinese indentured labors are widely reported nowadays (Young 2014; López 2013; Yun 2008). The "indentured" part of this work agreement was a gray area, as many of the indenture owners typically never followed agreed upon signed commitments, but the coolies were not considered slaves.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Through a series of testimonies given by 2,841 coolies during the investigation that lead to the abolition of the "coolie trade" in 1878, indentured laborers detailed the exploitation and manipulation imposed on them throughout many years. They also explained the cunning ways in which many fell into the trade, indicating that "they were recruited to use their skills in the coolie passage; but after providing service, such as interpreting or doctoring, they were sold off with the rest of the cargo."[29] The diverse background of this group (peasants, translators, traders, healers, etc.) allowed the possibilities of resistance when insurrection against Spain started. Either with their masters or in partnership with maroons, the Chinese participated in the Ten Year's War and other independence struggles on the island, as they saw their freedom—just like African slaves did—tied to the island's freedom.[30]

Due to their participation as rebels, the 1901 Cuban constitution "granted universal manhood suffrage to former slaves and Chinese ex-coolies."[31] Nevertheless, a double discourse around the Chinese community started to develop, "one imagining the Chinese as an essential part of the fabric of the Cuban nation, and the other portraying them as something exotic and alien (and its more aggressive form, as something dangerous to the Cuban nation).[32] As Elliot Young states in *Alien Nation,* "the Chinese suffered from a double alien status, being outsiders both legally and culturally."[33] Hence, in Montero's narrative, Domitila, Aida's mother, wanted to protect her daughter from her double bind inheritance, Chinese and African. In Aida's own family and community, Lucumí ascendants, she already was an outsider due to her Chinese appearance. Being a mulata-china meant that society would make their own assumptions of her daughter (both sexually and intellectually), which would overtake a double outsider status. Aida understands this as a struggle her mother had and that, to some extent, she inherited in her self-awareness of her body. However, she acknowledge as well that this double outsider appearance would not determine her fate.

When walking with Caruso to take him to her godfather Calazán, Aida observed him and thought: "he didn't look like a foreigner. He was just somebody from Calle Amagura, a white man walking with *a colored woman, a light skinned mulata who had a lot of Chinese in her*" (my emphasis).[34] Aida's highlights on her body and how others may perceive her, though constant, are not at the center of her identity. Mayra Montero does not inscribe this self-awareness as something that defines Aida's actions, but is always commented on as an afterthought, on the margins of a turning point event or a character's observation. However, it is sufficiently repeated that is something that cannot be denied and that adds complexity to Aida's character. As an agent of her own story, Aida understands the impact her presence, her (fetish) body, can create.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

When Aida and Caruso stay alone for the first time after traveling to Regla, he tells her part of his story growing up. He mentions how his brother died of the Neapolitan fever ("fiebre napolitana") and how this sickness almost killed him, too. Aida also share part of her story with Caruso and a bond start to grow. Aida, feeling this, reflects:

> I was tormented by Ada Giachetti [Caruso's first wife], or her memory . . . He [Enrico] looked for her in other women . . . he looked for her in me, not all the time, but he did at the beginning. He said I had teeth like Ada's. That was the only way I could be like her, because *I was a mulatta who had her father's Chinese eyes and a nose that came from the Lucumí part. I was a combination, as mixed as a Neapolitan fever. My life was made of different kinds of heat, and I tried to warm Enrico with that heat.* (my emphasis)[35]

These reflections juxtaposed two readings of Aida's body: Aida as the Cuban fetish, the mulata, and Aida's historical body on her Chinese part. Both "heats," as she described them, are a dangerous combination, a Neapolitan fever, but that is not harmful. Quite the contrary: her racial mixture is a benefit for Caruso's languishing body, an un-deadly and fortifying fever that will not kill Caruso, but that will infect his body in order to conceive a future, for herself and for him, in the figure of a child. By depicting Aida as dangerous but not harmful, Montero is re-appropriating the traditional "mulata" and, with it "chinita," filling her with a historical purpose as a new kind of Mother-Nation, a new kind of "Mulata-Antilla," that will decide with whom, how and when she will conceive the future child.

Alcaide Ramírez describes in her article[36] how *Como un mensajero tuyo* is a novel that may dialogue with Doris Sommer romances in *Foundational Fictions.* In her book, Sommer argues that Latin American novels, from the end of the nineteenth and beginnings of the twentieth century, served as narrative experiments to visualize a national future. These novels would have couples as its dramatic center, as their romance would work as a national allegorical family that would create a new future—a son or daughter. Depending on the couple circumstances, this future would be the example or the cautionary tale for the nation. Nevertheless, Montero already demonstrate how these romances are futile from a Caribbean perspective and do not provide a complete view of the complexities of national construction. Aida already had her romance with Baldomero (a white man) and it all ended badly. With Caruso, a decadent body, almost dead, like Calazán said, Aida is trying to recover her faith as a complete woman, one that can feel all the pleasures and also have a child on her own terms. Her motivations do not relate to a collective purpose, but a very individual and personal one. When she finds herself completely in love with Caruso, Aida is the one to ask of him for a child, for *him* to give

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

her that: "He'd never had a Chinese woman in his life, and he'd never had a mulata. He'd like to know how a child of ours would turn out. . . . When I heard that . . . I said we should make a baby, but we had to do it thinking about the child's face."[37] Instead of Aida's body be submissive to a European body, it is Caruso's who is objectified, serving as a tool for Aida to belong again to herself and forget of her first life with Baldomero. It is the mulata-china who has the power and who is trying to survive and help him to survive, also, by conceiving a live memory of their passion and by defying the warnings of the babalawos.

Aida's fight to stay with Caruso is surrounded by bad omens from the orishas: "Enrico was alone, somebody or something was circling, closing in on him, and Calazán and I, and in a way my father, Yuan Pei Fu, were the only people in this world who knew that the circle had already closed."[38] It was predicted that Caruso would die soon, but the babalawos did not want him to die in Cuba and tarnish Aida's life. However, being Yemaya's daughter and Caruso the one representing Changó, it was beyond Aida's power to not follow him. This connection may fetishize Aida as a miraculous body that would save Caruso. However, Montero also decomposes this approach by giving Aida her agency in her trust in Sanfancón: "I could have left if I wanted to: *I had the privilege of choosing,* the chance to stay on the outside; that's what Calazán and my mother wanted, and maybe my father too, *though my father, being so close to Sanfancón, had a clearer vision, he saw all the possible roads, and knew exactly which one would be mine*. In the end, *I decided to stay inside* . . ." (My emphasis).[39] She was the one that understood her function in her story, what she needed to do to belong to her own self by Sanfancón's hand.

According to Yun in her study of the Cuban Afro-Chinese author Antonio Chuffat Latour, Sanfancón was Guan Gong, "a figure of great courage, whose deification was based upon a general's heroic deeds in the classical Chinese epic *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, which took place during the Han dynasty." As a worship figure, Guan Gong arrived to Cuba through Chung Si, who was possessed by Guan Gong spirit and spoke "counsel to the Chinese in Cuba."[40] Yun explains:

> In China, the legend of Guan Gong emphasized teachings of honor, courage, justice, and integrity . . . in Cuba, however, highlights his views regarding race, as he declares that the Chinese have their gods as do whites, blacks, Indians . . . an omnipotent God . . . The worship of Guang Gong is now ensconced in the Cuban Yoruba religion today . . . syncretized with the worship of the Spanish-Catholic Santa Bárbara and the African Changó . . . known as 'Sanfancón', appearing as the deity in red colors and carrying a large scimitar.[41]

In summary, Sanfancón is a deity related to courage, justice, war, racial conciliation and integrity. Aida's agency in her decision to stay with Caruso

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

was based on these same premises, as she wanted to bring justice to herself, gaining courage to entail a war with the orishas in order to bring a future of racial conciliation and integrity through her persona. As Yemayá's daughter she was "bowing in reverence to King Changó,"[42] but Sanfancón (as equivalence of Changó) was guiding and inspiring her as well. She was in charge.

Aida do not fear her destiny. After the ritual in the San Joaquín Lagoon, one made to keep Caruso alive while in Cuba, Yemayá possessed Aida and stayed with her, always trying to hold on to Caruso and avoid certain death. Comfortingly knowing that Sanfancón is guiding her, both mythical worlds, the African Orishas and the Chinese divinities, reside inside her and show her a new space and time:

> When the bomb exploded, a piece of my life had blown away, a piece that had been lent to me *and went back to the place where it belonged*. Those places are mysterious . . . I loved him not the way you love a person *but the way you love a space, a place, a time you want back*, another life that shows up in this one. It was more like death than anything else (my emphasis).[43]

Aida's body is inhabiting Caruso's as a safe place in which she is able to redefine herself. Her body transforms into a myth, a new set of meanings inside Cuban national racial expectations, both as belonging and as the other: as a mulata, a china, the lover of an Italian and a single mother.

Montero's objective creating this myth, this new version of a national mother, is located in the interstices of Barthes' myth definition and my discussion of the fetish. Barthes states in *Mythologies* (1972) that "what causes mythical speech to be uttered is perfectly explicit, but is immediately frozen into something natural; it is not read as a motive, but as a reason."[44] In Montero's novel, the author constructs the narrative aware of the mythical Mother-Nation, the "Mulata-Antilla," and how it naturalize and gives reason to many to create a national discourse that base on a mixed-race ideology. By bringing it to the realms of myth, the figure is fetishized, it is stripped of her story. Montero is re-historicizing the myth and the fetish by underlining Aida's agency and trust in her mixed religion, orishas and Sanfancón, during a prerevolutionary time in Cuba that engage the character in a search of new meanings for her as a woman.

Through Aida and her journey, Montero highlights her body and influences, similar to other mulatas' tragic stories, but also hinting at a new influence, a new semiology that Barthes foresees can be broken down and reconstructed as many times as needed in history. In Montero's novel, Aida's history with Caruso is the pivoting point of a Chinese community that will slowly lose its visibility. It is a history that may be presented as an afterthought, behind smoke, smells and faith, but it is the first thing that could be seen on the

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

physical body. The signs of a Chinese identity are the first features that define Aida and she is aware of this definition. In her journey she determines her body will not define her identity and thus it can be re-positioned in time and history, in a new future, in her daughter, creating a body of reconciliation: "I'm not the one telling you this story, Enriqueta, because when I look into your eyes you're the one telling it to me; you're the one who brings back a gesture, a look, of your father's; you're the one who repeats Calazán's words, and Domitila's [Aida's mother] weeping, and Yuan Pei Fu's smoke."[45] As a cultural fetish, she transforms her life and her surroundings, Caruso and her family, in order to return to the complexities of a human being, not just a caricature of her inheritance.

From Montero's perspective, by portraying Aida's passion for Caruso, Aida is able to reconnect with a previous history, the one possessed by Yemayá and other orishas, who walk hand in hand with Sanfancón. Aida is a woman that just simply live an ordinary life in an extraordinary time in Cuba in 1920. It will be through Enriqueta that Aida will speak, but Enriqueta will also re-create her mother's story, re-historicizing Aida and her own inheritance by making sense of the passion and looking for witnesses that would corroborate her mother's (historical) body of reconciliation.

WRITING THE FETISH

Though in the first pages of the novel it is not clear, the reader meets Enriqueta when receiving a visit in her house at calle Amargura. She is old and weak and is exchanging a souvenir from the bomb—a small, golden egg with an encrusted piece of wood from the theater where the bomb exploded—to an antique buyer for pictures of Naples. At this point in her life, she does not want to dwell on the past and gives away the relic with all the writings from her mother's testimony. This is the story we receive as readers. Montero does not gives us a precise signal on how to interpret this exchange, though, after reading it, is possible to give this interpretation: one, Enriqueta was infected by the desolation of Aida and Caruso's passion and decided to give away her mother's testimony; and two, the antique buyer decided the story was worth reading. No matter why Enriqueta gave away her mother's testimony and why it finally came into the hands of others beyond the family, the literary framework that Montero creates is one that focuses on Aida's journey and how it affected her own historicity during those days with Caruso.

While Aida's testimony is imprecise on dates, days and how long her torrid affair with Caruso lasted, Enriqueta's corroborations are the opposite. Via journalistic and archival research, Enriqueta is able to provide a sense of completion and veracity to Aida's words, anchoring her mother's story in

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

place and time. The reader is able to differentiate Enriqueta's interventions from the change of font (italics are used for her, while standard font for Aida), which centers Aida's story, while providing annotations from Enriqueta's perspective and some glimpses of her own life. Through her, we learn first-hand when it all began, what Aida's inheritance was, when she started writing and when they finished: "This is the story of my mother. A story that begins on the Feast of the Wise Men in the year 1920, when she was a twenty-seven-years old widow who had lost her first-born child . . . My mother told me her story when she learned she was sick . . . We began on March 5, 1952, the day I turned thirty-one, and finished eight months later, on November 16th."[46] By establishing a timeline, Montero is giving verisimilitude to her alternative history of what happened to Caruso after the bomb exploded at the National Theater in Havana. The author, as discussed in the previous section, is also disarming the fetish (the mulata) by providing a specific time of action while negating an out of time mysticism.

In order to corroborate her mother's story, Enriqueta decides to contextualize the affair by researching newspapers and finding all the witnesses she convene. Her own writing journey, parallel to Aida's, is a self-discovery of her inheritance, her mother's strength, and marginality. In the first few interviews, Aida is not acknowledged by any of the witnesses. Gossip and hearsay about Santería, Chinese stereotypes and a mulata that tied Caruso with her witchcraft crowds the first testimonies. However, the more in depth we travel into Aida's story—the more involved the reader becomes with her love for Caruso—the more detailed and familiar the witnesses become. From the fringes of a look here and there, of foreign "eyes of a Filipina Chinese and a nose that could pass for white,"[47] Aida transforms into "a beauty; she didn't look Cuban [sic] but she wasn't an ordinary Chinese either. She was like a picture . . . Your mother was painted, who knows, probably that mystical Chinaman who was her real father painted her too."[48] Aida becomes real and a presence in the story, allowing Enriqueta (and readers) to tie the threads of Aida's testimony and all the other stories to understand, with some clarity, what happened between Caruso and her mother.

Looking from the outside and later going in depth is a narrative strategy that Montero frames on Enriqueta's writing as a correlation to how Aida perceives her body and her Afro-Asian inheritance. The awareness of Aida's body and how she uses it as an agent of her own story is also the same as the awareness Enriqueta's body of writing possesses. By inscribing her mother's testimony Enriqueta brings in another aspect of how the mulata is fetishized in Negrista poetry and other texts from early 20th century: the mulata was a seductress or a mother; the Chinese woman an exotic gift or a submissive servant.[49] From the first testimonies Enriqueta acquires, Aida is both: a mulata-china that entrapped Caruso and took care of him: "He told me the paper had

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

received reports that the great tenor was involved with a woman who was half Chinese and half mulatta [sic], and if that wasn't bad enough, she was a santera too . . . Caruso hid out, with a pack of ñáñigos protecting him, and that woman, with her Chinese snares. Just imagine."[50] Aida, as Carole Sweeney discusses in her book considering Josephine Baker, becomes in Enriqueta's writing a performance in which "[t]he 'racial truths' were performances of desire and repulsion, power and seduction, regeneration and degeneration."[51] On one hand, Aida is a stunning woman with the power to attract any man just by her presence; on the other hand, she is a powerful enchantress that would use her body and her knowledge of African and Chinese Santería to keep a man. In summary, Aida was a fetish.

However, when the interviews become more personal, closer to the truth of Aida and Caruso, the fetish starts to dissolve. Though some of her mystic seduction persists, Enriqueta is able to contextualize Aida's story away from the fetishization of her body by adding details her mother did not address and that would create a real and ordinary woman. Violeta, the cook that was in the kitchen of the Hotel Inglaterra the day Aida said she met Caruso and her fate, told Enriqueta:

> She [Domitila, Aida's mother] confided in me. She told me it [Caruso and Aida's affair] had started in May. She didn't know where Aidita and Caruso met . . . Somebody told her that Caruso saw her crossing the street and told the driver to stop the car . . . Caruso fell head over heels in love . . . your mother was a real beauty when she was young . . . she had that seriousness, like she was onstage . . . And she was mixed: nothing excites men more than that mix: Chinese eyes and hair and that great mulatta [sic] body—it stopped them in their tracks.[52]

From this testimony, Enriqueta and the reader learn that, more than Chango and Yemayá, what kept Caruso and Aida tied was pure and human desire. She was no fetish, just a mere woman in need of love. Though a spectacular beauty, Montero constructs a narrative technique that plays with the first person narrator (Aida) describing a magical but awareness of body narrative, and the second person narrator (Enriqueta and her witnesses) with prejudices and personal judgments in order to reconcile a need for historicity for the corpo-mulata. Aida has a place, maybe an imperfect and still fetishizing characteristics, but in a real timeline affected by the same daily and ordinary situations.

These narrations and interviews also affect Enriqueta's place in the story. Many times she tries to reconcile her mother's testimony with her life, yearning for her father and her connections to a Chinese world that is evaporating from existence as generations continue to pass by and memories start to be forgotten. Enriqueta finally realized that she cannot continue her mother's legacy: "I've said it before: my mother and father were so passionately in

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

love that perhaps, when I was conceived, they left me a little hollow, distant with men, or fearful, perhaps . . . I had never met the person who could make me want to leave everything, risk everything. . . ."[53] This love, this detachment, also affected her connection to her Chinese inheritance, a detail Montero highlights due to how Chinese contributions have been forgotten in Cuban history as well. Montero does not make a robust political statement, but, just like she de-fetishized Aida, she presents a body of distant historical spaces that are in need to be filled. When visiting her grandfather Yuan Pei Fu's house, years after his death, Enriqueta describes his room: "[it] looked exactly the same: a narrow bed, a dresser with a Chinese lantern . . . On the long wall there was still the same immense altar, with candles burned halfway down . . . In the center of the altar, above the shelf that held dozens of bronze miniatures . . . *there was a terrible absence*, *the great void* left by the image of Sanfancón" (my emphasis).[54] By not being able to connect to the religious figure and, thus, to her spiritual Chinese inheritance, Enriqueta cannot continue the historical framework that created her mother. She can only provide her own perspective and testimony of loss, just the same way many scholars are now readdressing the loss of Chinese history in Cuba's identity. Sanfancón becomes a symbol of power and representation that move Aida to her historical agency while providing Enriqueta with a nostalgic perspective that may trigger a conversation with the reader about the gaps of history and the need to fill the voids of those written out of national narratives.

Although Enriqueta experience the loss of her Chinese connection along with the discovery of her mother's story, it is a friend of her grandfather, Felipe Alam that gives her a spiritual comfort connected to her family's past:

> [H]e [Yuan Pei Fu] knew you would come to this house one day to learn the truth . . . When she comes, he said to me, tell her this: 'The Messenger of Death, whose name is Chui Chi Lon, is always the messenger of our own hearts.'
>
> What your grandfather meant is that you cannot struggle against what is yours, against *the messenger* that is yours [*contra ese mensajero tuyo*]. Remember that and give your mother some peace . . . She is paisana, a daughter of Yuan Pei Fu, blood of a blood not easily forgotten. *Go, and don't forget* (my emphasis).[55]

By giving some comfort to Enriqueta and placing the title of the novel in this dialogue with Felipe, Montero is highlighting the importance of all the pieces of history, particularly Cuban history. All the small histories—the personal, the spiritual, the ordinary—are part of the big arch of History and need to be addressed. Aida is the physicality of these histories; Enriqueta's writing is the conceptual, the need to search to belong and to reconcile.

Through Enriqueta, Montero is able to question how the Afro-Asian body of Aida is perceived. From the interviews and newspaper representations, the

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

author constructs an alternative interpretation to Aida's story, one that dwells between the ordinary and the extraordinary, similar to the space between desires and magic. Although Aida, as a character, is successful to embrace her Afro-Asian connection through her body and spirituality, Enriqueta, as the writer of her mother's story, is not able to consolidate the Afro-Asian connection, as the Chinese influence is dislocated from its space, moved out of the visibility the African connection still possesses. The novel as a whole, nevertheless, is able to pose the question: Where, in the culture of mestizaje in Cuba, does the Chinese influence lay? A potential answer is given by the character Felipe Alam: "you cannot struggle against what is yours . . . Go, and don't forget."[56] History is found in everyday life and every memory.

CONCLUSION: BACK TO THE FETISH?

In his discussion of the fetish, Jean Baudrillard warns how the loss of historicity creates a fetish body. In *Como un mensajero tuyo*, Montero deals with a mulata-china, a traditional fetish in Cuban and Caribbean culture, by breaking her lack of history and placing her in a timeline of her own agency. Still, there is another trap that Baudrillard warns against, especially in this era of high consumption, and that applies to the body of the mulata: a fetishized body is constructed when "it is the semiological organization itself, the entrenchment in a system of signs that [sic] has the goal of reducing the symbolic function."[57] In Cuban and Caribbean history, the mulata has been reduced from a complex national body to an objectified one and token for diversity.

The same reduction had happened to the complexities of syncretism, signifying the presence of a give and take, but nowadays is only highlighted through rituals and performances separated from its historical foundation and influences. In *Como un mensajero tuyo*, oftentimes, the Chinese and Afro-Cuban characters related to Aida and Enriqueta are reduced to stereotypical racial performances—the pipes Yuan Pei Fu smokes, his silent presence, the guards (both Chinese and Afro-Cuban) that may hurt or cut anyone with their knives, the power of damage their spiritual beliefs may impose on strangers, the strong voice and color of José Calazán—that may betray the dismantling of the fetish I propose. However, and as demonstrated above, the body of the fetish, Aida, is successfully disarticulated and brings a new light to the historical influences and Afro-Asian connections. The racial reductions that still dislocate these connections serve to enhance Aida's agency. In comparison, these references keep the mythical realm of modernism that Sweeney portrays in her book, contrasting with Aida's endurance and actions. Some of these stereotypes are unnecessary representations that distract from the main character and that underline Montero's distance to these realities as a Cuban

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

exile. Montero became a journalist and novelist in Puerto Rico, but still kept deep contact with her Cuban roots. However, the distance of an immigrant is always tainted with nostalgia and this nostalgia sometimes naively relies on stereotypes. It could be argued that, by painting some of her characters in the novel as racial stereotypes, the nostalgia that distance brings may be influencing these representations.

Mayra Montero's success with *Como un mensajero tuyo,* nonetheless, is to highlight the mulata-china, to create a body of reconciliation in Aida and to kill—or at least, disarticulate—the colonial necessity to romanticize the affair between a mulata and a white man, the reductions of creating an a-historical Mother-Nation. Caruso represents the decadence of a European influence that is disappearing from the dynamics of the Caribbean, at least in representation. The contingency of post-colonialism in Caribbean national identity is persistent, even in Cuba—though Montero's lens is positioned before the Cuban revolution—while the colonial discourse is relegated in the novel. It is the de-fetishized mestizaje, the mix of particular cultures and influences, the real persistence of a variation of beliefs, corporeal awareness, and writing that is celebrated. This celebration is accomplished by the acceptance of the everyday histories, the collection of ordinary memories and of different spiritual connections that creates an extraordinary account of love and the continuation of a search to belong and reconcile the diverse accounts of Caribbean history.

NOTES

1. Mayra Montero, *Como un mensajero tuyo* (Barcelona: Tusquets Eds., 1998).
2. Yvette Fuentes, "The Three Origins: The Cuban Ajiaco and the Chinese Cuban Voices in the Narratives of Mayra Montero and Daína Chaviano," *Anthurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal* 7, no. 1 (2010): 1–11.
3. Luisa Marcela Ossa, "Babalawos chinos: Religion, Ethnicity and Identity in Mayra Montero's *Como un mensajero tuyo*," *Delaware Review of Latin American Studies* 12, no. 2 (2011): 1–10, http://www.udel.edu/LAS/Vol12-2Ossa.html.
4. Jorge Marbán, "Historia, intertextualidad y mitología afro-sino-cubana en *Como un mensajero tuyo* de Mayra Montero," *Círculo* 40 (2011): 190–200.
5. Dolores Alcaide Ramirez, "Subjetividades diaspóricas, mestizaje y la re-canibalización del Otro en *Como un mensajero tuyo* de Mayra Montero y la obra de Ana Mendieta," in *Violencia, género y migración en el Caribe hispano: Reescribiendo la nación* (New York: Peter Lang, 2012).
6. Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).
7. Josephine Lee, "Bodies, Revolutions, and Magic: Cultural Nationalism and Racial Fetishism," *Modern Drama* 44, no. 1 (2001): 76.
8. Ibid., 79.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

9. Carole Sweeney, *From Fetish to Subject: Race, Modernism, and Primitivism, 1919–1935* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), 63.

10. Jean Baudrillard, "Fetishism and Ideology: The Semiological Reduction," in *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (US: Telos Press, 1981).

11. Ibid., 92.

12. Though in the article I will refer to the novel in its Spanish title, I will quote from the English translation by Edith Grossman.

13. Mayra Montero, *The Messenger*, trans. Edith Grossman (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1999), 11.

14. Antonio Benítez Rojo, *The Repeating Island* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1996).

15. Luis Palés Matos, *Tuntún de pasa y grifería* (Río Piedras, PR: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1996), 194.

16. Ibid.

17. Sweeney, *From Fetish to Subject*.

18. Ibid., 20.

19. Ibid.

20. Melissa Blanco-Borelli, "'¿Y ahora qué vas a hacer mulata?': Hip choreographies in the Mexican *cabaretera* film *Mulata* (1954)," *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 18, no. 3 (2008): 215–233.

21. Ibid., 217.

22. Ibid., 216.

23. Baudrillard, *Fetishism and Ideology*, 91.

24. Blanco-Borelli, "'¿Y ahora qué vas a hacer, mulata?'", 218.

25. Baudrillard, *Fetishism and Ideology*, 91.

26. Montero, *The Messenger*, 26.

27. Ibid., 13.

28. Kathleen López, "In Search of Legitimacy: Chinese Immigrants and Latin American Nation Building," in *Immigration and National Identities in Latin America*, ed. Michael Goebel and Nicola Foote (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014), 183.

29. Lisa Yun, *The Coolie Speaks: Chinese Indentured Laborers and African Slaves of Cuba* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2008), 68.

30. Kathleen López, *Chinese Cubans: A Transnational History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 4.

31. López, "In Search of Legitimacy," 188.

32. Ibid.

33. Elliot Young, *Alien Nation: Chinese Migration in the Americas from the Coolie Era through World War II* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 11.

34. Montero, *The Messenger*, 37.

35. Ibid., 59.

36. Alcaide Ramírez, "Subjetividades diaspóricas."

37. Montero, *The Messenger*, 83.

38. Ibid., 112.

39. Ibid.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

40. Yun, *The Coolie Speaks*, 207.
41. Ibid.
42. Montero, *The Messenger*, 112.
43. Ibid.
44. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 129.
45. Montero, *The Messenger*, 200.
46. Ibid., 8.
47. Ibid., 99.
48. Ibid., 181.
49. Vicente Huidobro, the Latin American poet and founder of the avant-garde poetry movement "Creacionismo," represents the Asian exoticism through his calligram poem "Nipona" (~1921): "Ven / Flor rara / de aquel Edén / que llaman Yoshiwara. / Ven, muñequita japonesa" [Come / Strange flower / from that Eden / that is called Yoshiwara. / Come, my little Japanese doll . . .]. The Japanese woman, a representation of the Asian figure, is considered very similar to the mulata, an object of desire for the writer, an exotic influence that allows him to be creative and inspired, and the primitive object of recovery during Modernism. She must obey the poet—"Ven"—in order for him to fulfill his desire—"Mi muñequita." Adding to this representation is the distribution of the words on the page. As a calligram, "Nipona" is creative both in the images that evoke and the image it is on the page (a two-way arrow), which may be interpreted as a two-way view of the exotic, from the inside and out, observation, perception and willingness to possess from the poet-observer.
50. Montero, *The Messenger*, 79.
51. Sweeney, *From Fetish to Subject*, 62.
52. Montero, *The Messenger*, 140.
53. Ibid., 207.
54. Ibid., 159.
55. Ibid., 163.
56. Ibid.
57. Baudrillard, "Fetishism and Ideology," 98.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alcaide Ramírez, Dolores. "Subjetividades diaspóricas, mestizaje y la re-canibalización del Otro en *Como un mensajero tuyo* de Mayra Montero y la obra de Ana Mendieta." In *Violencia, género y migración en el Caribe hispano: Reescribiendo la nación*, 47–86. New York: Peter Lang, 2012.

Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1972.

Baudrillard, Jean. "Fetishism and Ideology: The Semiological Reduction." In *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, 88–101. St. Louis, MO: Telos Press, 1981.

Benítez Rojo, Antonio. *The Repeating Island*. Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1992; 1996.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Borelli-Blanco, Melissa. "'¿Y ahora qué vas a hacer, mulata?:' Hip coreographies in the Mexican *cabaretera* film *Mulata* (1954)." *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 18, no. 3 (2008): 215–233.

Fuentes, Yvette. "The Three Origins: The Cuban Ajiaco and the Chinese Cuban Voices in the Narratives of Mayra Montero and Daína Chaviano." *Anthurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal* 7, no. 1 (2010): 1–11.

Lee, Josephine. "Bodies, Revolutions, and Magic: Cultural Nationalism and Racial Fetishism." *Modern Drama* 44, no. 1 (2001): 72–90.

López, Kathleen. *Chinese Cubans: A Transnational History*. Chapel Hill: The Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2013.

———. "In Search of Legitimacy: Chinese Immigrants and Latin American Nation Building." In *Immigration and National Identities in Latin America*, edited by Michael Goebel and Nicola Foote, 182–201. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014.

Marbán, Jorge. "Historia, intertextualidad y mitología afro-sino-cubana en *Como un mensajero tuyo* de Mayra Montero." *Círculo* 40 (2011): 190–200.

Montero, Mayra. *Como un mensajero tuyo*. Barcelona: Tusquets Eds, 1998.

———. *The Messenger*. Translated by Edith Grossman. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1999.

Ossa, Luisa Marcela. "Babalawos Chinos: Religion, Ethnicity and Identity in Mayra Montero's *Como un mensajero tuyo*." *Delaware Review of Latin American Studies* 12, no. 2 (2011): 1–10. http://www.udel.edu/LAS/Vol12-2Ossa.html.

Palés Matos, Luis. *Tuntún de pasa y grifería*. Río Piedras, PR: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1996.

Sommer, Doris. *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

Sweeney, Carole. *From Fetish to Subject: Race, Modernism, and Primitivism, 1919–1935*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004.

Young, Elliot. *Alien Nation: Chinese Migration in the Americas from the Coolie Era through World War II.* Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014.

Yun, Lisa. *The Coolie Speaks: Chinese Indentured Laborers and African Slaves of Cuba*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2008.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Chapter 8

"I Am Like One of those Women"

Chinese Masculinity as Feminist Writing Strategy in Three West Indian Novels

Anne-Marie Lee-Loy

In the 1972 article "Racist Love," Frank Chin memorably articulated many ideas that have become touchstones in Asian American debates surrounding the cultural construction and representation of Asian American masculinity. In particular, Chin complained that

> the white stereotype of the Asian [male] is unique in that it is in the only racial stereotype completely devoid of manhood. Our nobility is that of an efficient housewife. At our worst we are contemptible because we are womanly, effeminate, devoid of all traditionally masculine qualities of originality, daring, physical courage, creativity. We're neither straight talkin' or straight shootin'.[1]

Chin's analysis of the cultural feminization of Asian American men has become entrenched in an academic narrative that argues that Asian American masculinity has been positioned as Other to American masculinity. As such, Asian American men have been excluded from the social, economic, and political privileges afforded to American men. The response to this marginalization by some Asian American authors has been to create Asian American male characters who more closely align with the qualities traditionally deemed masculine in the Americas and, more generally, in the West. In this regard, however, the critic King-Kok Cheung, writing specifically about literary representations of Chinese American masculinity, warned that the "refutation of effeminate stereotypes through the glorification of machismo merely perpetuates patriarchal terms and assumptions" and challenged readers and writers to "work toward notions of gender and ethnicity that are nonhierarchical, nonbinary and nonprescriptive; that can embrace tensions rather than perpetuate divisions."[2] Cheung is, in short, arguing for alternative

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

understandings of masculinity that resist rather than reify the terms within which Western masculinity is performed by re-affirming as "valid and viable" expressions of the masculine those "feminine qualities" that have been associated with representations of Chinese masculinity in the West.[3] Cheung's challenge has been embraced in three West Indian[4] novels, *Bruised Hibiscus*, *The True History of Paradise*, and *Gloria*. In all three novels, Chinese male characters are effeminized as a means of establishing a striking indictment against the violence and oppression entrenched in the traditional performance of West Indian masculinity and to expose the ideologies and ideological practices that support it.

LOCATING WEST INDIAN MASCULINITY

Normative Western masculinity has been defined in terms of power and dominance. It is a performance that rejects and refutes anything deemed feminine, claims proprietary access to economic, social, and political power and status, and celebrates and/or justifies acts of domination and aggression.[5] The desires and constraints of colonialism, the context in which modern notions of West Indian masculinity were established, created an ideal environment for the performance of this masculinity in its most extreme—that is, hypermasculine—form. Indeed, Ashis Nandy describes hypermasculinity as the cultural pathology of colonialism, arguing that the inherent and obsessive need to control and dominate others that was integral to the colonial process "produced a cultural consensus in which political and socio-economic dominance symbolized the dominance of men and masculinity over women and femininity."[6] The maintenance of slavery, and later of indentured labor, required an unyielding binary-based hierarchical structure of domination that excluded male slaves and indentured laborers from access to the same resources of power as their White masters and later, White employers. Furthermore, colonialism fostered cultural discourses and ideologies in which the subject identities of slaves and indentured laborers were dehumanized as savage beasts or infantilized in opposition to "real men," thereby justifying "the violent subordination of black males by white men."[7] Significantly, this understanding of masculinity was not limited to the colonizer-colonized relationship:

> Imported Africans, and their creole progeny . . . understood, shared and actively supported the important tenets of the ideology of masculinity as represented by white men within the colonial encounter. Notions of political authority, economic power and domestic dominance as publically presented by white elite masculinity were culturally sanctioned by enslaved black men. Similarly, white

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

men's denial of these states of consciousness and experience to disenfranchised and dispossessed white women within colonialism set in place conditions for enslaved black men to assert their physical and social subjugation of black womanhood.[8]

Thus, the core concept in normative constructions of hegemonic masculinity, namely, male domination particularly through violence, was early and firmly established as the central characteristic of masculinity in the West Indian colonial context.

Twentieth-century independence movements in the West Indies, a historical moment in which West Indians were consciously and explicitly redefining and articulating their cultural values, identities, and norms, did not undermine the construction and maintenance of hegemonic hypermasculinity in the region. Instead, "the struggle for decolonization" was articulated around "issues of political empowerment, a liberal democratic notion of sovereignty and autonomy, and self-determination;" that is to say, it was articulated in terms of men claiming power in the name of manhood and "did not interrogate the patriarchal system."[9] It is perhaps no accident that all three novels under study are set in and around the time of independence for Jamaica and Trinidad, as this was a period in which the valuation of violence and oppressive power as the masculine was re-inscribed in postcolonial West Indian cultures. *Bruised Hibiscus*, *The True History of Paradise,* and *Gloria* resist this formation of masculinity by androgenizing the boundaries of masculine and feminine, rejecting exploitation and aggression as definitive of the masculine, and demystifying the normative construction of masculinity. This resistance is inscribed on the bodies and in the gender performances of significant male Chinese characters in the texts.

EMBODYING THE MATERNAL IN *BRUISED HIBISCUS*

Of the three novels under study, Elizabeth Nunez' *Bruised Hibiscus* is the most explicit in its recognition of the violence inherent to West Indian performances of masculinity as being a legacy of colonialism; and in its assertion that the valuation of the feminine, or in this case more specifically the maternal, is a means by which this legacy can be undermined. The novel, set in Trinidad, begins with the horrific discovery of a brutalized female body which turns out to be a White woman who has been murdered by her husband. This murder is soon linked by the community to another notorious killing of another woman whose dismembered body was fed to a pig. These murders are a turning point in the lives of the two women who are the focus of the novel: Rosa, a fair-skinned Trinidadian married to Cedric,

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

a headmaster descended from indentured laborers from India; and Zuela, a woman originally from South America who, as a very young girl, was brought by her Chinese shopkeeper husband, known only as the Chinaman, to Trinidad to become his wife. As the novel develops, the reader learns that the women's lives had converged briefly in their childhoods before their marriages set them on seemingly different life paths. The murders reveal, however, that their lives, and those of the murdered women, are not so different when it comes to their position as women in Trinidadian society. Both Rosa and Zuela have been subjected to casual exploitation and violence and have learned to negotiate their lives with a "numb passivity" that is disrupted by the "sudden panic of self-discovery" when they learn of the murder.[10] In the face of this self-discovery, both women are shocked out of their passivity, re-evaluate their relationships with their husbands, and consciously choose how they will respond to the everyday abuse and degradation that shapes their lives. It is this emotional journey that is the subject of the novel.

Structurally, through the characters and dynamics at play between Rosa, Cedric, and Rosa's Black nurse Mary Christophe, *Bruised Hibiscus* alludes directly to the characters of Antoinette, Mr. Rochester, and Antoinette's Black servant and nurse, Christophine in the classic postcolonial novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* and to that novel's mediation on the colonial will to power. *Wide Sargasso Sea*, itself a prequel to Charlotte Bronte's canonical *Jane Eyre*, links the descent of the Creole first Mrs. Rochester into madness to the colonial socio-economic and political structures that leave her vulnerable to Mr. Rochester's exploitative manipulations. The novel also reveals that these structures foster Mr. Rochester's obsessive need to perform a masculinity that is expressed through the control and domination of his wife, his servants, and the physical environment of the West Indian island on which the novel is set, despite the resistance he faces from characters like Christophine, his wife, and seemingly, nature itself. In *Bruised Hibiscus*, we once again see a husband, Cedric, whose manhood is threatened by his inability to control his Creole wife, Rosa, and a Black servant/nurse, Mary Christophe, who acts as a surrogate mother of his wife and a source of alternate knowledge that may allow the wife to resist the abuse of her husband. We are, in other words, to understand in this parallel structuring of the novel that the society of *Bruised Hibiscus* is the direct descendant of the colonial will to power enacted in the relationship of the Rochesters in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and, by implication, *Jane Eyre*.

Instead of focusing solely on the relationship between a Creole woman and a European colonialist however, *Bruised Hibiscus* asserts that the colonial impulses manifested in Mr. Rochester, particularly the desire to control others, are embedded in the genetic makeup of masculinity as it is performed in Trinidadian colonial society. This reality is established from the novel's very

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

beginning with the stories of the two murdered women from two very different social strata, a doctor's wife and a woman from the slum of Laventille. The women are similar, however, because they are murdered specifically as an assertion of male control when a man in their lives believes that the women's behavior challenges their manhood: the doctor kills his wife because he believes that she is having an affair, and the woman from Laventille is murdered by a wealthy lover when she refuses to give up her second lover in the slums for him. In a similar fashion, Cedric's campaign of emotional and psychological abuse of Rosa begins when she too threatens his sense of control in their relationship by suddenly losing interest in having sex with him, while the Chinaman wields his worst threats against Zuela when he senses that she might be planning to kill him as a means of effecting her escape from their marriage. The significance of the murders of the two women, which opens the text, alongside the abusive and cruel behavior of the Chinaman and Cedric to their wives, emphasizes the normative nature of hypermasculinity as the expression of masculinity throughout all strata of Trinidadian society—from the doctor and rich lawyer in town, to the middle-class headmaster, to the working-class shopkeeper and to the men who inhabit the slums of Laventille. It is against this ongoing demonstration of violent male agency and aggression in a continuing pursuit of domination and control that the second male Chinese character in the novel, Tong Lee, executes a deviant performance of a maternal masculinity.

The relationship between the Chinaman, Zuela's legal husband and the biological father of her ten children, and Zuela exemplifies the violence that is integral to the process of colonization. Their relationship is built on the assumption that Zuela—named significantly after the country, Venezuela—is territory to be possessed, controlled, and ultimately, exploited. Thus, upon returning from South America with Zuela, the Chinaman re-enacts some of the initial steps in the colonial encounter: he renames Zuela and forces her to learn a new language. The Chinaman also asserts his power over Zuela by maintaining rigid control over her movements and her body. He keeps a proprietary watch over Zuela when his male friends visit, places his trusted friend Tong Lee in the shop to help keep Zuela under surveillance, and demands that Zuela ask for his permission before she goes out. Zuela is expected to be silently submissive in this relationship, a reality memorably captured by the fact that she has been so successful at teaching her children to also be silent around their father, that Rosa does not even notice them when she visits. The Chinaman exerts further control over Zuela by preventing her from accessing any money. Zuela is not permitted to handle the money in the shop and is neither paid for her labor nor given money to buy groceries or other necessities for the children. Zuela's body is also expected to be available to meet the Chinaman's emotional and sexual needs. Indeed, Zuela's

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

body is, like the opium to which the Chinaman is addicted, very much another opiate that the Chinaman employs to his own ends.

Tong Lee's relationship with Zuela is an undoing of the Chinaman's aggressive and controlling behavior; the antithesis of the dynamics of patriarchal domination that characterizes that relationship. Early in their relationship, Tong Lee signals that he is not interested in dominating Zuela when she wonders why he does not already have a woman in his life. He responds, "I just never needed to *keep* one"[11] (emphasis added). The semantic structure of the sentence, its insertion of the word "keep" instead of just saying "I never needed one," suggests that it is the ownership or keeping of women that Tong Lee has rejected, not women themselves. Additionally, Tong Lee consistently refuses to impose his will on Zuela. When she asks him what name he will call her, for example, he immediately responds by saying, "The name you want to call yourself."[12] In fact, Tong Lee facilitates situations in which Zuela can assert agency and come into her own voice. It is, after all, Tong Lee who reveals where the Chinaman hides his money, giving Zuela the opportunity to decide whether or not she will continue to stay with the Chinaman. Similarly, instead of silencing Zuela, Tong Lee encourages her to speak. Their first private moments together are marked with Tong Lee's repeated phrase, "tell me," as he encourages her to tell him her life story. Tong Lee also refuses to exploit Zuela's body, giving up the claim to sexual domination and ownership that is so often understood to be a fundamental component of West Indian masculinity. Indeed, when Zuela approaches Tong Lee, offering her body to him in exchange for his help to escape the Chinaman, he rejects her offer, insisting that he will only have her "the right way."[13] He fulfills that promise when they finally do make love and the focus of Tong Lee is on Zuela's pleasure, not his own. Finally, Tong Lee creates safe spaces for Zuela and her children to thrive in. Not only does he take them out of town when he suspects that violence is simmering in their community, but at the end of the novel, he gives up his own house to Zuela and her children so that they can have a place to stay while, significantly, he builds them a new home.

The final images of Tong Lee feature him planting a garden with Zuela's children as Mary Christophe, who acted as a surrogate mother to Zuela when she first arrived in Trinidad, reappears in Zuela's life. This scene emphasizes that Tong Lee's behavior throughout the novel is not mere kindness but is, in fact, a performance of the maternal. In the novel, the maternal is the exemplification of femininity defined as the antithesis of masculinity through its association with the care and protection of others as opposed to the desire to oppress and exploit others. Rosa and Zuela face patriarchal tyranny because of the loss of the maternal in their lives—Zuela's mother has literally died, and Rosa is essentially motherless due to her biological mother's emotional abandonment of her and the physical removal of Mary Christophe from

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

her life by her parents. Rosa is unable to re-connect to the maternal and is depicted literally calling out for her mother at the moment of her death. While Mary Christophe is not there for Rosa when she is murdered, she does return to Zuela in the novel's last few pages, indicating that she is going to "finish being a mother" by claiming Zuela as Daughter, a title that Zuela is happy to embrace.[14] But if the maternal—that is, the feminine—is, as the last page of the novel asserts, essentially the means by which woman are kept safe and taught to own themselves, then, for Zuela, the feminine has already been embodied in Tong Lee long before Mary Christophe re-assumes her maternal role. In his relationship with Zuela, Tong Lee facilitated her ability to reclaim herself on physical and emotional levels. Tong Lee is the primary representative of the maternal, and therefore, the feminine, throughout the novel. As such, he embodies an androgynous form of masculinity—one that intentionally and successfully resists the binary oppositions of the paternal and the maternal and of the masculine and the feminine.

REJECTING MALE PRIVILEGE IN *THE TRUE HISTORY OF PARADISE*

Like the Trinidad of *Bruised Hibiscus*, the Jamaica of Margaret Cezair-Thompson's *The True History of Paradise* is a site of brutalizing and normalized violence, particularly sexual violence, against women by men. In its unflinching examination of this reality, the novel is overtly counter-discursive toward any superficial, commercialized images of Jamaica as an unspoiled paradise—it aims to render the island's "true history." This history is exposed during the journey of the main character, Jean, across the island to an airport where she intends to flee the state of emergency that is in effect due to an outbreak of violence, and indeed, to flee the men of the island who embody this violence (she is planning to reunite with her White American lover in New York). This literal cross-island journey parallels an emotional journey that Jean embarks on during which she reflects on how her personal family history led her to this point. As she does so, ancestral voices interrupt her recollection to intertwine their stories with her own. One such ancestor is Mr. Ho Sing.

Mr. Ho Singh's narrative is relatively short, but its representation of the relationships of Mr. Ho Sing with the women in his life is meant to be just as counter-discursive as the representation of Jamaica as a land of "screaming chaos" as opposed to an Edenic paradise.[15] It is, in other words, another "true history"—one that writes directly against the popular early twentieth-century stereotype of Chinese men in Jamaica exploiting the (native) women in their lives because of the financial power that they wielded over them. Mr. Ho Sing

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

consistently rejects the position of power and privilege over women that his identity as a male, and more specifically, as a male Chinese shopkeeper in the Jamaican context, provides. In so doing, he embodies and models an alternative performance of West Indian masculinity.

Mr. Ho Sing is involved with three women during his life. His first wife, Miss Pamela, is a Jamaican woman who was initially his employee in the shop. The description of their relationship is brief. All we know about Miss Pamela is that she handled customers well, worked hard, and had five children with Mr. Ho Sing before she died. We also know that Mr. Ho Sing thought of her as "a good 'ooman" and that he "feel sorry when she pass away."[16] Nevertheless, the little that we know about their relationship is significant because, despite the obvious opportunity for exploitation between the Chinese shopkeeper and his employee, there is no suggestion that coercion or exploitation characterized their interactions. Indeed, the fact that Mr. Ho Sing actually took the step of legally marrying Miss Pamela and speaks about his sorrow at her death, suggests an emotional connection between the two, rather than an ownership of her body and labor on the part of Mr. Ho Sing.

Mr. Ho Sing's second wife is a young woman from China named Lim Su. Although she is not a native Jamaican, their relationship is also important in terms of establishing Mr. Ho Sing's anti-masculine performance. In particular, Mr. Ho Sing was not looking for a stereotypical subservient Chinese woman when he turned to China for his new wife. Instead, his attitude is entirely more generous. As his daughter notes: "Dem starvin' over in China. Mr. Ho Sing wan' gi somebody a chance."[17] The marriage to Lim Su provides her with an opportunity to escape desperate financial and political conditions in China for a better life. Finally, in his old age, Mr. Ho Sing becomes involved with Miss Rema, the household domestic. Miss Rema's subordinate position as employee suggests that she would be vulnerable to exploitation and oppression on the part of Mr. Ho Sing, but once again, this is not the case. Indeed, the rejection of masculinity's privileges by Mr. Ho Sing is perhaps most vividly indicated when he has to seek and then wait for Miss Rema's permission for a sexual relationship between them to begin. Miss Rema's agency in this matter is re-emphasized when Mr. Ho Sing proposes to her after Lim Su's death, and Miss Rema exercises her choice to refuse him.

ANDROGENIZED GENDER IN *GLORIA*

If West Indian masculinity is understood to be "a particular representation of men and manliness . . . [that] refers to an orientation that is heterosexual . . . [and] prides itself on its capacity for sexual conquest," then certainly the Chinese men of *Bruised Hibiscus* and *The True History of Paradise* embody

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

the terms of normative West Indian masculinity in their sexual relationship with women, albeit their sexual encounters would not, as we have seen, be deemed conquests.[18] In the case of the novel *Gloria*, however, the male Chinese characters, with the exception of Pao, are notably asexual, as is most evident when Henry Wong appears to be incapable of responding sexually to Gloria when she makes herself available to him in the house at Ocho Rios. Even Pao diverges from West Indian codes of masculinity in that, although he engages in heterosexual intercourse, he is feminized in these encounters. The representation of the Chinese characters in this fashion is not, however, done so as to render them deviant or anti-masculine, as has long been the tradition in American depictions of Asian American sexuality. Instead, this aberrant form of masculinity is a key component of a larger writing strategy that challenges the normative assumptions of West Indian masculinity by revealing the social, economic, and political forces that provide the framework for its construct and the stage for its performance.

Gloria is the second novel by author Kerry Young. Her first novel, *Pao,* is exceptional: Firstly, because it is rare to find a West Indian novel that is told from the perspective of a Chinese main character; and second, because although the main character is Chinese, he is not a Chinese shopkeeper, but is, instead, a successful gangster in Kingston's criminal underworld. In *Gloria*, Young steps back from depicting the extraordinary, choosing instead to write about "the ordinary life of a woman who happen [*sic*] to be born black and poor;" namely, to tell the story of Pao's long-term lover, a prostitute named Gloria.[19] The novel is an exploration of the ideologies, as well as the ideological apparatuses and practices, that result in limited access to opportunities and the inherent vulnerability and inferiority that the identity of a poor Black woman in colonial Jamaica affords. Gloria's prostitution becomes an important marker of the sociopolitical apparatuses that interpolate her identity in this manner. Chinese shopkeepers (who in this novel are always male) are represented as being in a parallel position to that of Gloria. Their representation in this fashion not only feminizes them, it also demystifies ideas of superiority, power, and domination as being innately expressive of the masculine.

When Gloria arrives in Kingston in 1938 and expresses her intention to apply for work in a Chinese shop, Auntie responds by stating, "Deb burning down Chiney groceries as well, yu know."[20] It is a pointed reminder of the fact that the treatment of the Chinese shopkeepers during the 1938 labor riots both excluded the Chinese from being imagined into nascent ideas of national community and allowed the Jamaican laboring classes to "restore their sense of masculinity by venting their anger at those who are even more powerless," at least in sociopolitical terms.[21] In other words, if West Indian nationalism was about men claiming their rightful identities and privileges as men, violence against the male Chinese shopkeepers provided potent opportunity to

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

perform the gestures of domination and control associated with West Indian ideals of masculinity. At the same time, however, this violence is disruptive to hegemonic understandings of the binary division between males and females because the male Chinese shopkeepers must be coded as feminine in these encounters: the Chinese men are acted upon (i.e., are feminine), rather than being actors (i.e., masculine). This disruption of the masculine in the representation of the Chinese is made even more evident in the analogous relationship between Chinese shopkeepers and shopkeeping, and prostitutes and prostitution that the novel establishes.

When Gloria first begins to contemplate becoming a prostitute, she and Sybil, the established prostitute who initiates her into that life, have a conversation in which Sybil defines the word "whore" in terms of a power dynamic. According to Sybil, a "whore" is an identity that those in power apply to the powerless so that they

> can tek what they want from her because she is not a real person. She is a thing. A Thing for their comfort and pleasure, their pride or amusement. She there to mek them feel good. People think being a whore got to do with what gwaan in the bedroom but it not. Being a whore is about who is in charge. And who can mek who do exactly what they want the other one to do however menial or shameful.[22]

It is a description that could very much apply to the relationship between Gloria's then boss, Mr. Ho, and his customers that Gloria witnesses. As a Chinese shopkeeper, Mr. Ho is depicted as holding the same dehumanized position of servitude to his customers that a prostitute like Gloria or Sybil is deemed to hold in relation to her customers. He is just there to "work for them" and part of the pleasure of the customer's interaction with the shopkeeper is the customer's ability to make the shopkeeper do what s/he wants, even if it is only in terms of serving goods. Gloria also notes that Mr. Ho's reaction to insults and the undercurrent of physical danger that is directed toward him as a Chinese shopkeeper is much like her own response to the ever-present threat of male violence that shapes her existence as a poor, Black woman and later, as a prostitute: "He do the same as me. He bear it. But he grin, and sometimes he bow. That is how he protect himself. That is how he keep them coming back to buy the flour and rice and saltfish that is his livelihood."[23]

The comparison between Mr. Ho and West Indian prostitutes does more than simply feminize him. It also draws attention to the constructed nature of their identities. There is nothing natural or innate about the gestures of passivity and servitude in which either Mr. Ho or a prostitute (or any other Black Jamaican woman) perform the subjectivities in which they are cast; rather, their behavior is forced upon them by the socio-economic structures of their

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

society. The homosexual police officer Clifton Brown makes the most overt statement on the societal constraints around the performance of masculinity and femininity in relation to the exercise of power when he states:

> In this world the power a man got over woman is backed up by a whole system and culture that say he is more important and more valuable than her, and his needs and wants got to be met before hers, and she got to serve him and sacrifice for him, and do what he say and keep him happy. He got to have the better cut a meat and the last drop a milk while she settle for the scraps and water. What it say is, she don't really matter. And that apply to every man, the nice home-loving family man as much as the scrawniest, laziest, nastiest, imbecile of a man. The system is there for him.[24]

Thus, Gloria's final comments that Mr. Ho is "nowhere near as stupid as they think" points to both the constructed nature of Mr. Ho's subject identity and to the distribution of socio-cultural and political power that forces it upon him.[25]

The representation of Henry Wong, Pao's father-in-law, is quite similar to that of Mr. Ho. Henry's identity is also depicted as feminized and this feminization is also revealed to be the result of the colonial dynamics that shape Jamaican society. For example, Henry's initial feminization is linked directly to the plantation-based social and economic hierarchy that is in place upon his arrival on the island. Henry is located within the feminine because he is taken to a plantation to do the "cooking and clearing-up" for the African laborers.[26] Later, he shows little agency in the decision to marry Miss Cicely, the marriage being part survival mechanism and part imposition by the representation of colonial power, Miss Cicely's father. Throughout the marriage, Henry manifests the central tenants of normative femininity coded in binary opposition to West Indian masculinity—namely passivity, powerlessness, and submission. He has no say in raising his children, for example, or running his household, and he and his wife only engage in sexual intercourse when she decides it is time to have another child. As Henry puts it simply: "my head bowed to her since the beginning of time."[27] But, Henry is also very aware that he is not simply cowed by Miss Cicely but has been feminized when he himself notes: "Most women just do what somebody else want them to do, whether it their mother or father or husband," and then concludes by saying: "I am like one of those women."[28]

Despite Henry's recognition that he has been effeminized he is not totally devoid of those qualities traditionally defined as masculine. He does demonstrate initiative and some level of courage and daring when he rescues Gloria upon their first meeting and insists on maintaining their friendship throughout his life. His business practices are certainly creative and shrewd and allow

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

him to wield some level of financial power, albeit often from behind the scenes. His gender performance is, therefore, like that of Mr. Ho, not entirely stable. Instead, it blurs the binary divisions upon which the codes of femininity and masculinity rest, leaving Henry's gender identity hazy and abstruse.

The novel's insistence on embracing the tensions between femininity and masculinity within its characters rather than perpetrating divisions is even better realized in the character of Pao.[29] Young's first novel, told from the perspective of Pao, uses the classic Chinese military text, *The Art of War*, as the structuring device around which Pao navigates his life in Jamaica. The Pao of the first novel is a man of constant action who is, for the most part, able to impose his will on others. In the novel *Gloria*, Pao is already on his way to becoming a notorious gangster when he and Gloria meet. As with the novel *Pao*, their first interaction is based on Gloria's request that Pao effect a punishment on the man who brutalized her sister and become the paid muscle protecting the prostitutes in their household. In both novels, Pao agrees to do so and such begins the long-term association that will result in their becoming a type of family unit by the end of each novel. The novel *Gloria* differs from *Pao* not only in terms of the perspective from which the story is told, however, but in its rendering of Pao in more feminized terms than that of the man who masters the art of war in the original novel. In *Gloria*, not only is the perspective from which the story is told flipped, so also are the attributes of the feminine and masculine in terms of Gloria's and Pao's characterization.

When Gloria first sees Pao, she is struck by how incompetent he seems, noting that he "cyan even dress himself decent" and contrasting him against his Black associate who is described simply as "the big muscle one."[30] Pao is further distanced from masculine archetypes when Gloria subsequently compares him to an "overgrown schoolboy . . . not the grown man," an identity that she would still apply to him decades later.[31] The descriptions of Pao become more detailed—and more effeminate—when he becomes a regular visitor at Gloria's household. Pao does not physically embody the masculine ideal. He is not physically imposing. He is "not scrawny exactly, but there hardly anything on him" and has a smile that is described as "nice," "gentle," "innocent," "openhearted and undefended."[32] His behavior is described as quiet and "prim" and he is more apt to sing romantic songs about roses and drink tea instead of hard liquor. Pao practices tai chi instead of a more aggressive form of martial arts and fails miserably at "men's work," that is, at making repairs on the house. In one of his earliest interactions with Gloria at the house, Pao is positioned in the most submissive of stances in relation to Gloria, "on his knees on the kitchen floor looking up at [her] through those dark brown eyes."[33]

The image of Pao on his knees before Gloria has obvious sexual overtones, and the sexual submission of Pao suggested in that moment is subsequently

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

enacted in the bedroom. Indeed, nowhere is Pao more overtly feminized than in his sexual relationship with Gloria. Pao seems to have no understanding of how to play the role of pursuer when it comes to Gloria. His wooing of Gloria, if it can be described as such, consists primarily of inaction: Pao sits in the house with Gloria, drinking tea, barely saying a word. It is Gloria who initiates their first sexual contact and who describes her feelings after she propositions Pao in terms of sexual conquest: "I feel good. I feel strong. For the first time in my life I feel I tek control of something."[34] Once they are in bed together, Gloria continues to take the sexually dominant position, noting that "it was me that had to tek off his clothes. And me that had to stroke his face and rub his arms and shoulders and chest, and gentle squeeze the muscle that was under my fingertips. It was me that had to caress his lips. *It was me that had to take him*"[35] (emphasis added). Pao, who we learn is still a virgin, in comparison to the much more sexually experienced Gloria, is not only the one who is "taken" in their coming together, but ends up in tears, overcome with emotion, when the moment is over. It is behavior that Pao himself will later identify as the antithesis of normative masculinity when he describes it as weakness.[36]

Throughout the rest of the novel, the attributes of hegemonic masculinity and femininity continue to be reversed in the depiction of Gloria and Pao's ongoing relationship. Gloria always retains primary control of their relationship, deciding if and under what conditions they will sleep together, whether or not she will bear his child, and developing a financial base that leaves her independent of Pao (and of any other man, for that matter). Pao continues to acquiesce to Gloria's decisions and, on at least two other occasions, is depicted as weeping in her presence. Even Pao's criminal activity is not free from feminine taint in the sense that many of his activities are motivated by his desire to protect and care for others as much as they are by the more traditionally deemed masculine attributes of aggression and domination. Pao has ambitions for himself and certainly uses others to attain them; but in pursuing his goals, he is not above helping out a raped, pregnant girl, ensuring the safety of a waitress caught up in a murder, and being a loyal friend to a homosexual in the rampantly homophobic society of Jamaica. Like the other Chinese men in the novel, therefore, Pao's performance of masculinity is ambivalent since it also embraces a "culturally proscribed feminine gender script."[37] The ambiguity of his performance of masculinity reveals the false divisions between the masculine and the feminine and draws attention to the ideological underpinnings that are naturalized in hegemonic constructions of gender in much the same way that the feminization of Mr. Ho and Henry Wong makes the sociopolitical and economic structures and desires that support this feminization evident.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

CONCLUSION

In their rendering of Chinese masculinity as unsettled and ambivalent, Kerry Young, Margaret Cezair-Thompson, and Elizabeth Nunez successfully take up Cheung's challenge to write masculinity "without denigrating or erasing the 'feminine.'"[38] The feminization of these Chinese characters—their embodiment of the maternal, their refusal to engage in acts of oppression and exploitation as a right and expression of their manhood, and their "androgynization" in terms of slippages between feminine and masculine codes of behavior—is not inscribed for the purposes of maintaining the power and privilege of hegemonic masculinity as has often been the case in cultural productions of effeminized Chinese masculinity that have emerged in the Americas. The feminization of the Chinese characters in these West Indian novels is, instead, part of a writing strategy that exposes and resists the opportunities for tyranny, abuse, and violence within hegemonic constructions of West Indian masculinity by causing the reader to ask "questions about the constructed nature of experience, about how subjects are constituted as different in the first place, about how one's vision is structured."[39] By depicting flexible, plural, and alternative performances of Chinese masculinity and by celebrating such performances as viable rather than deviant, these Chinese characters help to dissolve "the mystifications of power" and "scramble the codes" of Western masculinity, thereby providing means and models by which to escape the tyranny of this performance.[40]

NOTES

1. Frank Chin and Jeffrey Paul Chan, "Racist Love," in *Seeing Through Shuck*, ed. Richard Kostelanetz (New York: Ballentine Books, 1972), 68.
2. King-Kok Cheung, "The Woman Warrior versus the Chinaman Pacific. Must a Chinese American Critic Choose Between Feminism and Heroism?" in *Asian American Studies: A Reader*, eds. Jean Yu-Wen Shen Wu and Min Song (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 315 and 319.
3. Ibid., 318.
4. The novels under study are located in Trinidad and Jamaica. I use the term "West Indian" as opposed to "Caribbean" in relation to these novels to signal the significance of the colonial context in which all three novels are psychically and temporally located.
5. See, for example, R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); and James Doyle's, *The Male Experience* (Dubuque, IA: Brown, 1989).
6. Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 4.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

7. Hilary Beckles, "Black Masculinity in Caribbean Slavery," in *Interrogating Caribbean Masculinities. Theoretical and Empirical Analyses*, ed. Rhoda E. Reddock (Kingston: The University of the West Indies Press, 2004), 228.

8. Ibid., 229. For more on the subject of gender identities in Africa see, *Readings in Gender in Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press and Oxford: James Currey, 2005) edited by Andrea Cornwall.

9. Linden Lewis, "Caribbean Masculinity. Unpacking the Narrative," in *The Culture of Gender and Sexuality in the Caribbean*, ed. Linden Lewis (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2003), 103.

10. Elizabeth Nunez, *Bruised Hibiscus* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2000), 5.

11. Ibid., 158.

12. Ibid., 253.

13. Ibid., 170.

14. Ibid., 286.

15. Margaret Cezair-Thompson, *The True History of Paradise* (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2009), 319.

16. Ibid., 79.

17. Ibid., 254.

18. Lewis, 108.

19. Kerry Young, *Gloria* (New York: Bloomsbury USA, 2013), 159.

20. Ibid., 18.

21. Cheung, 314.

22. Young, *Gloria*, 52.

23. Ibid., 22.

24. Ibid., 368.

25. Ibid., 22.

26. Ibid., 148.

27. Ibid., 145.

28. Ibid., 142 and 145.

29. Cheung, 319.

30. Young, *Gloria*, 72.

31. Ibid., 81, see also 260.

32. Ibid., 81 and 260.

33. Ibid., 84.

34. Ibid., 90.

35. Ibid., 92.

36. See Ibid., 124.

37. D. L. Mosher and S. S. Tomkins, "Scripting the Macho Man: Hypermasculine Socialization and Enculturation," *The Journal of Sex Research* 25, no. 1 (1988), 82.

38. Cheung, 315.

39. Joan Scott, "Experience," *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader*, eds. S. Smith and J. Watson (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 58.

40. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (New York: Viking, 1977), xxi.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Beckles, Hilary. "Black Masculinity in Caribbean Slavery." In *Interrogating Caribbean Masculinities. Theoretical and Empirical Analyses*. Edited by Rhoda E. Reddock. Kingston: The University of the West Indies Press, 2004, 225–243.

Cezair-Thompson, Margaret. *The True History of Paradise*. New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2009.

Cheung, King-Kok. "The Woman Warrior versus the Chinaman Pacific. Must a Chinese American Critic Choose Between Feminism and Heroism?" In *Asian American Studies. A Reader*. Edited by Jean Yu-Wen Shen Wu and Min Song. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007, 307–321.

Chin, Frank and Jeffrey Paul Chan. "Racist Love." In *Seeing Through Shuck*. Edited by Richard Kostelanetz. New York: Ballentine Books, 1972, 65–79.

Connell, R. W. *Masculinities*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

Cornwall, Andrea, ed. *Readings in Gender in Africa.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press and Oxford: James Currey, 2005.

Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane. New York: Viking, 1977.

Doyle, James A. *The Male Experience*. Dubuque, IA: Brown, 1989.

Lewis, Linden. "Caribbean Masculinity. Unpacking the Narrative." In *The Culture of Gender and Sexuality in the Caribbean*. Edited by Linden Lewis. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2003, 94–125.

Mosher, D. L. and Tomkins, S. S. "Scripting the Macho Man: Hypermasculine Socialization and Enculturation." *The Journal of Sex Research* 25, no.1 (1988): 60–84.

Nandy, Ashis. *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Nunez, Elizabeth. *Bruised Hibiscus*. New York: Ballantine Books, 2000.

Scott, Joan. "Experience." In *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader*. Edited by S. Smith and J. Watson. Madison: University of Wisconsin Parkside, 1998, 57–71.

Young, Kerry. *Gloria*. New York: Bloomsbury USA, 2013.

Young, Kerry. *Pao*. New York: Bloomsbury USA, 2011.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Chapter 9

La Mulata Achinada

Bodies, Gender, and Authority in Afro-Chinese Religion in Cuba

Martin A. Tsang

Alicia Castro, one of the Chinese-Cuban sisters in the acclaimed female musical ensemble Anacaona, offers us a rare written insight into the vast musical universe the artists inhabited:

> Although religion was a strong anchor in our lives and in our music, we sisters never talked much about religious matters. I discussed such things even less with others. Nevertheless, I knew that most people's lives in the neighbourhood were filled with religion. Each had his own discreet way of honouring his saint and securing protection and well-being.
>
> I mostly honoured the saints [orishas] and the dead at home, because I'm a spiritualist. I had placed the figures of San Lazaro and the Virgin of Caridad on my dresser and regularly put flowers out for them. But above all, I made sure to offer the departed spirits a glass of water set high atop my wardrobe. Spiritualism and Santeria follow somewhat different customs and beliefs, but mostly we call them both simply la religion. Alicia Castro.[1]

I begin this chapter with the above passage as it beautifully and reflectively captures the gendered and racial complexities of Afro-Chinese religiosity that are pertinent here. First, Alicia's memoir offers a snapshot of prominent Chinese-Cuban women practicing Afro-Cuban religion in their own way. Second, Alicia's reflections on the popularity of Afro-Atlantic religions to the culture of her barrio cannot be separated from Cuban music and the beat of daily life. Third, the careful mixing and fluid awareness of how distinct traditions can converge and are practiced without contradiction are crucial to understanding the thriving multivalent and intersectional religiosity at large in Cuba. Alicia's contribution is important on many levels especially if we

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

consider that the recorded voices and experiences of male, let alone female, Chinese-Cubans are sparse at best in Cuba's historical record. Within the realms of popular imagination and literature are inklings of the threat of Asian encroachment, in an abject rendering, these literary mulatta/os are the very epitome of Cuban figments of the imagination. However, I am reclaiming these tropes in an analysis of Afro-Cuban religiosity that yes, may never be truly liberated from vestiges of sexual and racial discrimination, but could offer a useful, alternative vernacular, helping us to divert from discussing religion according to and dominated by men and male authority. Afro-Atlantic religions are famously matriarchal[2] and create much-needed space for the expression and inclusion of their LGBTQ+ practitioners.[3]

From the mid-nineteenth century, wholesale migration of thousands of Chinese to many parts of the Americas irrevocably changed the cultural and religious landscapes for good. Indentured labor became the dominant means by which the Cantonese came to Cuba and spread across the island to work in the sugar plantations following the collapse of the Atlantic slave trade. In these industrial spaces, Chinese and Cubans of African descent lived and worked together and created unions that resulted in successive generations of multiracial Cubans. José Baltar Rodríguez writes that Chinese descendants following indenture were born of Chinese men and the Chinese daughter of Chinese parents, or a "Cuban mother (black, mixed, or white)," each producing marked differences in the ways that offspring formed communities on the island.[4] In light of these mixed households wherein Afro-Cuban religions have been practiced and the location for initiations, possessions, and healing occurs, began a long history of incorporating Chinese practices, materiality, and persons into religious practices, ideas, and the priesthood.

In this chapter, I shed light on the ways that Lukumí religious structuring has produced alternative readings of the mixed-Afro-Chinese woman.[5] I argue here that the internal visibility of Chinese and mixed-race Chinese adherents in Afro-Cuban religions reveals discernible sexualities and gendered understandings of power and supernatural efficacy that rallies against a cultural backdrop of alienation and superstition. Within these sacred spaces, practitioners of Chinese descent embrace their Chineseness as a means of underscoring their ritual abilities. What makes these racialized religious connections exciting is that there are many instances of the ways that alternative sexualities, including LGBTQ+ practitioners, occupy elevated positions in the hierarchy of worshipers and initiates. In turn, when examining how people of Chinese descent claim and exclaim both their race and their sexualities in contemporary Afro-Cuban religiosity, we can glimpse case studies that curtail existing, popular understandings of these mixtures as negative, superficial, or merely skin deep. Afro-Chinese mulataje[6] is perhaps what José Esteban Muñoz calls cultural work that is an expression of hybridization that

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

is "cultivated from the dominant culture but meant to expose and critique its conventions," resulting in a process of disidentification, the ability to expose subaltern identities for persons "whose experience of identity is fractured and split."[7]

FINE DISTURBANCES IN RACE AND UNSETTLING THE BODY

Beyond these boundary-breaking abilities, Alison Fraunhar explains that mulataje, "like blackness or Jewishness, is constituted from geographical, phenotypical and cultural markers that are recruited as signifiers of (always/already unstable)" identity and interpreted through an epistemological framework constructed on a foundation of colonialism and imperialism."[8] Accordingly, Fraunhar posits that the power inherent in ascribing the mulatta construction is that it is at once destabilizing and unsettling.

Didier Fassin reminds us that the connection between race and body has, for many years and by many people, problematically been both taken for granted and inextricable. However, the theorizing of race premised on biological and social constructs attests to these linkages, yet "real life was more complex, and there remained disquieting moments of indistinctiveness."[9] Fassin goes on to explain that ruptures in the ability to easily connect race to bodily identifiers occur when a body can shift from one racial category to another according to politics rather than phenotype. It is these shifts in racial and bodily assumptions that occur through interventions, such as religion, that are of interest here. The category of being mixed race, which has been thought of as an indistinctive or intermediary positionality, is in fact evidence of the bounded nature of racial classification as within the mixed-race category are those that cannot easily be identified as belonging to it.

Being mixed race and the ability to transcend socioeconomic and class barriers are factors that become ingrained and engineered through careful cultivation from one generation to the next. Passing for white thus became the aspiration for many and is used as a tool to unshackle the limitations of racism and prejudice across the Caribbean and Latin America. Rafael Ocasio's examination of costumbrista literature that marked the nineteenth century highlights the ways that black and mixed-race characters are related against the backdrop of slavery, abolition, colonialism, and industry. In so doing, Rafael self-identifies as a mulatto *fino*, as that which his mixed heritage, Puerto Rican ancestry would be equated to. Ocasio notes that this genre of novels is particularly rich in its portrayals of mulatto subjectivity and, written from the 1830s, central to these writings, are the tropes of sugar and slavery which are deemed to be "at the heart of Cuba's sugarcane financial

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

boom, provid[ing] plenty of Black-related themes, often taken as examples of the ways that representative traditions have impacted the development of a Cuban identity."[10] These characters and situations struck a chord with the author and his autoanalysis as a mixed-race Puerto Rican and, as his skin color marked him apart from black persons in his country, the divide was made ever more apparent in his formative years:

> I was kept away from the traditional Black cultural patterns and warned that they were *cosa de negros* [a Black thing]. Those lessons I learned from my mother, the ultimate *mulata fina*, who raised me to believe that I was White and who therefore insisted that I behave accordingly, following proper Puerto Rican manners in dress, speech, and hair grooming.[11]

The volatile and chimeric nature of mulataje can be thought of as a reaction to dominant social constructs, shaking them to the core. Afro-Cuban religions and the hybridity of Chinese and Asian persons within them add to the ways that race, class, and the body are conscripted and adjusted to produce different logics of action. Within the religious sphere, the dynamics of desire that have otherwise so closely been pegged to mulataje have become obsolete. Such detachment and reconfiguration is to be expected, and the Lukumí concern for Afro-Chinese mulataje is an example of the very nature of the category, as Alison Fraunhar states it refuses to "'stay put'; it is neither/nor; it resists regulation either overtly or slyly, appearing to comply with the social hierarchies as it undermines them. Mulataje shifts positions, encroaches, seduces, mimics, appropriates and rebels; affording people of color the agency that would have been otherwise unattainable."[12]

Recent academic work has greatly expanded our insights into the intercultural encounters of those indentured Chinese who arrived in Cuba from 1847 onward. These works serve to highlight the tense racialization and the ambiguous positionalities that the Chinese and their descendants faced with regard to the project of Cuban identity formation and promotion in the twentieth century. The rich mix of Chinese ethnic groups and other Asian demographics were superficially dubbed as *chinos*, or *coolies* [Spanish: *culíes*], guest workers. The Chinese in Cuba were never really meant to be included as a serious contributor to the making of the nation's *Cubanía*. With little regard for the wholesale importation of Chinese coolies from the mid-nineteenth century on, they occupied a space that was not theirs, and garnered press in the form of racist and stereotyped personas, ultimately resulting in their invisibility in the rhetoric of multiculturalism and *cubanidad*.

The fate and contributions of the Chinese emerging from indenture had not been adequately factored into the ideology of nationhood and were further complicated by the fact that many Chinese did not leave as anticipated once

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

their labor was no longer required, but instead transitioned from coolie to resident to citizen. Being neither black nor white, racial discrimination and social classificatory vagueness were experienced by Chinese in Cuba, whose skin was often technically lighter than many "white" Spanish, effectively destabilizing existing legal categories by their presence. Similarly, the positioning of the Chinese as temporary, disposable, indentured workers or coolies meant that they were framed to exist in limited and liminal sociocultural and political spaces, whose primary purpose was to help Cuba transition from an economy of slavery to one premised on free labor. Among these changes, the Chinese presence and participation in Afro-Cuban religions was an unpredicted factor, permanently altering the practices, materials, and philosophies of Afro-Atlantic spirituality.

In particular, the importance of Afro-Cuban religious registers in complicating mestizaje may be determined by exploring how Chinese antecedents and contemporary mixed Chinese practitioners play strategic roles in the symbolic and intellectual discourses of Afro-Cuban religion-making. I do this through the use of ethnography and literary analysis; in particular, close readings of contemporary Cuban texts offer, at first glance, an extension of the mulata persona with Sinicized features, yet upon closer inspection one can detect the valuable intersection of race and religion that help bring to the fore a new understanding of mixed-Cuba. I am mindful that although this chapter strives to make inroads into better understanding identity and religiosity with specific reference to Cuba's Chinese and African heritages, investigations that serve to ground the interaction and representation of Jewish, Korean, Japanese, and Middle Eastern presences in Cuba remain painfully scant.

The majority of work on race and mixing in the Caribbean, according to Hintzen and Rahier, "limits its analyses of mixture to that which occurred between European and African antecedents."[13] In Cuba in particular, the conceptualization of transculturation, while allowing for a greater appreciation of the nonblack and the nonwhite to be accounted for in culture making, at least on paper, did not adequately allow space for their thorough analyses, favoring instead a black-white racial dyad. Similarly, the transculturative paradigm has been dominant in the ways that Afro-Cuban religions, such as Lukumí, Arará, Palo, and the fraternal society of Abakuá have been framed and theorized, both inside and out. I challenge this partiality through an alternative view of how Afro-Chinese mulataje plays a significant role in these religious frames.

Elsewhere in the Americas where the Chinese disembarked to work, racial classification systems were marked by reference and contrast to indigenous/native and European tropes. The comparative racial distinctions of the Chinese culminated in the creation of fictions of identifications that carried political ramifications and ultimately, sexual and reproductive governance. Lisa Lowe states that "for some colonial administrators, the 'value' of the Chinese may

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

not have been exclusively labor, but also the instrumental use of the figure of Chinese women's sexuality as resembling the 'civility' of European marriage and family, in an implicit contrast to the sexualized representations of female African and African descendant peoples."[14] Thus, along with the dominant rhetoric of Chinese bodies for their physical labor, the colonial regime in the British West Indies was interested in the value of Chinese women as potential employees in the cultivation of families for future generations of free labor and to act as a buffer between African and European mixing.

My recent work has considered the ways that Cubans of mixed Chinese descent not only practiced the multiple forms of Afro-Cuban religions but have also been coauthors and creators in their Caribbean iterations and ethnoscape from the mid-nineteenth century. So much so, that those Chinese coolies who survived the dangerous working conditions in Cuba formed consensual unions with freed and enslaved women of color, and subsequent generations of Chinese Creoles. From these unions began the widespread influence and participation of the Chinese and their descendants in Afro-Cuban religions.

The trope and semiotics of mulataje from a religious position can be gleaned from ethnographic examples and close readings of some literary perspectives where the presence, performance, and embodiment of the Afro-Chinese mulata (*la mulata achinada*) differ greatly from the tragic seductress. While the line of demarcation may not be so clearly delineated, the idea of the Chinese mulata within the Lukumí religion differs in form and force than portrayals of her counterpart in Cuban popular culture. While conducting fieldwork in Cuba in 2012 on Chinese influence in Afro-Cuban religions, many participants and colleagues would wistfully recall the image of la mulata achinada, with sufficient numbers entering into a reverie over the thought of such a quixotic imaginary. The idea of a Sinicized mulata was, for some, the epitome of objectified sexual desire, thought of as both non-real and unattainable. The intensity with which la mulata achinada was conjured during discussions, as well as the frequency, sensitized my research to how, specifically, mestizaje was a prominent trope within the internal logics of power and constituted many aspects of power in the Lukumí religion.

The Afro-Chinese mulata held great fascination for my interlocutors, and as is all too often the case when discussing the mixing of races, la mulata achinada required the use of many superlatives to adequately convey to me her otherworldly qualities. Over and over again she was described as quixotic and enigmatic, and imagined as the unassailable ethereal beauty; indeed, many literary works do the same thing and, in some way, disingenuously collapse the Chinese mulata within representations of sexual desire. However, religious frameworks also hinted at in those pages suggest an understanding of Afro-Chinese mulataje that circumvents the libidinous regarding a break with sexualized conventions and a focus on the cerebral—that is, wisdom,

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

intelligence, and attendants of substantial and efficacious religious power. The identification of the Chinese mulata brings to the fore the relationship between, and issues about, racialized desire and religious capital.

On the rare occurrence that the Afro-Cuban architects of the Lukumí religion have been written about—perhaps because they were women—they have been parsed simply as women of color. However, many of them are remembered and venerated as being of Afro-Chinese descent. The Chinese aspect to their Afro-Cuban identity is not implied but detailed, ceremonially recalled through the *moyubá*, the cornerstone Lukumí invocatory liturgy that begins every religious rite, divination, and so on; these founding priestess biographies and lineages are not just preserved through collective memory, but their power, their *ashé* is made present from one life to another through their invocation.

FAMILIES OF STONE: GENDERED SPIRITUAL LINEAGES IN THE AMERICAS

Within the Afro-Atlantic religions of Lukumí (Cuba), Candomblé (Brazil), Vodou (Haiti), Shango (Trinidad and Tobago), Winti (Suriname), and many more, women have had and continue to hold positions of great power and prestige.[15] Similarly, the pantheon of deities is replete with goddesses that yield great authority and reflect a spectrum of gendered and sexual identities. Deceased Lukumí *iyalorisha*—orisha priestesses who are considered the architects and matriarchs of the religion as practiced in Cuba and its diaspora—are invoked in every contemporary ritual. These path-making priestesses are remembered for originating lineages of initiates, as each new priest is initiated by an existing orisha priest. The new priest is said to be "born from the *sopera*" (the porcelain tureen that houses the orisha) of their godparent, thus extending the religious lineage, creating "*la familia de soperas*, which is synonymous with an expanded definition of the Lucumí concept of *fundamento*. The word *fundamento* can refer both to the orichas' sacred stones and to the extended ritual family and genealogical lineage of the house."[16] Premised in this kinship system is the ability for the consecrated materials that represent the orisha to give birth or rebirth the person as a vessel for the orisha. As a consecrated priest, he or she is spiritually connected to the stones (*otá*) and cowrie shells (*dilogun*) that constitute the orisha's body and mouth, respectively. As such, a lineage of initiates is described as being a family of stone, to distinguish it from a family connected by blood. Joseph Murphy helps us to understand Oshún's character more fully, writing "an oricha is a power, or mystery which can be a person, but is other things as well. Ochún[17] is water, river, mirror, gold, honey, peacock, vulture, gestation . . . she may in fact be more than one person."[18]

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

A CHINESE BARRIO BELONGING TO OSHÚN AND HER DAUGHTERS

Havana's Chinatown is one of the largest and oldest Chinese quarters in the Americas. It is thus understandable that *el barrio chino* has become an enduring trope for situating, writing, and discussing the Chinese presence in Cuba, and much contemporary literature, especially fiction, uses this space as the backdrop for stories. Indeed, the barrio often becomes anthropomorphized as a copresence in the narrative. Cristina Garcia's novel, *Monkey Hunting*, published in 2003, describes the protagonist, Chen Pan, who migrates from China to Cuba in 1857 in search of his fortune; Pan describes el barrio chino as the "island within an island." However, as Kathleen López has amply demonstrated, Havana's ethnic Chinese population teeters in number between just one and two hundred, and its Chinatown is increasingly governed and constituted by mixed-Chinese-Cuban inhabitants and entrepreneurs. We can detect in such works the awareness of an ongoing mixing of race and space and the building momentum of a different mulataje that incorporates a non-essentialized Chinese perspective, one that is decoupled, from an atemporal barrio chino. A prime example of an awareness of mestizaje of people and place is given by Antonio José Ponte, a writer born in 1964 in Matanzas, who not only locates one of his narratives in and outside the Chinese quarter but includes racial and religious mixing as key tropes. Titled "At the Request of Oshún," Ponte's short story is situated in el barrio chino, specifically a butcher's shop where Ignacio, who narrates the story, is apprenticing in the trade. Luminaria, Ignacio's mixed-race wife, is the unfettered object of his devotion and attention, to the point of disaster. On their racial subjectivities, Ponte writes "Luminaria Wong, unlike Ignacio, was not completely Chinese. To describe such a beauty, in a nutshell, Lumi was a Chinese mulatto. The color of her skin varied continually and changed as the color of other women's eyes change. That skin was at its best after dark, for sure."[19] We learn that Ignacio, trapped in a quagmire of jealousy, imprisons his wife to prevent anyone peering into her enchanting eyes.

Ponte's story colorfully and emotionally draws us into Havana's Chinatown where Luminaria is protected by Oshún, similarly characterized for being a revered orisha whose wrath is difficult, perhaps impossible to placate. The similarity of Luminaria and Oshún, both extending mulataje in different directions, colors, so to speak, the very terrain of Cuba. Both Luminaria and Oshún are mulatas, and in Ignacio's action of imprisoning his wife, he is mimicking the fate of Oshún in one of her *patakí*, or oral accounts associated with the divination sign or *odu*, Oshenilogbe.[20] For the person who receives this divination verse in a Lukumí consultation is warned that they could be trapped or constrained, physically or metaphorically. Indeed, divination is also a pivotal theme in Ponte's story. The obsessed Ignacio consults a

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

santero after imprisoning his mulata achinada and ascertains through divination that he has directly offended Oshún, the stern orisha who is embodied in Luminaria: "Ignacio had dared to lift his hand against a daughter of Ochún, the goddess of love and happiness. 'Lumi, daughter of Ochún,' my assistant began to understand. 'The reason for her skin and her walk and her hair down her back and her love of bracelets and those eyes.'"[21]

In addition to its protagonists, the backdrop of el barrio chino suggests the magic of space and can be considered a character in the text alongside Ignacio and Lumi. Solimar Otero discusses the importance of Havana and the representation of Afro-Cuban religiosity, gender, and mixed race through its inhabitants and its cosmopolitan spaces. As described by Otero, Havana and its ruins become an important character in the writings that are situated there. Thus, Afro-Cuban religions help to orient people, space, and time, and have an explicative quality for what transpires in a space among people that one would not normally associate with the orishas. Otero explains the role of Afro-Cuban religions in Cuba and among those of Chinese descent as part of and participants in "Havana's magical laws: that is, the supernatural potential for changing material realities cannot be taken for granted in this part of the city"[22] where the magic of the island helps us to "move beyond imposed binaries of history, economy, culture, and politics."[23]

Cuban writer Mayra Montero[24] explores the entanglements of race, identity, and intercultural sexual encounters from the middle of the nineteenth century. In her writings, Montero uses specifically Cuban-Chinese genealogy to extrapolate themes of isolation, interracial mixing, and generational assimilation. This foregrounding of the mixed, moving away from the essential and Orientalized, serves to highlight the epistemic borderlands left uncharted by a hegemonic and homogenizing transculturative paradigm. Similarly evoking a mixed Chinese quarter in reference to religion, Montero reflexively writes to situate her experience and authenticity in the following manner:

> I was exposed to phenomena of syncretism as singular as that of Chinese Santería, and I visited, in the legendary Calle de Zanja, crucial heart of the Chinese barrio of Havana, altars in which the African Orishas blended with the improvised Orishas of Asian origin, such as the very miraculous San Fan Con, who derived from the mythical warrior Cuan Con.[25]

Montero underscores the range of reach of the body as knowledge and the gendered distinction in how Afro-Chinese and Chinese-Cuban bodies are imagined as imbued with religious power. These explicit references to mixed-Chinese-Cubans represented as religiously potent, complicate and deflect racist and subordinating characterizations that are too often attributed to nonwhite Cuban citizens.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

CASTING MULATAS AND AFRO-CHINESE BABALAWOS

An early and exceptional representation is found in the 1953 film, *Mulata*[26] starring the Cuban-born Mexican actress Ninón Sevilla who turns to the orishas for help. In exploring the rare popular appearances of Afro-Cuban and Afro-Chinese religious practitioners, the production of the film *Mulata* is astounding for its early and accurate portrayals of orisha worship on film. Among the firsts apparent in *Mulata* include what is regarded as the first appearance of the sacred *bembe* or Añá drums. The protagonist Caridad dances at a *bembe* or *toque de santo* to answer the call of her ancestors. What is most striking about the religious scenes, from my perspective as an orisha practitioner, is the consultation that Caridad's mother makes with the orisha of divination, Orunmila/Ifá, via her religious godfather or *padrino*, a Chinese mulatto babalawo who speaks with a Spanish accent inflected with a Chinese accent. In the scene, the babalawo chants the *mojuba*, the invocatory praise poem, and manipulates the *ekuele* or divination chain, with uncanny accuracy by suggesting that the uncredited actor for the babalawo role, may, in fact, have been an Afro-Chinese Ifá priest. What is more striking is that the person's phenotype as Chinese-Cuban mestizo is not commented upon as extraordinary. That such a figure as an Afro-Chinese Ifá priest is not regarded as out of place, nor as spectacle, suggests that the presence of mixed practitioners was routine rather than an anomaly. While the correlation between motion picture presences of Afro-Chinese practitioners as normalized participants in religious circles cannot be concluded, there are countless examples from within Ifá and orisha religious lineages that uphold the deceased practitioners of Chinese and African heritages, male and female, who are remembered as key participants in the development of these religions in Cuba. Thus religious practice in Ifá, as witnessed in the film, is determined through logics of ritual efficacy and the knowledge to adeptly perform divination and *ebo* (sacrifices made according to the reading) that are reliant on initiation, lineage, and intellect rather a perception of racialized subjectivity.

Matanzas is a particularly rich source of religious practice, considered by many to be the cradle of Afro-Atlantic religions practiced in Cuba. In Matanzas, one can observe the spectrum of Afro-Cuban religions being practiced, with many worshipers practicing multiple faiths in an intersectional way. Alongside those faiths that are considered of African origin, many also practice some form of spiritism, made popular in the nineteenth century by the French writer Allan Kardec, whose books remain popular and are used in spiritist sessions in Cuba and the diaspora.[27] *Espiritismo* is popular across the Caribbean and Latin America, and in Matanzas, I encountered a Chinese spirit or *muerto* who "came down" on his medium, Yesenia, an Afro-Cuban *espiritista*.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

In a *misa,* or spiritist session, in 2014, Yesenia's spirit made a dramatic entrance, exclaiming in loud Spanish and a pronounced Chinese accent that he prefers to go by the name of El Chino because the *blancos* did not know how to pronounce his Chinese name properly. He was proud that he had learned to speak Spanish, which he had learned with his Congo and Lukumí brethren while on earth learning how to cure/heal. El Chino had come to cleanse a girl who had been suffering from night tremors, waking up and shouting; part of the problem was that child should have been initiated a long time before. However, her parents' economic situation had prevented this.

After cleansing the girl with perfume, flowers, cigar smoke, and rum, the venerable Chinese spirit then gave the parents of the child in attendance a formula to help with gaining the money needed for her initiation. Included in the recipe was assistance (*una asistencia*) to the spirit that incorporated a range of materials associated with both African and Chinese cultural presence in Cuba, namely a bowl of uncooked rice, a bath with *acelga* (similar to Chinese cabbage, or bok choy), a cigar, and dry white wine. With these offerings, El Chino would ensure that the money would be coming swiftly. Thus, Chinese spirits, such as the one I encountered in Matanzas, are continuing to minister to the needs of the living, using the means at hand. Such efficacy in sorcery or witchcraft is not just skin deep; it also lingers and is located in the bones, to encompass the cerebral and intellectual pursuits of the Afro-Chino babalawo and also to evoke a sense of biopower.

The bones of Chinese are sought in Palo Mayombe practices to spiritually charge the prenda, known by its Bantu term *nganga*, a constellation of materials often contained in a metal cauldron or terra cotta vessel that is the nexus of Palo religious technology. Within the prenda the Palo deity, called *nkisi,* is conjoined with the spirit of a deceased human who carries out the brunt of the work in this union; this deceased spirit is made present by adding the cranium or femur taken from a known grave and is a form of indenture in the afterlife.

The Cuba noir thriller by Arnaldo Correa, *Cold Havana Ground,*[28] picks up on the materiality of Chinese bones in Kongo-derived materialized religiosity. In the novel, a corpse goes missing from Havana's Chinese section of the Cementerio de Cristóbal Colón, one of the many real places that Chinese bones have been clandestinely disinterred from for use in Palo Mayombe religious rites. The following passage from the novel is a line of questioning that underscores some of the attributes that illustrate what would make a Chinese body a desirable candidate for a nganga, or spiritual vessel.

> "Was this Chinaman a murderer or a thief?"
> "No, although he was a real tough guy, a man of action in his youth."
> "A doctor? A nurse? Did he cure people in some way?"
> "No."

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

> "He wasn't a witch doctor, a mind reader, a medium, a spiritualist, or even just religious?"
> "Only a believer; he consulted Li Chin until the day of his death."
> "I ask you this because if he was someone special, somebody may have wanted the body for a nganga. As you know, the majority of ngangas are based on the bones of a dead person. The bones will impart to the nganga the qualities the person had in his lifetime."[29]

The nganga is a container, often made of iron or clay which contains a Palo spirit, *nfumbe*. The vessel is a microcosm wherein elements of nature are present, lending their power by their homeopathic presence. Dirt from significant places such as the mountains, the forest, a crossroad, sticks from powerful trees, and animal parts such as feathers and horns represent the world and the ability to manipulate these energies when needed. The prenda, or nganga, is powered by capturing the spirit of a deceased person who labors in the afterlife alongside the nfumbe on behalf of the owner of the vessel.

The spirit of the deceased is made manifest by including pieces of human remains such as a piece of bone in its ritual construction. Thus, the finished assemblage is more like a reliquary with spiritual potency that is put to work when the owner or a seeker requires a solution to life's problems. Correa's passage states that the most effective and desirable human spirits that one would wish to work are those with renowned capabilities, strengths, or gifts which are believed to carry over into the otherworld and can be put to use. They move from the world of the dead back to that of the living, and as Correa's novel attests, many contemporary mixed-race Afro-Chinese practitioners are cognizant of the spiritual and tangible currency their bones fetch within the sacred Cuban Kongo landscape. Chinese-Cuban religious vernaculars of witchcraft and power unsettle historicized notions of the Chinese as passive and docile, while simultaneously invoking memories of enslavement and indenture, reclaiming in creative ways a working relationship with the deceased.

The Afro-Chinese body is scripted within specific liturgical concepts of subaltern power originated from Afro-Atlantic and Afro-Pacific religious practice and knowledge. What is important here is that this happens across the entire range of African-inspired religions practiced in Cuba, in competing and diverging terms.

The nganga and its inhabitant directly underscore the ways that Chinese and mixed-Chinese-Cubans are seen as being conduits of supernatural power that can physically and spiritually heal, harm, and resolve social issues and religious conflicts. Through divination, possession performance, connectivity to the ancestors and, as indicated, through narratives, songs, and material culture, Chinese-Cuban and Afro-Chinese practitioners are perceived to embody

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

different rights to religious authority and spiritual efficacy in this world and the next.

Such work on racial and religious mixing helps recast mulataje to include the Chinese in many ways that have remained under-reported in sociocultural and religious investigations in Cuba. Mixed Chinese-Cubans challenge existing racial and cultural cartographies of the Atlantic and the Antilles. Rather than continuing to treat the legacy of the Chinese in Cuba as separate and contained, which began in the abject and liminal spaces created by slavery and indenture, it is prudent to place the Chinese in relation to European and African religiosity, and to assert, in Ien Ang's words, that "'China' [however one may constitute that] can no longer be limited to the more or less fixed area of its official spatial and cultural boundaries."[30] Therefore, Afro-Cuban religious vernaculars indicate the prominence of an alternative mulataje subjectivity in which the Chinese keenly feature. Indeed, literary works, including those indicated here, further play with the historically situated representations of power and nationalist cultural ideology that have otherwise removed the Chinese from Cuba's larger configurations of gender, race, and power.

This discourse opens spaces that challenge Chinese/Afro-Chinese marginalization in Cuban society and identity-making as indicated through religious practices on the island, and also complicates dominant narratives of the biracial Cuban mulata whose literary imaginings have been critically assessed regarding the depiction of anxieties, erotics, imperfections, and fascinations that have otherwise constituted the discourse on racial mixing. The next chapter that will adequately feature and give voice to la mulata achinada and, indeed, *el brujo chino* is yet to be written.

The examples from literature, film, and fieldwork invoked here are a move toward an understanding of Chinese and mixed-race communities that avoids, to a greater or lesser extent, the pitfalls of writing a parochial or paternalistic postcolonial subjectivity and is one where we can appreciate that Afro-Sino religious mixing is intrinsic and central rather than exotic or peripheral to Afro-Cuban religiosity.

NOTES

1. Alicia Castro, Ingrid Kummels, and Manfred Schäfer, *Anacaona* (London: Atlantic Books 2007), 249–251.

2. Ruth Landes and Sally Cole, *The City of Women* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 8.

3. Randy P. Conner and David Hatfield Sparks, *Queering Creole Spiritual Traditions: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Participation in African-Inspired Traditions in the Americas* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2004), 12.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

4. José Baltar Rodríguez, *Los chinos de Cuba: Apuntes etnogra ficos* (Ciudad de La Habana: Fundación Fernando Ortiz, 1997), 101–102.

5. I dedicate the majority of space in this chapter to discussing the generative symbol of the Chinese *mulata* within the Afro-Cuban religious sphere. In contrast, the perception of the Chinese male as *brujo* and as counterpoint is briefly mentioned here; however, it requires further fuller analysis that is beyond the scope of the current chapter.

6. *Mulataje* can be described as the performance or experience of the quality of being a *mulata/o.*

7. José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications, Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 31.

8. Alison Fraunhar, *Mulata Nation: Visualizing Race and Gender in Cuba* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 6.

9. Didier Fassin, "Racialization: How to do Races with Bodies," in *A Companion to the Anthropology of the Body and Embodiment*, ed. Frances E. Mascia-Lees (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2011), 420.

10. Rafael Ocasio, *Afro-Cuban Costumbrismo: From Plantations to the Slums* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012), xii.

11. Ocasio, *Afro-Cuban Costumbrismo*, xii.

12. Fraunhar, *Mulata Nation*, 6–7.

13. Jean Muteba Rahier and Percy C. Hintzen, *Global Circuits of Blackness: Interrogating the African Diaspora* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), x.

14. Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 33.

15. See Moura 1981; Dion 1998; Brown 2001; and Landes 2005.

16. Karen McCarthy Brown, *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 75.

17. Just as Lukumí/Lucumí varies in spelling, the religion is also known by different names, including La Regla de Ocha, and Santeria. There are also many variations on the spelling of diasporic religious words. Oshún and Ochún are one and the same, as are orisha and oricha.

18. Joseph M. Murphy, "Yéyé Cachita," in *Osun Across the Waters: A Yoruba Goddess in Africa and the America*, eds. Joseph M. Murphy and Mei-Mei Sanford (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 95.

19. Antonio José Ponte, *Tales from the Cuban Empire* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2002), 48.

20. Lukumí religion employs divination technology designed to produce divination verses or *odu*, of which there are 16 principle *odus* that are read in a paired combination (16 multiplied by16) creating 256 possible combinations, each with its own *patakí*, governing orishas, warnings, and blessings. In this case, the *odu* Oshe is paired with the *odu* Ogbe, which together become the sign, Oshenilogbe.

21. Ponte, *Tales from the Cuban Empire*, 53.

22. Solimar Otero, "The Ruins of Havana: Representations of Memory, Religion, and Gender," *Atlantic Studies* 9, no. 2 (2012): 154.

23. Otero, "Ruins of Havana," 154.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

24. Mayra Montero, *Como un mensajero tuyo* (La Habana, Cuba: Ed. Letras Cubanas, 2001).

25. Montero, *Como un mensajero tuyo*, 199.

26. *Mulata*, directed by Gilberto Martínez Solares (1954; Mexico: Tekila Films, Inc., 2003), DVD.

27. Diana Espírito Santo, *Developing the Dead Mediumship and Selfhood in Cuban Espiritismo* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2015).

28. Arnaldo Correa and Marjorie Moore, *Cold Havana Ground: A Novel* (New York: Akashic Books, 2003).

29. Correa and Moore, *Cold Havana Ground*, 124.

30. Ien Ang, *On not Speaking Chinese: Living between Asia and the West* (London: Routledge, 2001), 225.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ang, Ien. *On not Speaking Chinese: Living between Asia and the West*. London: Routledge, 2001.

Baltar Rodríguez, José. *Los chinos de Cuba: Apuntes etnográficos*. Ciudad de La Habana: Fundación Fernando Ortiz, 1997.

Brown, Karen McCarthy. *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001. 75.

Castro, Alicia, Ingrid Kummels, and Manfred Schäfer. *Anacaona: The Amazing Adventures of Cuba's First All-Girl Dance Band*. London: Atlantic Books, 2007.

Conner, Randy P. and David Hatfield Sparks. *Queering Creole Spiritual Traditions: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Participation in African-Inspired Traditions in the Americas*. New York: Harrington Park Press, 2004.

Correa, Arnaldo and Marjorie Moore. *Cold Havana Ground: A Novel*. New York: Akashic Books, 2003.

Espírito Santo, Diana. *Developing the Dead Mediumship and Selfhood in Cuban Espiritismo*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2015.

Fassin, Didier. "Racialization: How to do Races with Bodies." In *A Companion to the Anthropology of the Body and Embodiment*, edited by Frances E. Mascia-Lees, 420–34. London: Blackwell Publishing, 2011.

Fraunhar, Alison. *Mulata Nation: Visualizing Race and Gender in Cuba*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018.

Garcia Cristina. *Monkey Hunting*. New York: Ballantine Books, 2013.

Landes, Ruth, and Sally Cole. *The City of Women*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005.

Lowe, Lisa. *The Intimacies of Four Continents*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.

Martínez Solares, Gilberto, dir. *Mulata.* 1954; Mexico: Tekila Films, Inc., 2003, DVD.

Montero, Mayra. *Como un mensajero tuyo*. La Habana, Cuba: Ed. Letras Cubanas, 2001.

Moura, Carlos Eugênio Marcondes de and Roger Bastide. *Olóòrìṣà: Escritos sobre a religião dos Orixás*. São Paulo: Ágora, 1981.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Muñoz, José Esteban. *Disidentifications, Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

Murphy, Joseph M. and Mei-Mei Sanford. *Osun Across the Waters: A Yoruba Goddess in Africa and the Americas*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001.

Ocasio, Rafael. *Afro-Cuban Costumbrismo: From Plantations to the Slums*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012.

Otero, Solimar. "The Ruins of Havana: Representations of Memory, Religion, and Gender." *Atlantic Studies* 9, no. 2 (2012): 143–163.

Ponte, Antonio José. *Tales from the Cuban Empire*. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2002.

Rahier, Jean Muteba, Percy C. Hintzen, and Felipe Smith. *Global Circuits of Blackness: Interrogating the African Diaspora*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Index

Note: Page numbers in *italics* denote figures.

Aaditya, Sadhu, 146
abolition movement, 92
Ades, Dawn, 48
African diaspora, 4, 62, 66, 69, 83, 160
Africanism, 165n31
African slaves, slavery, xi, 4, 31, 118, 119–20, 122–23, 126–27, 131;
  abolishment of, 139;
  agency, xii;
  compared with Chinese coolies, 31, 116–18;
  exploitation of, 120;
  harsh deaths and suicides, 121–22;
  life expectancy for, 119;
  slave trade, 115;
  suicide in Cuba, 119–22;
  treatment on voyage, 121, 143;
  work at sugar plantation, 31, 33.
  See also Blacks
Afro-Asian-Caribbean connections, 61;
  Halem Ashram (*See* Harlem Ashram)
Afro-Asian diaspora, 61, 91
Afro-Asian intimacies in Brazil, 98, 99–102;
  intimate love, 106–9;
  Japanese Brazilian literature, 110;
  linguistic intimacy, 102–6;
  postcolonial cartographies literature, 97–99
Afro-Atlantic religions, 215, 220
Afro-Brazilian, 96, 97, 99, 100, 102, 106, 110
Afro-Caribbeans, 4, 49, 65, 66, 69
Afro-Chinese babalawos, 218–21
Afro-Chinese body, 217, 220
Afro-Chinese mulata, 171, 172, 214
Afro-Chinese mulataje, 172;
  and religious frames, 210, 212, 213, 214
Afro-Chinese religiosity, 209–23
Afro-Christianity, 160
Afro-Cuban cultures, 4, 28–29, 40, 43
Afro-Cuban religions/religiosity, 28, 47, 127, 172, 209–10, 212, 213, 214, 215, 217, 218, 221
Afro-Pacific religiosity, 220
Afro-Peruvians, 19, 20, 21
Aggrawal, Sunil, 147
ahimsa (non-violence), 144, 146
Aída, 173
Albizu Campos, Pedro, 63, 68, 70, 71, 73, 74, 78, 79–80, 82, 83
Alcaide Ramírez, Dolores, 173, 181

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Alfonso, Vitalina, 124
Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA; now Partido Aprista Peruano), 23
Alien Nation, 180
ALPRI. *See* American League for Puerto Rico's Independence (ALPRI)
Alves, Sister Sharon, 150, 152
American League for Puerto Rico's Independence (ALPRI), 81
Americano (Indian), 9
Amon, Santiago, 49
Andean mestizaje, 3–4
Ang, Ien, 221
Appelbaum, Patricia, 67
APRA. *See* Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA)
asceticism, 144–46
ashram, concept of, 64–67. *See also* Harlem Ashram; New York Ashram; Sabarmati Ashram; Shantiniketan Ashram
Asiatic Barred Zone Act of 1917, 69
Atman (soul), 144
automatism, 28, 39
Aymara nationality, 15

Back-to-Africa movement, 149–50, 151, 158
Bainbridge, John, 79
Bald, Vivek, 69
Baltar Rodríguez, José, 47–48, 129, 210
Baltimore Afro-American, 76
Barcía, Manuel, 121
Barrett, Mickael, 155
Barrio-Garsd, Marta García, 29
Barthes, Ronald, 183
Basadre, Jorge, 9, 11, 12, 13, 23;
  on Blacks, 13–14, 15;
  on Chinese, 14, 15;
  on coolies, 14;
  on Indian cultural practices, 15
Baudrillard, Jean, 174, 188
Belial, Lord of the Flies (painting), 49
Bengali Harlem and the Lost Histories of South Asian America, 69
Berlant, Lauren, 96–97
Bethune, Mary MacLeod, 68
The Betrothed of Kiriwina (painting), 47
Bhabha, Homi, 51;
  theorization of hybridity, 30
Bigenho, Michelle, 108
Blacks, 4, 7, 8–9, 10–11, 15, 16, 18–20, 23, 106, 171;
  freedom movements, 65;
  in Jamaica, 155;
  and mestizaje (*See* mestizaje);
  Peruvian history, 12–13, 14.
  See also African diaspora; African slaves, slavery
Blanco-Borelli, Melissa, 177
body, and race, 211–15
Bones, Jah, 156
Bose, Subhas Chandra, 63
bozales, 119, 121
Brahman, 144
Brazil, 97–98;
  Afro-Asian intimacies in (*See* Afro-Asian intimacies in Brazil);
  Japanese immigration to, 91, 98–99, 100, 101 (*See also* Japanese Brazilians)
Breton, André, 38, 48, 49, 54n49
Breuning, Margaret, 49, 52
Bromberger, Christian, 156, 158
Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, 72
Brown, Scott Shibuya, 117
Bruised Hibiscus, 194, 195–99, 200
Buarque de Holanda, Sérgio, 98
Buddhism, 127, 129, 144
Bustamante, Juan, 15

Cabrera, Lydia, 40, 49, 173
cadavre exquis, 28, 39, 40
Calazán, José, 188
Cámara, Madeline, 124
Canaïma (painting), 45, *45*
Canaïma IV (painting), 45

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

cannabis:
 and Hinduism, 147–48;
 and Rastafari, 154
Capelo, Joaquín, 15
Caribbean, xi, xiii, 61;
 Afro-Caribbeans, 4, 49, 65, 66, 69;
 and Harlem Ashram (*See* Harlem Ashram).
 See also Cuba; Jamaica; Puerto Rico; West Indies
Castellanos, Isabel, 121, 122–23
Castellanos, Jorge, 121, 122–23
caste system, 11–12, 19
Castilla, Ana Serafina, 28–29, 32
Castillo Vázquez, Juan, 32
Castro, Alicia, 209–10
Castro, Juan E. de, 22
Cezair-Thompson, Margaret, 199, 206
chaos theory, 176
Cheung, King-Kok, 193–94
Chicago Defender, 75–76
Chin, Frank, 193
Chinese, 8, 10, 18, 20;
 Coolies (*See* coolie laborers);
 in Cuba, 30–37, 212–13;
 diaspora, 4;
 ink wash painting, 45–46;
 laborers, sequential slavery, 31;
 masculinity, 206;
 and mestizaje, 4;
 mulata, 171–72, 222n5;
 religious beliefs and practices, 127;
 suicide rate in Cuba, 119
Chinese aesthetics, 48–52
Chinese-Afro-Cuban-European traditions, 38–48
Chinese American masculinity, 193
Chinese commission's report (1874), 33, 34–37
Chinese-Cuban body, 217
Chinese-Cubans, 47, 209–10, 220, 221
Chinese Cubans: A Transnational History, 116, 124
Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, 33, 51
chronotope:
 definition of, 83n2;
 Harlem Ashram as (*See* Harlem Ashram)
Chung Si, 182
Cintron, Zaida A., 106
civil disobedience, 64, 70, 74
Civil Rights Act of 1964, 98
Cold Havana Ground, 219
Collective Drawing (painting), 39, *39*
colonia-go, 91, 102–6
colored cosmopolitanism, 64–65, 66–67, 69
Columbus, Christopher, 8
Como un mensajero tuyo (The Messenger), 116, 122, 124–30, 131, 171, 173, 174, 175, 177–82
Componentes étnicos de la nación cubana, 117
Confucianism, 127, 129
Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), 68
contact zones, 91, 96, 97
contextualization, 48, 153
coolie laborers, 31, 116–17, 140, 163n5, 212;
 in Caribbean (*See* Cuba); Jamaica;
 compared with slaves, 31, 116–18;
 in Cuba, historic investigation of, 1874, 33, 34–37
The Coolie Speaks, 115
coolie trade, xi, 14, 19, 21, 31, 33–34, 179–80
CORE. *See* Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)
corpo-mulata, 177
Correa, Arnaldo, 219
Creacionismo, 191n49
Cuba, 4, 115;
 African slaves' suicide in, 119–22;
 Chinese-Afro-Cuban-European traditions, 38–48;
 Chinese as forced labor, 179;
 Chinese in, 30–37;
 Chinese laborers into sequential slavery, 31;

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Chinese liberation, 33;
contract workers from Asia, 116–17;
coolies' testimonies, 180;
fetishism, 173–89;
historic investigation of coolies' condition, 1874, 33, 34–37, 180;
indentured, 179;
independence of, 54n35;
mulata figure, 171;
people of African and Chinese descent in, 92;
prosperity, 118–19
Cuba Commission Report, 117, *117,* 120–21, 122, 123
cubanidad, 212
Cubism, 4, 27, 38
Cuti, 110

Darshan, Sadhu, 145
Darshani, Sadhu, 146
decolonization movements, 92;
Afro-Asian approach to, 5;
in Puerto Rico, 63, 73.
See also Harlem Ashram; India
Degeyndt, Atma, 146
Dekar, Paul, 70
Dellimore, Ossie, 155
Dharma (duty), 144
diasporic confluences, 68–71
divination, 129, 216–17
The Double Look (painting), 47
double outsider status, 180
dreadlocks, Rasta lifestyle, 155–58
Dreadlocks Story, 92, 137–38, 140, 145, *145,* 147, 150, 152, 154, *157,* 161–63
Du Fu, 44

Edmonds, Ennis, 152
el barrio chino, 216–17
El camino Manila (Manila Galleon), 10
El estado social del Perú durante la dominación española, 9
El Monte, 40, 173
Enrique Lam Yam, 28–29, 30
Espiritismo, 218
essentialism, 177
The Eternal Presence (painting), 41–42, *42,* 48
Ethiopianism, 160, 165n31
Ethnic Studies, establishment of, 98
Eurocentrism, 17, 23
Europeans, 9

family of stone, 215
Farmer, James, 61, 62, 63, 67, 73
The Fascinated Nest (painting), 34, 36
Fassin, Didier, 211
fetishism, 173–89
The First Rasta. Leonard Howell and the Rise of Rastafarianism, 150
Fletcher, Valerie, 46
FOR (Fellowship of Reconciliation), 67, 71, 80;
Free India Committee of, 68
Fouchet, Max-Pol, 28, 49, 51
Foundational Fictions, 173, 181
Foye, Hope, 75
Fraunhar, Alison, 211, 212
Frazer, Bongo Shephan, 151
Frazier, Nishani, 68
From Fetish to Subject: Race, Modernism, and Primitivism, 1919-1935, 176
Fuentes, Yvette, 173
fundamento, 215

Gallenga, Antonio, 117
gamonalismo, 16
Gandhi, MK, 61, 64, 163n6
Gandía, Julio Pinto, 63, 70, 78, 81–82
ganja. *See* cannabis
García, Cristina, 116, 117–18, 216
Garrigues, Suzanne, 29
Garvey, Marcus, 66, 151
Garvey, Marcus Mosiah, 150, 160
gendered spiritual lineages, in the Americas, 215
George V, King, 151
Gilroy, Paul, 61, 83n2
Gloria, 194, 195, 200–5
González Prada, Manuel, 10–11, 15, 23;

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Peruvian history, 12–13
Grey Figures (painting), 49
Gris, Juan, 38
Groot, Jan Jacob Maria de, 122
groupism, 10
Guanche, Jesús, 117
Guan Gong, 47, 129, 182
Guillén, Nicolás, 4, 176

Haile Selassie I, Emperor of Ethiopia, 149, 151, 152, 159, 160–61
Haiti, 163n2
Han dynasty, 129;
horses in, 44
Han Gan, 44, 46
Haribansh, Sadhu, 145
Harlem Ashram, 4–5, 61–63, 64;
afterlife, 82–83;
circle of participants, 71–74;
demonstration, 68;
Farmer's mealtime tale, 62;
and local community, 70–71;
Lynn's involvement with, 72–73;
and neighborhood, 70;
political cross-pollination, 68–71;
and Puerto Rican independence activism, 78–82
Hartman, Saidiya, 105
Head, Wilson, 63
Helly, Denise, 122, 130
Herzberg, Julia, 28, 29, 40, 43
hierarchy, 10, 11, 15
Hill, Phil Clarke, 131
Hinduism, 143–44;
asceticism, 144–46;
and cannabis, 147–48;
in Jamaica, 158–59;
Jata, 146;
reincarnation, 159
Hintzen, Percy C., 213
Hippocrates, 154
Hispaniola, 163n2
Holzer Benitez, Helena, 29, 38, 41, 42, 48, 49, 51–52
Horne, Gerald, 64, 66, 67
horses, importance in China, 43–47
Howell, Leonard Percival (Gagunguru Maragh), 137, 149, 150, 151, 156, 162
Howell, Monty, 154
Hu-DeHart, Evelyn, 4, 33
Huidobro, Vicente, 191n49
Hu Ju, 123
Hunter, Stephen, 79
hypermasculinity, 194, 195
Hyppolite, Hector, 48

I Ching, 41
Ikuko, Onodera, 96, 97, 102–6, 110
Immigration, Ethnicity, and National Identity in Brazil, 1808 to the Present, 98
Imperial Eyes, 97
indentureship, 139, 140–43, 161, 163n6, 179
India, 71;
civil disobedience campaign, 64;
culture, influences on Rastafari, 137;
independence movement, 64, 68;
Salt March, 66, 74
India League of America, 68
Indians, 8;
marginalization, 11–12
Indus Valley Civilization, 147
Inoue, Ryoki, 95, 96, 97, 99–100, 110
interdiasporic cross-fertilization, 125, 127
interracial relationship, 106–9
interwar period (1930s–1940s), 63, 176
intimate distance, 108–9
Isamu, Endō, 96, 97, 108–9
Ishta deity, 146
I-tal food, 153–54

Jainism, 144
Jamaica, 161–63;
in the colonial age, 138–40;
coolies in, 163n5;
female indentureship, 142;
forced migration of Indians to, 139, 140–43;
Hinduism in, 148;

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

indentureship, 139, 163n6;
Indian contract laborers, 141;
Indian indentureship system, 140–43, 161;
Rastafari (*See* Rastafari);
Rasta lifestyle, 153–61;
slavery, 139
Japanese Brazilians, 96;
intimate love, 106–9;
literature, 96–98, 110
Japanese immigration to Brazil, 91, 98–99, 100, 101
Jata, 146
Jim Crow, 65
Jiménez, Antonio Nuñez, 29, 40–41
Journey of Reconciliation, 77

Kapur, Sudarshan, 65–66
Kardec, Allan, 218
karma, 144
Knibb, William, 149–50
Kristagraha, 67
"Kuroi mago," 96, 97, 109

La Asociación Pro-Indígena, 15
La fruta bomba (painting), 49, *50*
La Jungla (The Jungle) (painting), 4, 33
La Laguna Sagrada de San Joaquín, 173
Lam, Wifredo, 4, 27–28, 32, 37;
Afro-Cuban identity, 28;
artistic inspiration, 38;
and Chinese aesthetics, 48–52;
Chinese heritage, 28–29, 32;
Chinese magic in oeuvre, 48–49;
and Chinese philosophy, 41–42;
Chinese sensibilities, 49;
Cubism, 38;
horselike motifs, 43, 45;
ink drawings, 45–46;
interests, 42–43;
marriage life, 38;
painting themes, 40;
in Paris, 38–39;
on poetry, 34;
political participation, 38;
and religious and artistic syncretism, 47;
return to Cuba, 40–41;
state of mind after Spanish Civil War, 40–41;
symbolism, 43, 49;
talent as a colorist, 49;
traditional origins and painting, 50–51;
view on art, 43
la mulata achinada, 214
La raza cósmica, 17, 18
Latin America, xi, xiii, 115;
politicians and elites, 3.
See also specific regions and countries
Latour, Antonio Chuffat, 182
Lee, Hélène, 150, 151
Lee, Josephine, 173–74
Les Oiseaux Voilés (painting), 34, 35–36
Lesser, Jeffrey, 98
Lévi-Strauss, Claude, 98
Lipsitz, George, 69
Literatura Negra-Brasileira, 110
Little War, 33
longma, 44–45
López, Kathleen, 33, 116, 124, 125, 126, 131, 179, 216
Los negros en Cuba, 121
Los siete ensayos de interpretación de la realidad preuana, 16
Lowe, Lisa, 97, 98, 213–14
Lukumí, Lucumí, 127–28, 172, 180, 210, 212, 214, 215, 222n20
Lumière (poem), 27, 52n1
Luminaria, 216
lynching, 65
Lynn, Conrad, 72–74, 75, 76, 77, 80, 83
Lynn Committee to Abolish Segregation in the Armed Forces, 73

Mansingh, Ajai, 141, 148, 156, 158, 159–60
Mansingh, Akshai, 147, 154–55

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Mansingh, Laxmi, 141, 146, 148, 158, 159–60
Marbán, Jorge, 173
Marcantonio, Vito, 81
March on Washington Movement (MOWM), 68, 72
marginalization, 11–12, 13, 23;
  and solidarity, 23
Mariátegui, José Carlos, 8, 16, 18, 23;
  on Afro-Peruvians, 19;
  on Asian immigrants, 22;
  on Blacks, 19–20;
  on Chinese in Peru, 21–22;
  on effects of emancipation, 20;
  on Indian in Peru, 21;
  sistema de castas, 19;
  on slavery, 19;
  on socioeconomy, 16–17;
  on utopia, 18;
  view on Indian, 18–19;
  on White pride/superiority, 17
Marti, José, 4
Marxism, 77
masculinity, 194–95;
  Asian American masculinity, 193;
  hypermasculinity, 194, 195;
  West Indian masculinity (*See* West Indian masculinity)
Matanzas, 218
Matisse, Henri, 38
Mayer, Dora, 15
Mendieta-Lombard, Eva, 106
Mengjian, Zhao, 49
mestizaje (or racial mixing), xiii, 3–4, 17–18, 20, 211;
  children of, 106–9
mestizo, 18
Mexican Revolution, 16
Mielke, Thelma, 80, 82
Miró, Joan, 38
mixed heritage, 11
Modak, Cyril, 67
Modak, Manorama, 80
Modak, Ramkrishna Shahu, 63, 68, 80, 81–82
modernism, 174, 176, 188, 191n49
Monkey Hunting, 116, 117–18, 120, 121–22, 123, 124, 126, 129, 131, 216
Montejo, Esteban, 32
Montero, Mayra, 116, 122, 171, 173, 175, 178–79, 180, 181, 183, 184, 187, 188–89, 217
Moreno Vega, Marta, 130
Mosquera, Gerardo, 50
MOWM. *See* March on Washington Movement (MOWM)
Mudgal, Hucheshwar G., 66
mulata, 176, 177, 211;
  agency, 177;
  definition of, 177
Mulata, 218–21
mulataje, 4, 171, 222n6;
  volatile and chimeric nature of, 212
Mullen, Bill, 98
multiculturalism, 212
Muñoz, José Esteban, 210
Murphy, Joseph, 215
Murray, Pauli, 63
Muste, A. J., 68
Muzumdar, Haridas, 63, 65–66
myth-making, 183
Mythologies, 183
mythology, 160

Nakasato, Oscar, 96, 97, 100–2, 110
Nandy, Ashis, 194
Narcissus (painting), 49, *51*
Negrismo movement, 176–77
Nelson, Wallace, 68
Nelson, William Stewart, 68
Newland, Arthur, 155–56
A New System of Slavery, 163
New York Ashram, 71
New York CORE, 81
nganga, 219–20
Niaah, Jalani, 160
Nichols, Homer, 73, 75
Night Shining White (painting), *44,* 46
Nihonjin, 96, 97, 100–2

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

"Nipona" (poem), 191n49
nkisi, 219
nobility of blood system, 11
Noceda, José Manuel, 29
noncooperation movement, 66
Nuestros indios, 15
Nunez, Elizabeth, 195, 206
Nuñez, Luís Manuel, 49

Obatalá, La China, 47
Ocasio, Rafael, 211–12
Occidental culture, 174, 176
Oiseau-Lumière, II (painting), 34, *35,* 36
Okihiro, Gary, 98
One Love: Rastafari History, Doctrine and Livity, 156
oppression, 4;
  describing through painting, 33
orientalism, 21, 22
Ortiz, Fernando, 4
Oshún, 215–17
Ossa, Luisa Marcela, 47, 173
Otero, Solimar, 217
Overmyer, Daniel L., 127, 128

pacifism, 5, 62, 63, 66–67, 71–78, 77, 80, 82, 220
Palés Matos, Luis, 176
Palo Mayombe, 219–20
Pao, 201, 204–5
Partido Nacionalista, 70
Pérez, Louis A., Jr., 117, 118–19, 121–22
Peru, 3–4, 8, 22–23;
  alliance of the marginalized, 23;
  coolie trade, 21;
  gamonalismo, 16;
  history, and race/ethnicity/colorism, 12;
  Indians in, 11–12;
  Japanese immigrants, 24n3;
  militant groups, 23;
  politics of blood, 9
Peruvian Enlightenment, 9

Picasso, Pablo, 38
pilgrimage, from Harlem to Washington, 74–78
Plummer, Brenda Gayle, 82
poetry, 27, 34–35, 52n1, 191n49
political cross-pollination, 68–71
Ponce Massacre, 78
Ponte, Antonio José, 216
Po Songling, 29
Prado, Javier, 9, 13
Prashad, Vijay, 98
Pratt, Mary Louise, 96, 97
Primitivism, 38
The Promised Key, 151
Puerto Rican Nationalist Party, 5, 63, 71, 75, 79
Puerto Rico, xi, 4, 31;
  decolonization movements in, 63, 73;
  exploitation of, 68;
  freedom for, 78–82;
  and Harlem Ashram, 68–71, 72, 78–82;
  working-class community members, 78–79

Qing Dynasty, 129
Qin Shi Huang's Terracotta Army, horses in, 43
Quechua nationality, 15
quilombo settlements, 111n17

race, 10
Rahier, Jean Muteba, 213
Ramayana, 148
Randolph, A. Philip, 68, 72
Rastafari, 92–93, 137–38, 148–53;
  and identity, 160, 162;
  and society, 165n32
Rasta lifestyle:
  and cannabis, 154–55;
  creed and spirituality, 158–61;
  cuisine and I-tal food, 153–54;
  dreadlocks, 155–58
Rasta Rocki, 150

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Regla de Ocha, 173
reincarnation, in Hinduism, 159
The Religious System of China, 122
The Repeating Island, 176
Reynolds, Ruth, 63, 75, 78, 80, 82, 83
Rojo, Antonio Benítez, 176
Romance of the Three Kingdoms, 182
Roosevelt, Franklin D., 77
Roots of Brazil, 98
Russell, John, 101
Rustin, Bayard, 72, 73, 79

Sabarmati Ashram, 61, 64, 65, 71, 72
Saburō, Tahata, 96, 97, 106–8
Sadhana, 147
Sadhus, 144–46, 155–56, 158, 162
Saga: A história de quatro gerações de uma família japonesa no Brasil, 95–96, 97, 99–100
Sagua la Grande, 30, 32, 38, 51
Sanfancón, 173, 182–83
Santeria, 47
Sat (truth), 144
satyagraha, 76, 77, 84n7
Scherer, Frank, 48
Selassie, Moqapi, 148, 150
Sepoy metaphor, 79
Sevilla, Ninón, 218
Shang dynasty, horses in, 43, 45
Shantiniketan Ashram, 65, 71, 72
shared space, 7–8
Shepherd, Verene, 140, 141, 148
Shining Path, 23
Shizen, Ren, 35
Shridharani, Krishnalal, 63, 76–77
Sierra Leone, slave trade in, 163n3
Siete ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana, 8, 16
Sims, Lowery Stokes, 29, 46, 49
Singh, J. J., 68
Sinicized mulata, 214
Slate, Nico, 64
Smith, Jay Holmes, 62, 63, 67, 71–72, 74, 75, 80, 81
Smith, Theophus, 69
Socialist Party U.S.A, 81
Sociedad Amiga de los Indios, 15
socioeconomic conditions, 16–18
Sommer, Doris, 173, 181
Song of Osmosis (painting), 37
South Asian migrants, 69–70
Spain, 138;
  contract workers from Asia, 116–17
Spain–China 1877 treaty, 54
spirituality, 126–27
Surrealism, 4, 27, 28, 38
Sweeney, Carole, 176–77, 186, 188
syncretism, 47–48, 125, 127, 173

Tagore, Rabindranath, 63, 65
Tahuantinsuyu, 8
Tang dynasty, horses in, 44
Tao, 41
Taoism, 127, 129
taotie mask, *36,* 45
Taylor, Edward Burnett, 152, 164n18
Ten Year's War, 33, 180
Tête (painting), 45
Thomas, Saint, 151
Thurman, Howard, 65
Thurman, Sue Bailey, 65
Tinker, Hugh, 163n4
Torre, Victor Raúl Haya de la, 23
Townsend, Willard S., 68
Transients to Settlers: The Experience of Indians in Jamaica, 1845–1950, 141
Tristes Tropiques, 98
Tropic (painting), 37, *37*
The True History of Paradise, 194, 195, 199–200
Tsang, Martin A., 47, 116, 122, 125, 127–28, 128–29, 132n3, 172
Tupac Amaru II, 23

Unanue, José Hipólito, 9, 13, 23
UNIA. *See* Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA)

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

United Nations Conference at San Francisco, 81–82
Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), 66, 150
Untitled (painting), 46, *46*
"Uruwashiki gogatsu ni," 96, 97, 102–6
utopia, 18

Vasconcelos, José, 17, 18;
 on mestizaje, 17–18
Vázquez, Juan Castillo, 29, 30
Vedas, 143, 154
Verdi, Giuseppe, 173
Viceroyalty, 9
Voting Rights Act of 1965, 98

War of Independence, 33
Wars of Liberation, 33
War Without Violence, 76–77
The Wedding (painting), 41
West Indian masculinity, 194–95;
 feminization of Chinese characters in novels, 206.
 See also Bruised Hibiscus; Gloria; The True History of Paradise
West Indies:
 independence movements in, 195;
 masculinity. *See* West Indian masculinity.
 See also Caribbean
white Christian pacifist movement, 66–67
whiteness, 10
white settler colonialism, 3
Wiley, Jean, 63, 75, 80, 82
Wilson, Mantonica, 28, 40
Winslow, William Allen, 78
World Congress of Dominated Nations, 1945, 81–82
World War I, 79, 176
World War II, 73, 78

Xing Xiao Sheng, 29

"Yasei," 96, 97, 106–8
Young, Elliot, 180
Young, Kerry, 201, 206
Yu-Fang Cho, 118
Yun, Lisa, 31, 34, 36, 116–17, 132n1, 182

Zapata, Emiliano, 16
Zhou dynasty, horses in, 45
Zulen, Pedro, 15

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

About the Editors

Luisa Marcela Ossa is associate professor of Spanish and area chair of the undergraduate Spanish program at La Salle University. Her research interests include Afro-Hispanic Literatures and Cultures, as well as the Chinese presence in Latin America. She has published articles on the work of Manuel Zapata Olivella in the *Afro-Hispanic Review* and the *Monographic Review*. Her other publications include "Conciencia social y la herencia africana en la salsa de Joe Arroyo y Grupo Niche" in the *Afro-Hispanic Review*; "Muerte caliente: El erotismo y la muerte en La última noche que pasé contigo" in the anthology, *La narrativa de Mayra Montero: Hacia una literatura transnacional caribeña*, edited by Madeline Cámara and Kevin Raúl Sedeño; and "*Babalawos chinos*: Religion, Ethnicity and Identity in Mayra Montero's Como un mensajero tuyo" in the *Delaware Review of Latin American Studies*. Dr. Ossa also served for six years as the president of the Afro Latin/American Research Association (ALARA), an international scholarly organization devoted to the study of the African Diaspora in the Americas, and she currently serves its executive committee.

Debbie Lee-DiStefano, is professor of Spanish at Southeast Missouri State. Her manuscript *Three Asian-Hispanic Writers from Perú* (2008), and coedited volume *Imagining Asia in the Americas* (2016), bring to the forefront the topics regarding Latin Americans of Asian descent. She has many articles published that touch on the themes of cultural production, focusing on individual writers, *mestizaje* and orientalism, all in the context of interrogating what it means to be Asian in the Americas. She was instrumental in starting the Asians in the Americas Symposium in 2012. She and Dr. Hsiao-Ping Hu Biehl also cofounded the Asians in the Americas Association.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

About the Contributors

Dania Abreu-Torres is associate professor of Spanish in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures at Trinity University in San Antonio, TX. She completed her BA at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras, and her graduate studies (MA and PhD) at the University of Florida, Gainesville. Her research interests are racial and national identities and representations in the greater Caribbean and Latin America, focusing on literature, cinema and cultural studies. She had published in *Transmodernity*, *Hispania*, and *Centro Journal* and is currently working on research regarding racial representations in museums' displays in Puerto Rico, diasporic masculinities and Afro-Asian connections.

Linda Aïnouche, PhD, is an accomplished documentary filmmaker and anthropologist researcher. An avid traveler passionate about international cultural exploration, Linda's films expertly create distinctive portraits of outcast people. As a multi-lingual ethnographer and cultural analyst, Linda's background in research and fieldwork aid her adventures into communities around the world.

Dreadlocks Story, Linda's feature documentary, sheds light on the extraordinary untold story of Hindu roots in Jamaican Rastafari culture. A subject never before investigated on film, *Dreadlocks Story* is a unique exploration of a predominantly male topic through a female lens. A arduous endeavor with a rewarding outcome, this documentary was filmed across four countries (France, India, Jamaica, and the USA) in four languages (English, French, Hindi, and Jamaican Patois) with four local crews. A fascinating cross-cultural historical study, *Dreadlocks Story* uses its global perspective to present a diverse and vivid portrayal of Rasta culture and the array of cultural influences that guide it. Filled with riveting interviews, *Dreadlocks Story*'s

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

success comes from Linda's ability to capture the essence of her subjects. The film has been screened in theaters around the world as part of film festivals and cultural events.

Following a nineteen year journey working in public, academic, and governmental sectors, Linda founded Look At My Productions. Enthusiastic about uniting artists and activists, she collaborates with cultural consultants and independent filmmakers around the world for education. She also enjoys producing live events. Notably, she was a contributing curator for a UN event in honor of "The International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade."

Malathi Michelle Iyengar is assistant professor of ethnic studies at the College of San Mateo. Her research employs a transnational-relational-intersectional ethnic studies lens to examine issues related to social movements, education, language, and citizenship, with methodological emphases on historical and archival research and literary reading practices. She earned her PhD in ethnic studies from the University of California, San Diego, in 2017.

Anne-Marie Lee-Loy is associate professor in the English department at Ryerson University (Toronto, Canada). She is the author of *Searching for Mr. Chin: Constructions of Nation and the Chinese in West Indian Literature* as well as a number of articles exploring the production and representation of "Chineseness" in the Caribbean.

Kathleen López is associate professor with a joint appointment in the Department of Latino and Caribbean Studies (LCS) and the Department of History at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. She is the author of *Chinese Cubans: A Transnational History* (2013), which received the 2014 Gordon K. and Sybil Lewis Prize of the Caribbean Studies Association. She is also a contributor to the recently published volumes *Immigration and National Identities in Latin America* (2014), *Critical Terms in Caribbean and Latin American Thought* (2016), *Imagining Asia in the Americas* (2016), and *A Nation of Immigrants Reconsidered: US Society in an Age of Restriction* (2018). Her research and teaching focus on the historical intersections between Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, post-emancipation Caribbean societies, race and ethnicity in the Americas, and international migration.

Mey-Yen Moriuchi is assistant professor of art history at La Salle University. She received her PhD in art history from Bryn Mawr College. Her research focuses on representations of racial, social, and national identities in Latin American art. Dr. Moriuchi is a recipient of the Whiting Fellowship in the

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Humanities and a Mellon-funded Publication Initiative grant. Publications have appeared in *Envisioning Others: Race, Color and the Visual in Iberia and Latin America* (2015)*, Art and Social Change* (2016), and *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* (2013). Forthcoming publications include the article "Casta, Costumbrismo, Kahlo" (2018) and her book manuscript, *Mexican Costumbrismo: Race, Society, and Identity in Nineteenth-Century Art* (2018).

Zelideth María Rivas is associate professor of Japanese at Marshall University. Her research focuses on the conception of race through literature written by Asian immigrants in the Americas, as well as the representation of race in Japan in post–World War II literature and film. She has received fellowships and awards from the Ford Foundation, Fulbright-Hays, West Virginia Humanities Council, and National Endowment for the Humanities. Her work has appeared in *Comparative Literature Studies*, *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, *Journal of Asian American Studies*, and *Asian American Literary Review*. She is currently completing a book manuscript, *Caught In Between: Identity in Japanese Brazilian Cultural Productions*, which uses an interdisciplinary approach to examine historical documents alongside novels, television dramas, poetry, memoirs, and films that depict Japanese immigrants to Brazil and Japanese Brazilians returnees in Japan, spanning 1908 to the present. She co-edited the volume *Imagining Asia in the Americas* (2016).

Martin A. Tsang is a Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) Postdoctoral Fellow in history and area studies at the University of Miami Libraries. Martin is a cultural anthropologist and received his PhD at Florida International University. His doctoral dissertation focused on the Chinese in Cuba, specifically how the legacy of Chinese indentured workers have influenced Cuban culture and Afro-Cuban religion. His research and publishing interests include contemporary issues of race, health, and religion in the Caribbean and Latin America. Martin is currently researching the role Afro-Cuban religious practitioners play in the treatment, education, and prevention of HIV in Havana.

Lisa Yun is associate professor of English and Asian and Asian American Studies at SUNY Binghamton. Lisa teaches courses with a special interest in racial/ethnic solidarities, and her writings explore interracial intersections, diaspora and migration. Her book *The Coolie Speaks* presents the "coolie narrative," a form of protest and *testimonio* that emerged in the coolie trade to Cuba. Additional work appears in *Afro Asia*; *Transnational Blackness: Navigating the Global Color Line*; *The Chinese of Latin America and Caribbean*; and in journals such as *Afro Hispanic Review; SOULS: Critical Journal of Black Politics; Caribbean Quarterly; E-misférica; Journal of Chinese*

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Overseas; Journal of Asian American Studies; Amerasia Journal; MELUS; Wasafiri; and *Black Book Review*, among others. Her poetry is published in anthologies such as *Identity Lessons Roots and Flowers*, *The NuyorAsian Anthology*, and journals such as *The Paterson Literary Review*, *A Gathering of the Tribes*, *Seattle Review*, *Hawaii Pacific Review*, among others. Lisa's writing and research interests extend to her teaching.

As a faculty fellow of the Center for Civic Engagement, she received the Faculty Engagement Honor for "exemplary community-engaged teaching" and her students received numerous recognitions for their work. Lisa also serves as faculty administrator for the Peter T. and Shun Yee Chang Memorial Internship, which links students with community initiatives and non-profit work in NYC. She also was the co-principal investigator of a Freeman Foundation Grant, which enabled the eventual launch of a new Asian and Asian American studies department on her campus. She is based in Brooklyn.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/12/2023 9:52 PM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use