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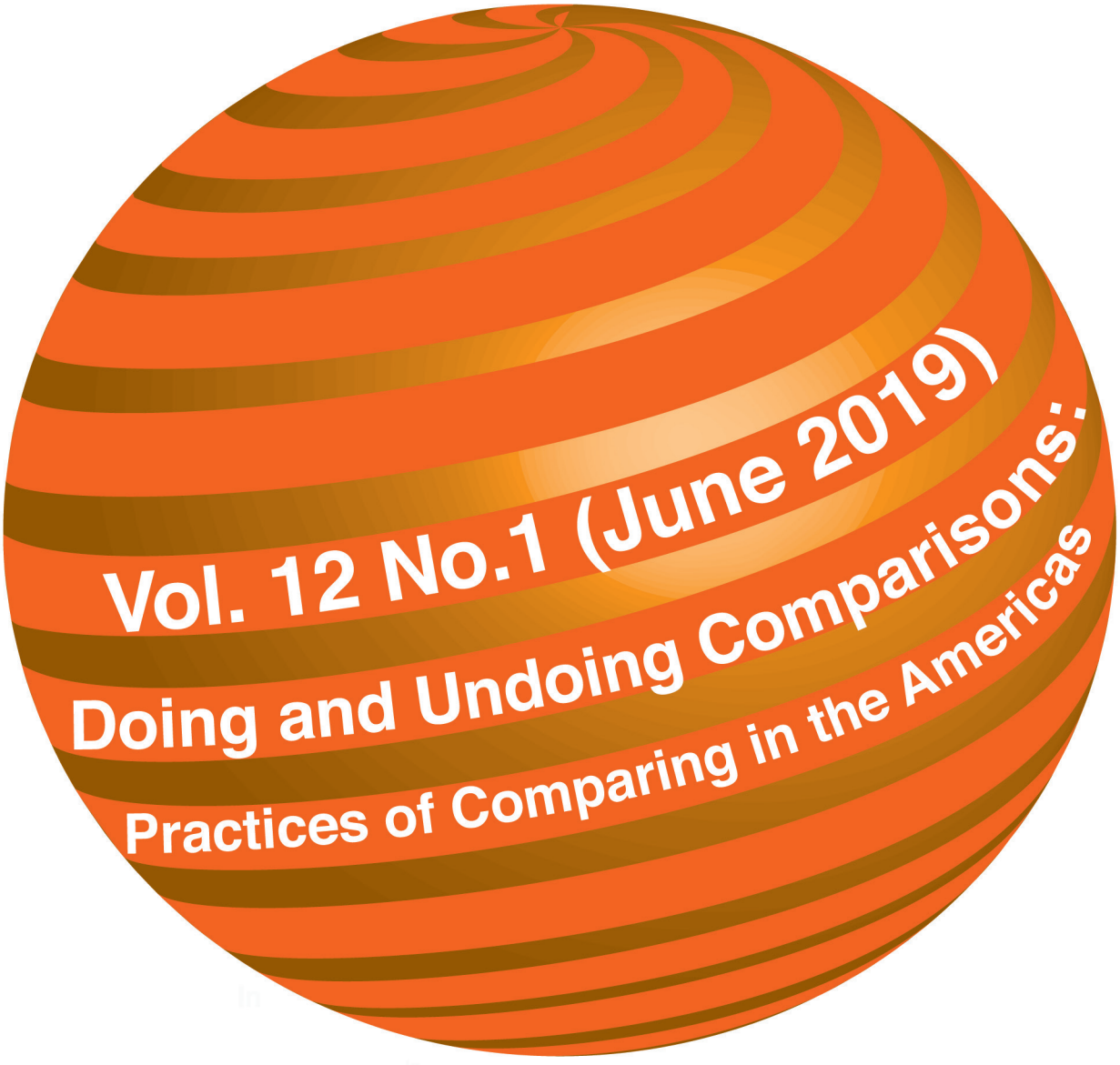

The forum for inter-american research was established by the American Studies Section of the English Department at Bielefeld University in order to foster, promote and publicize current topics in the studies of the Americas.

fiar is the official journal of the International Association of Inter-American Studies (IAS)

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The association seeks to promote the interdisciplinary study of the Americas, focusing in particular on inter-connections between North, Central, and South American culture, literature, media, language, history, society, politics, and economics.

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Universität Bielefeld
SFB 1288
PRACTICES
OF COMPARING

fiar

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Introduction: Doing and Undoing Comparisons in the Americas from the Colonial Times to the Present

SUSANA ROCHA TEIXEIRA (BIELEFELD UNIVERSITY)

Currently, comparisons seem to be ubiquitous. Anything and anyone – be it universities, sports teams, countries, restaurants, or physicians – can and seem to be compared in order to identify, for example, the 'best,' 'performance' or the most 'diversity.'[1] Nevertheless, comparing is hardly a novel phenomenon. Critics maintain that 'modernity' (and in particular the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) gave rise to new ways of seeing, measuring and ordering the world as well as to new practices of comparing; and that during that same period, comparing was increasingly established as a seemingly objective and scientific method, a fact that led to the establishment of a number of academic areas and (sub-) disciplines such as comparative literature.[2]

It is a well-established notion within academia that juxtapositions and comparisons have played a central role in the creation of geopolitical imaginaries with regard to the Americas – be they Eurocentric or Creolist – and that they have fueled images, clichés, and stereotypes about various region(s) and their peoples. It similarly holds true for the making and remaking of the north-south divide within the Americas, whether real or imagined, in regard to relations between countries, regions and on a hemispheric scale. [3]

However, in the course of the twentieth century, for example, with the rise of postcolonial and decolonial studies, critics increasingly explored and criticized not only the seemingly' 'objective' comparative disciplines within academia but also the practice of comparing itself. Postcolonial and anti-colonial intellectuals criticized European perspectives, the standards involved in the practices of comparing, and their being influenced by assumptions, prejudices, and biases. Comparisons and practices of comparing were rejected for creating hierarchies between presumably 'more' and 'less' developed countries, races, or cultures. In this context, comparing as globalized practice was perceived as practice of modern dominance, a tool of power, which perpetuates rated relations of hegemony and subordination, center and periphery, sameness and difference. In a similar vein, *tertia*, the aspects, which are compared (as, e.g., 'progress'), were revealed to be not 'given', but as always being constructed and led by particular interests and ideologies.[4]

Despite or perhaps due to the aforementioned issues, scholars such as Angelika Epple and Walter Erhart are interested in analyzing comparisons and practices of comparing themselves, which they find essential in establishing relations between different units, ordering the world, reducing complexity and propelling intellectual and historical change (Epple and Erhart, "Welt beobachten" 18; Epple, "*Doing Comparisons*" 174). In "*Doing Comparisons* – Ein praxeologischer Zugang zur Geschichte der Globalisierung/en," Epple points out that comparing is a complex practice that is malleable and in which at least two *comparata* are put in relation to a *tertium* by at least one actor, who is situated in a particular context. Depending on various factors such as time, place, culture, and who is comparing, what is compared (i.e. the *comparata*) differs and so do the functions and effects of comparing. The *comparata* are not 'given' but 'produced' by the actors by choosing a *tertium.* Comparisons are therefore, seemingly, the result of numerous activities, decisions, and choices that are themselves based on a number of assumptions and negotiations, e.g. regarding sameness or difference of the *comparata*, and consequential choices regarding inclusion and exclusion of certain aspects. These factors influence decisions about such central questions as: which *comparata* and *tertia* should be chosen and on which basis (e.g. similarity or difference)? This

complex process gives room for innovations, deviations, transformations, production of (new) knowledge, and negotiating issues of sameness and difference (Epple, "*Doing Comparisons*" 162-163, 193-194). [5] Similarly, Johannes Grave highlights the importance of practices and routines involved in (un-)doing comparisons which can create new forms of acting and comparing while curbing others. Grave's praxeological approach allows for the exploration of decisions and assumptions regarding the choice, perception, and evaluation of *comparata* and *tertia*, the creation and prioritization of particular categories, and implied values or judgements of relevance, difference, and similarity. Routines and repetitions can stabilize certain practices, essentialize and naturalize assumptions (e.g., regarding sameness or difference, inclusion or exclusion). At the same time, they can also produce differences and transformations (Grave, "Vergleichen als Praxis" 142-146). In this view, comparisons and practices of comparing not only contribute to prejudice and stereotypes. They also have the potential for challenging established notions, categories and re-ordering and thus transforming the world (Epple and Erhart, "Welt beobachten" 10; Epple, "*Doing Comparisons*" 166).

Comparisons and practices of comparing are thus neither innocent nor objective. In order to be able to do comparisons, it has to be assumed that the objects, elements, or aspects to be compared (*comparata*) share some characteristics (commensurability). Furthermore, criteria (*tertia comparationis*) are necessary to observe differences (or similarities) between the *comparata*. In doing comparisons, it is actors who differentiate; they create categories and establish hierarchies between different *comparata*. Different regions, 'races', groups, cultures, sexes, beliefs, or forms and styles of cultural production are compared by various actors – by individuals, groups, and institutions. This holds true for popular discourses, the humanities as well as the natural sciences, for example with regard to racial ideology (Epple and Erhart, "Welt beobachten" 13). However, as the articles by Wilfried Raussert and Claudia Hachenberger show, alternative practices of comparing, which emerged, for example, in the context of subaltern, countercultural and avant-garde movements, have the potential to challenge and re-negotiate old or to create new categories and to undermine or destabilize particular power structures/relations. This also applies to the field of identity politics where, for example, indigenous and afro-descendent groups have drawn upon global comparisons, imagined transnational and translocal relations, and focused on similarities between people of African 'descent' in the Americas and beyond, thus creating global 'indigenous' or 'black' communities with 'shared' characteristics.

Numerous comparative studies exist, which relate, among others, literature, regions, or cultures in the Americas. The same cannot be said for studies decidedly dedicated at exploring not only comparisons, but also practices of comparing in the Americas, including, but also going beyond issues such as, who compares to which end, or in what regard social or cultural developments contribute to new practices of comparing, and vice versa. This is a *desideratum* which the present special issue of *fiar*, "Doing and Undoing Comparisons in the Americas from the Colonial Times to the Present," aims to address. This issue took shape as part of ongoing research in the context of the SFB 1288 "Practices of Comparing. Changing and Ordering the World" at Bielefeld University, which is funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG). In accordance to *fiar's* objective of fostering a dialogic and interdisciplinary approach to the study of the Americas, the articles included in this issue not only explore a variety of comparisons and practices of comparing in various periods, regions and contexts, but also approach their topic from angles opened up by different disciplines such as film studies, cultural studies, literary studies, art history, history, sociology and political sciences. The main focus of this issue lies on negotiations and differentiations, especially regarding issues of sameness and difference, self and other, and the innovative power of (un-) doing comparisons. It is in this context that the articles also explore the functions marginalized positions have had with regard to practices of comparing; the variety of actors involved in or excluded from practices of comparing. The articles further probe whether new practices of

comparing have replaced old ones; ask whether established practices of comparing have triggered new ones or contributed to negotiating old categories; and examine the role practices of comparing have played in postcolonial thinking.

Exploring practices of comparing in the Americas appears to be of special interest because of the region's colonial history, its common history of separation from the European colonial yoke, and the hybridity of its cultures emerging from the exchange between colonizer and colonized and between various colonized and enslaved populations. According to Wilfried Raussert, "'America/América' as geopolitical, cultural and social manifestation should be seen as 'entangled Americas' beyond closed national and area spaces" (Raussert 63). Seen this way, the Americas represent a space/place, in which – beyond rigid binary structures, contact zones, entanglements, forms of assimilation, and hybridization have produced in-between and fluid categories that not only complicate or refuse simple comparisons and classifications, but also stimulate re-negotiations of and reflections on particular categories, and excite new practices of comparing.

Particularly, Raussert's and Rath's essays in the present issue reveal what practices of comparing mean for negotiating identity politics between subaltern and hegemonic positions. Here, comparing functions as a mediator and testing ground for the actor's positioning between the margin and the mainstream while comparing. As both articles show, practices of comparing not only fix but also challenge and mobilize *tertia* and tropes like 'blackness.' Subaltern practices of comparing that, for example, aim for self-assertion and inclusion have the potential to challenge the elements involved in comparisons and not only question the choice or re-negotiate the meaning of the *tertia* but also *comparata*, generating new inclusions and exclusions, and identifications of similarities and differences. In doing so, these alternative practices of comparing also shed light on (the dynamics and tensions involved in these) hegemonic practices of comparing, which also distinguish between the self and the other, amongst others, in order to relegate and project undesirable aspects onto the 'other'. This is, for example, discernible when (scientific) racist actors chose 'whites' and 'blacks' as comparata and progress or self-governance as tertia. As Raussert and rath show, alternative or subaltern practices of comparing not only have the potential of re-evaluating, re-defining, and re-ordering 'the world,' i.e. challenging seemingly established truths, but that these practices also have innovative potential, so much so that they influenced not only artistic cultural production but also the sciences/academia. "'We Wear the Masks,' *Reflexivity*, and Black Practices of Comparing in the Harlem Renaissance," the essay by Raussert (Bielefeld), looks at the field of cultural production during the Harlem Renaissance and in particular those works of literature and art that had a particular focus on self-reflexivity of the comparing actors. Adopting close reading, Raussert explores in what regard (self-) reflexivity on part of the authors and "masking strategies" can be seen in the context of practices of comparing in the course of which the *tertium* blackness is (re-) negotiated, resulting in turn in its (re-) emergence as a floating signifier. Gudrun Rath (Linz) explores how nineteenth century Haitian diasporic intellectuals such as Joseph Janvier or Joseph Anténor Firmin challenged practices of comparing, which were essential for scientific racism. As Rath asserts, Firmin methodically dissected and laid bare the arbitrariness and subjectivity of scientific practices (of comparing) and methods in the context of pseudoscience and what he called "false anthropology" – practices and methods that aimed at 'proving' an alleged white superiority. Challenging racist notions of racial difference, he instead underscored the sameness of human beings. At the same time, he challenged what 'blackness' means, in particular against the background of the Haitian Revolution, by implicitly comparing black achievement in this context to black potential in general.

In contrast, Olaf Kaltmeier's and Hachenberger's contributions explore how practices of comparing contribute to establishing and cementing the hegemonic order, power structures and inequalities by focusing on differences between the self and the other. In "*Narcos* and the Promotion of a U.S.

(Informal) Cultural Empire Based on Processes of Stereotyping and Comparison" Claudia Hachenberger (Erlangen-Nürnberg) claims that the United States of America can be seen as an informal cultural empire that, for example, via practices of comparing, engages in Latinism (similar to Said's Orientalism) in its cultural production. Using the series *Narcos* (Netflix, 2015-2017) as an example, she explores how the U.S. constructs – via numerous, repeated explicit and implicit comparisons on a visual, verbal, structural and productional level – Latin America and Latin Americans as the inferior 'other.' In "Invidious Comparison and the New Global Leisure Class: On the Refeudalization of Consumption in the Old and New Gilded Age," on the other hand, Kaltmeier (Bielefeld) explores class issues in the "New Gilded Age." He explores the practices of comparing that the contemporary global elite resorts to in order to distinguish itself from others and cement its elite status. The global elite groups compare themselves with each other, Kaltmeier contends, in terms of conspicuous consumption, expensive hobbies, and philanthropy.

The next two articles by Carsten Schinko and Marcus Hartner highlight, respectively, how cultural products such as works of fiction have the potential to show practices of comparing at work, namely how they simultaneously construct (via highlighting and including similarities and differentiating and excluding other aspects) the elements and concepts involved in comparisons and in doing so help reveal the underlying issues and (power-) structures involved with issues of race and class. They further shed light on the ways these works can undermine simplistic readings and categorizations. Tracing discussions by intellectuals such as Du Bois, Ta-Nehisi Coates, Walter Benn Michaels and Adolph Reed and works of fiction by authors such as William Faulkner, Erskine Caldwell, and Bobbie Ann Mason, Schinko (Stuttgart/Berlin) analyzes how practices of comparing (re-)negotiate *tertia* such as poverty or whiteness and comparata such as poor blacks and whites and the decent (poor) whites and white trash in his essay "How (Not) to Compare White Poverty? Class Issues, Socioeconomic Suffering, Literature." Schinko further explores how Old and New Left discourses use class as a "tool of comparison" in order to argue over whether class is the "main defining feature" of societies or whether "class stratifications" can be seen as a "secondary feature." "Placing Prospero's Island: (Post) Colonial Practices of Comparing in the Academic Reception of Shakespeare's *The Tempest"* by Marcus Hartner (Bielefeld) discusses, tracing and exploring colonial, postcolonial, and 'Old World readings' of the play, different practices of comparing. Conventional and postcolonial readings of this play both compare Prospero's island with other descriptions of the New World in the period, where they also locate it. Both readings differentiate between the 'self' and the 'other' while comparing. However, while the former focuses on similarities between this fictional island and the New World in order to see the former as representing the 'uncivilized' 'other,' postcolonial readings of the play re-evaluate this imaginary place/space and its representatives. Since for Hartner the practices of comparing involved in both readings of the play have their limitations, he pleads for an alternate, third way.

This issue closes with articles by Quiñones Triana, Elena Furlanetto and Pablo Campos, each tracing how practices of comparing contribute to a number of transformations in what Latin America means, the meaning of concepts such as creole and indigenist practices. In "Gilberto Freyre entre duas Américas Latinas: a lusitana e a hispana. Análise da transformação da interpretação do Autor com relação a influência espanhola e portuguesa em América," Yago Quiñones Triana (Brasilia) traces a major transformation in Gilberto Freyre's thought. Freyre was a Brazilian sociologist and anthropologist, well known for comparing Portugal to and differentiating it from other colonizing nations. However, Quiñones Triana highlights how Freyre, in the course of his works, underlined the similarity of Portuguese and Spanish colonization projects and differentiated them from Anglo-Saxon colonization. This transformation can be seen in the context of and echoing other similar developments in the Americas. In her essay "Declensions: Conceptual Migrations Across Europe," Furlanetto (Duisburg-Erlangen) explores how the meanings of concepts such

as creole or renegade changed and developed, amongst others, via inclusions and exclusions and thus practices of comparing. Using the declension paradigm to track various meanings, she argues that "declensions reverse the act of translation, which is at the basis of the comparative endeavor." In "'Early' and 'Modern' Indigenist Practices – A Comparative Analysis of the Ecuadorian and the Mexican Cases," Campos (Bielefeld) examines indigenous practices in Ecuador and Mexico and discusses how "comparisons in the form of *structuring structures* in Bourdieusian sense" give shape to "'modern' indigenist practices."

Endnotes

[1] On a similar/related phenomenon, i.e., the ubiquity of rankings, see, for example, Elena Esposito and David Stark, "What's Observed in a Rating?" *Theory, Culture & Society* (2019) 1-3.

[2] See, for example, Angelika Epple and Walter Erhart "Die Welt beobachten – Praktiken des Vergleichens." *Die Welt beobachten: Praktiken des Vergleichens* edited by Epple and Erhart (Frankfurt: Campus, 2015: 11-16, 22). See also Niklas Luhmann, "Kultur als historischer Begriff." *Gesellschaftsstruktur und Semantik – Studien zur Wissenssoziologie der modernen Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1999), 35-36; Bettina Heintz „Numerische Differenz. Überlegungen zu einer Soziologie des (quantitativen) Vergleichs/Numerical difference. Toward a sociology of (quantitative) comparisons." *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 39.3 (2010): 165-166; Bettina Heintz „„Wir leben im Zeitalter der Vergleichung."Perspektiven einer Soziologie des Vergleichs." *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 45.5 (2016): 309-310. Critics such as Heintz, however, correctly point out that comparisons also played an important role in earlier periods.

[3] On the juxtaposition and comparison of the 'old' with the 'new' world, see, for example, Epple and Erhard "Die Welt beobachten," 8-10. On comparisons and practices of comparing with regard to the Americas, see, for example, Ann Laura Stoler, "Tense and tender ties: The politics of comparison in North American history and (post) colonial studies." *The Journal of American History* 88.3 (2001): 829-865. On the constructedness of the Americas see, for example, Caroline F. Levander and Robert S. Levine "Introduction: Essays Beyond the Nation." *Hemispheric American Studies*, edited by Caroline F. Levander and Robert S. Levine (New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2008: 4-5).

[4] See Epple and Erhard "Die Welt beobachten," 13-17. See also, for example, R. Radhakrishnan "Why Compare?" *New Literary History* 40.3 (2009): 453-471; Pheng Cheah "Grounds of Comparison." *Diacritics* 29.4 (1999) 3-18; Susan Stanford Friedman, "Why Not Compare?" *PMLA* 126.3 (2011): 753-762; Angelika Epple „Doing Comparisons-ein Praxeologischer Zugang zur Geschichte der Globalisierung/en." *Die Welt beobachten: Praktiken des Vergleichens* edited by Epple and Erhart (Frankfurt: Campus, 2015: 168); Antje Flüchter, "Die Nairen der Malaberküste zwischen Adelsstand und Kriegerkaste. Praktiken des Vergleichens und die europäische Weltaneignung." *HerStory. Historical Scholarship between South Asia and Europe: Festschrift in Honour of Gita Dharampal-Frick* edited by Rafael Klöber and Manju Ludwig (Heidelberg: xasia, 2018) 6-7.

[5] See also Epple and Erhard "Die Welt beobachten," 12-19, 24.

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FORUM FOR INTER-AMERICAN RESEARCH (FIAR) VOL. 12.1 (JUN. 2019) 12-20
ISSN: 1867-1519

'We Wear the Mask': Modern 'Masks,' Reflexivity, and Black Practices of Comparing in the Harlem Renaissance

WILFRIED RAUSSERT (BIELEFELD UNIVERSITY)

Abstract

This article examines practices of comparing by writers and artists from the Harlem Renaissance. Highlighting reflexivity and an awareness of subaltern positioning at the very basis of practices of comparing by black writers and artists in the early 20th century, the article directs the reader's attention to context, personal, and group positioning as well as emotional conditioning of the comparing actors. The article explores African American and Afro Caribbean masking strategies like the mastery of form to show how the comparata 'The Old Negro' and 'The New Negro' are negotiated and lead to an understanding of complex entanglements between black cultures, a tertium of blackness beyond colonial histories, and their racial baggage during the Harlem Renaissance.

Keywords: practices of comparing, mask, blackness, reflexivity, The New Negro

Reflexivity is *en vogue* again. Established in modernity as a concept to reflect the relation of the self to the social, reflexivity has gained new prominence in the contexts of contemporary postcolonial and decolonial approaches to social relations. American pragmatism shaped the understanding of the concept in the 1920s and 30s, when reflexivity was comprehensively defined by George H. Mead as "the turning back of the experience of the individual upon [oneself]"134). In late modernity, Sara Delamont explained reflexivity as "a social scientific variety of self-consciousness" (8). Critics like Margaret Archer have developed the concept further by introducing the idea of "internal conversation." The latter notion theoretically reflects the permanent self-confrontation of the individual and its dialogical interaction with an ever-changing social and cultural environment.

While Anthony Giddens' theory of reflexive modernity prominently continues in current studies on the self, social, and their interrelations, more recent postcolonial and decolonial thinkers oppose the Western and Eurocentric conceptualization of the rational self as well as the Western-centered definition of social experience in Giddens' discourse. In theories like Nicos Mouzelis's apophatic reflexivity, special attention is paid to the emotional, spiritual, and therapeutic side of self-reflexivity. As Eugene Halton puts it, "Being human involves feeling, dreaming, experiencing, remembering and forgetting, and not simply knowing" (273). It is Hortense Spillers who pushed for new approaches to reflexivity in the feminist and postcolonial discourse of Black Studies of the late 20th and early 21st century. Badia S. Ahad reminds us of "Hortense Spillers's call for attention to deeper modes of self-reflexivity" (133).

To further reflect on a fundamental 'twoness' (black self, 'American' self) in African-American cultural analysis, Spillers introduces her idea of "interior intersubjectivity" (713) as a possible interpretative strategy and practice of resistance. While her reflections emerged in the context of late modernity, similar to those of Giddens, Delmont, and Mouzelis, they serve as a point of departure for a journey to reach a better understanding of 'The New Negro' as a comparative metaphorical construct within Harlem Renaissance identity politics in the 1920s. "If by substitutive identities . . . we mean the capacity to represent a self through the masks of self-negation[,] then the dialectics of self-reflection and the strategies of a psychoanalytic hermeneutic come together at the site of a 'new woman/man'" (711-12). Spiller's discourse emphasizes three key markers that illustrate the complexity of black

identity formation and reformation in the 1920s: the mask, self-negation, and self-reflection. With Spillers' words in mind, echoing the modernist discourse on blackness, I will turn to the historical period of the early 20th century, the 'African craze,' and the first black arts movement in Harlem.

Historical Context and the Emergence of 'The New Negro'

At the turn of the 20th century, a call for a gathering of intellectuals in London in order to explore the situation of peoples of African ancestry living in Africa, North and Latin America, the Caribbean, and on the African homelands captured the attention of black activists, artists, and intellectuals. Along with the hope for overcoming allegations of 'Negro inferiority' in scientific circles, a Pan-African movement emerged to confront global issues of colonial discrimination against peoples of African descent. Involved thinkers from different peoples of African ancestry shared the belief that historical experience, cultural values, social anxieties, and strong hopes united many black cultures around the globe. London's Pan-African conference echoed the impact of the 'American Negro Exhibit' that had taken place a few months prior at the Rue des Nations in Paris. This exhibit combined books, visual art, photography, industrial, and fine arts products to celebrate black cultural and industrial production of the post-slavery period of the U.S. The common tenor among black intellectuals celebrated the evidence of black equality and productivity "once the veil of slavery had been lifted" (Powell 24).

Pan-African ideas gained momentum and encountered a new exotic fascination with the black continent and its diasporic offspring in the so-called 'African craze'. A somewhat ambiguous embracement and clichéd representation of African cultural expression pushed artistic expression in music, cabaret, visual arts, and literature to new horizons. U.S. America found itself in the middle of reinventing modernity, nourished by the desire for a truly 'American' aesthetic and vernacular. The Harlem Renaissance, also called the New Negro Movement, formed an important black contribution to this new American aesthetic. The 'New Negro' seemed the perfect metaphor for a society and culture at a moment of intense rupture, change, and transition. While the Harlem Renaissance cherished many artistic collaborations between poets, painters, photographers, and musicians, for many, the 'New Negro' entity was first of all a "mood, or a sentiment" in which black cultural workers were acknowledged as equal partners in the world of cultural production (Powell 42).

The term 'New Negro' emerged from the progressive race rhetoric of thinker Booker T. Washington and black woman rights activist Fannie Barrier Williams for the black magazines *Voice of the Negro* and *Crisis* in the late 19th and early 20th century, with illustrations done by John Henry Adams Jr. Taking off from original sociopolitical connotations, the term 'New Negro' entered the discourses of aesthetic progress and racial redefinition with Alain Locke's *The New Negro: An Interpretation* and "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro," a special issue of the magazine Survey Graphic. Both were published in 1925 and popularized the term in artistic, intellectual, and cultural market circuits (Powell 42).

'The Old Negro' versus 'The New Negro'

The emergence of 'The New Negro' as a powerful metaphor was the result of practices of comparing in intellectual, political, and artistic circles of the time. The metaphorically constituted other, 'The Old Negro,' provided the backdrop against which 'blackness' entered into dialogue and was renegotiated in juxtaposition with the *comparata* 'Old Negro' versus 'New Negro.' As a metaphorical construction, both terms held the potential for multiple significations and were exposed to different performative, theatrical, artistic, and literary interpretations during the early decades of the 20th century, particularly in the manifold cultural productions of the Harlem Renaissance. On various levels, 'The Old Negro' signified what Butler and Athanasiou refer to as "the dispossessed," while, in different ways, 'The New Negro' suggested agency and empowerment. On a political level, 'The Old Negro' stood for political conservatism and social accomodationism, while 'The New Negro'

represented renewal and change (Bernhart 273). The basic metaphorical constitution of these *comparata* signals the complexity of a new synthesis of "blackness" (tertium). Comparisons between the 'The Old Negro' and 'The New Negro' inevitably involved questions of tradition and innovation. It also meant drawing comparisons between imaginaries of African, African American, and Euro American cultures to undo long lasting paradigms of difference and hierarchy. Reflectivity was always positioned in conjunction with these practices.

The question of the self and how to relate to identity, the social, and the other was even more complex for the modern black subject. Writers like Countee Cullen and Jean Toomer wanted to transcend race, even refusing the label 'black writer.' On the other hand, Langston Hughes completely embraced his blackness. His poetry nevertheless gave voice(s) to the involved conflicts in the process of reflecting what it meant to be a poet in Harlem of the 1920s, what it meant to be a *black* poet, and what it meant to manage the spaces in between communities. Reflectivity meant looking at the self, but also at the black self's often 'disenfranchised' and 'dispossessed' positioning in comparison to others. After all, the publication of works by black authors still largely depended on white publishing policies and priorities of white publishing houses (Bernard 269-71).

Reflectivity also involved a continuous comparing of the self with the floating metaphors of 'The Old Negro,´ `The New Negro,´ and society at large, which meant white hegemony, censorship, and selection. The act of writing and subsequent comparisons took place from a peripheral or (invoking Spivak) "subaltern" positioning. In spite of the optimistic spirit of renewal, black writers had to manage the colonial baggage of anxiety, dispossession, displacement, and anger in their acts of writing, singing, and painting of 'The New Negro.' This varied spectrum of emotional complexity shaped their reflectivity, as well as the act of comparing beyond a pure cognitive understanding. There were (and still are) specificities of black culture that have been marked by a distinct difference to white mainstream culture. Even in the works of W.E.B. Du Bois, an African American intellectual educated at Humboldt University in Berlin and one of the bastions of Western thinking in the late 19th and early 20th century, a spiritual reflectivity is highly noticeable. His works mark African American culture as a strongly spiritual culture, quite different from the white mainstream which is based upon rational principles.

Practices of comparing during the Harlem Renaissance must be observed in a relational way: how the cultural actors related themselves to history, to a past and contemporary social context, and to the other (whiteness in general terms). The positioning of actors was of key importance for the ways in which they did or un-did comparisons, articulating their relation to signifying practices beyond Euro-American standards, such as in the African, Caribbean, and African American cultural traditions. Practices of comparing occurred in local, national, and, most of all, transcultural networks (inter-American and trans-Atlantic). They built on colonial and emancipatory processes and were fundamentally conflictive.

Colonial and Peripheral Practices of Comparing

It is commonly agreed among historians and critics that practices of comparison played a central role in the processes of colonizing the New World. Comparisons veiled under the guise of science and universal knowledge helped establish structures and hierarchies based upon white supremacy and racial discrimination. At the beginning of the 20th century, this meant that, for the black subject in the Americas, by and large one still spoke from a peripheral locus of enunciation. For the black subject in the Harlem Renaissance (and in the Americas at large), practices of comparing were first of all a way to order one's own position—one's own place in society and cultural practices. These practices frequently included references of the self with the dominant structure, the canon, the established art world, or the successful music industry. They served as tools for self-positioning, self-reflection, and further self-empowerment. They also included dissident and trickster strategies based upon black oral cultures.

What differentiates them from mainstream

practices of comparing is the high degree of reflexivity about the group and the self, which is at the core of black thinking during the Harlem Renaissance. In Alain Locke's manifesto of *The New Negro,* it is a local, national, and global consciousness of black history and cultures that he locates in the reflective quality of African American culture that makes the latter the spearhead of a global black liberation movement. "One is the consciousness of acting as the advance guard of the African peoples in their contact with Twentieth Century civilization; the other, the sense of a mission of rehabilitating the race in world esteem from that loss of prestige for which the fate and conditions of slavery have so largely been responsible" (Locke 14). Similar to Locke's historical consciousness, Langston Hughes reflects on a long trajectory of black 'high' culture in "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," linking African and Black-American cultures (256). In a self-reflexive way, he contemplates the freedom of the black writer and compares him to the vanguard, experimental, and ground-breaking group of artists and writers in his literary manifesto "The Negro and the Racial Mountain" (1926). "We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame…. We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves" (95).

Hughes' reference to the "top of the mountain" has biblical and secular connotations; it compares the black artist to the prophet Moses on the mountain and to John Winthrop and his futurist model of a city upon a hill. By comparison, Hughes relates the black self to larger theocratic and secular imaginaries of America, thus inscribing the black poet into an 'American' modernist and progressive discourse. Through acts of comparing, writers and intellectuals like Locke and Hughes challenged the ruling geopolitics of knowledge from their peripheral positioning.

The Mask and Practices of Comparing in African American Cultural Production

As a cultural and political movement, the Harlem Renaissance resisted fixed structures. The writers, activists, and intellectuals worked within networks and searched for new dialogical ways of interaction. In this way, the first Black Arts Movement developed a self-reflexive dimension in which identity, social structures, cultural expressions, and ways of being were discussed and questioned. By confronting the power hierarchies of the literary and cultural industry and filtering the colonial baggage and stigmatization of 'black inferiority,' these black thinkers and artists had to act boldly, becoming inventive and playful to challenge the mainstream. 'Masking' manifested itself as a central practice through which self-positioning and comparative ways of thinking unfolded in the Harlem Renaissance. Already in 1895, Paul Laurence Dunbar had written his poem "We Wear the mask," a reflection of the cultural dissembling that is at the core of this practice. The poem gives voice to decades of black masking during times of conquest, slavery, and reconstruction.

> We wear the mask that grins and lies,
> It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—
> This debt we pay to human guile;
> With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
> And mouth with myriad subtleties.
>
> Why should the world be over-wise,
> In counting all our tears and sighs?
> Nay, let them only see us, while
> We wear the mask.
>
> We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries
> To thee from tortured souls arise.
> We sing, but oh the clay is vile
> Beneath our feet, and long the mile;
> But let the world dream otherwise,
> We wear the mask! (n.pag.)

Dunbar's meditation on masking gives voice to what African Americans have experienced from slavery, through Jim Crow, and until the contemporary period. Psychological masking is a way to protect one's inner self and the thought system of one's group (cf. Hills 217). The practice of masking is shared by other colonized people, e.g. in the Caribbean. Frantz Fanon explained the whitening efforts among his countrymen in the Antilles through cultural displacement. Once

the black subject starts moving among white people, he becomes self-conscious that he is measured by different norms than those in his community. Fanon's thought bears similarities to W.E.B DuBois "double consciousness"—an awareness of constantly looking at one's self through the eyes of the other.

This self-reflexive attitude is at the very base of black thinking in the Americas and influenced the practices of comparing at work in Harlem Renaissance cultural production. In Harlem during the 1920s and 1930s, masks as material artefact occupied a special place in the community. Exhibitions of African masks, sculptures, and ornamentation were regularly mounted at the 135th street branch of the Public Library, as well as in the galleries of midtown and downtown Manhattan. To artists and intellectuals like Alain Locke and Aaron Douglas, African masks not only made reference to ancestral legacy, but were also signs of the African importance for the development of modernist art throughout the Western world (Hills 210). In reference to Pablo Picasso's *Les Demoisselles d'Avignon,* Henry L. Gates Jr. explains that "[t]he Cubist mask of modernism covers a black Bantu face. African art—ugly, primitive, debased in 1900; sublime, complex, valorized by 1910 was transformed so dramatically in the cultural imagination of the West" (163). The mask became a touchstone for African American art from the Harlem Renaissance into the contemporary period. However, it is the *reinvention* of the mask as an abstract literary and artistic tool to *do* and *un-do* comparisons in the works by the Afro-Caribbean poet Claude McKay, the African American poet Langston Hughes, and the African American painter Aaron Douglas that marked the most distinctive challenges to white culture and power 'from within': actors.

Claude McKay, Jamaican poet and leading literary figure of the Harlem Renaissance, published "If We Must Die" in 1919 in the July issue of *The Liberator*. McKay wrote the poem in response to mob attacks by white Americans on African American individuals and communities during the race riots of the so-called Red Summer. The riots were the outcome of post-World War I social tensions in numerous cities throughout the United States. The return of African American soldiers from Europe and increasing competition in the job market lead to another racist, violent explosion. McKay used the literary mask of the sonnet to address the violent tensions and challenge white norms and standards. The poem's language is the iambic pentameter and it consists of 14 lines with a complex rhyme scheme. It has three quatrains: the first of a,b, a,b rhyme scheme, the second of c/d, c/d, and the third of e/f, e/f, and a concluding couplet of g/g. The intricate and strict form mimics order and control. The poem's opening line repeats comparative practices of the white supremacists comparing black people to "hogs." The poetic speaker echoes white racism. The comparisons shifts from animals to humans as blacks become humanized: "Oh Kinsmen."... "like men." In contrast, white people turn from being compared to hunters into "mad dogs."

McKay includes direct and indirect suggestive practices of comparing; he masters the form of the sonnet but changes its content. The conventional theme of love in the sonnet tradition turns into a social, cultural, and political appeal. McKay's sonnet is a call to resist. On the level of reflectivity, McKay compares himself, through the mask of the Shakespearian sonnet, to the canonized writers of the Anglo-Saxon tradition. However, this comparison implies a reversal of power. McKay masters the form skillfully, but transfers it to new levels of meaning. The Shakespearian sonnet dwells on love, courtship, and romance; the sonnet by McKay focuses on oppression, negation, and violent resistance. The love it expresses is for a black brotherhood goes beyond national boundaries. It is a call for black Pan-African nationalism, as the calling to "kinsmen" highlights. 'The New Negro' in McKay's vision is a collective movement connecting multiple black cultures:

> If we must die—let it not be like hogs
> Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,
> While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,
> Making their mock at our accursed lot.
> If we must die—oh, let us nobly die,
> So that our precious blood may not be shed
> In vain; then even the monsters we defy

Shall be constrained to honor us though dead!
Oh, Kinsmen! We must meet the common foe;
Though far outnumbered, let us show us brave,
And for their thousand blows deal one deathblow!
What though before us lies the open grave?
Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back! (290)

Langston Hughes's poem "I Too" was first published in 1926. Similar to McKay, Hughes also chooses a masking strategy to challenge the white modernist discourse of Anglo-Saxon America. In the poem, practices of comparing work on the level of authorship and citizenship are embedded in a reflective mode. Hughes' title already refers to Du Bois' notion of twoness and double consciousness. Declaring himself the darker brother, the black poetic voice claims blood ties, citizenship, and communal belonging. As the short poem unfolds, Hughes describes a ubiquitous scene of domestic racism, against which he sets an initial comparison. In free verse form, the black poetic voice of a seemingly domestic servant addresses his master household. The comparison expressed through "darker brother" is simple and powerful. 'The New Negro' is conceived in communal, political, and aesthetic terms: "How beautiful I am." (257) Hughes continues a step further from the familial/social/aesthetic to comparisons on the level of authorship. Writing through the mask of Whitmanesque self-celebratory expression and adopting the latter's free verse style for African American poetry, Hughes compares himself to Walt Whitman as a poet and citizen, the canonically acclaimed founding father of modern poetry. The domestic servant's poetic voice not only claims black equality, it celebrates the beauty of blackness in Whitman's style of self-embrace.

The Whitmanesque mask provides an authorial space for bold cultural and social claims. Hughes uses it to refer to the blackening of America through music from the slavery to the Jazz age. "I, too, sing America" claims black authorship for Modern American artistic expression (257). At first glimpse, merely a simple intertextual reference to the famous opening of Whitman's "Song of Myself," the verb in the context of the Harlem Renaissance actually expresses a celebration of African American oral and musical culture. Hughes' textual practice of comparing lifts African American folk culture into the realm of modernist American literature and culture. His singing voice is as biblical as Whitman's, but his sources are spiritual, blues, and jazz. Underneath the surface of the Whitmanesque modern American utopia, Hughes inserts dissidence (laughter) and expands utopian ideals with a strong belief in social change.

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
I'll be at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed— (257)

These examples from Hughes and McKay reveal that the literary mask, at the level of form and voice, serves multiple purposes. The mask provides a safe aesthetic space to claim mastery of knowledge and form in order to push the comparison of the self with the accomplished master in the field of cultural production. The abstract literary mask 'tongue-in-cheek' allows the poet to subvert and expand the acknowledged and canonized literary expression for his own aesthetic, cultural, and political claims. It also provides a superb medium to designate reflexivity on blackness as a public concern.

Strategies of 'masking' and the use of masks shared an equally powerful presence in the Harlem music and cabaret scene (double entendre) and especially in the visual arts. The painter Aaron Douglas was arguably the most prolific African American painter to use masks and develop 'masking' strategies as a counterpoint to white hegemonic visions of blackness. 'The New Negro' in Douglas' work came in hybrid African American/African attire. Aaron Douglas' artistic inclinations included experimental modernist forms like Braque's and Picasso's cubism, Winold Reiss' modernization of folk painting, and African art. Many black figures in Douglas' paintings show faces modelled on masks of the Dan people of Liberia in Africa, their personality concealed, silhouettes of strong bodies represented in a rather abstract artistic expression. Douglas concealed individuality to let a collective narrative and history emerge. He cherished cubist dynamics of form and Cubism as well as a modern and avant-garde style; this served Douglas as a painted mask to look beyond Eurocentric visions of modernity to comparisons of contemporary black culture with African culture, particularly Egyptian culture. Commercially, the cubist mask opened a path into the American art world and he was subsequently commissioned to paint murals for the New York Public Library. The murals demonstrated that Douglas saw himself equally capable of adapting African art as the European masters of cubism at the time, Picasso and Braque. Yet Douglas was not paying homage to Western modernist art. Douglas used the mask in cubist style to celebrate black art and history from ancient Egypt to present black art of Harlem. His figures of African and African American art and folk art merge in mask and silhouette-like presentations of blackness. His painterly practices of comparing built on the *comparata* Egypt and Black America(s), not on the *comparata* Black America(s) and Europe. Douglas created a complex vision of 'The New Negro,' presented in *Aspects of Negro Life*, a series of four murals sponsored by the federal Works Progress Administration (WPA). *Song of the Towers* (1934) is arguably the most modern of the four.

(image Aaron Douglas Song of the Towers)

The murals collectively outline black history from its African roots through the Great Migration; *Song of the Towers* tells a story of the conflicted black struggle with modernity Complex and multi-layered, *Song* of *the Towers* relies on graphic designs as well as patterns of geometric shapes and, thus, speaks through the practices of cubist painting. People and things appear in abstracted fashion. Dominating the mural's center are concentric circles, framed by jutting rectangular prisms. Through this careful improvisation of various forms, Douglas unfolds a narrative that catapults the black figures into the whirlwind of modern, urban machinery. In a comparative yet relational way, cubist abstraction shows the dispossessed and the rising, the human and the machine, the left behind 'Old Negro' and the rising 'New Negro' in the center. In setting his black figures in a mix of Cubist inspired dynamic forms, Douglas reflects the black origins of modernist art. The black figures, albeit, are still struggling to claim their position in the setting of modern metropolis.

Song of Towers wistfully celebrates the triumph of black artistic expression in the Harlem Renaissance. Douglas shows himself mastering Cubist modernism, the black musician in the center alludes to the musical blackening of Harlem and America during the heydays of Race

Records in the 1920s. Nevertheless, the struggle against history, the wheel of modernization, and the over-towering presence of metropolitan architecture- the upward-gazing central black figure- suggests that a complete black arrival is still "a dream deferred" (Hughes 221). This interpretation is further supported by the contours of The Statue of Liberty rather removed in size and position. The mural intricately compares dream and reality, myth and history; the result is abstraction and ambiguity. Like McKay and Hughes, Douglas displays mastery of form. Like other literary figures, he used the master form to unfold a self-reflexive discourse on blackness—noting that all murals manifest of diversity within blackness and relate different shades of blackness with a long trajectory of African diaspora history. The mastery of form gives Douglas the authority to speak for the modernist community, yet raises a racial critique on modernity. In the state-commissioned mural *The Song of Towers,* Douglas cannily inserted a critical yet self-empowering black modernist vision. By comparing and relating different figures and stages of African American history with the emergence of the modern metropolis, Douglas reveals the cracks within modernist American utopian design; he continues to push a concept of 'the New Negro' that lies outside of Euro-American practices of comparing white versus black. His black figures demonstrate a difference within blackness in terms of history and identity. Africa and the African diaspora in the Americas serve as *comparata* reference points.

Concluding Remarks

Resulting from an editorial board meeting of the Harlem magazine *Fire!!,* Aaron Douglas penned an artistic statement in 1925:

We are group conscious. We are primarily and intensely devoted to art. We believe that the Negro is fundamentally, essentially different from their Nordic neighbors. We are proud of that difference. We believe these differences to be greater spiritual endowment, greater sensitivity, greater power for artistic expression and appreciation (qtd. in Kirschke 122).

Reflexivity characterizes Douglas's manifesto. The gaze is inward. It is a reflection on the black self, the black collective, and their relatedness. His comparison between black and white cultures is based on gradual difference and he concludes an affirmation of black superiority. Douglas's emphatic message signals a difference along the lines of emotion, spirituality, and aesthetics, while presenting a radical reversal of white supremacy paradigms. The above quote from Douglas also shows that the emphasis on black differences as an essentialist strategy helped to challenge normative practices of comparing that order the world. While 'masking' strategies meant an appropriation of white master models, the performativity within it allowed for in-group reflectivity, a multitude of affirmative 'New Negroes,' and a chance for new comparative models within black cultures. This created an understanding of deep and complex entanglements between black cultures and a *tertium* of blackness beyond colonial histories and racial baggage.

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fiar

FORUM FOR INTER-AMERICAN RESEARCH (FIAR) VOL. 12.1 (JUN. 2019) 21-28
ISSN: 1867-1519

Contesting Inequality. Joseph Anténor Firmin's De l'égalité des races humaines, 133 years on

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Abstract

Methods of comparison have been a central element in the construction of different races and the modeling of scientific racism, such as Arthur de Gobineau's Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines (1853). Nevertheless, these racist ideologies didn't remain uncontested, and it was especially the intellectual legacy of the Haitian Revolution that played a key role in shaping what has recently been referred to as "Haitian Atlantic humanism" (M. Daut). However, 19th century Haitian diasporic intellectuals have frequently been omitted from international research tracing an intellectual history of the Atlantic sphere in the aftermath of the Haitian Revolution. Publications by intellectuals like Louis Joseph Janvier and Joseph Anténor Firmin, both Haitians residing in Paris in the second half of the 19th century, have too easily been discarded for their embracement of nationalism or their 'imitation' of French forms. Only recently has research highlighted their importance in thinking a "hemispheric crossculturality" (M. Dash) as well as for pan-African and pan-American thought. In publications such as De l'égalité des races humaines (1885), 19th century Haitian diasporic intellectual Joseph Anténor Firmin contested anthropological methods of comparison which provided a basis for racist ideologies. Similarly, Haitian intellectual Louis Joseph Janvier, who was trained as a medical doctor and anthropologist in France and author of Un people noir devant les blancs (1883), contributed to the modeling of an Atlantic humanism. As members of the Société d'Anthropologie de Paris and French literary circles, both of them were acknowledged members of intellectual communities in the French capital, while at the same time being in continuous exchange with intellectual leaders of independence in the Americas, such as Ramón Emeterio Betances and José Martí. This essay discusses how methods of comparative anthropology were contested by Haitian-diasporic writer Anténor Firmin. It argues that Haitian diasporic thinkers not only put their birthplace and the legacy of the Haitian Revolution at the center of their work, but also actively shaped intellectual circles on the European continent. It thereby foregrounds a permanent, and also permanently neglected, entanglement between 'Europe' and the Americas.

Keywords: Contesting Inequality, Joseph Anténor Firmin, Haiti

Contesting Inequality. Joseph Anténor Firmin's *De l'égalité des races humaines*, 133 years later

> "Le préjugé, qui fait croire qu'une couleur plus ou moins blanche est une signe de supériorité, restera-t-il éternellement ancré dans les meilleures têtes, malgré tous les faits qui en trahissent la fausseté?" (Firmin 661)

What would a world without prejudices look like? Would presuppositions of racial superiority always be present in scholarly thought, although their falseness had already been proven? At the end of the 19th century, when Haitian diasporic author, diplomat, and politician Joseph Anténor Firmin wondered about the future of racial ideologies during his sojourn in the French capital, such thoughts still belonged to "utopian futures" (Chaar-Pérez 29).

In 2018, 133 years later, the "revolution of love" (Chaar-Pérez 11), leading to a "future beyond race" (Dash, "Nineteenth-Century Haiti" 49) that Firmin and other Caribbean diasporic

intellectuals such as Puerto Rico's Ramón Emeterio Betances envisaged, is not only still pending but seems to have drifted into a far away, ungraspable future. [1] The first decade of the 21st century has given rise to a revival of white supremacist thought and nationalist movements in Europe as well as in the Americas. Within the European Union, "racism and ethnic discrimination remain at levels that raise serious concern". [2] It is thus evident that racism does not belong to the past and neither does the category 'race'. The latter continues to haunt everyday life as well as scientific realms. As the anthropologist Jean-François Veran (246) states, "it has been impossible to bury this past, and it has become obvious that in spite of claims about its scientific irrelevance, the heritage of raciology cannot simply be dismissed, at least in its political consequences and continuities."[3]

In the light of these developments, a reexamination of publications such as Firmin's *De l'égalité des races humaines,* a text that stood up to anthropology's comparative anatomic methods and racialization at a very early stage, seems more than urgent, and not just to imagine "alternative histories" (Chaar-Pérez 29) and provide a different view of the 19th century. This essay discusses how methods of comparison were contested and shaped 'Haitian Atlantic humanism'. It argues that Haitian diasporic thinkers not only put their birthplace and the legacy of the Haitian Revolution at the center of their work, but also actively shaped intellectual circles on the European continent. In this essay, this reexamination will thus lead us to ask: How can the "utopian futures" envisaged in the past be reactivated for the present?

1. "[…] le crâne, il reste muet": Against Comparative Anatomy

In 1885, only two years after his arrival in Paris, Joseph Anténor Firmin published *De l'egalité des races humaines*. In Haiti, Firmin had been given a classical education in European languages and cultures, then studied law and became a successful attorney and politician in Cap-Haïtien and Caracas before moving to Paris as a diplomat, where he stayed until 1888 (Chemla, "Anténor Firmin"; Fluehr-Lobban 450). As the title indicates, Firmin's book was clearly directed against Arthur de Gobineau's *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* dating from 1853 (Hurbon 65). In his text, de Gobineau famously argued for a golden age of 'arianism,' that was inexorably in decline, and the superiority of whites over blacks (Chemla, "Anténor Firmin"; Fluehr-Lobban 449; Banton 55).

Firmin's publication *De l'egalité des races humaines*, however, was not a mere polemic against de Gobineau, but rather a systematic study (Lewis 317). His analysis provided readers with a general overview of the most established European and American scientific positions – which comprised, among others, the Swedish botanist, physician, and zoologist Carl von Linné, French naturalist Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, German physiologist Friedrich Tiedemann, German anthropologist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, Kant, and Goethe. It also presented the different positions intellectuals took in contemporary debates such as monogenism vs. polygenism, i.e. the discussion of if humankind had singular or multiple origins, the question of hybridity and its moral and physical effects, or the debate on whether physical differences between humans should lead to the conclusion that humankind consisted of different 'species'. However, Firmin's study was not only a detailed survey of different intellectual positions, but also a targeted critique. Due to its precise structural frame, in which every argument is followed by a counterargument, Firmin's study can be related to juridical rhetoric: *De l'egalité des races humaines* is a written objection to the majority of scientific positions of the era.

Firmin had been elected as a member of the Société d'Anthropologie de Paris in 1884, where he was one of two non-white members, along with Paris-based Haitian diasporic intellectual Louis-Joseph Janvier.[4] His essay therefore not only confronted de Gobineau, but was also a "groundbreaking critique of scientific racism" (Murphy 38), a fierce attack on the views most members of the Société held, along with the 'scientific' methods they had developed.[5] Firmin's analysis was especially directed against the legacy of the then already deceased French anatomist and anthropologist Paul Broca, who had founded the Société d'Anthropologie de

Paris in 1859. Although not the first organization which sought to promote this emerging academic discipline in Europe, the Société was the first scholarly association to use the term 'anthropologie' (Wartelle 126).[6] Decades before 'anthropology' would be recognized as an academic discipline at the end of the 19th century and Émile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss would introduce a shift towards sociological parameters at the beginning of the 20th century (Fluehr-Lobban 453), the Société placed its focus on anthropology as a natural science, especially racializing physical anthropology. Its members employed methods such as anthropometry and craniometry in the comparative and racializing interpretation of human physical data, which "viewed the inferiority of the black race as an incontestable fact" (Fluehr-Lobban 453; see also Douglas 56ff.).

Firmin's own definition of the discipline as "positive anthropology" in the subtitle of his study and his personal approach differed from the consensus on racial hierarchies most of his colleagues had reached. Beyond physical data, Firmin incorporated cultural, social, linguistic, historical, and archeological dimensions into his study, which, in this respect, predates posterior anthropological approaches such as the one developed by Franz Boas by decades (Denis 332). [7] Consequently, *De l'egalité des races humaines* is also a critique of the one-sidedness of anthropological methods of the era. Firmin's repudiation of compared craniometry – the measurement of human skulls that ultimately resulted in parallels drawn between the size of the skull, brain, and intelligence, particularly promoted in France by Broca and his successors – concerned not only the comparison of, but, more fundamentally, the attempt to classify human physical data.[8] According to Firmin, any attempt of classification could only be arbitrary and was always led by subjective criteria, trying to impose order where nature had put its "most capricious irregularity" (Firmin 23). It was thus only logical that different scientists had established different systems of classification, thereby causing a "fluctuation" of arbitrary classifications (Firmin 26; 40). What was at stake was, according to Firmin, not only anthropology's reputation, but science itself:

> Les anthropologistes, en étudiant la forme et le volume du crâne, cherchent surtout à découvrir les différences qui existent entre les races humaines, apres [sic] avoir assigné arbitrairement à chaque race une certaine forme ou une certaine capacité crâniennes spéciales. Plus tard, il est vrai, on s'appuiera sur ces mêmes spécialisations pour proclamer que telle race est inferieure ou supérieure à telle autre; mais cette conclusion, sans avoir plus de poids que celle des phrénologistes, ne sera pas moins revêtu d'un semblant scientifique. (Firmin 180) [9]

While de Gobineau, with his well-known publication from 1853, had preceded the foundation of the anthropological society, its members, rather than questioning de Gobineau's hypothesis, had "imagined" scientific practices in order to confirm, mainly on a physical basis, the superiority of whites in comparison to non-whites, according to Firmin (Firmin 213). This also held true for other comparative methods from the "arsenal of anthropology", that only led to an "imagined comparative proceeding" (Firmin 228). In the end, all of the established approaches in craniometry were in vain, Firmin argued: One could twist and turn the skull, but it still remained silent (229).

2. "Tous les hommes sont l'homme": Haitian-Atlantic Humanism, Revisited

For Firmin (495f.), comparative anatomy was not the only anthropological method that produced too many insufficiencies. His critique also targeted comparisons of attributions concerning moral judgment, grades of civilization, and evolution. For the author, comparisons of physical, moral and/or other non-physical attributions were clearly "comparaisons *imaginées* dans le but d'établir ou de consolider la doctrine de l'inégalité des races humaines" (Firmin 215; emphasis added). According to the author, these comparisons did not prove fruitful because historical factors and probable future progress were not sufficiently considered. As Michael Dash ("Nineteenth-Century Haiti" 47) has rightfully argued, "Firmin's main thesis is not essentialist but universalist as he sees the differences between cultures and civilizations as not based on any innate, genetic qualities

but historical and material conditions are used to explain cultural difference and evolution." His understanding of 'race', consequently, is equally based on historical and social factors rather than biological ones (Denis 328).

While Firmin did not go so far as to completely renounce the concept of 'race' – consistent with the consensus of his era – he vehemently disputed the idea of a 'purity' of races as well as the "anti-philosophical and pseudo-scientific" idea of racial inequality (Firmin 95; 204). For Firmin, insistence of the inequality of human races clearly served only one purpose: the legitimization of enslavement and servitude (Firmin 209) as well as men's exploitation by men (Firmin 204). Science, the author argued, had made itself an "accomplice" to the "dumbest prejudice" and to the "most unjust system", either due to "flattery" or due to "insufficiency of observation" (Firmin 489). If anthropology only served to proclaim that black men were destined to serve white men, Firmin insisted, he had the full right to say to this "false anthropology": "Non, tu n'es pas une science!" (Firmin 230). [10] At the same time, Firmin also denounced false condemnations of enslavement in Europe. As the author argued, such condemnations could only be contradictory when they were brought forward while simultaneously maintaining the argument of the "comparative inequality" of human races (204f.). [11]

In accordance with the title of his publication, Firmin thus came to the following conclusion:

> […] les hommes sont partout doués des mêmes qualités et des mêmes défauts, sans distinction de couleur ni de forme anatomique. Les races sont égales; elles sont tous capables de s'élever aux plus nobles vertus, au plus haut développement intellectuel, comme de tomber dans la plus complète dégénération. […] C'est qu'une chaîne invisible réunit tous les membres de l'humanité dans un cercle commun. (Firmin 661-662)

This, the author argued with Victor Hugo's famous words, "Tous les hommes sont l'homme", was where his argument was leading to. He closed his study with the biblical invitation to love one another (Firmin 662).

It is by no means by chance that the first edition of *De l'egalité des races humaines* showed an image of Toussaint Louverture, hero of the Haitian Revolution, on the second page (Fluehr-Lobban 460). [12] Undoubtedly, Haiti and the intellectual legacy of the Haitian Revolution were at the heart of Firmin's argument. Scientific racist positions of the era, amongst others de Gobineau, often used Haiti and the outcome of the Haitian Revolution "as proof of black incapacity for self-government, but Firmin and other Haitian intellectuals of his generation turned that logic on its head. Haiti was exemplary, yes – exemplary of black equality, achievement and potential" (Ramsey 95). This becomes particularly clear when we consider the dedication that opens Firmin's study: *De l'egalité des races humaines* is dedicated to Haiti but also to all the "children of the black race", "love of progress, justice and liberty", and to the "dispossessed of the present and the giants of the future" (Firmin v).[13] At a moment when new European colonial expansions were being undertaken on the African continent, Firmin thereby underlined the importance of Haitian history as a symbol for and motor of universal equality and liberty in the future.[14] In this regard, *De l'egalité des races humaines* is a precursor of Firmin's later transnational political argument for an "Antillean confederation" as well as a new "geographic imaginary where metropolitan France and post-independence Haiti […] are no longer opposed" (Dash, "Nineteenth-century Haiti" 50; see also Chaar-Pérez 15).

Firmin's position can be situated within the wider context of what has recently been named "Haitian-Atlantic humanism", i.e. "a long-standing way of thinking about eradicating the problems of racism and slavery *through* and *from* the nation state of Haiti, but also *in collaboration* with European and American world powers" (Daut 12). For centuries, the Haitian Revolution has been regarded as an "exceptional event" that could be discarded or "silenced" from official records (Trouillot). In scholarly research outside of Haiti, this perception has shifted due to the increase of international interest in the Haitian Revolution during the bicentenary, a development which ultimately led to the "Haitian

turn" (Celucien 37). Within this context, scholars have focused on the universal importance of the Haitian Revolution (Dash, "Haïti Chimère" 10) and have emphasized its significance as part of a "modernity disavowed" (Fischer 38) as well as part of "universal history" (Buck-Morss x). However, within history of knowledge, currents of "Haitian-Atlantic humanism" have often been overlooked. Only recent research has highlighted the contribution of 19th-century Haitian diasporic intellectuals to "hemispheric", cross-cultural thought (Dash, *Nineteenth-Century Haiti* 45), normally attributed to writers such as Cuba's José Martí or Puerto Rico's Ramón Emeterio Betances, as well as the importance for pan-Africanism and pan-Americanism and the transatlantic space, decades before writers such as Édouard Glissant or Paul Gilroy brought forward ideas on the "poetics of relation" or the "Black Atlantic".[15]

Indeed, Firmin is not the only Haitian intellectual residing in Paris in the second half of the 19th century whose contribution, both in his publications and his intellectual life, to the shaping of a "cross-cultural" thought has been widely ignored. The same holds true for other Haitian-diasporic intellectuals of his generation, such as Louis Joseph Janvier, author of *La République d'Haïti et ses visiteurs* (1883). Janvier was one of the members of the Société d'Anthropologie who made Firmin's election possible. He had been trained as a medical doctor and anthropologist in France and collaborated with intellectuals such as the abolitionist Victor Schoelcher or Ramón Emeterio Betances in a collaborative work, *Les détracteurs de la race noire et de la république d'Haïti*. He was an acknowledged member of intellectual circles in the French capital and was close to the Parnassians Charles Leconte de Lisle, Judith Gautier, and Stéphane Mallarmé (Chemla, "Louis Joseph Janvier").[16] Firmin and Janvier, like other intellectuals of the era, used Paris as a "strategic site for spreading their political messages and as a locus of community that brought together Latin American exiles alongside French liberals" (Chaar-Pérez 27). As Michael Dash ("Nineteenth-Century Haiti" 47) has argued, these intellectuals thus employed a "strategy of performative cosmopolitanism". However, within this performance – whether intentionally or not – Europe was given pride of place.

3. Intruding into Europe's Space and Time?

How, then, has it been possible that the reexamination of these intellectuals has been (and still is) undertaken mostly within a national frame, classifying them as 'Haitian' intellectuals and reading their work as part of a 'Haitian' canonical history of knowledge, while both their established position within intellectual circles in Europe as well as their work on transnational communities proves this view untenable?[17] How come that, at the same time, Arthur de Gobineau's *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* was not only translated into English almost immediately after its first publication but also edited as an "Oxford classic", as late as 1966, after having served as an inspiration for Nazi ideology (Denis 326; Fluehr-Lobban 450); meanwhile Firmin's *De l'egalité des races humaines* had to wait until 2002 for a translation into English (not to speak of a German edition) (Denis 325). Most certainly, all of these indicators point to the fact that Europe, on the one hand, has for a long time been – and still is – conceived as the opposite of the Caribbean (Randeria and Römhild 22); a position that seems even more untenable given not only Europe's colonial past, but also the fact that present parts of the European Union are geographically situated in the Caribbean. On the other hand, this past and current history of reception of intellectuals such as de Gobineau and Firmin sheds light on the desire (or the unconsidered implication) to think of Europe as a space of 'purity', within which intellectual positions that stood up to and spoke out against the ideological framework of scientific racism from a position of transnational entanglements seemed and still seem unthinkable.[18] Consciously or not, the continuous reception of de Gobineau and the marginalization of counterpositions such as Firmin's – even by academics critical of scientific racism – have thus perpetuated the arguments of scientific racism and promulgated the view of the European intellectual space, as well as European scientific communities of the 19th century, as only conceivable within national

parameters.

In his introduction, Firmin (viii) acknowledged that while attending the Société d'Anthropologie's discussions on the inequality between human races, he came to the conclusion that counterarguments could only be brought forward in written form, for he felt he would have been regarded an "intruder" if he had directly expressed his arguments in the discussions. The result of this process was *De l'egalité des races humaines,* a work of almost 700 pages published by the Parisian editor Cotillon. Firmin's decision has ultimately made his objections more durable; it has provided a persistent and more effective form of 'intrusion' from within the European intellectual communities of the 19th century – an 'intrusion' can still be reactivated for the present. It also gives some rare evidence of the fact that the history of knowledge of the 19th century should be reconsidered beyond national boundaries. Europe's past, after all, has always been subjected to trans-national entanglements. This also holds true for its present and future, despite claims to the contrary.

Endnotes

[1] Ramón Emeterio Betances, Puerto Rico's leader of independence, coined the term "revolution of love" to refer to "revolutionary communities". See Chaar-Pérez 14.

[2] The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights report comes to the disillusioning conclusion: "Seventeen years after the adoption of the Racial Equality Directive and nine years after the adoption of the Framework Decision on Racism and Xenophobia, immigrants and minority ethnic groups continue to face widespread discrimination, harassment and discriminatory ethnic profiling across the EU, as the findings of FRA's second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS II) show. The European Commission supported EU Member States' efforts to counter racism and hate crime through the EU High Level Group on combating racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance. It also continued to monitor closely the implementation of the Racial Equality Directive and of the Framework Decision. Although several EU Member States have been reviewing their anti-racism legislation, in 2017 only 14 of them had in place action plans and strategies aimed at combating racism and ethnic discrimination." (FRA, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 8)

[3] Veran particularly refers to the unexpected, long-lasting effects of raciology, in which the strategic employment of 'race' has become a tactic, for instance for indigenous communities, to underline their territorial claims against agribusiness or real estate projects in Brazil. See Veran 249f.

[4] Three other members had arranged for Firmin's admission. French physician Ernest Aubertin, French anthropologist and archeologist Gabriel Mortillet and Haitian-diasporic anthropologist and intellectual Louis Joseph Janvier nominated him as a new member, whereupon he was elected "with majority vote by secret ballot of the society" (Fluehr-Lobban 453).

[5] Haitian anthropologist Jean-Price Mars argued in his biography of Firmin's life that this must have been a "cruel paradox" (cited in Fluehr-Lobban 453).

[6] Ethnological societies had previously been founded in Paris in 1839, in London in 1841, and in New York in 1842. See Fluehr-Lobban 453.

[7] Firmin (2) expanded the prevalent view scholars of his era held on anthropology and defined it not only as the "study of the nature of men" but also as the study of "the place he occupies", while at the same time arguing against specialization: "C'est surtout en anthropologie qu'il faut se mettre en garde contre cette spécialité exclusive qui reserre les horizons de l'esprit et le rend incapable de considérer les objets sous toutes leurs faces." (Firmin 5)

[8] For an overview of physical anatomy and craniometry, see Douglas 2008.

[9] "Comment parviendra-t-on jamais à une classification vraiment scientifique", Firmin (157) asked elsewhere in his study, "'en suivant les principes de la méthode naturelle', quand les mesures anthropologiques, que l'on reconnaît comme les seules bases rationnelles, sont non seulement trompeuses, irrégulières, mais le plus souvent contradictoires?"

[10] Firmin's own concept of science was clearly shaped by the values of Enlightenment, above all reason. But also other references, such as the achievements of progress and civilization and Comte as an alternative reference give us some insight into Firmin's ideas. See Fluehr-Lobban 451; Denis 333; Murphy 38.

[11] This critique was explicitly directed at anthropologist Paul Broca who, according to Firmin (205), only condemned slavery because it did not fit in the theory of a polygenistic origin of humanity.

[12] The image is not included in the 1885 edition of the French National Library that was used for this essay.

[13] The dedication reads: "A Haïti […] Puisse ce livre […] inspirer à tous les enfants de la race noire, répandus sur l'orbe immense de la terre, l'amour de progrès, de justice et de la liberté! Car, en le dédiant à Haïti, c'est encore à eux tous que je l'adresse, les déshérités de présent et les géants du avenir." (Firmin v). Indeed, ever since the Haitian Revolution, in Haiti there has been a different understanding of 'black' and 'white', as Jana Braziel (5) states: "[...] [U]nlike the French *nègre* (in France, Quebec, and even in parts of the French Antilles), the Kreyòl *nèg* and the French *nègre* (in Haiti) not only does not pejoratively connote blackness (as in 'Negro') or less negatively (as in 'black man'), but moreover does not specifically reference race at all, except as a universal. In Haiti *nèg* (in Kreyòl) and *nègre* (in French) have both denoted 'man' or ‚human' ever since

Jean-Jacques Dessalines – the first ruler of independent Ayiti – tore the white stripe from the French national flag to form Haiti's blue-and-red- striped flag and proclaimed all citizens of the island country *nwa* (noir), and all foreigners *blanc* (blanc), regardless of race. [...] All Polish soldiers, for example, who initially fought under Napoleon Bonaparte to subdue the Haitian slave revolutionaries but later defected and fought alongside the Haitian's for the country's independence, were granted citizenship by Dessalines and became *nwa* (in Kreyòl) and *noir* (in French). And to the surprise of many travelling African Americans visiting the country (and even some Haitian diasporics returning home after a long absence), they are *blanc*."

[14] Equality, for Firmin (xvi), thus also comprises equality of rights, and it is again Haiti that is chosen as an example: "Combien ne serais-je pas heureux de voir mon pays, que j'aime et vénère infiniment, a cause même de ses malheurs et de sa laborieuse destinée, comprendre enfin qu'il a une œuvre tout spéciale et délicate à accomplir, celle de montrer à la terre entière que tous les hommes, noirs ou blancs, sont égaux en qualités comme ils sont égaux en droits!"

[15] Along with other Paris-based Haitian diasporic intellectuals such as Bénito Sylvain, Firmin attended the First Pan-African Conference in London in 1900 (Fluehr-Lobban 460).

[16] On Janvier as a transnational intellectual see also Daut 2016.

[17] Intellectual positions such as Firmin's have been marginalized within the history of knowledge for decades. A reexamination in Haiti and, to a lesser extent, also elsewhere in the Americas and in Europe in the 20th century has been made possible by the insistence of farsighted – mainly Haitian – intellectuals (Fluehr-Lobban 449).

[18] On the afterlives of 'race' in contemporary France, see Stovall 2014.

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FORUM FOR INTER-AMERICAN RESEARCH (FIAR) VOL. 12.1 (JUN. 2019) 43-55
ISSN: 1867-1519

Narcos and the Promotion of an U.S. (Informal) Cultural Empire Based on Processes of Stereotyping and Comparison

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Abstract

According to postcolonial critic Edward Said, European imperialism was not only based on arms; it was also based on forms of knowledge affiliated with domination and on a vocabulary that constructed and promoted the inferior Other. Contemporary practices of imperialism may be more subtle but are no less powerful. After the end of traditional and formal European colonization, the United States is still exerting influence on other countries, particularly Latin American countries, either in a formal, political, and interventional way, or, as I propose, in an informal way that privileges cultural ideological strategies and knowledge production. By reformulating and readapting Said's concept of Orientalism, my paper suggests that the concept of Latinism illuminates the workings of an imperialist gaze in representations of Latinos in the media. By its promotion, the U.S. informal cultural empire introduces and installs negative portrayals of Latinos as the perceived ethnic Other. This presentation of stereotypes can influence the audience's view on Latinos and thus poses an undesirable factor obstructing constructive tendencies in a globalized world, an argument I elaborate on by focusing on the first two seasons of the Netflix exclusive series Narcos. The series' presentation of stereotypes is accomplished by different practices of comparing on the visual, verbal, and structural/productional levels. By exploring the construction of Latino Otherness on these three levels, I assert that cinematic stereotypes are used to depict the Latino Other in an inferior way in the majority of the cases, simultaneously representing the U.S.-American characters and culture as superior.

Keywords: US Informal Imperialism, Latino Otherness, Latinism, Stereotyping, Narcos (Netflix)

1. Introduction

In his well-known publication *Orientalism*, postcolonial critic Edward Said describes the various disciplines, institutions, mentalities, and discourses by which Europeans experienced the Near and Middle East, referred to as 'the Orient,' in the course of the consolidation of European colonies in the 19th century. By shifting the study of colonialism "towards its discursive operations, showing the intimate connection between language and forms of knowledge developed for the study of cultures and the history of colonialism and imperialism" (Young, *Colonial Desire* 159), [1] Said's study established that European imperialism was not only based on arms, but also on forms of knowledge affiliated with domination and on the vocabulary with which the Oriental Other was described in contrast to the European citizen (*Culture & Imperialism* 8). In this essay, I take evaluative stereotyping as unfavorable comparisons in which one group always fares better than the other. In a colonial or imperialist context, the practices of comparing performed by European agents were characterized by implicit claims of dominance and power over the perceived ethnic Other. They predominantly focused on differences between cultural groups.

Relying on Edward Said's definition of imperialism as "the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory" (*Culture & Imperialism* 8), my article will investigate how contemporary practices of imperialism that are still put into practice after the end of traditional and formal colonization by several European nations may be more subtle but are no less powerful. Today it is the United States that is exerting influence on other countries, particularly Latin American countries, [2] either in a political,

interventionalist, and thus more formal way, or in a cultural, ideological, and hence more informal way. As Michael Doyle (qtd. in Said, *Culture & Imperialism* 8) specifies,

> [e]mpire is a relationship, informal or formal, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society. It can be achieved by force, by political collaboration, by economic, social, or cultural dependence. Imperialism is simply the process or policy of establishing or maintaining an empire.

Postcolonial and hemispheric studies strive to move beyond the inflexible black and white portrayals of the history of colonization by focusing on dynamic shifts, the richness of the coexistence between, and the hybridity of the various cultures on the American continent. However, entrenched stereotyping processes in cultural relations are still put into practice regularly, also through practices of comparing.

The hegemonic dominance and cultural leadership of one social group or nation over another, as well as the silent consent and acceptance of that superiority and influence by the inferior group is no longer established by governmental institutions but by the mass media. In order to account for the imperialist gaze on work in representations of Latinos [3] in the media, I propose to reformulate and readapt Edward Said's abovementioned concept of Orientalism in terms of 'Latinism'. [4] By promoting certain television and Netflix series, the U.S. informal cultural empire introduces and installs the Latinos portrayed as the perceived ethnic Other. My article analyzes constructions of Otherness particularly in the Netflix series *Narcos*. Other publications on *Narcos* either focus primarily on the opening sequence of the series, discovering principles of its creation and providing a microanalysis of the 'collage technique' from a productional point of view, or investigate visualities of Latin America and historical events in Colombia in the series, trying to understand the complex relationships between crime, economy, politics, and corruption by viewing *Narcos* from a visual studies perspective. In contrast, I will focus on Latino Otherness and illustrate how it is depicted from a U.S. perspective. The series' presentation of stereotypes is accomplished by different practices of comparing on the visual, verbal, and structural/productional levels.

2. From Orientalism to Latinism and on the U.S. Cultural Informal Empire

Introducing his concept of Orientalism, Edward Said radically questions the systems of values supported by former colonizing nations and offers a crucial critique of Eurocentrism (Lenz 317) by examining dominating European discourses of knowledge concerned with the construction of the Oriental Other (Culler 145). The Orient is seen from a twofold perspective. On the one hand, it is constructed as a European utopia and invention which, since antiquity, has provoked a certain fascination as a "place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, [and] remarkable experiences" (Said, *Orientalism* 1). On the other hand, in spite of its great history and its lure of exoticism, the Orient (considered from a European perspective) has remained static and did not develop, in contrast to European culture, which has maintained a certain dynamism and has progressed as part of its historical development (Prashad 174).

The construction of alterity is easily accomplished by the attribution of certain values to both the Orient and the Occident (Prashad 175). The relationship between the East and the West is a relationship of power establishing a pattern of hierarchy in which the West adopts a dominant position (Said, *Orientalism* 5; Prashad 175). The conceived difference between the familiar, productive, and dynamic compared and contrasted to the strange, lazy, and static was used as justification for imperialism and colonialism because if "the Orient was primitive and barbaric, then it was up to the enlightened West to civilize and tame it, and at the same time rescue and preserve the ancient knowledge and wisdom held by the great traditions of the East" (Wise 23). As applied ideology, Orientalism powerfully reinforces the dichotomy and is supported by institutions, scholarship, and different styles of representation (Said,

Orientalism 2).

As Stuart Hall (234ff.) explains, difference is fundamental for the production of meaning, the establishment of symbolic order, the construction of individual and collective identities, and, especially important in this context, social inclusion and exclusion. The perceived difference between two cultures is shown by the installation of binary oppositions, which do not only construct an unjust hierarchy "swallowing up all distinctions in their rather rigid two-part structure" (Hall 235), but also exist to confirm the dominance of one group. According to Said (*Orientalism* 227), the generalizations which are produced by dichotomizing processes are strengthened by anthropology, historical events, and linguistic speech acts, as well as by the theses on natural selection put forward by the natural scientist Charles Darwin. Stuart Hall offers a number of responses to the question of why difference matters, for instance, by introducing an anthropological explanation of difference. For anthropologists, difference represents the basis of culture as it attributes meaning to objects and things by designating them to different positions (Hall 236). Cultures which claim to be stable, like in the European case at hand, "require things to stay in their appointed place" (Hall 236), thus trying to establish symbolic boundaries to keep their own culture isolated and maintain a 'pure' identity. While defining one's own culture, a dichotomy is established by comparing oneself with the other entity and by stating what one is *not*. The aforementioned symbolic confines are central to cultures:

> Marking 'difference' leads us, symbolically, to close ranks, shore up culture and to stigmatize and expel anything which is defined as impure, abnormal. However, paradoxically, it also makes 'difference' powerful, strangely attractive precisely because it is forbidden, taboo, threatening to cultural order. (Hall 237)

The objective of postcolonial studies is to illuminate this region of taboo and highlight the cultural hybridity which becomes possible in the category between the two oppositional terms. At the same time, eventual contradictions can be uncovered (Ashcroft et al. 21). However, as there are various categories of difference, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, and class, an intersection of categories of difference may lead to the collective marginalization of a people.

The representational practice of comparison employed to construct and reinforce notions of difference is called stereotyping. Ramírez Berg (13) comments on the difficulty of finding a single definition of the concept 'stereotype.' Still, most scholars would define it as such: "A widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing" (Oxford Dictionaries: "Stereotype."). Drawing on Richard Dyer, Stuart Hall affirms that we make sense of the world by using types which are classified according to our culture, a common and necessary data filtering process which runs parallel to the construction of difference as a basis of culture. A "type is any simple, vivid, memorable, easily grasped and widely recognized characterization in which a few traits are foregrounded and change or "development" is kept to a minimum" (Dyer qtd. in Hall 257). In the beginning, this mechanism of comparison by creating different categories might be completely neutral. In the process of stereotyping, however, the categories mentioned are imbued with values. Those values imply the assignment of negative and clearly reductive qualities to other individuals or groups. Stereotyping operates as a shared and consensual group phenomenon (Ramírez Berg 14f.; 23): "The attitudes about what constitutes the norms of the society go more or less unquestioned […] [by the dominant group] and mark a boundary between what the society considers normal and socially acceptable and what it does not" (Ramírez Berg 24). What is not embraced as the norm by the dominant part of a society consequently represents the Other. Therefore, stereotyping can be considered a strategy of group splitting and exclusion (Hall 258). The reduction of complex characteristics to simplistic traits and the exaggeration of certain features (Hall 258) help to create a cognitive gap which is often visually represented, especially regarding ethnic and racial differences (Herrera 135).

Postcolonial revisionism in the 1980s did not only focus on the asymmetrical relationship between colonizer and colonized, but also underlined the necessity to reorganize the canon, include marginalized works by minority groups, and reconsider the nation as key organizing unit of scholarship on cultural production (Bauer 234-236). [5] Despite the attempted turn away from U.S. exceptionalism towards hemispheric transnationalism, seeking to deflate U.S. hegemony and break with dichotomous thinking (McClennen 174), "U.S. power has been brought to bear unevenly in the region by diverse agents, in a variety of sites and conjunctures, and through diverse transnational arrangements" (Gilbert 5). Fernando Coronil (x) goes even further by arguing that Latin America can be considered as the region "where the United States has most forcefully practiced new modes of imperial domination as the world's major capitalist power." As compellingly argued by the contributing authors of *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (edited by Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease), "Latin America has been largely absent from the internal dialogue that has established the field of postcolonial studies in the metropolitan centers" (Coronil x). Nevertheless, it seems to be useful to introduce the term 'Latinism,' which represents a play on Edward Said's Orientalism and can be defined as "the construction of Latin America and its inhabitants and of Latinos in […] [the United States] to justify the United States' imperialistic goals" (Ramírez Berg 4). [6] Furthermore, it is meaningful to expand the concept of Orientalism as it "cannot contain all aspects of a globalised world" (Rossow 402). Lastly, it seems important to mention that the concept of Latinism does not hark back to Spanish colonization of Latin America and the discursive constructions and repercussions of the inhabitants of the "New World," but refers to the discursive and comparative practices involved in informal cultural imperialistic approaches and interventions of the United States.

"Imperialism is over. No nation will be world leader in the way modern European nations were" (Hardt and Negri xiv). This strong statement by the authors of *Empire* is reinforced by Lois Tyson, who explains in her chapter "Postcolonial criticism" (*Critical Theory Today* 425) that traditional colonialism "is no longer practiced as it was between the late fifteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, through the direct, overt administration of governors and educators from the colonizing country". Today, it is not imperialism, in the sense of colonialism, which still determines global structures, but rather an informal and cultural imperialism. Postcolonial studies helped to uncover that the late 20th century's form of U.S. power on an international scale has been problematic, resulting in the fact that the United States is more and more referred to as a cultural Empire (Streeby 2007: 95; 100). From the 1930s onwards, the United States positioned itself as an external hegemonic presence in Latin America by expanding "functions and programs […] [which] diversified the social relations, experiences, and sympathies" (Stern 60) of the cultural center in Latin America, which is conceptualized as cultural periphery (Stern 59f.). [7] After the Second World War, political leadership shifted and the United States assumed an authorial leadership role in international economy and globalization processes (Hardt and Negri xiii). In the last century, there has been a development from Eurocentrism to U.S.-centrism combined with U.S. exceptionalism, using the "American culture as the standard to which all other cultures are negatively contrasted" (Tyson 420).

As Edward Said (*Culture & Imperialism* 7) shows, there is a connection between U.S. imperial politics and culture. There are myriads of different approaches for a definition of culture; for my line of argumentation, I opt for Raymond Williams' definition. As delineated by Williams, the definition of culture has changed over the last centuries. In the 16th century, it meant the cultivation of land (Young, *Colonial Desire* 31). At the turn of the 19th century, however, the term was used to designate the result of a process of cultivation of mind. Culture can thus be seen as civilization [8] and cultural products as results of processes of development (Wise 4). The idea was accompanied by the belief in culture as sort of moral education - not only concerning one's own culture, but also other cultures - therefore seen "as ideal that Europe had achieved but other countries were found wanting" (Wise 5). Tying into that notion, culture

functions as a means of comparison and tool for moral evaluation (Wise 5). Colonialist discourse uses this definition of culture and "constructs figures of alterity and manages their flows in what unfolds as a complex dialectical structure. The negative construction of non-European others is finally what founds and sustains European identity itself" (Hardt and Negri 124). The colonialist ideology is always based on the presupposition of a perceived superiority of the colonizer in contrast to a supposed inferiority of the colonized, who, according to that logic, lacks a civilized and sophisticated culture (Tyson 419). Furthermore, culture is considered a widely distributed set of practices comprising music, literature, art, leisure-time activities, and entertainment, amongst others. These practices compose everyday life and work to construct a sense of cultural and national identity. In the case of the informal cultural imperialism promoted by the United States, culture is offensively brought into connection with the nation and functions as a vehicle of identity construction by enforcing xenophobic distinctions between "us" and "them," establishing hierarchies of race and legitimizing them by portraying the United States as a "great" and exceptionalist nation (*Culture & Imperialism* xiii; 7). [9] Thus, U.S. national identity is constructed through differences in comparative relation to other national identities and cultures (Silva Gruesz 20f.). Cultural meaning is imposed from the outside and Latin Americans are subjected to U.S. cultural production ever since (Hall 2). Here it is important to point out a diversification regarding the main actors: It is no longer only the government, but also (inter-) national corporations (Tyson 425) like Netflix, Inc. and cultural agents that construct Latin America, in this particular case Colombia, as having an intrinsic deficit or vacuum. Simultaneously, by "channeling […] massive energies into the production of images and texts" (Salvatore 71), they legitimate the presence of the U.S. and ascribe meaning to the mission and role of U.S.-Americans in the region.

3. Cultural Imperialism Illustrated: The Construction of Otherness in *Narcos*

According to Charles Ramírez Berg, there are different ways of dealing with the Other for cultural agents, namely the degradation of the Other which legitimizes power asymmetry and domination, the idealization of the Other which offers a cultural critique of one's own culture, and the recognition of the Other as equal (25ff.). The preliminary stage preceding a cultural interaction with the Other always consists of comparing and evaluating differences that automatically degrade the other group. As will be shown and argued in the analysis of the Netflix series *Narcos*, the Latino Other is constructed in a negative and degrading way, which completely reduces their complexity and the interaction of social groups. The construction of stereotypes is inextricably intertwined with different practices of comparing which are "very easy to identify, quote and denounce, and yet […] impossible to eliminate" (Rosello qtd. in Herrera 139). These comparisons can be detected on the visual, the verbal, as well as the structural and productional level.

Narcos is a Netflix exclusive series, first aired in August 2015. The first two seasons of ten episodes tell the story of the Colombian drug lord Pablo Emilio Escobar Gaviria. [10] The show vividly depicts his rise in the drug trafficking world and success in the illegal transportation of cocaine into the United States. With the increasing number of U.S. citizens who are dying of drug abuse, the DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) steps in and tries to help the Colombian military track down Escobar. The hunt for Escobar drags on until December 1993 when he initially survives a shootout with the military but is eventually executed right after getting caught. Selected examples of scenes in the following sections illustrate how the stereotype of the Latino as the ethnic Other is construed, reinforced, and underlined in the Netflix series.

3.1 Otherness on the Visual Level

This first section analyzes some examples of the representation of Latino Otherness on the

visual level. The U.S.-American main character of the series, Steve Murphy (played by the U.S.-American actor Boyd Holbrook), represents what Ramírez Berg (67) calls "the sun around which the film narrative revolves." This is not only because he occupies the important position of the narrative voice-over, but also because of his appearance as a "white, handsome, middle-aged, upper-middle-class, heterosexual, and obviously Anglo-Saxon male" (67).

Murphy sets Colombia against the United States and insinuates his country's faultlessness. The scene in which the DEA and the Colombian Colonel Horacio Carrillo try to catch a group of Escobar's *sicarios* constitutes a striking example (cf. figure 1).

Fig. 1: The Roadblock (*Narcos* I,3)

Murphy makes clear that the roadblock set up by the Colombians would never meet U.S.-American standards. Boastfully commenting, "Excuse me for saying so…but this isn't much of a roadblock, is it?" and simultaneously folding his arms and looking down on Carrillo with a smirk, Murphy represents the stereotypical image of a U.S. American and his sense of exceptionality (*Narcos* I,3). [11]

Murphy's last scenes of the second season reproduce traditional stereotypical constructions of U.S.-American superiority in contrast to the Latino Other's inferiority, apparent through practices of comparing. For instance, during the military discussion in the scene before Escobar is caught, the Colombian General Hugo Martínez gives the orders. Still, the prominent element in the picture is Steve Murphy sitting amidst Colombian soldiers in a regular red t-shirt (cf. figure 2). Everyone appears in full combat gear to capture Colombia's most dangerous criminal; it seems that because of his civilian clothes, Murphy has either not realized the seriousness of the situation or believes that they are going to fail once again in their attempt to catch Escobar. Possibly, he thinks of himself as invincible as it is clear to him that the U.S. Americans will finally triumph over their enemies, no matter how challenging the manhunt has been before.

Fig. 2: Murphy amidst Colombian Soldiers (*Narcos* II,10)

According to Mario Arango Jaramillo (32), with the emergence of the narco business as a subculture, a new male figure appeared, whom he calls the "nuevo patrón machista". Previously, the paisa had completely channelled his *machismo* and aggression into economic and entrepreneurial success. However, with the increasing modernization and industrialization of the Colombian economy in the second half of the 20th century, it is not only *machismo* in terms of drug trafficking which has risen, but also in terms of social and physical aggression as moral and ethical values underwent significant change. One characteristic trait of the "nuevo patrón machista" is that he always carries a gun with him which is somehow integrated into the person's physical appearance, complementing the image of the tough guy and offering him a sense of safety. Furthermore, his conduct towards women changed radically as the nouveau riche is unfaithful towards his wife and surrounded by lovers (Arango Jaramillo 32-36). The mentioned change of morality can be considered inherent in some of the series' characters. In general, all Colombian drug lords are displayed as "nuevos patrones machistas". Furthermore, they unite some of the character traits of the *bandido* stereotype. The bandido stereotype is one of the six distinct basic Latino

stereotypes in cinematic productions developed by Charles Ramírez Berg (39). According to him, the *bandido* is "vicious, cruel, treacherous, shifty, and dishonest" in behaviour and psychologically is "irrational, overtly emotional, and quick to resort to violence" (Ramírez Berg 68). Two of the myths characterizing the cinematic representation of the Latino Other according to Woll (108) are also frequently reiterated, namely the graphic portrayal of excessive violence and the fact that "no matter how violent the Latin American, he is unable to cope with either the strength or the superior technology of the North American hero". [12] The following paragraph briefly explores how the *bandido* stereotype and these mentioned myths comparing the Latino Other with the U.S. American are cinematically reinforced in the series.

Throughout the series, Murphy's counterpart Pablo Escobar is presented as a two-faced character. According to Jorge J. Barrueto, the representation of stereotypes in film becomes part of a network of knowledge the audience can access at any time. "The ethnic images and cultural symbolism" (Barrueto 19) through which the character of Pablo Escobar is construed clearly embodies and evokes Latinism. A process closely tied to Postcolonialism, namely the mimicry of the colonizer by the colonized, is noticeable in this context. [13] The nouveau riche as "patrón machista" is shown to mimic and imitate the U.S. American "in dress […] and lifestyle" (Tyson 421). Since he owns the U.S.-American cocaine market and his enormous wealth, Escobar attaches importance to a U.S.-American lifestyle. Listed by the Forbes magazine as one of the richest persons on earth, he even gained positive attention in the United States.

However, Escobar is never shown regarding his own culture as inferior compared to the U.S.-American culture; he is always depicted as a proud Colombian who does not want to leave his country in order to live somewhere else (*Narcos* I,5). However, when the Colombian government subsequently agrees to a policy concerning the extradition of drug traffickers to the United States, the United States and its imperialist and political interventionalist agenda become Escobar's number one enemy, even though he admires the United States' exceptionalism and the idea of the American Dream.

In the end, after shooting and executing Escobar, Murphy's narrative voice-over tells the audience of how he perceived the drug lord after having chased him for such a long time:

> All this time hunting him and just like that I'm looking down at Pablo fucking Escobar. For years I'd been building this son of a bitch up in my head. What a monster he'd be. But there's the thing. When you lay eyes on him, the devil's a real letdown. Just a man. Beard grows if he doesn't shave. Fat and shoeless. You take a good long look at evil, and it reminds you of one. (*Narcos* II,10)

Murphy's description of Pablo Escobar as "[j]ust a man" (*Narcos* II,10) contrasts with the characterization of this character as the evil Other fighting against the United States' good mission. Thus, it becomes clear that the whole representation of the two main characters served exactly the purpose of contrasting "us vs. them" and to reinstate the stereotyping dichotomy. As Jorge J. Barrueto (26) convincingly argues, "[t]he discourse of Otherness requires that the monster must be killed, so a new day can begin." In the end, despite all the difficulties of Escobar's manhunt and Escobar's genius and "career of staying ahead of cops" (Steve Murphy in *Narcos* II,2), the United States is portrayed as triumphant over Escobar, the Latino Other.

3.2 Otherness on the Verbal Level

The Latino Other is often linguistically depreciated by using swearwords. Furthermore, Colombians are represented physically and technologically inferior to the U.S. Americans and as inherently violent. While giving background information on a DEA-agent who was tortured and murdered in Mexico by a drug cartel, Steve Murphy remarks almost aggressively: "What the fuck were they thinking? They could kill an American government agent and get away with it? Uncle Sam doesn't fuck around. The

cocksuckers paid in blood. They went after them so hard, every single narco in the world got the message that the DEA is off limits" (*Narcos* I,3). Obviously, he supports revenge to make a stance and considers a violent intervention necessary. Murphy presents himself, the U.S. government, the organization he works for, and his partner as omnipotent against all odds as he states: "We were like the Bermuda Triangle. You get too close to us, you disappear" (*Narcos* I,3). The United States' intervention is displayed as necessary to solve the Colombian drug problem and political ineptness: "Now Pablo had someone to fear: us. It's one fucking man against the United States of America" (*Narcos* I,4). [14]

The verbal depreciation of the Other is also reflected in mocking and ironic remarks, for instance, in the narrator's comment on the dead bodies of those who had been killed and later arranged by the death squad "Los Pepes": "We came up with a name for their displays. *Colombian folk art*" (*Narcos* II,7; emphasis added). The remark is macabre and reveals how Colombian art is seen as worthless if it does not depict violence, which in turn is considered a Hispanic cultural value (Barrueto 22).

By reinforcing stereotypes though the practice of comparing, the series clarifies that Murphy thinks that the Colombian military is incapable of doing anything against Escobar, even if they have the appropriate equipment. In the first minutes of the second season, Murphy summarizes the events of the last episode of the previous season:

> Let me break it down for you. Four thousand soldiers, a 250-man team of Colombia's elite forces, tens of thousands of rounds fired, seven dogs, and four fuckin' helicopters. Pablo Escobar was surrounded in the middle of fuckin' nowhere. There was no way he was getting out of this one…right? (*Narcos* II,1)

This remark also creates suspense, as it becomes clear that Pablo Escobar is about to escape again. This is shown in the next scene, where soldiers just let him pass out of fear that they and their families would be haunted by Escobar's furious, ghostly apparition. The scene where a soldier tells his companions to not "speak a word of this to anyone, understood" (*Narcos* II,1) underlines the absurdity of the course of the events. Using the swearword "fuckin'" various times, Murphy shows his anger about the failed attempt to catch Escobar, blaming the Colombian government and military since they could not define a clear agreement on how to proceed.

Not only the military is incapable of acting correctly in the series; the government and political institutions are less rigorous in comparison to the United States' legal system, as Murphy confirms: "If you were a narco in Colombia, jail time meant banging girls, watching movies, hanging with the fellas. Grease the right hands and you'd get a reduced sentence for good behavior. It was a fucking joke. Back home, it was a whole different deal" (*Narcos* I,4).

However, Steve Murphy also admits that the United States' tactics may not always work, but because of multiple interventionalist actions throughout Latin America, the U.S. government knows how to solve problems effectively. The narrator prominently highlights his government's successful actions by boastfully presenting them as the heroes who "could get shit done" (*Narcos* II,1). This way, their own criminal acts, their "bad stories" against humanity, are covered:

> Best way to make a bad story go away is to come up with a better story and sell it hard. This is *one of the cornerstones of American foreign policy*, and one we learned through the years of trial and error in Latin America, Chile, Guatemala, Panama. Getting caught with your pants down sucks, but if at the same time you give the folks a big win, like, say, dismantling the second biggest drug cartel in the world, well, then nobody's paying attention to the bad story. They're too busy patting you on the back. (*Narcos* II,9; emphasis added)

The selected examples taken from the series clearly underline the argument that Colombia and its people are presented as inferior through verbal dialogue. In comparison, even though the government's measures are not always effective, the United States is shown as superior.

3.3 Otherness on the Structural and Productional Level

Having briefly explored how practices of comparing accomplish the presentation of stereotypes on the visual and the verbal levels, the third and last section deals with the representation of Otherness on the structural and productional level. As stereotypical devices are "deployed at every cinematic register" (Ramírez Berg 42), it seems important to show how the technology of film itself, including the choice of light, framing, and image composition, works to augment the comparative stereotyping in the series.

Hollywood productions tend to represent a series' content displaying Latin America using saturated color. As James Monaco ([4]2009: 136) explains in *How to Read a Film*, the "saturation of the color is a measure of its amount". When speaking of "saturated light," one normally refers to images which seem to be shot through a slightly darker filter, not representing the setting in a transparent way. In U.S. audio-visual productions, a filter is applied to obscure current realities in Latin American countries, misleading the audience in order to highlight U.S.-American ideological values and disparage another cultural group as inferior. In the series *Narcos*, "Hispanic drug milieu [is] achieved with […] saturated colors" (Barrueto 42). The distorted filmic demonstration of light inevitably leads to the reinforcement of common stereotypes deliberately drawing a misconceived picture of Latin American cultures (Woll 5). Furthermore, the always gloomy and suspenseful atmosphere is created by scenes shot at night, as the image below illustrates (cf. figure 3). In all cases, Colombia is presented in darker light hues and shades than its counterpart the United States, which is shown without using a saturating filter (*Narcos* I,1). Dark images are shown when presenting DEA's operations against Colombian drug traffickers on the streets of Miami, thus depicted as a threat to U.S. social order.

Fig. 3: Before the Shooting (*Narcos* I,1)

The image composition in the example in figure 3 is held in very dark colors. Only diegetic light elements like the car headlights in the background or the dimmed illumination of the bar serve to illuminate the scene. The atmosphere is gloomy and the audience has the impression that something is going to happen soon, which is exactly the case. The Search Bloc attacks some of Escobar's *sicarios* that night. The composition of light reinforces the notion of Colombia as a dangerous place to be, especially at night.

The frame "determines the limit of the image" (Monaco 206). Referring to David Bordwell, Charles Ramírez Berg explains that "typical compositions in Hollywood films are centered" (43). They "work with a privileged zone of screen space resembling a T; the upper one-third and the central vertical third of the screen constitute the 'center' of the shot" (Bordwell qtd. in Ramírez Berg 43). As exemplified by the following image from the series (cf. figure 4), the one-third in the center of the frame shows the white, heterosexual, and Christian male hero, while the rest of the frame shows minor characters and stereotypes (Ramírez Berg 44).

Fig. 4: The Hearing (*Narcos* I,3)

In addition to the image's dark colors, Steve Murphy's posture hints at his dominant position; the framing is also significant, as he takes up the privileged zone of the screen. On his sides, thus not in the center of the image composition, two employees of the Bogotá airport have marginalized positions, construing them in a stereotypical light. The man on the left bends his head, a body posture which underlines his submissive position. The shoulder posture of the man on the right shows resignation. Both of them do not look at Murphy, a fact that confirms the agent's superiority.

In general, the image composition or mise en scène in *Narcos* is characterized by a highly symmetrical arrangement of the characters and scenery. [15] Comparing the two following images, we see that Steve Murphy and Pablo Escobar are near the window leading to the rooftops of a block of houses. Both hold a gun, however Escobar seems to run for shelter, almost sitting down passively and not using his gun;] Murphy is shown actively using his gun and jumping out of the window. The discrepancy between the two characters is furthermore emphasized by their physical appearance. Escobar in his blue t-shirt and "[f]at and shoeless" (Steve Murphy in *Narcos* II,10) is clearly depicted as being the inferior of the two (cf. figure 5) as compared to Murphy in his red t-shirt and neat appearance (cf. figure 6).

Conclusion

From a transnationalist perspective, the Americas has to be seen as a zone of negotiation; these 'negotiations' are asymmetrical. The intentional and merely superficially concealed operation of U.S. imperialism constitutes a fact that indicates an ongoing process of coercion between the two cultural spaces. Similar to the European colonialists' connection related to the Orient, which was regarded as a fascinating exotic place yet backward and inferior culture, informal actors in the United States stimulate a discourse and knowledge production on what is construed as the Latino Other, which can be referred to as Latinism. Hereby, ideological values are not explicitly promoted, but rather implicitly transported through powerful mass media whose target group is an international audience. The asymmetrical relation advanced by the United States serves to justify any formal or informal intervention on the political or cultural level. It is corroborated by the perceived Otherness of Latin American cultures, which are displayed as inherently different to the Anglo-Saxon one. To depict the Latino Other in an inferior way and simultaneously represent the U.S.-American characters and culture as superior, cinematic stereotypes are utilized. These mediated stereotypes "have historical roots in racist attitudes that existed for various

Fig. 5: Escobar (*Narcos* II,10)

Fig. 6: Murphy (*Narcos* II,10)

social and political reasons […] prior to their inclusion in media" (Wilson and Gutiérrez 78). Even though there are several possibilities to take a different stance on the series, in the majority of the cases, the audience is not able to reconsider the events presented as true. The analysis of the different levels of comparison on which Colombian Otherness is depicted in *Narcos*, namely the visual, verbal, and structural and productional level, foregrounds a critical viewing of the series.

In order to detect and understand how informal imperialism works and how different techniques are used to advance the United States' informal cultural empire as an audience, it seems useful to have a 'checklist" available while watching. Referring to Clara E. Rodríguez (240), it becomes obvious that the spectator can actively contribute to the uncovering of hidden stereotypes, for instance by asking some of the following questions while watching: "Who is telling this story?"; "Who else could tell us stories?"; "Given the perspective of the camera, which characters does the director want us to follow?" Those questions could help the audience sharpen their understanding of filmic productions (Rodrígue 240) and how cultural imperialism and informal stereotyping processes based on differences presented through practices of comparing work.

Endnotes

[1] It is important to establish the further utilization of the terms "imperialism" and "colonialism." As Young (2001: 15) explains, both "involve […] forms of subjugation of one people by another," a reason why the concepts sometimes appear to be interchangeable; in Edward Said's work, for instance, there is no distinction made. However, Robert J.C. Young argues that a differentiation has to be made. Colonialism stands for a pragmatic practice whose primary objective is the extension of state power, whereas imperialism refers to a policy of state which focuses on the aim of ideological domination of other people. Hereby, power is exercised through political and economic influence and driven by the facilitation of institutions and ideologies (Young 16-27).

[2] Over the course of the centuries, the countries of Latin America have been subject to a myriad of imperialist impositions, which also involved the infliction of culture and ideology promoted by Spain, Portugal, France, as well as Great Britain, and later on by the United States.

[3] In this article, I use the term 'Latino' for people with Latin American origin regardless of their gender.

[4] The term Latinism was coined by Charles Ramírez Berg (4) and will be explained below.

[5] The hegemonic nation is a deeply ideological construct, which in the course of its formation involves "processes of self-definition and self-consolidation as often dependent […] on the persecution of differences" (Weinbaum 176), and whose fictional character is given permanent justifiability and authority through political and constitutional processes based on imperial and capitalist forms of (economic) exploitation (Weinbaum 176f.). According to Hobsbawm, nations recognized as political states have been generating "themselves by inventing traditions that enabled them to constitute populations as historical and cultural entities meaningfully joined over time and in space" (qtd. in Weinbaum 178).

[6] In his article "Orientalism, Globalism and the Possibility of Alternative Systems of Representation," Holger Rossow (2004) argues that there is a considerable number of similarities between globalism and Orientalism that both "refer to materially founded relations of power and domination and culturally constructed discourses that simultaneously conceal these relations and justify behavioural patterns or specific actions that sustain them" (Rossow 2004: 395).

[7] Gilbert M. Joseph (12) explains that neo-imperialist or informal imperialist enterprises manage "a stream of flows unified by the logic of profits, power, and a single hegemonic culture. From the center flow[…] commodities; capital; technology; cultural artifacts [sic!]; and military power, equipment, and expertise – in order to reproduce more of the same". To summarize in the context of the article, the American way of life is exported to Latin American countries (Gilbert 1998: 13).

[8] A person is civilized and has culture when appropriately educated and trained (Wise 2008: 4).

[9] The notion of American exceptionalism foregrounds the uniqueness of a nation which "was created differently, developed differently, and thus has to be *understood* differently" (Shafer qtd. in Paul 14; emphasis in the original).

[10] Season III was released on September 1, 2017 which, after Pablo Escobar's death, no longer focuses on the Medellín cartel, but on the Cali cartel. The setting of the fourth season (*Narcos Mexico*) is no longer in Colombia but Mexico as it relates the Guadalajara cartel's story. It was released on November 16, 2018.

[11] The respective reference in the series will be indicated in short form: *Narcos* I,1. In this case, "I" stands for the first season, "1" for the first episode of *Narcos*.

[12] This holds true for all drug kingpins in the series except the members of the Cali cartel, who successfully eschew a fatal encounter with the U.S. Americans, as they also make common cause with them.

[13] The phenomenon was introduced by Homi K. Bhabha and "it reflects both the desire of colonized individuals to be accepted by the colonizing culture and the shame experienced by colonized individuals concerning their own

culture, which they were programmed to see as inferior" (Tyson 421).

[14] As Murphy explains in the first episode of the first season, it is not the first time that the United States intervened in Latin America, as they "helped Pinochet seize power" (*Narcos* I,1) in 1973.

[15] Mise en scène is generally understood as "the arrangement of the scenery, props, etc. on the stage of a theatrical production or on the set of a film" (Oxford Dictionaries: "Mise en Scène.").

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fiar

FORUM FOR INTER-AMERICAN RESEARCH (FIAR) VOL. 12.1 (JUN. 2019) 56-72
ISSN: 1867-1519

How (Not) to Compare White Poverty: Class Issues, Socioeconomic Suffering, Literature

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Abstract

If the renewed academic interest in class-related issues has opened up a vivid scholarly discussion, it has not always generated fresh arguments, often provoking a return to the familiar struggles between Old Left and New Left positions. What is new, however, is the political context of the post-Obama era in which these debates take place. Nowhere have they become more heated than when white workers or white poverty are discussed, which is, in part, a result of Trump's right-wing wooing. This essay seeks to neutralize the conversation, taking a pragmatic approach that seeks to reveal possible blind spots of the contenders in this debate. In a first step, the notion of class will be assessed in the respective camps. Subsequently, I will disentangle the peculiarly U.S.-American blend of "race" and class that has a long semantic history. Taking a look on recent scholarship on poverty as socioeconomic suffering, I will discuss a number of key texts that reflect on the issues addressed above.

Keywords: Poverty, Whiteness, New Left vs. Old Left, "White Trash", Aesthetics

The Complicated Return(s) to Class

Class and poverty made their comeback as part of the critical idiom, returning to the forefront of scholarly discourses in American Studies once again. The majority of critics embrace this return, or at least welcome it as a necessary development, reflecting the signs of the times: the global economic meltdown, ever-increasing income gaps in the US and elsewhere, Occupy Wall Street, the unlikely resurgence of democratic socialist positions from Bernie Sanders to Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, as well as the wooing of poor whites in Trump's populist agenda make such a correction almost inevitable. It is interesting to compare the ideological maneuvers of these political contenders. In his presidential campaign, Democratic candidate Sanders was charged with shying away from racial exclusion when discussing social inequalities, creating what was felt to be a rather loud silence. It is a silence amplified by the fact that Hillary Clinton, his centrist rival in the Democratic party, talked about racial inequality rather freely while dismissing left-leaning positions. In turn, the blatant racism of Trump's "Make America Great Again" campaigning was hardly veiled, especially when directing his speeches at the blue-collar segment ("Trump Digs Coal") and thus we can infer that, at least in the political arena, the discursive return to issues of class is always tinged with the logic of "race." Like Republicans before him, Trump cashed in on a reframing of debates – a strategy that allowed many right-leaning parties to win over leftist voters and dominate formerly progressivist topics[1] by turning from class solidarity to allegedly "American" values.[2]

In the current "populist moment" (Mouffe 11) that has superseded the "post-democratic" neutralization of liberal politics (Crouch), Trump is only the most aggressive politician. Like most other populists, he is catering to the masses by pretending to speak for the "the people" thus claiming "exclusive representation." (Müller 3). But what explains his success in the first place? Pundits might have frequently misinterpreted the statistics, arguing that it was white workers who finally made Trump president- they did not (Davis). Still, it is true that the rhetoric of class

identity was ubiquitous in his public speeches and ham-fisted tweets. Not only that, but even though media was highly critical of the 45th president of the United States, journalists and writers strangely adapted to the drift, creating what to some critics seems an excessively biased interest in white poverty and working-class issues.

Commenting on this upsurge, Rafia Zakaria observes that after the election "a growing call for sympathy with dispossessed white America began to pick up among liberals." Yet, she argues, these invocations of economic need and psychological misery in the writings triggered by such concerns "are rife with glib omissions, tossing up words like 'community' and 'little guy' while only meaning certain communities, certain little guys." Moreover, to generalize about an entity like *the* white working class is problematic in the first place. White workers do exist, but such an abstract collective does not. Thus, according to Michael Bray, we would do better to analyze (and compare) its rhetorical use(s) rather than accept it as empirical fact. The white working class functions as "imagined addressee […] of liberal (post)racial discourse," allowing "liberals to simultaneously believe themselves to be antiracist, deny their denial of racial history, and do nothing much about the racial structures they help to reproduce" (Bray). For a long time, such an othering had only worked if the white working class was projected as a quasi-pathological aberration of decent white folks, i.e. as a racist relict within an otherwise responsible citizenry considering itself to be well-educated, tolerant, and globalization-friendly. Needless to say, this projection of difference within has a history and is currently changing when liberals – irritated by populism – turn inward and scrutinize themselves about such exclusionary acts. If Bray is correct, we should not be too surprised that such a compensatory move has a strong political edge; it appeals mostly to those liberals who are now "eager to bash identity politics" (Zakaria). While it resonates with a given moment – the Trump presidency – it is only one shift in a well-established, steadily emerging repertoire of semantics crystallizing around the twin notions of race and class in the U.S.

Zakaria also points to some of the touchiest questions in politics and in academia today. How do we talk about class structures without dismissing other relevant issues of inequality? Do those who believe that there is "trouble with diversity" need to overcome "race" (and gender) discourses to genuinely talk about distributional justice, as Walter Benn Michaels claims?[3] (Michaels, *Trouble*). In these cases, the return to class is habitually presented as an undoing of the conceptual cultural studies trinity ("race," class, gender) that originally relegated class from dominant social conflict to a position of equivalence with racial and gender-based exclusions. What is highlighted is the conceptual or political incomparability of class with these other social markers, and, as a consequence, the incompatibility of distributional justice with the recognition-based politics of identity. In the following, I will try to answer some of these questions by briefly discussing academic works on class (and poverty), and, more exactly, how class is being used quite differently as a tool of comparison in Old and New Left discourses. Do we live in a class society, i.e. a society whose main defining feature is its class structure, or is class part of a hegemonial structure that ties a horizontal network with other criteria of difference? Do we have to reframe the problem altogether and understand class stratifications as a secondary feature, an outgrowth contingent upon, but not necessarily linked to, the key characteristics of society, e.g. functional differentiation?

Bray's idea of class identity as rhetoric will provide an entry point into the subsequent parts. Tracing the peculiar entanglement of race and class in U.S. from Reconstruction to the recent populist moment, I will assess the rhetoric of class-related identity. Many of the tropes and problems are eerily repeating throughout history with a culmination point of "white trash" emerging as an "unpopular culture" (Hartigan 109) at the end of multiculturalist developments as we know them. A strange variant of an alleged "culture of poverty" (Lewis), it helps us understand white (self-) identifications and disaffiliations as a kind of changing same of U.S. cultural evolution: the separation of the good versus the bad poor, the latter a tribe apart, beyond hope and reform. A

comparison of the focus on class and poverty as conceptual tools will lead me to read key literary texts that deal with the questions prepared above. Juxtaposing the writing of authors as diverse as William Faulkner, Erskine Caldwell, and Bobbie Ann Mason along the way, I will describe the multiple ways of fictionally rendering poverty.

Doing Class, Undoing Class War?

There are times when nothing seems as old as the difference between the Old and New Left. Heated debates that have taken place since the 1970s are reactivated lately as if nothing has happened and the reason for this repetition compulsion is a seismic shift in the political imagination. The identity politics that have emerged with new theories, but also with the impact of new social movements, has helped cultural studies to grow strong in the humanities. As a New Leftist political reflection, their success includes a specific treatment of class. In the beginning, class still was the most important axis of research, as in the studies on youth and subcultures and relations to their assigned classes. If models of class *stratification* had already turned into models of class *belonging* in the hands of Dick Hebdige and others, thus drifting off to the realm of identity and meaning, these early proponents were criticized by a second generation of scholars for sticking to an idea of Englishness unfit to meet the reality of multicultural societies.

The discursive turn finally changed the whole outlook of cultural studies practices. Society was seen as a fluid product of articulations, rather than as a solid set of a priori structures. Not only did class lose its privileged place as master concept in the writings of Stuart Hall and his colleagues, but – taking their lead from the linguistic turn – the idea of structure was textualized and increasingly opened up to contain multiple agencies. This had a strong impact on the legitimate players differently located in the social field, and on the possibility to present "a *unified discourse* of the left," as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe wrote in 1985: "If the various subject positions and the diverse antagonisms and points of rupture constitute a *diversity* and not a *diversification*, it is clear they cannot be led back to a point from which they could all be embraced and explained by a single discourse." (191; emphasis in original).

Marxism's focus on the core antagonism between workers and those who control the means of production has had this unifying potential; it needed to repudiate the politics of difference – a vision of the political, which, according to Marxist critic Sharon Smith, regards class as

> "just another form of oppression, separate from all others. Furthermore, each separate system of oppression has its own unique set of beneficiaries: all whites benefit from racism, all men benefit from sexism and all heterosexual benefit from homophobia – each in a free-floating system of 'subordination'." (Smith 43)

Smith presents us with a familiar either/or: either we accept the hierarchy of antagonisms with class as key to all other conflicts, or we end up with disarray and lack any perspective to systematically fight injustice. What we would end up doing instead is treating symptoms as root causes.

How to present progressive politics when these Marxian foundations are deconstructed? When classes can no longer safely correspond with objective social positions, when, in fact, no semantics can be deduced from an a priori structure at all (Stäheli, *Die Nachträglichkeit* 315)? For Laclau and Mouffe, society as such does not exist, and most certainly it is not an objective entity from which social structures could be inferred. In their post-foundationalist theory, society has become an "impossible" object; it cannot be represented as a "unitary and intelligible object which grounds its partial processes" (Laclau 90), but needs a "constitutive outside" (ibid.: 9). But this epistemological problem does imply a lack of such representations. Far from it, the very impossibility generates society in the first place, as it is nothing but the various attempts to construct it as a unified object. By necessity, these attempts at closure are deeply political acts, and the different discursive efforts – e.g. left vs. right – are antagonistic interventions. Antagonism, then, should not be construed

as rivalry between a set of already existing camps (as in many dangerously essentialist versions of multiculturalism) nor as a Marxian contradiction between wage labor and capital (Stäheli, *Poststrukturalistische* 36); but, more fundamentally, as conflicts emerging through the articulations themselves. Their affective mechanisms include the marking-off of an "us" against "them" – a rhetoric strategy that invites identifications by pitting an in-group against an excluded other habitually conceived as a threat. This is not necessarily a bad thing, as Laclau and Mouffe are at pains to make clear, for nothing threatens democracies more than a centrist, consensus-oriented Third Way. We simply need to construct "the people" in ways different from the Right's appeal to nation and "race."

Yet, what if the conflicts have multiplied, if the discourses on the Left simply do not add up to great utopian projects like the classless society anymore? The task becomes more complicated: any unification is the political product of complicated struggles to establish a "chain of equivalences" (Laclau and Mouffe 130), combining working class demands with those of the new movements. In such a reconfiguration of Marxist thought, Jacobin fervor has given way to a reformist project, a radical democracy true to the fundamental promises of liberty and equality for all. Instead of class war and the overcoming of capitalism, the task is to work against the grain of what Laclau and Mouffe – taking their lead from Antonio Gramsci – call hegemony. Counter-hegemonic interventions as those proposed by Mouffe in her latest book *For a Left Populism,* try to attack the current neoliberalism and are now presented as challenging the current populism from the Right. The apologists of Marxism will maintain, however, that "'class struggle' presupposes a particular social group (the working class) as a privileged political agent" and insist that such "privilege is not itself the outcome of hegemonic struggle, but is grounded in the objective social position of this group" (Zizek 554).

Comparing Trump, Reading Sanders

These debates return even more heatedly in the Trump era when the whole democratic project seems to be at stake. How do commentators read his presidency? Which political alternatives are available to combat the new surge of nationalism, racism, and ultra-neoliberalism instrumental in maintaining the status quo? Writing for *The Atlantic,* Ta-Nehisi Coates created a rough sketch of an America haunted by "race," an America whose white supremacist leanings had to undo the first black presidency. Trump is nothing but "the negation of Barack Obama's legacy" (Coates). According to this logic, Trump can be considered "America's first white president" because "his entire political existence hinges on the fact of a black president."

Coates himself introduces an alternative, class-related interpretation of Trump's way to power, the weakness of the Democrats who have "abandoned everyday economic issues" and established an "elitist sneer at blue-collar culture." Consequently, Trump's success is not so much the result of supremacist biases, as he is "the product of a backlash against contempt for white working-class people." Recognizing their urge to disaffiliate from the less fortunate, liberals suddenly feel sorry for deriding the other white half and having created a rich imagery of the bad poor. It is no surprise that Coates does not buy this argument, not the least because "black people, who have lived for centuries under such derision and condescension, have not yet been driven into the arms of Trump." Considered by many the legitimate heir of James Baldwin, Coates is keen to dissect the self-delusions of America. If, at the present moment, these include "the myth of the virtuous white working class," this mythmaking needs to turn a blind eye to its complicity in American racism.

The article points out, however, that the statistics strongly suggest that it was not the workers who put Trump in the White House – often they did not vote at all (Davis) – but whites across the whole economic spectrum. Hence, "when white pundits cast the elevation of Trump as the handiwork of an inscrutable white working class, they are being too modest, declining to take claim for their own economic class" (Coates). What we should speak about, however, is the lower stratum of blacks, and more importantly, keeping those two distinct. "Black poverty," Coates insists, "is fundamentally

distinct from white poverty," and thus any attempt to fight economic inequality must tackle racism. David Roediger's *Wages of Whiteness* helps him to delineate "the tightly intertwined stories of the white working class and black Americans" throughout history. Coates notes "the temporary bondage of indenture" as point of departure for the former in the prehistory of the U.S., and grants a remarkable lack of "racist enmity" in the 17th century. Soon, however, the "full benefits of whiteness" kicked in and, as a result, the need of white workers to distinguish themselves from slaves grew stronger on a personal level, but also in the political imagination beginning in the 18th century to this day. His defeatist verdict is the most brutal comparison possible: "White slavery is sin. Nigger slavery is natural."

What does such a generalizing sweep of U.S. history mean for politics, especially in the populist moment when centrist positions are criticized from Left and Right as never before? Seminal for this line of argument is Coates's firm belief "that white supremacy was a force in and of itself, a vector often intersecting with class, but also operating independent of it," so that, if actually instated, any democratic socialist program might well be a welcome amelioration of society; however this would not fundamentally alter anything about white supremacy. Nor would "the problems of economic inequality dissipate," as Coates quickly adds, scornfully nodding to Bernie Sanders. He reads Sanders' reluctance to opt for reparations as yet another instance of an "enduring solidarity of whiteness."

It is easy to feel the impatience in many of these columns, the rightful anger at the situation of black America especially after the Trump backlash. Rhetorically, however, he faced contenders not always given to sober articulation themselves. Walter Benn Michael had already made himself a name outside academia as a public commentator with a strong penchant for polemics. While the vastly popular *The Trouble with Diversity. How We Learned to Love Identity and Ignore Inequality* (2006) is a hotbed for quotable slogans and one-liners, its "rhetorical excess" (Wolfe) should not make us blind to the political philosophy behind this book. It is laid out in earlier academic studies like *The Shape of the Signifier* in which Michaels historically traces the obsession with identity and subject positions back to the late 1960s. This fascination rests on a larger shift in political outlook from ideology to ontology, that "replaced the differences between what people think (ideology) […] with the differences between what people are (identity)" (24). If ideology implies disagreement and conflict, ontological differences do not. Conceptualized like languages or cultures, one identity is not better than the other: they are different but equal.

It is silly to call such critical self-positioning "liberal racism" (Gordon and Newfield 737) – but the agenda that followed in *Trouble* and also in polemical essays for the online journal *nonsite* pit Michaels irreconcilably against Coates. In fact, a short piece co-authored with his Chicago colleague Kenneth Warren directly takes aim and denounces his call for reparations as "right-wing fantasies" (Michaels and Warren), completely in line with the neoliberal credo they see at work in identity politics. Now, in a reversal of Coates's logic, they urge the public to see identity politics not as "an alternative to class politics but a form of it: it's the politics of an upper class that has no problem with seeing people left behind as long as they haven't been left behind because of their race or sex" (Michaels, 'The Political Economy'). Michaels is evidently not championing the status quo, but he does recognize the social ills Coates diagnoses. Narrowed down to the political realm, his position "just means that fighting discrimination has nothing to do with fighting economic inequality" (Michaels, 'Identity Politics').

Michaels finds support in Adolph Reed, Jr., a political scientist at the University of Pennsylvania. It is an important back-up, to be sure. If Michaels is dismissed by some as yet another old white male trying to turn back the clock to a time before identity politics, Reed, a black scholar, takes specific issue with Coates as the newest among the "freelance race leaders." This is Reed's term for public figures disengaged from concrete politics, who are part of the "professional-managerial strata," and thus the natural adversary of black workers and unemployed. Unconcerned with pragmatic solutions to the problems at hand, theirs is a totalizing perspective on U.S. society, Reed

argues, offered as "an alternative to *political* action." One might argue that Michaels, too, presents totalizing arguments or that general intervention might give direction for political work to come. As a socialist with interest in the connection of theory and praxis, however, Reed finds unique flaws with theories of so total a vision that their grand moral statements – their "fatalistic outlook" – interdict rather than incite political agency. "Among this cohort of racial voices, the essential qualification for recognition seems to be inclination to declaim on the intractability of undifferentiated, ahistorical racism as a fetter on all black Americans's life chances across the sweep of the nation's history." To diagnose such universal "systemic effects" (Fluck, 'Wissenschaft' 116 et passim) is prone to have disastrous effects for those in need, and create jobs only for those already capable of self-fashioning as representatives of the black intelligentsia.

Indeed, the most interesting of Reed's points for our discussion is a strange return of class-related rhetoric within black leadership. He shows great disdain for the "top-down model of black discourse" that runs from DuBois to Coates, and that today works as a "new assertive liturgy of dependence" in which white liberals and well-off black public intellectuals have advanced a "profoundly race-reductionist" politics "discounting the value of both political agency and the broad pursuit of politics." What we end up with, surprisingly, is a disdain for the black underclass that is cast as "a population mired in pathologies and hemmed in by an overwhelming racism." What we end up with is an almost universal problem in discussions of economic need, a dubious return to the culturalization of need – a culture of poverty that refrains from materialist perspectives. If we follow Reed, white and black views of the(ir) other half(s) are dangerously comparable. Consequently, almost all influential black leaders "envisioned their core constituency as a politically mute black population in need of tutelage from their ruling-class-backed leaders." Such tutelage produces a troublesome "underclass mythology" which "grounds professional-class claims to race leadership, while providing the normative foundation of uplift programs directed toward enhancing self-esteem rather than the material redistribution of wealth and income." We are back at one of the key questions of progressive politics: do we want to start with the minds of people or with the situations they are trapped in? Plus, we face the rivalry of an identity politics that has often neglected class-issues with the materialist doctrine of the Old Left. And, paradoxically, we are in an odd situation in which cultural studies-bred scholars accuse Old Leftists of not paying enough attention to "race;" while Michaels and Reed would find fault with the very separation of "race" and class in the liberal camp, which allows them to decry white supremacy as a historical phenomenon.

Mouffe would urge these different camps to let go of their conflicts and create "the people" from the Left instead. In the moment neoliberalism and centrist parties are successfully weakened from a populism on the Right that has read their Gramsci and Foucault only too well, this seems to her the only plausible option. In this form of political agency identity, claims are much invited, yet the problem is to connect their differences. It is a dilemma all too obvious when it comes to Coates: to see white supremacy as an all-encompassing force and talk about privilege when addressing unemployed or working-class whites will get you only so far. With Michaels and Co. the problem runs even deeper: class-consciousness engenders a different form of identity, if at all. Once a class in itself turns into a class for itself, this shift might cause a sense of belonging. Moreover, even if Marxist critics nowadays can concede that class, too, is contingent on processes of meaning but is not cultural in the same way the politics of recognition is (Chibber), one would very willingly let go of its defining lack – poverty or powerlessness in the face of capital – while to be recognized for, say, black achievements is something you would want to maintain even if your situation changes.

One could take another perspective and try to disengage from directly talking about class and "race" and understand the popularity of identity in the first place. If we assume that class stratification exists but that it is not the prime distinction of current society – i.e. that it's modus operandi is not the perpetuation of class differences – we could argue that society

until today is defined by functional differentiation (Luhmann). Individuals in such a society are addressed differently in the distinct function systems: politics, economics, religion, art, and the medical system all take a different interest in a person. Thus, instead of individuality, the proper modern self-experience is as a dividuum: modernity means the fundamental lack of an address (Fuchs 50ff.). In premodern times, such an address was the tribe, clan, or caste. Premodernity implies total inclusion – worst-case scenario as a slave – which means that one's place completely determines one's address(ability). Modern society, while not devoid of stratification and exclusionary mechanisms is centerless; it has no foundation that could determine one's place and thus it enforces the "self-conditioning of the individuum" (Nassehi, *Geschlossenheit* 99). It does so because in the function systems, it is only considered relevant in specific dimensions. Any individual is thus created in its exclusion individuality, beyond the function systems, but hardly outside society. This openness allows for radical self-fashioning, e.g. a Dandyism, but it also includes more mainstream forms of self-identifications –in our present time, along ethnic lines. Evidently, some can choose more freely than others the ways in which they want to live out their individuality. Still, all forms are contingent on this fundamental rule of modern society: individualization is something that happens to individuals whether they want to or not. Far from being a semantic correlating with bourgeois society, then, it is the sine qua non of modernity. Hardly any single person will perform this self-fashioning from scratch. Most use the established patterns, and we can observe "that, in order to be addressable, the compensatory (and simplifying) reference to class-, stratum- and gender experience is used in comparatively stable fashion" (105). We must add "race" and ethnicity to these collectivist categories, even more so as "structural individualization not necessarily has to result in semantic individualist self-descriptions" (106).

The fact that there is no center of society controlling either the distinct function systems or the way people create such addresses does not mean that there is no asymmetry or conflict in society. It is only that these conflicts are an outgrowth of this fundamental principle of modern society. Once the various asymmetries are politically semanticized and crystallize as part of political discourses, chances are that social agents will appropriate them for their self-identifications. Why then, should such agents choose identity-based markers rather than class semantics to do so? One plausible answer is that we have entered an age of "expressive individualism" that champions has superseded the "economic individualism" governing the 18th and 19th century (Fluck, 'Humanities' 59). The shift is contingent on the transformed status of money as a standard medium. Anyone can, at least potentially, become economically successful and gain social respectability in a regime of Franklinian self-discipline and psychic self-regulation along the lines of a protestant work ethic. In the more recent "expressive individualism," the goal has become "cultural self-realization." Unlike money, however, culture thrives on difference; it separates, no matter how much one highlights the hybridity of ascriptions and identities. Culture, after all, relies on a "difference-identity-function" (Gürses 21), it knows of its contingency, yet simultaneously masks its constructedness, thereby suggesting a paradoxical (post)modern authenticity. Further, the more culture is used within *politics*, the stronger the focus on binding representations of groups, spokespersons, collectives will be, as part of the function of the political system is to create visible collectives (Nassehi, 'Themenbindung' 40). In this arena, cultural identities often do not even compete for the better argument, as Michaels correctly diagnoses, even though his politico-aesthetic philosophy misunderstands the root causes of modernity as well.

The Close-Knit Ties of Race and Class: White Loyalty vs. Interracial Solidarity

For a long time, historical accounts of slavery have regarded the "peculiar institution" as a pre-modern phenomenon, a kind of gruesome, mostly Southern exploitation preceding the modern capitalism that soon took center stage and generated class stratifications. It is one of the great achievements of theoreticians of an

Afromodernity to have refuted this neat separation of periods. Slavery is not merely comparable to capitalism, nor simply preparing it, Paul Gilroy claims in his important study *The Black Atlantic*; it is better conceptualized as the "inner essence" of labor exploitation. Far from being a Southern peculiarity, then, the "empire of cotton" (Beckert) along with its horrible racial logic was "a system that paved the way for laboring under capitalism" (Gilroy 55). If we accept this revisionist criticism – and thus not only make comparable but even metaphorize slavery as key to an understanding of the modern economic system – then class was always already tinged with race. The essential question to be taken from these discussions is how to relate the Afromodernity to the classical accounts of modernization, i.e. division of labor, stratification, functional differentiation of value spheres, etc.

Gilroy's thoughts about the comparability of slavery and capitalism had been prepared long before the publication of W.E.B. DuBois' study *Black Reconstruction*. Published in 1935, the book invites readers to regard slaveholders primarily as capitalists and not so much as an aristocratic elite. In line with this Marxist reframing, slaves, too, had to be recast as class antagonists, as "it followed that the laborers were proletarians" (Ignatiev 243). Accordingly, the first chapter of *Black Reconstruction* refers to "The Black Worker" rather than black slaves. Yet, it is also important to note that in the follow-up chapter, "The White Worker" is given specific attention. While both collectivities were logically bound by their class status, DuBois illuminated important differences. Again, the category of "race" is highlighted to explain specific developments of social stratification. Just as in his diagnosis of double consciousness – burden and gift for those behind the veil – DuBois provides black people with a troublesome privilege, turning them into the quasi-avant-garde of resistance. This time, it is not so much the sociopsychic disposition, but a subversive form of agency. During the Civil War, constant struggles with their masters led to increasingly subordinate slave behavior, from escape to sabotage and upheaval. These actions were far from accidental, but, as Guy Emerson Mount has explained, they can be described as "a form of politics. They emanated from a class conscious slave community" (Mount). Class consciousness entails both, the understanding of their exploitation as workforce and the yearning for existential freedom as a man. Mount eloquently summarizes: "The end game of any slave insurgency was not just to own the means of production, but to own one's very self."

The general strike thesis thus presented a revolutionary proletariat, which – because the slaves' understanding of their situation ran so fundamentally deep – was a potential inspiration to others. "At stake was the centrality of self-emancipation of slaves and the knowledge that this motion created the possibility that white workers might seek something more than being 'not slaves.'" (Roediger, 'Critical History' 23). We have reached the essential point of the debate: the potential disaffiliation of white workers, who can now begin to understand that they have more in common with black workers than with "their folks." In his day, DuBois's challenge of received historical knowledge was – to put it mildly – not enthusiastically received. The Dunning School with their white supremacist views was still in full effect, and it certainly would take quite a while to undo the myth of the Lost Cause. DuBois knew he openly fought these influential camps and ideologies. What he basically did was to attribute agency to slaves, thereby actively undoing the racist comparisons of William A. Dunning & Co. which "held that the slaves were docile, unprepared for freedom, and racially inferior" (Mount). Even more, he presented slave insurgency as a heroic and inspiring act completely corrupted the familiar racial hierarchy.

In the same year that saw the publication of *Black Reconstruction*, Scribner's magazine featured a story in its February edition called "Kneel to the Rising Sun." Erskine Caldwell, the author, had reached critical acclaim with his early works about the rural poor of the South –the novels *Tobacco Road* (1932) and *God's Little Acre* (1933) fared especially well – yet the highly prolific writer was also a gifted writer of short prose. The Scribner's story is a real gem, a poignant tale of poverty and interracial friendship that neatly corresponds with DuBois's revisionist piece of historiography. Set in the

Reconstruction era, Caldwell invites us into a world of need. Lonnie, a white sharecropper, has trouble supporting his wife Hatty and Mark, his disoriented grandfather. Thus, he urgently needs to ask the landowner for an extra ration. Lonnie is friends with Clem, a black sharecropper. Right at the beginning of the story, Caldwell efficiently blends the themes: "A shiver went through Lonnie. He drew his hand away from his sharp chin, remembering what Clem had said. It made him feel as if he were committing a crime by standing in Arch Gunnard's presence and allowing his hollow face to be seen" (Caldwell 71). The sharp chin, an image repeatedly used throughout the story, reminds us of the physical hurt. But it is also referenced by Clem who reminds his friend that "your face will be sharp enough to split the boards for your coffin" (ibid.). Clem, however, not only sees things more clearly than Lonnie, but he is introduced as an authority – a status well-deserved. Walking up to the sinister and sadistic landowner, Lonnie wishes "he could be as unafraid of Arch Gunnard as Clem was" (ibid.). Even though "a Negro, he never hesitated to ask for rations when he needed something to eat," and this strength, we infer, is a result of the existentialist struggles of an ex-slave that set the sharecroppers apart.

If this earns Clem the respect of his comrade, the landowner is hardly amused and only waits for a chance to get rid of the insurgent black worker. When the time has finally come for Arch to take action – Clem refuses to step down – the irate proprietor organizes a lynch mob. Lonnie, too, faces danger, for he is supposed to help the landowner track down Clem. At the moment of decision, the white sharecropper is trapped in a deadlock: blocked both mentally and physically, words completely fail him and we find him incapable of even making the slightest move. Clem urges him to send the angry mob on a wrong path and his friendship is now tested in front of their class antagonist. Slowly, but surely, Lonnie regains mobility (not agency) only to get caught up in the surge of the lynchers. Because he has failed to do what is ethically right (and politically progressive), he becomes one with the white mass again, simultaneously securing the hierarchic status quo: white dominating black and white landowner dominating those dependent on his will.

Quite efficiently, Caldwell has dramatized a key conflict played out in the white mind, the either/or of white loyality and interracial solidarity of Jim Crow society. While, in real life, such dangers were not always a matter of life and death, the disaffiliation often included violence in interactive situations and also on an organizational level. Any formation of black and white workforce into unions had to face this and the short-lived nature of many an alliance tells us more about the forces to break them than about the willingness to cooperate. In "Kneel to the Rising Sun," Lonnie's choice seems to work against his whole personality, he is de-individualized, a passive medium re-modeled as a part of movement he does not actively embrace. There is no doubt that his friendship with Clem is genuine and that he understands their mutual plight. Still, in spite of all his unquestionable integrity, as specimen of the "good poor," Lonnie can be broken and Arch's dominance – an erratic figure symbolizing the continuity of evil mastery from slavery to capitalist domination – is firmly in place.

In her parable "Two Men and a Bargain" Lilian Smith has succinctly captured the psychosocial dynamics of exclusion at work in the protocols of racial loyalty. Smith describes the strange symbolic transactions at play in a severely stratified South. The bargain invokes nothing short of a Southern white conspiracy against the ex-slaves – a move that would prevent them from becoming rivals for the poor whites. "There's two big jobs down here that need doing," the rich man explains, "somebody's got to tend to the living and somebody's got to tend to the nigger" (Smith 176). In his esteem, Mr. Poor White is "too no-count to learn […] things about jobs and credits, prices, hours, wages, votes, and so on," but what "any white man can" surely understand is "how to handle the black man." Or, more explicitly: "You boss the nigger, and I'll boss the money." More than simply presenting economic gain – jobs guarantee through exclusion – the bargain includes a strong sense of supremacy, as it allows even the lowest whites to boss around his black neighbors. This, then, is the dividing line between the good and the bad white poor; Lonnie's conversion comes close to a rebooting. His literally loses any sign of selfhood before

blending in with the white horde.

Surprising to some, Caldwell was much more careful creating black than white characters. While considering himself the champion of the poor and exhibiting an interest in class issues far greater than that of his Southern peers, the portrayal of white poverty is much more ambivalent and presents both, the good and the bad poor; realist representations of sharecroppers and farmhands find a counter-current in a rivaling strand of panning depictions. At least there are no black characters that feature the depravity of some of the figures occupying the pages of his popular novels. These are a set of poor whites lacking decency and integrity, and who openly embrace the gift of white supremacy involved in Smith's bargain. Caldwell's writing might be populated by specimen of Southern "white trash," yet the richest and most memorable inventory of this strange breed has been created by William Faulkner. His 1936 *Absalom, Absalom!* tracks the rise of poor white Thomas Sutpen to gentry. It describes the intricate relationship between Sutpen and Wash Jones, his "redneck retainer" (Hönnighausen 177), whose self-respect profits from the subjection of black into an inferior position. In "Wash," a short story published two years before the critically acclaimed novel, the psychodynamics of belonging are presented quite efficiently. In one elongated flashback, Faulkner invites us into the mind-set of this character, and we see how the precarious identity is played out. Wash affirms the racist order of slavery, and he needs to do so to maintain his self-image as part of the white society. As long as the master dominates the blacks – who hardly find any respect for Wash at all, freely calling him "white trash" – the working hand feels affiliated to whiteness. This is not a reciprocal feeling at all, however, as Sutpen does not hold his worker in any higher esteem than his slaves. Instead, he himself "magnifies racial difference" (Marcolin 60) in order to purge the shame of his own poor past, projecting it on a person at the very bottom of the social hierarchy. It is a dual exclusion at work here, then: the familiar white versus black, and a class-based yet racially tinged one within whiteness.

If Faulkner had a keen eye for the psychodynamics of such exclusions, Caldwell included these stereotypical portraits of abject poverty more directly in his fiction. His father, who in 1929 contributed to the magazine *Eugenics*, might have influenced him. Writing about a dysfunctional family "The Bunglers," Ira Caldwell "reluctantly suggested selective sterilization as a means to slow the proliferation of desperate lives" (Cook 70). Running from 1880 to 1920, Eugenics Family Studies tried "to validate that large numbers of rural poor whites were 'genetically defective' (Wray and Newitz 2). This troublesome pseudo-scientific background had a strong impact on the othering of an "odd tribe" (Hartigan 4) so completely beyond the realms of decency that the gap between "us" and "them" could not be bridged anymore. The distinction is not a question of class, even though economic stratification is very much part of the reality that produces this gap; nor is it merely a culture of poverty that has created a vicious cycle of dependency. Fundamentally, it is presented as a matter of genetics, a matter of blood that forbids any reciprocity between decent white folks and this variant of the bad poor.

Racist Re-Entries: White Trash as Key Trope

Underlying this demarcation was a strange re-entry of the core racist asymmetry – white vs. black – on the side of whiteness. Much of the discriminatory criteria used to set apart blackness – e.g. animal-like features, a lack of inhibition and restraint, the lust, laziness and irrationality beyond decency – returned to set some whites apart from others, creating a semantic and iconography to be used in different contexts, by different people, to different ends. The term's exclusionary drift first served both black slaves and white gentry in the colonial era, much in the manner depicted by Faulkner: the aristocratic slaveholders could render invisible the shared ancestry with the lower classes and the slaves could distinguish themselves from a set of people even lower in status than themselves (Poole 257). Considered more hurtful than similar monikers such as redneck or hillbilly, the slur seems to "allow little room for valorized self-identifications" and invites only the strongest of reactions: "contempt, anger, and disgust" (Wray 2), not only for the debasement that is part of

its baggage, but also for an alleged racism of those who are considered "white trash." And still, the history of this term has seen a number of appropriations, culminating in a national "hip authenticity" (Wray and Newitz 6) in popular culture. From *Roseanne* to white rappers to the recent memoirs and histories (Hochschild; Isenberg; Vance), "white trash" has become a sturdy means of self-fashioning that conveys much of the logic of multiculturalism.

The recent short-lived revival of *Roseanne* can be used as a vivid vignette for this change of political imagination. Initially running from 1988 to 1997, the ABC sitcom depicted working-class life in an Illinois town. It used conventional realist storylines – Roseanne Barr and John Goodman play hardworking parents of four kids – to convey its inclusive universalism. With a humor instrumental in creating its humanist appeal, *Roseanne* occasionally used "white trash" as marker, as in an 1993 episode called "White Trash Christmas" or in an ironic self-identification that fundamentally seeks to deconstruct the term and similar monikers: "Hey, black people are just like us. They're every little bit as good as us, and any people who don't think so is just a bunch of banjo-picking, cousing-dating, barefoot embarrassments to respectable white trash like us." At its heart, it presents its obese and often foul-mouthed characters as decent people, turning what some consider as "others" into people like us. This "inclusionary laughter" ("Hereinlachen"; Gumbrecht 823) is thus comparable with the Cosby Show's rendering black middle-class life familiar to the average viewer. The revival of *Roseanne* however failed to continue on this path. Not only has U.S. American humor changed with national politics, but Roseanne Barr herself has incurred the wrath of the public for her explicit backing of Trump and for her racist tweets about a former Obama official that, in the end, led to the dumping of the sitcom. Thanks to its leading actress, the show that had done its best to do away with a slur, has turned into an epitome of the bad poor again.

Once whiteness had lost its status as an invisible center and had been relegated onto a horizontal plane as just one ethnicity among others, a whole new game of identity had to take its place. Whites, after all cannot not know that they are white by now. No longer merely a signifier for privilege, whiteness (via "white trash") enabled the "me-too-claims to victim status" (Nelson 6), which dominated the mechanics of recognition for quite some time. It became "a term which names what seems unnamable: a race (white) which is used to code 'wealth' is coupled with an insult (trash) which means, in this instance, economic waste" (Hartigan 9). This way of putting it, we might still find in material realities the most decisive element, but in a political arena obsessed with identity claims – and, most assuredly, that counts in Trump's own brand, not just the New Left's – the cultural work of the trope soon blended in with demands of recognition rather than redistribution.

Who is doing the comparison between good and abject poverty? When used as self-identification, the "white trash" semantic dramatically changes in its functions. In literature, the "White Trash Gothic" school – negative portrayals in much Southern Gothic fiction to be contrasted with decent white folks – gave way to writers like Dorothy Allison who claimed the label for herself. Allison drew ambivalent pictures of abject poverty and wrote about her troublesome family history in much of her essays. Used as critical affirmation, the slur is appropriated much like the N-word in the hands of black rappers. Indeed, it was in rap that the symbolic transactions became most visible. Eminem used the slur as coinage in exchange for the N-word, i.e. as a token of authenticity. The logic behind the maneuver is evident: "I, too, have been despised and degraded, I, too, speak the language of the oppressed." The essential moment is not so much any of the tracks of the lyrically gifted performer. It is in the movie *8 Mile*, based in good measure on Eminem's own upbringing, that the slurs become compatible as currency in hip hop and the larger culture it seeks to represent. B-Rabbit (Eminem) is consistently labeled "white trash" until he starts using it himself. The whole movie is building up to the moment of the final battle, when B-Rabbit fights his strongest competitor, Papa Doc, a black rapper, whose upper middle-class background he uses as the final insult. Blackness, at this key moment, comes to signify privilege, while the hurt suffered from humiliating insults is on par.

The cultural work is done: B-Rabbit is below his opponent class-wise and thus deemed more authentically "streetwise," so he takes the prize. The fact that his fictive name recalls the cunning of trickster Br'er Rabbit, whose connotations with black folklore is well-known, is as telling as naming Papa Doc's posse "Leaders of the Free World" who – given the economic benefits of their member, now sounds like a paleocapitalist think tank. After this cultural transaction, "white trash" seems almost a safe place to turn to in pop culture, as the playful invocation by New South artist Bubba Sparxxx reveals in self-ironic videos like "Ugly." It is a fairly peaceful universe we enter, that includes blacks and whites riding pigs, mudfights, black artists like Missy Elliott on a tractor with Bubba. Even the occasional Confederate Flag seemed like part of a self-musealizing gesture – until it was not. Trump's idea of America has revealed that pop culture might only be one part of reality, but certainly incapable of transcribing the country's politics in full. Eminem went viral with a lengthy anti-Trump rap and Sparxxx mourned that much of the achievements of "Hick Hop" – the interracial co-operation in a shared music culture that encompasses differences – were profoundly revoked. Indeed, some "fans" asked the New South rapper why he would not go viral with a pro-Trump piece, to which he responded in shock, reminding listeners that his "attempt to find common ground between the poor white people and poor black people he'd grown up about" has been perverted by people who need him to be "the Donald Trump of white rappers" (Peisner). Today, after the Charlottesville Riots, the "Rebel Flag" might still be a much-contested symbol, but no one in their right mind would say it resembles something peaceful or remotely musealized. Is it still possible in such a climate to explain "white trash" as an "allegory of identity … deployed to describe the existence of class antagonisms in the U.S." (Wray and Newitz 8)? Needless to say, it is an antagonism that will not become part of any progressive "chain of equivalence" in the near future. No matter how we opt to interpret the allegory, it is complicated to return to class as a social structure devoid of its deeply racial tinge.

The Literature of Poverty

Recently, poverty has been addressed as an alternative or supplement to the category of class in literary criticism. In his seminal *American Hungers*, Gavin Jones provides a sketch of how a focus on the multiple facets of poverty can bring together the materialist concerns of the Old Left, cultural studies concerns, and literary sensibilities. The term of his choice to explain the potential damage "of poverty as a specific state of social being" is "socioeconomic suffering" (Jones 2). While he acknowledges the materiality of poverty as in a state of lack, Jones is also keen to show how "[t]he materiality of need opens up into the nonmaterial areas of psychology, emotion, and culture, with poverty moving away from the absolute and the objective toward the relative, the ideological, and the ethical" (3). The awareness for these transition points facilitates readings of texts far less schematic of the allegories of theories often encountered in Marxist and neo-Marxist interpretations. Jones, in other words, helps us trace the implications of need in rich psychosocial registers, taking into account the different phenomena of a life lived. Among them are doubtlessly class relations, the status anxieties these cause, and the respective class habitus of social agents (Bourdieu). Without falling back into a notion of individuality cut off from the social, he can correct the problem often found in "class analysis" which "often fails to focus sharply on what poverty means as a social category" (Jones 8). Jones correctly points out that Marx (and parts of later Marxist criticism) has an ambiguous relation to notions of poverty at best: habitually the poor are reduced to a quasi-naturally miserable and passive "Lumpenproletariat," cast "in images of residue and waste" (ibid.), or they are kept down by force only to return heroically – these are the undeserving poor that will, as a revolutionary subject, become the privileged agent of history. In both cases, there is a one-dimensionality of (pre-)destination, either the poor are completely outside meaning and reciprocity, playing no role at all and in fact waste to be disposed in the dustbin of history, or they are elevated and turn into the one "thymotic collective" (Sloterdijk 120), capable of channeling its rage in order to change

the world. In this way, and maybe surprisingly, Marxism too, partakes in the troublesome tradition separating the good poor from the bad – a semantic and iconography we will return to below.

Jones also takes issue with the multiple forms of interpellation discussed in cultural studies, the way subjects are being made through social power. Granted that "the composite kind of class analysis" has produced exceptionally good studies – he praises *Love and Theft,* Eric Lott's study of blackface minstrelsy and its function in the formation of the white working class – Jones elucidates how this breed of scholarship "returns us full circle to the forces that have always acted to unsettle socioeconomic awareness of the lower classes" (15). Thus attention is diverted again and we tend to talk more about race and gender than actually about class and poverty, in all its dimensions. The discussion of "white trash" is a case in point. Yet, a complete focus on class is also in danger of getting too one sided: in its emphasis on the economic realities or the narrow focus on emergent class consciousness studies, proletarian literature has sufficiently demonstrated this bias.

Fictions of Poverty: Undoing Naturalism

Still, if poverty implies socioeconomic suffering, and is thus a material reality as much as a psychological one, literature is a good object for study. Literature, after all, is language-based art that "reveals how poverty is established, defined, and understood in discourse, as a psychological and cultural problem that depends fundamentally on the language used to describe it" (Jones 4). The focus is on the peculiar reflexive qualities of literary texts, its capability to do more than repeat an already existent world. Thus, Jones correctly insists on the meta-linguistic potential, the way a literary text might reference a "real" phenomenon while simultaneously reflecting on both the discourses that shape our conception of said reality, as well as on literature's own means to evoke such phenomena. And this understanding of an aesthetics (rather than sociology or cultural studies) of poverty can help us dissect a bulk of fiction often misunderstood: the minimalism of the 1980s, especially Bobbie Ann Mason's short stories with their focus on (Post-)Southern blue-collar life. One reason for these critical misjudgments is minimalism's break with naturalism which has long been regarded as the closest ally of those in need. Because of "its predominant interest in the underprivileged and the downwardly mobile," naturalism "necessarily follows the more enlightened view of the poor – as victims of their physical environment – found within turn of the century social science and Progressive reform" (Jones 5).

Yet, if literature's role is seen less as mimetically reproducing an already existent reality and more as allowing us to see the world through the eyes of its manifold aesthetic designs, there is no necessary ethico-aesthetic link between naturalism and poverty narratives. Moreover, written at a decisive moment in American history, when the Republicans began to "talk constantly about class – in a coded way, to be sure" (Frank 245), Reagan is one of the key figures of what Thomas Frank calls "the Great Backlash" that set out to undo the achievements of the sixties:

> While earlier forms of conservatism emphasized fiscal sobriety, the backlash mobilizes voters with explosive social issues – summoning public outrage over everything from busing to un-Christian art – which it then marries to pro-business economic policies. Cultural anger is marshaled to achieve economic ends. (Frank 5)

This redirection of anger informs Mason's *Shiloh and Other Stories* (1982), which zoom right in into a milieu that is catered to by such discourses. Yet, instead of providing a full-fledged portrait of any of her working-class or unemployed characters, Mason's signature style does the opposite: vignettes rather than spot-on characterizations of regional existence, disconnected glimpses of everyday life shot through with the decontextualizing powers of popular culture. This narrative strategy has led some of Mason's critics to dismiss her (and other minimalist) writings as "Kmart realism" – a form of literature devoid of the promises of traditional realist or naturalist discourse and their reliance on metonymic detail. The minimalist willingness

to dodge the protocols of verisimilitude and abandon motivational progression in plot and characterization is a decision, of course, not a flaw. What is left unsaid must be considered to be part of the aesthetic experience, for what is actualized on the page becomes form only when compared to the virtual background of possible choices. And her decision to refrain from, say, describing the formation of a class consciousness might well be a reflection of the Reagan moment.

One of the best stories, "Still Life with Watermelon," deals with unemployment and psychological damages caused by socioeconomic suffering in a society in which Southern rootedness has given way to nationwide late capitalist consumerism. The lack of identity is thus attributable to both, the actual need of collecting food stamps and the loss of a sense of place. Buried behind the shallow plot is a story of possible emancipation discernable enough for the acute reader. Her partner has left Louise, the protagonist, a plight she shares with her flat mate Peggy. While the latter is killing time reading Harlequin romances with the TV on, thus inattentively consuming trivial entertainment, Louise has taken to painting watermelons. If at first we cannot fail but notice a strong distinction between activity and passivity instrumental in shaping the twin characterization, we are led to observe how her hobby soon turns into an obsession. The initial split between – again – the good poor (disciplined, inward-directed, actively pursuing the arts) and the bad (lack of restraint, utter consumption, passivity and popular culture) is thereby shattered. Louise now paints as greedily as her friend consumes pop culture; what is more, her newly-found interest prevents her from doing what seems to be the only plausible solution in her situation: actively looking for a job. Mason cleverly juxtaposes brute material need with psychological emancipation and self-sufficiency and forces her readers to reflect on whether the close at hand really is the best option.

Before going to the unemployment office, Louise makes a stop at a retailer, buying some new paint. She has high hopes of selling her stock of images to a man who – as she is informed by Peggy – collects watermelon paintings. Two questions follow these aspirations: the first one is, of course, one of oddly making-it, finding someone of idiosyncratic tastes who actually buys the art of a self-taught novice. "Why not?" we might ask; there is a market for any kind of product in a highly individualized culture in need of distinction. That it is Peggy, however, who functions as contact, adds another layer of meaning, expert that she is for de-hierarchized popular culture. Good at heart, Louise often has to wait for her to pay the monthly rent; thus, there is an intersection between material necessity and a hobby that is not just a hobby (anymore) if it turns out a profit after all. How are we to read this intersection?

While a first reading could suggest that Louise's aspiration is a good and uplifting one – who does not dream to work without alienation? – Mason's depictions of Louise's autodidacticism are more nuanced. It is not just the sheer act of painting, of doing something meaningful with her life; the story's subtext is one of aesthetic education. We observe Louise recognizing a number of different things: the materiality of paint and canvas, the emergence of form, etc. Once she sets out to apply the colors and strokes, she begins to grasp the differences of style and, in doing so, sees her beginning capability to make sovereign distinctions and increasingly self-affirmed choices. This emancipatory process is threefold: initially, it applies to the painting itself, her growing awareness of artistic potential and stylistic repertoire. Put to test in a more pragmatic context, these changes also affect her relationship. When her boyfriend returns, having tried to find himself, she is forced to reflect on her role in this relationship – a task she is better prepared to face now after having found a kind of self-realization herself. It is, in short, an awareness that if there is a mutual future, she will need to have a say in it. Even more, she knows that this future can be actively shaped, despite the fact that material lack will remain a consistent concern.

Finally, on a more abstract level, the text reflects on itself, on the economics of art. This applies both to the stylistic qualities of minimalism – its omissions, reliance on present tense, and lack of narrative coherence – as to the idea of art, its merits as a form of expression

negating direct use-functions. In art, we find a different kind of economics at work, in which – to follow minimalism's credo – less actually is more. And if the filling of gaps is part of any readerly response, these gaps are the vital element of minimalist prose. Scarcity of means does not imply lack of achievement. More essentially, while art is dismissed as luxury by most, Louise's growth is pit against the bare necessities of the market. Had she simply succumbed to the economic logic, she would have never gotten an idea of amelioration. For all the "Kmart" routines, for the adherence to the uneventful everyday of blue-collar life, there is a strong subtext of re-evaluating aesthetic experience against the proto-capitalist logic of necessity.

"Still Life with Watermelon" hides its story of (self-)emancipation from plain sight and needs the gift of readerly attention to unbury its narrative subtleties. Mason, thus, has stripped down the classical class-affirmative writing, taking away much of the usual contextualization, e.g. information that would embed its tales in larger socioeconomic realities or explicitly instill hope for class formation. By not living up to these standards, Mason might either respond to aesthetic challenges (postmodernism) or react to the politics of the day, in which traditional class consciousness was besmirched by Reaganomics, with its downsizing and anti-unionist agendas but also its re-direction of working-class anger into national pride and family values. What turns her writing (at least for some of today's recipients) into such an uncomfortable read is the very absence of an expressive individuality corresponding to any of the available cultural scripts. Louise's painterly expressions notwithstanding, what she (and other Mason characters) lack is the will to make themselves readable in the available semantics of belonging – either class-related or in a multiculturalist idiom. The idea of whiteness as identity corresponding the multiculturalist matrix was not yet available in the Reagan era, even though "Shiloh," the title story, very subtly points in that direction. Mason's characters are frequently trapped in the moment-to-moment of a life of lack. The habitual present tense of the storytelling confirms our initial hunch that they neither know their past nor have a sense of future, which – politically – is a dangerous ignorance. It might create a void filled by gifted storytellers who create the (political) narratives for them. Her reluctance to fully flesh out context and character and her invitation to readers to fill in the gaps reveal poverty as

> intertwined with questions of selfhood, being, and language, yet always in a struggle against a universal, metaphysical understanding of *lack*, and toward an understanding of *need* as a specific kind of suffering that is at once materially bounded, socially inscribed, and psychologically registered. (Jones 4)

Endnotes

[1] See Eribon 2013.

[2] See Frank 2004.

[3] See Michaels' The Trouble with Diversity (2006)

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FORUM FOR INTER-AMERICAN RESEARCH (FIAR) VOL. 12.1 (JUN. 2019) 73-85
ISSN: 1867-1519

Placing Prospero's Island: (Post)Colonial Practices of Comparing in the Academic Reception of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*

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Abstract

One of the most important developments in the recent scholarly investigation of (academic) practices of comparing has been the emergence of a profound criticism of comparative methods. Postcolonial scholars have drawn attention to the political and moral dimensions of comparing which frequently hides behind the seemingly neutral nature of comparative research. In the context of this discussion, this article presents a case study that traces the history of academic approaches to Shakespeare's The Tempest and discusses the function of (geographical) comparisons in the underlying conceptual and ideological matrix of different readings of the play by various schools of literary criticism. The article's particular focus is on scholarly interpretations that explicitly and/or implicitly engage with the text's embeddedness in colonial discourse and the corresponding practice of placing Prospero's fictional island in the Caribbean. In this context, I will show that colonial, postcolonial, and so-called 'Old World readings' of the play either locate or refuse to locate the island and its key protagonists literally and/or discursively in the specific geographical and/or historical context of the Americas. By analyzing the historical trajectory of this practice, this entry attempts to illustrate that postcolonial criticism itself looks back on a long history of engaging in ideologically charged practices of comparing. It also discusses potential consequences of these findings for the study of early modern literature.

Keywords: The Tempest, Shakespeare, Postcolonial Practices of Comparing

1. Practices of Comparing

Writing about comparative practices frequently begins with the acknowledgment that comparisons are ubiquitous. And indeed, philosophers and cognitive scientists have claimed comparisons to be fundamental to "the way we think" (Fauconnier and Turner; cf. Grave 135-139).[1] They argue that our ability to compare constitutes a basic aspect of human cognition, reaching from rudimentary pattern recognition to complex mental operations. But comparing does not only play a key role in the realm of cognition. Since the 18th century, comparative methods have acquired a central status in many academic disciplines and permeated an increasingly wide range of social domains – a situation which has led scholars such as Michel Foucault and Niklas Luhmann (39) to famously characterize modernity as an age defined by comparative practices.[2] In the light of such assessments and given their social and scientific ubiquity, it is perhaps not surprising that acts and practices of comparing have themselves recently become objects of research in the humanities.[3]

While various aspects of comparative logic, practice, and methodology have been investigated over the past years, perhaps the most important development in the context of this paper lies in the emergence of an increasing scholarly criticism of (academic) acts of comparing as such. In particular, postcolonial critics have attacked the seeming objectivity and neutrality of comparisons.[4] They have highlighted the political and moral dimension of comparing that frequently hides behind the seemingly neutral and disinterested method of comparative study. Comparisons, Radhakrishnan emphasizes, "are never neutral: they are inevitably tendentious,

didactic, competitive, and prescriptive" ("Why Compare?" 454). While the act of comparing, metaphorically speaking, "assume[s] a level playing field", it turns out on closer inspection that "the field is never level" (Spivak 609). In other words, comparisons are always conducted from a particular perspective and driven by particular interests. They are, in Spivak's words, "never a [neutral] question of compare and contrast, but rather a matter of judging and choosing" (609). Put differently, comparisons not only possess an epistemological but also a political dimension. While this may be irrelevant for some (academic) forms of comparison, the situation acquires specific relevance in (historical) contexts of (post)colonialism, in which "the grounds of comparison" have traditionally been teleological and Eurocentric (Cheah 3).

> The point is that in a world structured in dominance, comparisons are initiated in the name of those values, standards, and criteria that are dominant. Once the comparison is articulated and validated, the values that underwrote the comparison receive instant axiomatization as universal values. (Radhakrishnan, *Theory* 74)

As a result of the postcolonial criticism of comparative methods, (simplistic) comparative endeavors between presumedly distinct, monolithic "geographical and cultural areas" (Cheah 3) and their cultural products have generally been called into question. This has not only plunged the discipline of comparative literary criticism into a debate about its foundational principles,[5] but it provides the (literary) historian with a rich ground for critical investigation. In this context, I suggest that despite its instrumental role in challenging cultural and regional comparisons, postcolonial criticism itself has a long tradition of engaging in such practices. My paper presents a historical case study of the academic treatment of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* that aims to serve as a contribution both to the diachronic reception history of Shakespeare's work and to the discussion of postcolonial approaches to early modern literature. For this purpose, I am not only interested in the role both pre- and postcolonial scholarship have assigned to the play in the cultural imagination of the Americas, but I will first and foremost investigate and discuss the function of (geographical) comparisons in establishing the underlying conceptual and ideological matrix of different approaches to the play.

2. Colonial and Postcolonial Readings of *The Tempest*

Perhaps no other work in the canon of English literature can look back on an equally long-standing controversial debate about its "association with New World colonization" (Raman 51) as Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1623).[6] The debate began more than two hundred years ago when Edward Malone (1808) compared aspects of the text to early 17th century reports of a shipwreck on the coast of the Bermudas in 1609 and became convinced that he had discovered one of the main sources of the famous text. These reports, in Malone's view, "unquestionably gave rise to Shakespeare's *Tempest*, and suggested to him [Shakespeare] the title, as well as some incidents, of that admirable comedy" (*The Plays* 381).[7] In the following decades, Malone's observations gradually took hold. They turned him into the first voice in a long and increasingly influential tradition of scholars who argued for the central importance of the New World context of Shakespeare's play by basing their assessment methodologically on an implicit comparison between the text's setting/characters and contemporary representations of (the) America(s).

This tradition proved to be so successful that by the end of the 19th century, it had become "unquestionable" for the prominent Shakespeare scholar Sidney Lee that Prospero's island could be compared to and identified "with the newly discovered Bermudas" (*A Life* 253). Following Malone, Lee names a number of sources such as Silvester Jourdain's *A Discovery of the Barmudas* (1610) in support of this claim, and furthermore asserts an unequivocal relationship between the character Caliban and "the aboriginal savage[s] of the New World" (253).[9] Although he declares

the character to be "no precise presentation of any identifiable native American", he believes Caliban to be

> an imaginary composite portrait, an attempt to reduce the aboriginal types of whom the dramatist and his contemporaries knew anything to one common denominator. … [I]t is obvious that Shakespeare was eclectic in garnering his evidence …. But finally, from his imaginative study of the 'idea' of aboriginal life, there emerges a moving sentient figure which, in spite of some misrepresentations, presents with convincing realism the psychological import of the American Indian temperament. (Lee, *Elizabethan and Other Essays* 295-296)[10]

For Lee, Caliban is a true representation of the Native American because he corresponds to Lee's own notion of a character in a primitive stage of evolutionary development, "a creature stumbling over the first stepping-stones which lead from savagery to civilization" (296). Lee's racist assessment is typical for much of the writing in his time (A. Vaughan 140). Yet, apart from its racism, the passage is also typical for 'New World' readings of the *Tempest* up to the present day in that the character Caliban takes center stage in interpretations of the text which are located primarily in a (post)colonial (conceptual) frame. Accordingly, the introduction to Morton Luce's Arden edition of the play not only claims that "nine-tenths of the subjects touched upon by Shakespeare in *The Tempest* are suggested by the new enterprise of colonisation" but also that Caliban clearly constitutes "a dispossessed Indian" (qtd. in Vaughan and Vaughan, Introduction 100). Similarly, a few years later the scholar Walter Alexander Raleigh declared the play to be a "fantasy of the New World", and the name Caliban to be "almost certainly a distortion of Cannibal"; he described the portrait of this character in general as "a composition wrought from fragments of travellers' tales" that "shows a wonderfully accurate and sympathetic understanding of uncivilized man" (112-113).

On an ideological level, the examples above illustrate that early arguments comparing aspects of Shakespeare's play with the New World tend to read contemporary cultural notions of Native American inferiority into Caliban. In addition, these scholars often instinctively identify with Prospero in their interpretations, who accordingly comes to represent culture and civilization. Lee, for example, voices the opinion that "[e]very explorer shared Prospero's pity for the aborigines' inability to make themselves intelligible in their crabbed agglutinative dialects and offered them instruction in civilised speech" (*Elizabethan and Other Essays* 296-297). [11] His statement is indicative of a cultural frame of mind convinced of Western (linguistic) superiority that serves as the implicit, underlying (Eurocentric) ground of all contemporary comparisons featuring the native population of the New World (Cheah 3). On a methodological level, the interpretations of scholars such as Lee, Luce, and Raleigh primarily rely on the identification of potential early modern sources whose relevance is then proclaimed by means of associative reasoning. One of the problems with this method that is fundamentally based on a comparison of these sources with the text of *The Tempest*, however, lies in the diverse and rather inconclusive results of such comparisons. This becomes apparent when we return to some of the historical analyses of the text. Certain snippets of the play such as the name 'Setebos', the god worshiped by Caliban (*The Tempest* 1.2.374, 5.1.361), could in fact be more or less convincingly traced. The name appears to be literally taken from a Patagonian deity that appears in the translation of Antonio Pigafetta's report on Magellan's circumnavigation of the globe (Lee, *A Life* 253).[12] A case can also be made for the influence of Montaigne's "Of the Caniballes" (100-107) on a speech by the character Gonzalo in Act II. Scholars have argued that Gonzalo's fantasy about what he would do if he were King on Prospero's island can be compared to Montaigne's (idealized) description of Brazilian natives and their culture (*The Tempest* 2.1.148-165).[13]

Other links, however, are less unequivocal. For example: "The references to the gentle climate of the island" featured in travel reports such as Jourdain are, for Sidney Lee, one of the reasons why Prospero's island can be compared with the climate of "the newly discovered Bermudas"

(*A Life* 253). This may certainly be a possible comparison, but it is hardly a necessary one, particularly if one bears in mind that the island's literal location in the play is the Mediterranean (between Tunis and Naples) – a region also commonly associated with a "gentle climate". A similar case concerns "the spirits and devils" that allegedly "infested" the Bermudas according to those early accounts; for Lee, they seem to clearly provide a link to the characters Arial and Caliban (253). Yet, medieval and early modern travel accounts from all hemispheres abound in references to magical or monstrous creatures. Again, it remains doubtful whether, for example, Silvester Jourdain's short reference to the Bermudas as "a most prodigious and inchanted place" (8) indeed constitutes conclusive evidence for the particular relevance of this text as a source for *The Tempest*. Better cases may be built for other documents, such as William Strachey's "A True Reportory of the Wracke and Redemption of Sir Thomas Gates".[14] But even the latter has remained heavily disputed up to the present day (e.g. Stritmatter and Kositsky's *On the Date, Sources and Design of Shakespeare's* The Tempest).[15]

Historically, the lack of unequivocal evidence for a colonial setting, i.e. the inability to identify a critical amount of conclusive similarities between Shakespeare's play and contemporary sources about the New World, thus triggered a number of critical responses in the first half of the 20th century. Though New World readings remained largely dominant, some scholars began to poke holes in the accounts of Lee and others based on the inconclusiveness of the comparisons illustrated above. Elmer Edgar Stoll, for example, protested that "[t]here is not a word in *The Tempest* about America or Virginia, colonies or colonizing, Indians or tomahawks, maize, mocking-birds, or tobacco. Nothing but the Bermudas, once barely mentioned as a faraway place, like Tokio or Mandalay" (213). Similarly, Frank Kermode stressed in his introduction to the Arden edition of 1954 that there was "nothing [...] fundamental" to the play's "structure of ideas which could not have existed had America remained undiscovered, and the Bermuda voyage never taken place" (xxv). In other words, given the lack of conclusive evidence, an alternative tradition for reading the play emerged in which critics skeptical of the New World connection refocused on the general context of the 'Old World'. Though both traditions have existed side by side ever since, colonial readings of *The Tempest* have not only continued to dominate literary criticism, but, more importantly, they went through a fundamental transformation in the second half of the 20th century.

The advent of Postcolonialism with its scholarly re-assessments of Western colonial rule significantly altered earlier New World readings of the play, for example, by fundamentally reversing the evaluations of Caliban and Prospero. In 1960, George Lamming declared that he could not help reading the play against the background of England's colonial history. *The Tempest*, he argued, was "prophetic of a political future which is our present. Moreover, the circumstances of my life, both as a colonial and exiled descendant of Caliban in the 20th century, is an example of that prophecy" (13). Fernández Retamar makes a similar statement and also identifies with Caliban in his assertion that for the people of the Caribbean

> [o]ur symbol then is … Caliban. This is something that we, the *mestizo* inhabitants of these same isles were Caliban lived, see with particular clarity: Prospero invaded the islands, killed our ancestors, enslaved Caliban, and taught him his language to make himself understood. What else can Caliban do but use that same language – today he has no other – to curse him, to wish that the 'red plague' would fall on him? I know no other metaphor more expressive of our cultural situation, of our reality. … [W]hat is our history, what is our culture, if not the history and culture of Caliban? (24)[16]

The quotes from Lamming and Retamar stand for a general reversal in the interpretation of Caliban that is embedded in a new critical reading of the relationship between past and present, between history and allegory. Retamar's suggestion that we view Caliban as a kind of symbolic ancestor for the peoples of the Caribbean is based on an understanding of the island's colonial past as fundamentally

intertwined with the colonizer's imperial, cultural, and literary history: "Symbolic appropriation of *The Tempest* to represent an ongoing condition thus merges with a historical reading of the play as the original colonial allegory to which the postcolonial present can be traced" (Raman 2011: 58).

But even though Retamar and Lamming reverse the evaluation of the relationship between Prospero and Caliban in their reading of the play, several underlying comparative coordinates remain unchanged. They evidently also locate Shakespeare's fictional island in the Caribbean and identify Caliban as a symbolic representative of the "*mestizo* inhabitants" of this region, whose colonial cultural history they argue to resemble Caliban's subjugation by Prospero. Correspondingly, the latter continues to be compared to the European colonizer. However, as the academic perspective changes from a colonial to a postcolonial ideological frame, the conceptual grounds of comparison also change. While Lee had identified "Prospero's pity" for the cultural 'deficiencies' of the native as one of the links between the play and his notion of the Western explorer (*Elizabethan and Other Essays* 296), Prospero's behavior is now compared to that of the colonial invader, murderer, and slaver (Retamar 24). While Retamar and Lamming thus continue to take the historical connection of the text to early modern English colonialism for granted, the main thrust of their criticism turns towards a re-conceptualization of the relationship between colonizer and colonized both in the present and the past. From this postcolonial perspective, colonialism is construed not only as a political and historical event, but also in terms of a critical reading of its ideological, conceptual, and symbolical practices. Pursuing a related strategy, Octave Mannoni's seminal *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonialism* employs the play's characters as typological models for what he sees as the characteristic psychological personality types of European colonizers and colonized natives. Drawing on psychoanalysis, Mannoni diagnoses two opposing and complimentary psychological conditions for the two groups: While Caliban embodies a dependency complex that Mannoni believes to be characteristic of the colonized, Prospero, i.e. the colonizer, suffers from a 'Prospero Complex', a lack of an "awareness of the world of Others, a world in which Others have to be respected"; this condition is combined with a nervous impatience, and an infantile "urge to dominate …, which social adaptation has failed to discipline" (108).

Mannoni's ideas were highly influential, but they were also severely criticized – particularly the notion of the dependency complex.[17] Still, in the context of this paper, his work provides another instance of the general strategy of conceptualizing *The Tempest* as a colonial text by comparing Caliban to the colonized and Prospero to the colonizer. In other words, the play's connection to and relevance for (post)colonial discourse is once more coupled with the implicit presupposition of its historical embeddedness in the symbolic, geographical, and biographical contexts of colonialism. When for Zabus "the colonial encounter between Prospero and Caliban" comes to provide "the central metaphor" for "transatlantic imperialism" (116; cf. Fishburn), the underlying logic of this interpretation is also both different and similar to earlier readings by Lee and Malone. Instead of tracing potential historical sources and comparing their content to Shakespeare's depiction of the island and its characters, now the text's colonial status is revealed by the way its character relationships resonate with a postcolonial critique of the colonial encounter. In other words, *The Tempest* continues to be read as a colonial play, although it is a new set of associative links between text and perceived (post)colonial context that is considered to be relevant. No longer primarily interested in hunting for the sources that inspired the playwright, scholars now see the play's "dominant discursive con-texts" in "the ensemble of fictional and lived practices" of "English Colonialism" (Barker and Hulme 198). From this point of view, Caliban is no longer seen as a faithful representation of the barbarous Native American (Lee, *A Life*). Instead, he is considered to be "one of the most powerful symbols in the European construction of the New World as its Other" (Fishburn 158).

3. Alternative Readings

Over the past decades, postcolonial approaches have exerted a major influence on the scholarly reading of *The Tempest*; many postcolonial critics see it as "a self-evident truth" that the play "is not only a colonialist text, but has functioned historically to support and validate a colonialist ideology" (Lindley 39).[18] Yet, as with any other successful academic paradigm, such readings have not gone uncontested. Critical voices favoring an Old World reading have continued to point out weak spots. The main thrust of their argument again tries to draw attention to the dissonances emerging from a comparison between early modern scenarios of colonialism and the plot/setting of the play.

> [I]f the play is about colonialism, Prospero is a very odd colonist indeed. He did not choose to voyage to his island, has no interest in founding an outpost of Milan, and no desire to turn the riches of the island which Caliban has made known to him into tradable commodities …. In many respects he seems closer to Duke Senior, reluctant inhabitant of the Forest or Arden in *As You Like It*, than to Sir Thomas Gates, and generically his island functions rather more like the 'green worlds' or earlier Shakespearean comedy, from *Two Gentlemen of Verona* onwards, than it does as a colonized territory. (Lindley 39)

Robert Miola also agrees that "the island setting of *The Tempest* constitutes the *locus amoenus*, or 'pleasant place' of the pastoral genre".[19] Far from being a colonial space, it "provides the conventional retreat from civilization and the courtly world" (144). Moreover, the play seems to lack any interest in England's colonial projects in the West:

> Even the action on Prospero's Mediterranean isle, controlled as it is by Prospero's magic, steadfastly resists the colonial analogy it nevertheless suggests: the 'shipwrecked' men on whom Prospero practices are Italians, overwhelmingly royalty or nobility; they had been traveling east; they had been trying to go home; … and all do go home in the end. (Knapp 221)[20]

In addition, it is not only the Italian characters for whom the colonial analogy is problematic. Even Caliban, who, as we have seen above, has become a symbol for the colonized, does not represent an indigenous native. The attempt to cast the relationship between Prospero and Caliban as prototypical for the colonial relationship between colonizer and native is complicated by the characters Ariel and Sycorax (Skura 50). As the son of the dead witch Sycorax who had taken possession of the island after having been exiled from Algiers many years ago, "[t]he enslavement by Prospero repeats his mother's earlier imprisonment of Ariel, who might be considered the island's 'real' indigenous inhabitant" (Lindley 39). From this point of view, Caliban rather constitutes "a first-generation colonialist himself" (39), who would not only like to regain control of the island but also to use Prospero's daughter to people "This isle with Calibans" (*The Tempest* 1.2.351).[21]

The reference to Caliban's transgressive sexual energy manifests in the scene in which he is accused of having attempted to rape Miranda, however, it can also be read as supporting Miola's comparison of the play with the genre of the pastoral. For Miola, Caliban can clearly be compared to a pastoral satyr, "a paradoxical combination of animality, humanity, and divinity" (146). Satyrs, he explains, "represent brutish sexual desire but possess the human gifts of speech and song as well as a divine ancestry and vitality". Caliban, in his view, possesses all of these characteristics (146). The character cannot only be seen as a pastoral satyr, however. He may also be placed in other interpretive contexts. There are, for example, the period's fascination with monsters and monstrous births (Burnett; del Lucchese and Toppe 488); the much older notion of the 'wild man', a mythical figure that can be found in medieval artwork and literature (Lindley 43);[22] or the idea that Caliban "is a more general representation of anarchy, or social uprising" (Marshall 379).

Such interpretations call into question the assumption that colonialism constitutes the play's dominant discursive context and support

readings that foreground the play's connection to Jacobean concerns closer to home. Tristan Marshall, for example, believes that the way Shakespeare's text centers on the island and its ruler Prospero points to an underlying preoccupation with "Britain as a distinct and insular community" (400).[23] Similarly, David Kastan holds the opinion that the play is much more concerned with European politics than with European colonial activities. He points, *inter alia*, to the similarity between Prospero and Rudolf II, the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire who was first stripped of administrative control (1606) and later deposed by the Habsburg archdukes (1611) for entirely "dedicating himself to scientific and occult study" (192). It hardly needs to be mentioned at this point that Kastan's argument, again, is based on a comparison between one of the key characters and (a figure from) the play's contemporary historical context. And again, the function of the comparison changes fundamentally. This time, it is employed in order to serve the general argument that "the critical emphasis upon the new world" has obscured "the play's more prominent discourses of dynastic politics" (189).[24] Instead of a postcolonial desire to read the play in the context of early colonialism, i.e. to locate it "in *our* historical moment" (196), Kastan wants to return to *the play's* historical moment:

> If … one's interpretive desire is to reinsert the play into its own historical moment, … it seems to me that we should look more closely at the old world than the new, at the wedding of Elizabeth and Frederick rather than of Pocahontas and John Rolfe, at James's own writings rather than the writings from Jamestown. This seems to me so both because old world history marks the play (context as discourse) more insistently than does the new world … and because the European history allows a reader to make sense of more in the text (context as frame) that would otherwise seem arbitrary or inexplicable. (196)

Kastan's clean-cut separation between locating *The Tempest* in *our* historical moment and in *the play's* historical moment is conceptually and methodologically problematic (Raman 53). Nevertheless, he belongs to a number of critical voices who make the valid point that dogmatic postmodern readings run into several textual problems. Various passages of the text make it impossible "to sustain a univocal reading of the play as a colonialist text" unless important details have been 'tweaked' (Lindley 43).[25] It is important to take such critical comments seriously. Yet, my purpose behind outlining the arguments of scholars skeptical of the colonialist paradigm is not to denounce or refute postcolonial readings of the play. Even though Caliban may not represent an indigenous native of the isle, I believe that his name still seems to be an anagram of 'cannibal'; and although he may not be a morally blameless character, it still "makes us flinch" from our position of "historical retrospect" when Prospero, the European foreigner to the isle, "calls Caliban 'savage' and 'slave'" (Alexander 153).

Neither does the purpose of my investigation lie in proclaiming one set of comparisons to be more accurate or productive than another. What I have tried to highlight, by tracing the academic reception of Shakespeare's *The Tempest,* is the fundamental role comparisons play in all of the approaches outlined above. Colonial, postcolonial, and Old World readings of the play locate or refuse to locate the island and its key protagonists literally and/or discursively in the specific geographical and/or historical context of the Americas. In all cases, comparisons between text and context are not employed in a "neutral" way but deliberately serve a particular interpretation of Shakespeare's work. In this function, they turn out to be crucial for establishing the underlying conceptual and ideological matrix for the respective reading of the play – a finding interesting in several respects. On the one hand, it pays testimony to the ubiquity of comparative practices in different schools of literary study in general. In this context, it raises the crucial question whether approaches in cultural and literary studies can avoid engaging in comparative readings of text and context in literal, symbolical, and metaphorical ways at all. If comparison, as Friedman emphasizes, is "an inevitable mode of human cognition", then "to refuse comparison" is either an impossible or a misguided academic practice, tantamount "to stick[ing] your head in

the sand" (760). On the other hand, the history of the academic treatment of Shakespeare's play reminds us of the problematic nature of specific forms of comparison (cf. Radhakrishnan, *Why Compare*). In this context, it also demonstrates that postcolonial critics have substantially participated in comparative practices that discursively construct Europe and the Americas as a conceptual binary consisting of distinct, monolithic geographical and cultural areas. In the attempt to squeeze *The Tempest* into a single interpretive frame, the postcolonial readings outlined above subscribe to a conceptual separation between Old World and New World contexts that repeats the structural dichotomy between 'the West and the rest' inherent to earlier colonial readings, albeit in a politically reversed form.

4. Beyond Binary Comparisons

In response to the situation outlined above, I would like to propose that we refrain from such simplistic conceptual and comparative binaries in the postcolonial study of early modern literature. In order to resist politics of othering, comparative practices require an increased methodological and epistemological reflexivity that engages "with the contradictions inherent in comparison, [and] … that creatively open[s] up dialogue and new frameworks for reading and acting in the world" (Friedman 760). Particularly with regard to the study of the early modern period, any strict conceptual separation between Old World and New World, between the Mediterranean, the Caribbean, and the British Isles, is misleading and counterproductive. Instead of playing different contextual frames off against each other, it is necessary to pay attention to the ways in which they intersect and combine into something that is greater than the sum of its parts. Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, in this respect, is a wonderful example for the creative blending of elements from seemingly distinct contexts. The playwright weaves the fabric of his text out of multiple sources and demonstrates his ability to interconnect and merge cultural models of various kinds in a productive way.

Once more, Caliban serves as a good example as his portrayal deliberately features elements associating him with a wide range of contextual fields including the Caribbean, Africa, and classical (European) mythology. The name "Caliban", as I have mentioned before, associates the character with the Caribbean. Caliban is an anagram of 'cannibal', a term derived from the ethnic name *Carib* or *Caribes* that belonged to a people of the West Indies who were accused of eating human flesh by European explorers and colonizers. The term replaced the older term "anthropophagi" in the early modern period and became firmly associated with the native inhabitants of the Caribbean as practitioners of cannibalism (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 37-38). The character is, furthermore, associated with the New World by being shown to worship Setebos, a Patagonian deity (*The Tempest* 1.2.374). At the same time, Caliban is the son of the Algerian witch Sycorax, which genealogically makes him of North African descent – a fact that for Barbara Fuchs links the character with the Maghreb, a region firmly associated with the threat of Muslim piracy and the notion of captivity and slavery at the time. The origin of Sycorax and the forced marriage of Claribel to the King of Tunis, which are both part of the back story, place the play in the context of the general concern about the power of the Ottoman Empire. For Fuchs, "any island imagined in the Mediterranean at the time of the play, then, would be understood to exist in a hotly contested space, permanently threatened by the Ottoman Empire" (57-58).

In addition to Caliban's North African genealogy, Sycorax reminds the reader/spectator of the two witches Circe and Medea from classical antiquity (cf. Warner); Caliban can be linked to the aforementioned mythical traditions of the satyr, the 'wild man', and the monstrous races in general. This composite nature is reflected in what Warner has called the "contradictory zoology" of the character: his description by other characters in the play does not add up to a coherent image, but is made up of "shuffling, overlapping pictures [that] have made Caliban notoriously difficult to cast and dress" (98-99). On the one hand, Caliban and Sycorax are thus emblematic of the multiple locations of the island. On the other hand, they illustrate

that ideas and images could migrate in multiple directions in the early modern period. European explorers, travelers, and colonists not only took traditional symbols and images of liminal figures (e.g. satyrs, monsters, and amazons) westward to impose them on the New World (cf. Wittkower), but the process also moved in reverse. When Shakespeare takes the name of the Patagonian deity Setebos to further exoticize the North African witch and her offspring, this small detail, in my opinion, points to a much larger phenomenon: the general interconnection of a wide range of discursive contexts concerning the encounter with other cultures and civilizations. By embedding allusions to Cannibals, the "still-vexed Bermudas" (*The Tempest* 1.2.229), and Patagonian deities, into a plot that is concerned with questions of dynastic exile, rule, and succession, the play symbolically reminds us that "the colonial activity of seventeenth century Europe" cannot be seen independently of "the politics of the Great European powers" (Kastan 194).[26] For Jerry Brotton, this means that

> [t]o interrogate the specificities of *The Tempest*'s complex negotiation of its Mediterranean contexts does not simply call for a rejection of its New World readings in favour of its Old World resonances. … Instead I would argue that the play is precisely situated at the *geopolitical bifurcation* between the Old World and the New, at the point at which the English realized both the compromised and subordinated position within which they found themselves in the Mediterranean, and the possibility of pursuing a significantly different commercial and maritime initiative in the Americas. ("Contesting Colonialism" 37)

The composite nature of Caliban that includes the blending of New World references and a North African origin, for example, serves as a reminder that England's early colonial endeavors are contemporaneous to England's experiences of North African piracy and Ottoman power in the Mediterranean; such seemingly different contexts can be interlinked politically and symbolically in complex ways.[27] "[T]he different geographies animated by the play" which are emphasized by different schools of critics, Loomba suggests, "remind us … of the limitations of compartmentalizing the waters, of thinking about the Atlantic without the Mediterranean, and the Mediterranean without the Indian Ocean" (28). As we have only begun to explore the manifold connections between these spaces, it is an important task for Early Modern Studies to further pursue lines of investigation that focus on their intersection.

However, the academic reception history of *The Tempest* not only serves as a powerful reminder of the limitations of compartmentalizing the early modern world but, on a different level, it also illustrates the tempting nature of this practice. As my paper has attempted to show, conceptually dividing the early modern world into clearly demarcated geographical and cultural blocks allows both (post)colonial scholars and their critics to sustain coherent readings of the play and its protagonists. Thus, despite its instrumental role in challenging cultural and regional comparisons, postcolonial criticism itself looks back at a long history of engaging in simplistic and ideologically charged practices of comparing. What we may learn from this history is that in order to overcome the monolithic readings that tend to emerge from such practices, that in order to "move past centrisms and instrumentalisms of all kinds" (Friedman 760), postcolonial approaches in early modern literary studies perhaps need to resist the temptation of squeezing texts into a single interpretive frame. The various schools of criticism of *The Tempest* outlined above rather indicate that Shakespeare deliberately refrains from placing Prospero's island in a clearly specified geopolitical space. Instead, I believe that the play's setting and characters are fundamentally composite and inherently contradictory in nature. In this respect, a critical reading of the polyphonous comparisons invited by *The Tempest* effectively undercuts the ideologically charged interpretations of the play outlined above. Such a reading, in my opinion, also moves into the direction of Natalie Melas' general vision of "a practice of comparison" in literary studies "that doesn't begin from the foundation of empirical unities and in which comparison is not put to work in the service of a

distinct project" ("Merely Comparative" 657).

Endnotes

[1] This article has been written within the framework of the Collaborative Research Center SFB 1288 "Practices of Comparing. Changing and Ordering the World", Bielefeld University, Germany, funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG).

[2] See, also, Epple and Erhart 14.

[3] See, for example, the edited volumes by Felski and Friedman, and by Epple and Erhart, as well as the work of the Collaborative Research Center SFB 1288 "Practices of Comparing. Changing and Ordering the World" (Bielefeld University).

[4] See, for example, Melas 2007, Stoler 2001, Harootunian 2005, and Radhakrishnan 2009.

[5] See, for example, Rey Chow "The Old/New Question of Comparison in Literary Studies: A Post-European Perspective. *English Literary History* 71.2 (2004), Natalie Melas, *All the Difference*, and Susan Stanford Friedman "Why Not Compare?" *PMLA* 126.3 (2011).

[6] Raman's account of this debate (51-67) provides one of the starting points for my own discussion in this paper. For an introduction to the topic, see also Lindley (30-45), and Vaughan and Vaughan, Introduction (39-47 and 98-108). For a general introduction to the critical contexts of *The Tempest*, see, furthermore, the contributions in Hulme and Sherman 2000, as well as Vaughan and Vaughan 2014, which includes the helpful survey by Charry, "Recent Perspectives on *The Tempest*" (61-92).

[7] Malone presents his observations initially in *An Account of the Incidents, from Which the Title and Part of the Story of Shakespeare's Tempest Were Derived* (1808). The quote is from the expanded version of the argument that appeared in Malone, *The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare* (1821).

[8] The notion that the Bermudas are the play's location was further popularized in Kipling, *How Shakespeare Came to Write the 'Tempest'* in the same year.

[9] Other potential sources that have been suggested as sources for *The Tempest* include a promotional pamphlet by the Council of the Virginia Company, *A True Declaration of the State of the Colonie in Virginia* (1610) and the letter from the same year by William Strachey "A True Reportory of the Wracke and Redemption of Sir Thomas Gates." Although the first publication of the letter was in 1625, scholars have assumed that it was available to Shakespeare in manuscript form (Lindley 31). Another text frequently cited as a potential source is Michel de Montaigne's "Of the Caniballes" (100-1 07) in *The Essayes, or Morall, Politike and Millitarie* (1603). Scholars have argued that Shakespeare might have borrowed from Montaigne's (idealized) description of Brazilian natives for his portrayal of Caliban and, in particular, for a speech by Gonzalo in act II (see ensuing discussion as well as Vaughan and Vaughan (Introduction 44-45 and 61)). For more detailed overviews of the play's entire spectrum of potential sources and the history of its scholarly debate, see Gurr 2014, Alden Vaughan 1988, Lindley 2002 (25-33), and Vaughan and Vaughan (Introduction 36-62).

[10] Sidney Lee "The American Indian in Elizabethan England" was originally published in *Scribner's Magazine* in September 1907. I have used the reprint of the article in Sidney Lee, *Elizabethan and Other Essays* edited by Frederick Boas 1968 ([1929]: 263-301).

[11] Until the 1960s/1970s, a different tradition of reading the characters in the play dominated Latin American scholarship. José Rodó, *Ariel* (1900) associated Caliban with the "colossus of the North", i.e. the US, while simultaneously "urging the Latin American nations to seek inspiration in the more ethereal Ariel" (Fishburn 158); cf. Vaughan and Vaughan (Introduction 98-99 and 102-103)).

[12] The first English translation of Pigafetta's short account appeared in Richard Eden's anthology *The Decades of the Newe Worlde or West India* (1555). It describes, *inter alia,* an encounter in South America with a people "the capitayne named *Patagoni*" as well as one of their deities, the "greate devyl they caule *Setebos*" (220).

[13] See, for example, Vaughan and Vaughan (Introduction 44-45 and 61) and Marshall 1998 (382).

[14] Sir Thomas Gates was the Governor of the English Colony of Virginia in 1610. On his way to the colony his ship, the *Sea Venture*, was heavily damaged during a hurricane and left Gates and his crew marooned on the island of Bermuda where they spent ten months before managing to build two small boats that would take them to Jamestown. William Strachey, who was a passenger on board the *Sea Venture*, wrote a letter containing a narrative of those events. This report was not published until 1625, although a manuscript version that Shakespeare may have had access to had previously been circulated in England. As one of the play's allegedly main sources, the letter is partially reprinted in the recent Arden edition of *The Tempest* by Vaughan and Vaughan (287-302).

[15] Cf. Barry Clarke 2011, who believes it to be improbable that Shakespeare had access to Strachey's report before the first performance of *The Tempest*. See also Elmer Stoll's argument, that "there are some few isolated similarities in subject-matter [between *The Tempest* and Strachey's report], such as a storm, a shipwreck, St. Elmo's fire, a Master, a Boatswain, a harbour, an island, the north wind; but who could tell a sea story without them, even Herodotus or Heliodorus?" (Stoll 213).

[16] See, in this context, the entry on Caliban in the *Encyclopedia of Latin American Literature*: "Caliban, in post-colonial literary criticism, is considered one of the most powerful symbols in the European construction of the New World as its Other. Traditionally, Caliban has been seen as the negative foil to Prospero's culture, Miranda's virtue, Ariel's spirituality in a variety of dyadic interpretations; more recent critical attention has focused on *The Tempest* as 'the startling encounter between a lettered and an unlettered culture'" (Fishburn 158).

[17] Frantz Fanon, for example, famously devotes the

fourth chapter of his *Black Skin, White Masks* (83-108) to a thorough criticism of Mannoni.

[18] See, for example, Fiedler 1973, who enthusiastically claims that "the whole history of imperialist America has been prophetically revealed to us in brief parable: from the initial act of expropriation through the Indian wars to the setting up of reservations and from the beginnings of black slavery to the first revolts and evasions" (238).

[19] Lindley also points to Barber 1959 and Frye 1965 for readings that connect the play to the genre of the 'pastoral comedy' (39, FN 1).

[20] See Kastan 1999 (188-189) for a similar assessment.

[21] Cf. Skura: "She [Sycorax] is a reminder that Caliban is only half-native, that his claim to the island is less like the claim of the Native American than the claim of the second-generation Spaniard in the New World." (50)

[22] On the figure of the Wild Man, see chapters seven and eight in Dorothy Yamamoto, *The Boundaries of the Human in Medieval English Literature* (144-196).

[23] Critics have also connected Prospero's island with Africa and Ireland, which, according to Callaghan "might be understood as the sublimated context for colonial relations in *The Tempest*" (137). In this context, see also Fuchs 1997 (45-62); Brotton 1998 (23-42), and Vaughan and Vaughan (Introduction 47-54).

[24] On the political thought in Shakespeare's play, see also Jeffrey Rufo "New Directions: 'He needs will be Absolute Milan': The Political Thought of *The Tempest*." *The Tempest: A Critical Reader* edited by Alden and Virginia Vaughan (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

[25] The most important detail for Lindley is Caliban's attempted rape of Miranda, which poses a problem to unconditionally 'positive' readings of Caliban as the victim of colonization. For a discussion, see Lindley (42-43)

[26] Kastan argues that England's colonial activities are deeply imbedded in its political involvement in Europe: "If our attention to early modern colonialism is to be more than reflexive it must see its practices or what they were, as various and admittedly overdetermined activities within the conflicts of seventeenth century absolutism rather than as examples of a unified and transhistorical imperial desire and administration" (194).

[27] On England's early modern encounter with Islam and the Muslim corsairs of North Africa, see MacLean and Matar 2011, Brotton 2016, and Colley 2003 (23-134).

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FORUM FOR INTER-AMERICAN RESEARCH (FIAR) VOL. 12.1 (JUN. 2019) 86-100
ISSN: 1867-1519

Gilberto Freyre entre duas Américas Latinas: a lusitana e a hispana. Análise da transformação da interpretação do Autor com relação a influência espanhola e portuguesa em América

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Resumo

O presente artigo analisa uma relevante mudança de enfoque no pensamento de Gilberto Freyre sobre a América Latina, especificamente, o abandono da sua proposta de exaltar a particularidade do aporte português e passar a considerar a homogeneidade dos povos nascidos da colonização ibérica. Explora-se como a reflexão sobre as particularidades da América Latina se dão no contexto de interesses políticos e econômicos e o ambiente acadêmico, por meio de processos de comparação e como o Freyre consegue destacar-se destas grandes influências e propor uma intepretação que responde mais à seu próprio percurso biográfico.

Palavras-chave: Gilberto Freyre, América latina e Brasil, América hispana, ibero-américa, Espanha e Portugal

1. Introdução

O presente texto é uma proposta de análise particular sobre a obra de Gilberto Freyre. O objetivo é traçar sumariamente a guia de um percurso na obra do Freyre procurando identificar as fases de uma clara transformação no seu pensamento que tem sido até agora pouco estudada. Não tendo como aceder à fonte primaria de informação, que é o próprio Autor, a sua obra publicada será o material principal a ser pesquisado tendo como referência uma simples constatação: Freyre passa de defender a singularidade única do português e sua forma de colonização na América a propor, anos depois, a ideia de uma raiz hispana única nos povos surgidos das colônias ibéricas no continente. Isto é, ele passa de tentar compreender as particularidades do Brasil efetuando uma comparação exclusiva com a cultura portuguesa a ampliar este termo até incluir também aquela espanhola, enfatizando então semelhanças entre estas duas últimas. Aliás, este empenho específico dentro da sua obra é passível de ser interpretado como uma série de atos de comparação, neles a definição do que se é como país e cultura depende amplamente dos termos com os quais se traçam paralelos. Desta forma, é possível entrever o conjunto de interesses atuantes na época e que intervinham na formação dos conceitos para interpretar o subcontinente e o Brasil nele. Neste quadro, o Freyre parece flertar com os vários atores em jogo, mas acaba por seguir um percurso mais pessoal. Deste fato surgem vários interrogantes sobre os quais podemos lançar algumas hipóteses na base da leitura da sua obra. O que acontece ao longo da sua carreira que justifique tal mudança? A transformação em relação a sua posição sobre as semelhanças dos povos ibéricos é uma revisão do seu próprio trabalho? Isto é, ele estaria “errado” nas suas observações dos anos juvenis? Haveria talvez uma transformação no contexto das relações de poder regionais que influenciaram seu pensamento? E, o que é mais interessante e difícil de corroborar, o que provocou tal mudança? São perguntas que talvez não encontrarão resposta definitiva aqui, mas que permitem propor uma revisão da sua obra

com um enfoque particular e, especialmente, abordando o seu pensamento ao longo do tempo e considerando o conjunto amplo da sua produção, sem ficar necessariamente circunscritos ao título *Casa Grande & Senzala*, ou à "trilogia",[1] como muitas vezes acontece com as críticas e análises sobre a obra deste autor.

2. América Latina e Casa Grande & Senzala

Nascido com a clara intenção de marcar uma distinção entre duas "américas" - uma, no norte, anglo-saxã e uma, ao sul, latina - o termo América Latina surge de uma visão eurocêntrica do mundo segundo a qual neste continente, como na Europa, haveria uma diferenciação entre culturas católicas e protestantes, mediterrâneas e continentais, desenvolvidas e subdesenvolvidas; isto é, uma distinção de fundo, de caráter estrutural que divide em dois um território continental que geograficamente é considerado como uma unidade. América Latina, termo considerado de origem francês, ainda que com vários "pais" reconhecidos (Bethell, O Brasil), surge para indicar uma determinada identidade cultural relacionada com um território, mas denuncia seu caráter funcional aos interesses da potência europeia na América no século XIX (Bethell, "Brasil y América Latina"). De fato, o termo desafia qualquer taxonomia intuitiva do continente americano, já que inclui territórios ao sul do Rio Bravo que linguisticamente não seriam latinos, especialmente no Caribe, e exclui outros no Norte, pensemos no Canada francófono, que "tecnicamente" teriam que entrar no subcontinente "latino". Na realidade, a distinção pretendia justificar a expansão francesa no México, forçando uma posição supostamente civilizatória importada da Europa (Bethell, "Brasil y América Latina").

Porém, especialmente nos países hispano falantes, a categorização consolidou-se ao longo do tempo (incluindo o Brasil recentemente e por vezes de forma parcial), como parte de uma entidade territorial e cultural que, estritamente falando, teria que responder ao nominativo de Ibero-américa. Basicamente trata-se de uma unidade conceitual politicamente construída em oposição ao Norte desenvolvido e que parece mais protagonista no âmbito do Ocidente que do Novo Mundo como um todo. Com algumas diferenças, especialmente no período da Independência e no processo de construção do ideário nacional a partir da relação com a madre pátria, em geral na América Latina é possível identificar uma certa unidade, não homogênea e por vezes fratricida, mas uma só. Isto sobre a base de uma determinada empatia nos países da América Latina em quanto ao processo de Conquista e Colonização, especialmente em contraposição à América do Norte, onde as caraterísticas dos europeus que lá chegaram, em termos de religião, língua e cultura, teriam produzido sociedades essencialmente diferentes àquelas do Sul.

Contudo, esta conclusão, que parece hoje relativamente aceitável, nasce da interação de uma série de enfoques ligados com interesses políticos e econômicos. Incialmente o Brasil foi excluído do conjunto dos países americanos e latinos pelos próprios realizadores e teóricos da Independência das antigas colônias espanholas (Bethell, "Brazil and 'Latin America'") e posteriormente, no início do século seguinte, o próprio Brasil parecia olhar mais para o Atlântico, ou, incluso, aderir a um pan-americanismo liderado pelos Estados Unidos do que se filiar ao resto dos países que hoje consideramos como latinos (Bethell, "O Brasil"). Freyre vai na contramão dos intelectuais brasileiros e se coloca do lado de José Martí e Rodó para denunciar o pan-americanismo como uma forma de expansão cultural e econômica dos Estados Unidos. O arielismo, inspirado na figura de Ariel de José Enrique Rodó, era um movimento que confrontava o europeísmo com o americanismo, à procura de um modelo autóctone que rejeitasse aquele europeu e norte-americano. Como parte do arielismo, pode-se entender a exaltação do latino (luso e hispano) a partir da distinção com o anglo-saxão (Zang). Especificamente, Freyre propõe um interamericanismo que leve em conta as semelhanças, mas também as especificidades das ilhas sociológicas que compõem as Américas (Valente). Trata-se de um projeto explícito de negação ou contraposição dos modelos outros, vistos como impostos externamente. Porém,

nos anos 1960's ele se dissocia também dos intelectuais que procuravam a excepcionalidade do caso brasileiro, as raízes do Brasil (Valente).

Em todas estas variações de interpretação temos a intervenção de um projeto político que pretende construir formas e valores de identificação a partir da comparação. Isto é, trata-se de um ato de comparação que serve para definir os termos em que se constrói a própria imagem: somos (ou queremos ser) mais parecidos com a França, com o Portugal, com os Estados Unidos ou com a Inglaterra? Assim, na definição de quem é o outro com que convivemos e as semelhanças reais ou idealizadas que estabelecemos, é possível gerar um projeto a futuro com consequências de vários tipos. Por exemplo, a pretendida comparação do imperialismo francês com as raízes neolatinas das Américas permitia justificar pretensões expansionistas; os precursores das repúblicas americanas preferiam se comparar com as democracias liberais para se distinguir do Brasil imperial; este, por sua vez, colocava como ponto de comparação o outro gigante americano ou inclusive a França antes que as instáveis "irmãs" americanas. Neste sentido, no empenho de se posicionar no contexto regional, ou inclusive global, entravam em jogo formas de comparação que não estavam livres dos condicionamentos dos planos políticos e econômicos dos países e das prioridades do clima intelectual dos acadêmicos.

Ainda assim, por sua parte, na obra de Gilberto Freyre é fácil a identificação dum projeto teórico presente nas suas primeiras obras e que mira a demarcar uma diferenciação clara e significativa dentro dos componentes latinos do Continente: isto é, a raiz portuguesa sendo muito diferente da espanhola. Projeto que, aproximativamente no final da década dos anos 1950's, parece abandonado em função do interesse pela América Hispana, que não é claramente a espanhola, mas aquela relativa a Hispânia, toponímia clássica para a península ibérica. Por que há uma mudança neste sentido? Trata-se de uma mudança teórica ou é uma questão terminológica? E, mais ainda, quais as visões predominantes sobre o tema naquele momento e a que lógicas elas respondiam? Isto é, qual a relação do pensamento do Freyre com os interesses e as forças de poder em jogo.

Na obra fundadora do que se conhece geralmente como a "trilogia", *Casa Grande & Senzala* de 1933, há um intento claro por delimitar certas particularidades de ordem histórico, cultural e econômico do português que o distinguiriam dos outros europeus colonizadores, e que acabariam por se expressar em algumas inclinações e afinidades constatadas no processo de instauração da colônia de ultramar portuguesa em América. Já que *Casa Grande* segue um roteiro metodológico próprio e particular, nem sempre é fácil entrever de forma imediata os objetivos e o alcance das intuições e aportes que esta obra traz. Filtrado fortemente por uma densa matriz biográfica e atravessado por um substrato bibliográfico de alta erudição, não é tarefa simples estabelecer um *avant-propos* explícito deste estudo, e mal faríamos nós hoje, em tentar adjudicar arbitrariamente ao Autor alguns objetivos que ele mesmo não explicitou, mais ainda conhecendo o "histórico" de críticas por ele recebidas, muitas delas infundadas e contraditórias – desde pornográfico até reacionário – surgidas especialmente a partir desta obra. Porém, nesta publicação parece plausível identificar uma intenção de revisão histórica da figura do português conquistador de forma coerente com o tom geral presente no texto que, junto com outros aportes importantes, se centra na desmitificação do caráter "danado" do Brasil por causa dos seus componentes culturais essenciais. Este seu primeiro livro se apresenta, especialmente para a época, como uma peça iconoclasta em relação a uma imagem difundida de desprezo aos elementos fundantes da nação brasileira, vistos como responsáveis pelo atraso crónico a partir de uma leitura progressista que pretendia identificar no DNA social do país os empecilhos ao desenvolvimento.

Neste sentido, vemos como sua obra vai se colocar em grande parte na contramão do pensamento político oficial predominante no país e que pretendia posicionar o Brasil como potência regional, se comparando com os Estados Unidos em termos de dimensões, recursos naturais e potencial econômico (Bethell, "O Brasil"). Muito longe então do resto dos países da América Espanhola, mas também

da antiga metrópole, considerada como símbolo de atraso por causa da mentalidade arcaica e supersticiosa. Nesses anos, a política exterior brasileira demonstra em diversas ocasiões a afinidade com a potência do Norte e sua adesão a ideia de posicionar o país em interação com os grandes do outro lado do Atlântico (Bethell, "O Brasil"). O que respondia a uma lógica política conjuntural que definia os interlocutores do país com relação a afinidades mais almejadas que concretas, como a proximidade cultural de velha data com a França ou a parceria comercial, claramente desigual, com o império Britânico. Onde as componentes que fossem consideradas arcaicas ou atrasadas eram relegadas num segundo plano pelo projeto de modernização ideológico dos governos. Pelo contrário, Freyre dedicou-se a reabilitar o trópico, a dissolver a visão pessimista enquanto ao trópico, se opondo às correntes modernistas, naturalista e românticas (na literatura) que enfatizavam a versão cientificista do caráter agressivo do entorno tropical, e colocando o culturalismo, a partir de Boas, e a ecologia no centro do debate (Warley Candeas).

Entre os elementos "não ótimos" que o Freyre resgata, estava, é claro, a componente portuguesa, que na década de trinta do século XX era há muitos anos já uma referência da Europa atrasada e parecia poder confirmar a suspeita modernista de o Brasil ter sido "conquistado pelo país errado" entre as opções disponíveis. O Freyre, pelo contrário, leva em frente um projeto diametralmente oposto, contrário até ao projeto oficial de modernizar o país seguindo os grandes exemplos de sucesso civilizatório tidos como pontos altos de comparação e modelos a imitar. O empenho do Freyre é aquele de combater a "lenda negra", como ele mesmo a chama (Freyre, "Uma visão"), que estigmatiza a obra de colonização europeia nos trópicos. A partir de uma densa revisão bibliográfica "impura", que envolve as mais diversas fontes, tenta enfocar de uma maneira diferente os condicionamentos físicos e culturais do processo colonizador, não negando-os e nem fazendo uma apologia, mas enfatizando o seu caráter particular e único na história das américas e que teriam desencadeado um processo virtuoso; quase como uma feliz conjunção de fatores concomitantes que teriam dado num resultado surpreendente e eficaz, diferentemente da versão oficial que predominava na época em que foi publicado o livro. A tese de fundo que devia justificar uma proposta assim era o caráter particular do português, aqueles rasgos que fariam com que precisamente no Brasil ele encontrasse o terreno físico e social ideal para desenvolver as suas inclinações civilizatórias, a diferença de ingleses, franceses e, claro, espanhóis. Assim, um dos objetivos de fundo de *Casa Grande* era valorizar a componente particular europeia do processo histórico que deu origem ao Brasil. Era demonstrar que foram determinadas caraterísticas singulares do português as que permitiram que nascesse aqui uma sociedade que poderia perfeitamente ter fracassado, como de fato aconteceu com outras empresas do Velho Continente na América tropical. Para Freyre, o português da época possuía o caráter ideal para instaurar uma colônia nestas terras, um caráter único que não se verificaria em outro lugar da Europa. Porém, é claro que houve outras colônias europeias nos trópicos. Era tão diferente o conquistador português do espanhol? Para um leitor latino-americano, à luz da ideia de América Latina visto acima, talvez esta distinção não seja tão transparente, mas em *Casa Grande* parece ser fundante. Por que com os anos ela tende a perder a sua centralidade? Trata-se de uma revisão do Autor ou é simplesmente uma mudança de enfoque?

3. Particularidades do modelo português na América

O objetivo mais claro do Freyre, neste seu empenho por desmontar o "mito" do colonizador português, é demonstrar a adaptação particular deste europeu ao contexto tropical, especialmente ao Brasil. Uma aclimatação do português não somente do ponto de vista físico, quase biológico, mas também do ponto de vista atitudinal, cultural, às condições tropicais onde outros povos europeus teriam falhado desastrosamente: "os portugueses triunfaram onde outros europeus falharam" (Freyre, *Casa Grande* 73). Esta tese é sustentada na ideia de o português não ser um europeu "puro", por assim

dizer, e sim um povo que sempre conviveu, não somente com a miscigenação, mas com a África. Fato este que teria para ele duas consequências: a adaptação facilitada às condições tropicais e a naturalidade da promiscuidade com outras raças que seria, na Colônia, um fator decisivo num modelo econômico produtivo carente de mão de obra, como era o caso do Portugal, com uma população reduzida, "com escassez de capital-homem" (Freyre, *Casa Grande*). Dita condição não pura se relaciona com uma atitude que:

> explica-a em grande parte o seu passado étnico, ou antes, cultural, de povo indefinido entre a Europa e a África. Nem intransigentemente de uma nem de outra, mas das duas. A influência africana fervendo sob a europeia e dando um acre requeime à vida sexual, à alimentação, à religião; o sangue mouro ou negro correndo por uma grande população brancarana quando não predominando em regiões ainda hoje de gente escura. (Freyre, *Casa Grande* 66)

É fácil aqui reconhecer uma descrição, no estilo particularmente colorido do Autor, do povo português; o que resulta difícil é não ver uma ligação direita com o vizinho espanhol, que compartilhava o mesmo território, a Hispânia, e que anos mais tarde fornecerá ao Freyre a base para falar em uma componente hispânica ou ibérica em América, inclusive fazendo referência ao mesmo período histórico. É o caso do lúcido texto do 1963, aparecido originalmente em inglês, sobre a noção de tempo hispânico ou ibérico; neste trabalho, analisando as predisposições dos europeus da Península no momento da Conquista e, de forma coerente com seu constante projeto de estudar todo processo histórico sem esquecer fatores aparentemente triviais ou anedóticos, o Freyre concede aos dois povos uma unidade clara:

> Na qualidade de colonizadores europeus em áreas não europeias, os hispanos agiram, desde seus primeiros contatos com povos não europeus – gente situada na África, na Ásia e na América –, com um sentido ou uma noção de tempo diferente da que tinham a maioria dos europeus daquela época. (Freyre, "Em torno" 265)

Qual é a base desta unidade que aparece quase trinta anos depois? Trata-se da mesma Hispânia, a península que engloba não somente dois povos, mas muitos outros mais. A identidade do espanhol não esteve nunca, nem ainda hoje, amalgamada a partir do projeto monárquico de unificação sob o discurso do inimigo comum, e na península ibérica conviveram várias culturas, incluindo tudo o que se considera eventualmente como espanhol, junto com portugueses e muitas outras ricas componentes. Incluso é o próprio Freyre quem o reconhece: "uma persistente massa de dóricos morenos, cuja cor a África árabe e mesmo negra, alagando de gente sua largos trechos da Península, mais de uma vez veio avivar de pardo ou de preto" (Freyre, *Casa Grande* 67). Trata-se da "Península" e não somente do Portugal, aliás, é difícil não relacionar também com a Espanha a "bicontinentalidade" proposta por Gilberto Freyre para o povo luso: em Gibraltar, quase uma terra só com a África, região mediterrânea nas sonoridades e os sabores. É claro, não parece possível argumentar que o Autor simplesmente estivesse errado, mas podemos constatar que seu projeto intelectual nos anos trinta do século passado era outro, incluía a configuração teórica de uma unidade cultural portuguesa que justificasse um projeto nacional diferenciado a partir da instauração de uma particular formação social no Brasil: a família patriarcal. Fato este que é demonstrado amplamente e sem alguma dúvida em *Casa Grande*. Porém, a "negada" Hispânia voltará anos depois, por via da sua própria pluma.

É evidente que seria arriscado propor uma homogeneidade monolítica da Hispânia, mais mítica do que real, já que inclusive no presente texto mais acima se a caracterizou como terra de várias culturas vizinhas. Aliás, há algumas diferenças fundamentais que Gilberto Freyre aponta lucidamente, ávido como ele estava nos anos 1930's por enfatizar os traços opostos dos reinos ibéricos. Mas trata-se de diferenças que, embora tenham a mesma repercussão que os caráteres atitudinais ou de disposição tão caros ao Autor, são mais de ordem política. Isto é, fazem

mais referência às formas estatais de administrar as riquezas das novas terras. Especificamente, é impossível negar a preponderância da Igreja e do Estado na colonização espanhola que o Autor nota claramente, fato este que em parte inibiu a constituição de uma sociedade de base familiar como a que, na visão do Autor, criou o português. Porém, as infindas penúrias do homem português em terras tropicais que o Freyre anota e que parecem ausentes nos europeus nórdicos, nos louros incapazes de se adaptar aos trópicos, traçam uma clara distinção a partir da comparação entre "tipos" de europeus dentro dos quais, chamemo-los como quisermos - latinos, ibéricos, hispânicos - é difícil não incluir os espanhóis. A detalhada descrição freyriana da odisseia lusitana em América dificilmente não faz lembrar as gestas castelhanas, tão demonizadas por certa visão leiga precisamente pela crueldade de uma vasta empresa capaz de acabar com impérios e com as civilizações mais sofisticadas do Continente.

Todo era aqui desequilíbrio. Grandes excessos e grandes deficiências, as da nova terra. O solo, excetuadas as manchas de terra preta ou roxa, de excepcional fertilidade, estava longe de ser o bom de se plantar nele tudo o que se quisesse, do entusiasmo do primeiro cronista. Em grande parte rebelde à disciplina agrícola. Áspero, impermeável, intratável. (Freyre, *Casa Grande* 77)

É uma descrição do entorno físico do futuro Brasil, mas temos que concordar que poderia tratar-se perfeitamente de qualquer outro território da América tropical. Como esquecer que foi o espanhol o conquistador do deserto mais seco do planeta (Atacama) e da floresta mais impenetrável do Continente (Darién) onde ainda hoje a "civilização" branca não tem conseguido penetrar? Como esquecer gestas de dimensões bíblicas como as de Balboa, Valdivia ou Aguirre, - do qual o diretor alemão Werner Herzog nos deixou testemunha cinematográfica numa obra que por vezes parece mais absurda que a original – [3] todos eles mortos na aventura e que deixaram epopeias que ainda hoje se lembram pelo seu talante barroco, como barroca foi toda a conquista da América espanhola.

Porém, em algumas passagens de *Casa Grande* o Autor parece sugerir o contrário; discutindo sobre a carência de recursos e as dificuldades do terreno ele propõe que esta configuração seria exclusiva do Brasil: "dá à obra de colonização dos portugueses um caráter de obra criadora, original, a que não pode aspirar nem a dos ingleses na América do Norte nem a dos espanhóis na Argentina" (Freyre, *Casa Grande* 77). Para sustentar esta última afirmação cita uma comparação entre a facilidade geográfica da colonização dos Estados Unidos e da Argentina; é evidente aqui que, na sua profícua erudição, o Freyre escolheu uma fonte pouco adequada. Não é um segredo que a Argentina não foi nunca um botim para a Coroa espanhola, sabemos bem que tratava-se de uma passagem para o centro do Continente; de fato, o nome Rio de La Plata faz referência ao caminho que leva à prata num sentido quase literal. É simplesmente mudar o termo de comparação da Argentina para o Peru, por nomear somente um dos mais óbvios, para notar como o fator geográfico inclui a cordilheira dos Andes e a floresta amazônica, além de um povo com um exército organizado com caraterísticas semelhantes às europeias.

O Freyre estava então errado? Não, e ele também não ignora as similitudes que anos depois fundamentarão a sua ideia de América Hispânica. Se na sua obra nos anos 1930's há uma ênfase na distinção no ato de comparação, a partir dos anos 1950's teremos uma ênfase na homologação das componentes ibéricas. O que acontece é que seu projeto em *Casa Grande* traz implícita a intenção de explicar a fundação do Brasil que, para ele, se baseia na formação socioeconômica da família patriarcal. A qual surge, entre outros fatores, pela atitude da Coroa portuguesa em relação às suas colônias. Situação essa, na qual, as duas monarquias ibéricas demonstravam diferenças como em nenhum outro campo do seu acionar político no Novo Mundo. No entanto que, na febre de ouro gerada a partir da lenda do El Dorado, os espanhóis procuravam riqueza monetária rápida – em função do mercantilismo, o sistema de produção dominante –, já no Brasil o que viria a se conformar seria, segundo o Autor, uma sociedade de produção agrícola de base familiar e com a miscigenação como estratégia econômica e inclinação cultural. Fato este que a

diferencia de outras formações sociais presentes na América, inclusive de algumas com vocação familiar agrária como os assentamentos ingleses na Virginia, por exemplo (Freyre, *Casa Grande*). Neste caso específico o sistema escravocrata podia até ser considerado similar ao português, mas o fator atitudinal que leva a miscigenação parece totalmente ausente, fortalecendo assim o argumento da falta de familiaridade dos europeus não-portugueses com a convivência junto com outras culturas. Esta distinção da família patriarcal como forma de produção particular do Brasil é fundamental porque não está baseada em critérios econômicos e nem políticos, mas surge do particular método freyriano que destila seus aportes a partir da observação minuciosa do viver cotidiano dos indivíduos objeto de estudo e se afasta do afã modernizador que dominava no pensamento político oficial.

A sociedade primordial do que iria a ser o Brasil é única, é a sociedade da formação social da família patriarcal agrícola, diferente se comparada com as anglo-saxãs, incapazes de se adaptar às terras tropicais e diferente das espanholas, dominadas pelo poder do Estado e da Igreja (Freyre, *Casa Grande*). É a singularidade do caso português em América o que mais interessa ao Autor, ainda em 1940: no prefácio de *O mundo que o português criou*, ele faz uma exaltada defesa da cultura luso-brasileira, ressaltando o seu caráter único em defesa de quem pretendia, especialmente no Sul do país, instaurar uma cultura outra, de raiz europeia diferente da portuguesa, fato este inconcebível para o Freyre:

> seria ridículo pretender que o Brasil exista independente de sua formação portuguesa; ou que seja, um país onde outra cultura - outra língua inclusive - possa instalar-se com os mesmos direitos da de Portugal quando colonizou certa parte da América e firmou nos trópicos uma civilização com elementos predominantemente europeus e cristãos. (Freyre, *O Mundo 34*).

Claramente, na visão do Freyre, é a matriz portuguesa a que tem a primazia em contraposição a qualquer outra componente europeia. Porém, estamos ainda longe de qualquer referência à América Latina como unidade de análise, ou da Hispânia como matriz para distinguir o nosso subcontinente. Há no Autor a necessidade de estabelecer uma distinção, basicamente positiva, da componente portuguesa na consolidação da sociedade brasileira, e para tal ele a estrutura ao redor da figura da formação socioeconômica patriarcal, que é fundamentalmente diferente, em termos econômicos, do sistema implantado pelos espanhóis. Desta forma, seu termo de comparação acaba sendo a instituição colonial espanhola enquanto ela possa ter de diferenciado com relação à portuguesa, e nesse exercício comparativo específico, nesses termos concretos, não há alguma afinidade entre as duas realidades, ainda que seja evidente a proximidade da dominação ibérica em outras áreas. Assim, é possível notar como a definição dos critérios específicos da comparação pode facilmente enfatizar proximidades ou divergências e vice-versa segundo o ponto de vista adotado.

4. Surgimento da ideia de América Hispana

Se concedemos algum valor heurístico ao método aqui adotado de tentar traçar o surgimento de um enfoque latino-americano no Freyre, é então relevante notar que na década de 1940 nos seus trabalhos ainda prevalece o tema luso-brasileiro como um dos eixos fundamentais. Tratando deste tema especificamente, é possível identificar a semente de um enfoque que será, anos mais tarde, central e que em parte pareceria se contrapor a uma das teses fundamentais de *Casa Grande*; em conferência para o governo de Portugal em 1940, o Autor explica, citando o intelectual espanhol Angel Ganivet: “não foi nenhum excesso de diferenças que separou Portugal da Hespanha: foi um excesso de similhanças” (Freyre, *Uma Cultura*). Nesta intervenção o Autor fala abertamente de cultura hispânica, a cultura de toda a península, na qual o Portugal participa por uma série de afinidades de diversos tipos. Trata-se de uma intuição que irá a se desenvolver com o tempo, até ao ponto de, nos anos da Tropicologia, o Freyre chegar a propor inclusive que a Luso-

tropicologia seria uma componente dentro da maior Hispan-tropicologia (Freyre, "Os reis"). O processo de reconhecimento da raiz hispânica não é imediato, e nem se trata de um processo "natural" ou óbvio ao qual os intelectuais deveriam chegar de uma forma ou outra naquele período; pelo contrário, Gilberto Freyre parece, mais uma vez, demonstrar seu caráter intelectualmente excepcional e único também neste ponto.

É reconhecido que, ao longo, dos anos da vida política das formações nacionais surgidas após a independência da Europa, as relações do Brasil com seus vizinhos "latinos" têm sido, do ponto de vista da análise social e política, bastante variadas. Respondendo aos desafios da situação política regional e global, excluído pelos próprios países hispanos, o país e seus dirigentes e pensadores têm trabalhado a própria identidade a partir do que se é, ou se quer ser, com relação aos vizinhos: procurando as semelhanças e as diferenças, efetuando então uma comparação dirigida que responde as prioridades de cada momento. Assim, tem se optado desde o pan-americanismo até o isolamento do Brasil como uma grande ilha em América do Sul (Bethell, "Brazil and 'Latin America'"). Embora que com argumentos diferentes, estas posições parecem depender do clima político regional do momento. A rejeição ou aceitação de uma integração do Brasil na América Latina tem sido condicionada pela posição relativa do observador com relação à situação geopolítica do subcontinente. Nos anos 1940's, por exemplo, o projeto continental dos Estados Unidos que pareciam estar desenhando com a política de "boa vizinhança" uma América para os americanos por meio da doutrina Monroe, influenciava fortemente as opiniões de quem na época refletia sobre a latinidade do Brasil (Bethell, "O Brasil e a ideia"). Da mesma forma, a negativa de considerar o Brasil como um membro mais da comunidade de nações surgidas da colonização ibérica se baseava claramente na constatação de uma aparente falência do modelo político das republicas dos "libertadores", sistemas idealizados pelos caudilhos que tinham gerado uma história instável, por vezes anárquica, e que foi um dos argumentos mais recorrentes durante os anos do surgimento da Primeira República. Temática que precisamente o Freyre vai abordar em *Ordem e Progresso*, a partir de uma perspectiva particular, seguindo sempre o seu percurso intelectual singular, tratando indiretamente o tema da interpretação da liderança política brasileira sobre as semelhanças e diferenças dos vizinhos latinos.

Neste livro, obra final da trilogia sobre a formação do Brasil, a metáfora arquitetônica que caracteriza os dois estúdios anteriores desaparece, porém se mantem a intenção de propor uma certa imagem de equilíbrio entre os extremos, se antes se tratava de raças diferentes que chegavam a um ponto de equilíbrio, desta vez se trata de ideologias diferentes que, de certa forma, convivem sem rupturas violentas. É uma opção que se baseia na imagem de equilíbrio e antagonismo e que, por sua vez, podemos interpretar como um empenho de comparação em que os polos permitem revelar as características de seu contrário. Nos textos anteriores o conceito de família patriarcal dá muita força as suas ideias, já que lhe concede um endereço a sua proposta. Quando essa figura passa, muda um pouco a sua opção metodológica, tanto é assim que o texto conta com uma ampla Nota metodológica na qual se explicam as escolhas feitas a partir do fato de trabalhar com depoimentos diretos, já que as informações, pela primeira vez, provêm da memória viva dos sujeitos. Assim, a história a partir de *Ordem e Progresso* se constrói por meio das vivências em primeira pessoa, a partir de testemunhas diretas e das biografias que o Autor recolhe para a sua pesquisa. Se mantem, e até se reforça, a importância da vivência pessoal na construção da sua interpretação da história. No seu método permanece a escolha de usar fontes da vida cotidiana, da cultura material, para ilustrar a sua obra. Publicado em 1957, parece difícil enquadrá-lo numa visão, como a que foi resenhada acima, que determina a inclusão ou não do Brasil na América Latina a partir do clima político regional predominante (Bethell, "Brasil y América Latina"). Mais que mudanças de paradigma no pensamento social da região, num autor como Freyre, tão refratário aos cânones acadêmicos, é mais provável que fatores biográficos permitam-nos identificar

neste momento do seu percurso intelectual a evolução da ideia de uma América Hispânica no seu pensamento.

Não parece casualidade que no mesmo ano de 1957 ele publique um texto que faz parte de uma obra dedicada a Ortega y Gasset, o mesmo autor que, anos depois, em 1983, ele vai utilizar para demonstrar a raiz hispânica dos povos surgidos da aventura ibérica na América. Neste sentido, Freyre aponta o Brasil como o único país hispânico e ibérico, capaz de vivenciar através da língua escrita os dois mundos e culturas provenientes da Península: "Ortega y Gasset não precisou de ser traduzido ao português para que a influência de sua filosofia fosse tão marcante no Brasil" (Freyre, "Os reis"). Isto é, há na língua, inicialmente, mas também numa determinada compreensão do mundo, uma particular empatia que faz com que não seja necessária uma tradução da sua filosofia para o português, e nem dos clássicos da literatura castelhana que têm participado da formação cultural da nação espanhola. Junto com Ortega y Gasset a referência a Unamuno, Ganivet e Julián Marías é quase uma constante quando o Autor trata de autores espanhóis, os quais aliás não são classificados como espanhóis, mas como "hispanos". E não se trata só de uma referência, não é somente uma citação; em 1957, comentando a obra do Ortega y Gasset no volume em homenagem ao mestre espanhol, o Freyre encontra apoio para consolidar um dos conceitos mais interessantes que nos tem deixado: o de "homem situado". Embora que somente esboçada nas suas duas primeiras obras e não de forma explícita, mas através da metodologia inovadora e um tanto heterodoxa – metodologia do cotidiano, do detalhe, a metade de caminho entre a etnografia e o anedótico - é clara no seu pensamento a procura por uma compreensão do ser humano agente a partir do seu contexto, com um olhar abrangente, capaz de identificar a relevância dos pequenos detalhes e a importância dos processos macro. O "homem e a sus circunstancias", para o Autor é esse o eixo mais rico para interpretar o fazer e o pensamento de um determinado sujeito no seu tempo. É assim que ele propõe em 1957 ler Ortega y Gasset como um autor capaz de lidar com as correntes de pensamento provenientes de diversas línguas e culturas, mas se mantendo dentro da visão hispânica do mundo, uma atitude que o Autor aliás não julga como particular deste filosofo espanhol:

> Ortega y Gasset is almost unclassifiable, as were Unamuno and Ganivet. Yet, like Unamuno and Ganivet, he was a 'specialis' in dealing with a variety of subjects - art, history, literature, landscape, politics, social problems, philosophy, religion - from the point of view of a philosopher who was a Spaniard: a Spaniard greatly affected, but not denatured or denaturalized, by French, English and German influences. (Freyre, "Ortega y Gasset" 375)

A ideia do homem e a suas circunstancias, *yo y mis circunstancias*, pedra angular da filosofia de Ortega y Gasset segundo a própria interpretação do Freyre dos anos 1950's, é o ponto de chegada no nível intelectual e abstrato de uma intuição que podemos identificar no Autor claramente anos atrás, a partir de um processo mais amplo e que faz parte integral da sua formação, especificamente na época de publicação de *Nordeste,* em 1937. Ali, o Freyre faz explícita a sua preocupação pelo espaço, pela dimensão espacial, a relação do ser humano com o entorno. O que o conduz a considerações de tipo ecológico, e que levará anos depois a propor uma nova disciplina, a Tropicologia. Neste texto um dos temas mais interessantes é a crítica à monocultura. O livro foi escrito num momento em que ele desenvolvia pesquisas sobre as condições de trabalho dos empregados dos canaviais, porém, essa preocupação está presente também em *Sobrados e Mucambos* ao analisar a gradual desconfiguração da família patriarcal como forma de produção agrícola. Em *Nordeste*, sendo a cana um dos temas principais, Freyre estabelece a relação deste elemento com a água, com a terra, o mato, os animais e os seres humanos. Essa crítica ecológica, embora sem entrar na discussão teórica do ecologismo, está já baseada no conceito de paisagem que estava-se consolidando nos debates sobre o tema naqueles anos nos países industrializados, demonstrando mais uma vez a sua capacidade

de acompanhar as discussões contemporâneas sem precisar pertencer integralmente a algum campo do conhecimento definido e fechado. Junto com a intenção ecológica há também a ideia de mudar a imagem típica do Nordeste como uma região desértica e seca, e traz a ideia de um Nordeste também oleoso e fértil. Já que temos o Nordeste pastoril do Sertão, mas também o nordeste do litoral dos canaviais. A cana de açúcar, na forma da monocultura, é vista como a fonte de vários males físicos e ambientais para o Nordeste, pois estraga os rios; mas como forma econômica também se presenta como negativa no ambiente social como um todo. A importância da cana é tal que o Freyre anota as consequências sociais do consumo da cana de açúcar nos seus efeitos físicos sobre os sujeitos, assim como também nos impactos sociais amplos que ela traz.

É claramente aqui o homem situado que está sendo enfocado desde um ponto de vista concreto, biológico, já presente então na década de 1930's, e que encontrará anos depois por meio do pensamento de Ortega y Gasset sua base filosófica solida. Talvez seja possível lançar a hipótese de o Ortega y Gasset representar a dimensão filosófica da proposta que o Freyre, do ponto de vista social, tinha desenvolvido já desde suas primeiras obras. No prefácio à edição espanhola de *Nordeste*, lançada em 1943, o Autor coloca o filósofo espanhol junto com Weber e Humbolt e anseia vê-lo "convertido" à Sociologia, ou pelo menos à Ecologia, que seria para ele uma das sociologias especiais (Freyre, *Nordeste* XXI). Provavelmente a partir deste encontro filosófico seja possível identificar o surgimento no pensamento do Freyre da Hispânia como base teórica na sua interpretação madura das culturas ibero-americanas.

5. O aporte teórico espanhol: o homem situado

Em 1963 a conversão freyriana ao hispanismo está completamente consolidada, é ele mesmo que a proclama, fazendo inclusive uma pequena cronologia; na introdução à segunda edição em língua espanhola de *Interpretação do Brasil* ele afirma: "como brasileño, tengo la clara consciência de que soy, o pretendo ser, um escritor fundamentalmente hispânico" (Freyre, *Interpretaciones* 7). Um escritor, continua o Autor, que pretende propor elementos para a análise do homem situado nos Trópicos. Têm claramente ficado para trás as distinções comparativas entre portugueses e espanhóis e, aliás, este homem hispânico seria filho das várias Espanhas (Freyre, *Interpretaciones*), da mesma Península, sem alguma diferenciação de fundo. Porém, não se trata de uma transformação conveniente, "natural" ou inclusive contextual; pelo contrário, as discussões relacionadas com a ideia de uma comunhão cultural, histórica ou inclusive económica na região que se conhece como América Latina partiam naqueles anos de outros pressupostos (Bethell, "Brasil y América Latina"). Nesses anos a distinção se fazia com relação ao Norte do continente, considerado como imperialista e propulsor de valores alheios ao sentir latino, os autores destes países ligavam a distinção dos seus países com a América anglo-saxónica à continuidade nas suas culturas da essência latina, contemplativa, em contraposição ao materialismo e mercantilismo norte-americano (Melo). Isto é, a comparação era feita com relação a um acervo clássico que permitisse estabelecer uma espécie de distinção de valores modernos triunfantes nos Estados Unidos, dessa forma a afinidade entre os "latinos", que podiam eventualmente incluir o Brasil, se fazia a partir de uma herança, talvez mais ideal do que concreta, associada com um passado anterior ao pensamento economicista norte-americano. Já o Freyre, como em outros temas, segue um caminho pessoal e, por vezes, único. A sua inspiração não tem um caráter político e nem é movida por alguma apologia ao sonho "libertador" ou baseada em teorias económicas de desenvolvimento; pelo contrário, trata-se de um percurso coerente que foi-se enriquecendo e consolidando com os anos. Diferentemente da procura de uma contraposição com as culturas anglo-saxãs a partir de uma comparação com o longínquo passado latino clássico, ele promove a valoração da componente ibérica comum, uma só se comparamos os fatores que a constituem com relação ao resto dos povos americanos, e o faz não simplesmente a partir de uma ideia de herança, mas de reflexão sobre os frutos

dela no presente. O que ele observa não é uma ideal relação com a latinidade clássica e nem uma oposição às culturas nascidas no norte do Continente, pelo contrário, resgata a raiz comum da hispanidade no passado de miscigenação histórico trazido desde a península ibérica (Melo). Nesta segunda "fase" da obra do Freyre (o da aproximação do Brasil com a América Latina) a mudança se dá pela troca dos polos de comparação, o outro é a América anglo-saxônica e o colonizador norte-europeu (Mendes Freitas). Porém, ele se coloca numa posição que foge das correntes intelectuais e dos interesses políticos em jogo no momento, propondo uma procura dos traços identitários do Brasil a partir de uma comparação com a componente ibérica num sentido bem amplo, que enfatiza a riqueza e a mistura como elementos criativos e essenciais nos processos posteriores acontecidos em América. Já não é a observação e admiração dos vizinhos do Norte e a comparação idealizada com eles, e nem com o ideário político e cultural da França ou com a herança genérica latina associada ao Portugal, mas um paralelo com a componente hispana enquanto já fruto de uma miscigenação. A América Latina do Freyre não é simplesmente aquela da oposição a um modelo cultural e econômico, nem também aquela de uma essência latina idealizada, se trata pelo contrário da exaltação de uma riqueza "impura" que reconhece as misturas anteriores ao processo de colonização do continente, mas as localiza, as "situa" no território americano onde as condições do entorno lhes dão sentido. É tão clara a sua visão anti-essencialista que ele inclusive chega a considerar que os ibéricos teriam perdido seu poder criador e no século XX o papel inovador e renovador cairia em setores silenciados que sairiam de sua hibernação sociológica: os índios, mestiços, camponeses e proletários, impulsionados pela crescente valorização das tradições, renovando assim a arte, literatura, filosofia social (Mendes Freitas).

Assim, não é então uma contradição, ou uma revisão, o fato dele em suas primeiras obras negar qualquer semelhança ao comparar os povos ibéricos entre eles e, anos depois, conceber o homem hispânico quase que como uma cultura só, já que este homem hispânico parece não ser outro que o "homem e as suas circunstancias", neste caso, ibéricas, hispânicas. Aliás, a ideia de homem situado parece presente desde *Casa Grande*, embora de forma rudimentar. Porém, naquela obra a importância dada à família patriarcal como forma de produção era maior, e o levou a enfatizar a dita particularidade sobre as semelhanças presentes nos conquistadores hispanos. A origem das suas intuições sobre o homem situado talvez possam-se identificar nas suas viagens juvenis na Europa, onde o Freyre teria desenvolvido a sua tendência em um certo sentido regionalista, contraposta aos projetos modernistas que se baseavam no centralismo, por exemplo na França nos anos 20' do século XX. Neste sentido ele foge do clima político e cultural modernista que seria, por exemplo, preponderante no país nos anos da concepção de Brasília como capital, o que nos confirma mais uma vez o fundo biográfico que o leva a mudar suas prioridades, se afastando de certa forma das escolhas ditadas pelas configurações conjunturais do poder, seja ele político, econômico ou acadêmico. Em *Tempos e outros tempos*, de 1975, é possível estabelecer a influência clara do pensamento espanhol, a qual pode-se dar a partir do contato direito com os autores da geração do 98' e do 14'. Aparentemente, o Autor conhecia já ditos pensadores, mas é na década dos 1930's, estando em Portugal, que o contato imediato com a Escola de Madrid parece claramente verificável (Rugai Bastos).[2] É neste período que pode ter nascido em Freyre a admiração por esta escola e que viria a se expressar, vários anos depois, na sua ideia de Hispânia como raiz cultural própria. Daí também a sua crítica ao modernismo brasileiro, que ele achava superficial, uma espécie de transposição nos trópicos de um movimento europeu e que se concreta claramente na sua visão crítica - no meio da euforia - da Brasília de Niemeyer, mais voltada à edificação de símbolos do que de espaços para os habitantes futuros da cidade, necessitados segundo ele mais de lugares de lazer do que de monumentos grandiloquentes. A crítica à modernidade e à modernização se vê claramente também em *Casa Grande & Senzala* através da recuperação do aporte das diferentes culturas ao Brasil, questionando um progresso que estaria apoiado na cópia de modelos importados.

Os condicionamentos raciais e climáticos, por exemplo, ao invés de serem negativos e causantes do atraso, poderiam pelo contrário ser considerados como fatores positivos. Seria o modernismo particular do Freyre que iria recuperar os fatores culturais distintivos do país. É nesse sentido também que é possível interpretar a sua crítica à catequização jesuíta que, levando os indígenas nas missões para salvá-los da escravidão dos colonos, terminaria os separando do contexto social mais amplo e do sistema produtivo. Haveria uma falta de adaptação da Companhia de Jesus ao contexto local, inclusive ele chega a dizer que ao irem embora os jesuítas teriam deixado os indígenas sem um sistema produtivo próprio. Trata-se da ausência da consciência do homem situado, que resulta na incapacidade de interpretar o contexto e se adaptar de forma coerente e produtiva. Da mesma forma, se o português conseguiu muito bem aproveitar as melhores condições do ambiente tropical, pareceria ter errado com a forma de produção da monocultura, uma forma de produção agrícola mais voltada ao comercio que a supervivência. Assim, no Freyre é clara uma crítica ao mercantilismo como forma econômica, já que a interpreta quase como um método que não é produtivo. Isto é muito claro quando fala da história de Portugal e do período em que o pais era produtor agrícola e passou a ser um pais comercial, para obter benefício somente da troca. Temos então na sua análise a presença clara do "homem hispânico situado nos Trópicos" como tela de fundo; porém não se trata de um modelo ótimo, pelo contrário, é uma ferramenta teórica que permite vislumbrar as suas virtudes, mas também suas falências. Isto é, um modelo que foi amadurecendo com os anos, obtendo na obra de Ortega y Gasset talvez o contraponto filosófico necessário para fazê-lo mais sólido, mas que estava já presente nas três obras da trilogia.

Assim, em *Sobrados e Mucambos*, a metáfora arquitetônica tem a ver com a relação entre a casa e a rua, que muda bastante por causa da urbanização da vida social. Nasce um espaço público em contraposição ao privado e deve se criar uma mediação entre os dois mundos. Com a ascensão dos profissionais dos sobrados a vida social vai para a rua com a necessidade de demonstrar os signos de distinção da nova classe ascendente, por exemplo nos novos espaços públicos urbanos como o teatro. Mas ao mesmo tempo na casa fica trancada a moça, olhando pela janela, marcada como ela estava pelo tabu de não poder frequentar a rua sem companhia ou por simples prazer. Num primeiro momento pode parecer que, indo para a cidade, o espaço interno da casa e o externo da rua poderiam ficar mais perto e se misturar. Mas na verdade, na cidade pode-se dar uma diferenciação até maior, isto se vê muito bem nos diferentes tipos de escravos, alguns especializados nas tarefas da rua e outros da casa, dando-se uma divisão de trabalho escravo que deixa entrever a separação clara entre o espaço privado da casa e o público da rua. De uma certa forma, a transformação da casa grande para o sobrado é mais clara que a transformação da senzala para o mucambo, já que este último parece um pouco se diluir na cidade. Diante das várias críticas que *Sobrados e Mucambos* trouxe, o Freyre faz na introdução à segunda edição uma defesa do seu trabalho, na qual propõe que não se deve confundir o dado etnográfico com os modelos sociológicos, ou seja, o fato de ter tantos detalhes na sua obra, não quer dizer que ele não esteja propondo um modelo de interpretação ampla que se pode aplicar a toda a sociedade brasileira através da figura da família patriarcal. Para compreender o processo que Freyre mostra é importante focar nas figuras intermédias, muito brasileiras segundo ele, além de únicas, e que são as que permitem a comunicação entre os polos antagónicos. Mas, para chegar num resultado deste tipo é necessário enfocar na cotidianidade dos sujeitos pesquisados, os seus hábitos, seus anúncios de jornal e seus brinquedos. Assim, se concedemos um enfoque exclusivamente marxista ou sociológico não é possível compreender a evolução do processo que o Autor quer mostrar. Parece plausível interpretar então, na convicção desta obra ser uma continuação orgânica de *Casa Grande*, a proposta de *Sobrados e Mucambos* como o desenvolvimento cronológico da procura teórica e metodológica do homem e suas circunstâncias, embora que sem uma explicitação evidente, pelo menos não textual, mas sim na intuição clara que movia o Autor.

O homem situado, dentro de uma situação espacial e temporal, se liga muito com vários aspetos da obra do Autor que se condensam bem com o reconhecimento do trópico como eixo de análise. Embora essas ideias estivessem claras quase desde o começo da sua obra, é a partir de uma sua viajem pelas colônias portuguesas que esta ideia se reforça muito. Concretando-se no conceito de luso-tropicologia, já que o caso de Goa parecia confirmar a sua intuição de serem as condições tropicais a favorecer o colonizador português e não somente o Brasil como situação excepcional. Porém, a partir dos anos 1960's neste tipo de considerações entra com pleno direito também o colonizador espanhol, pertencente à mesma Hispânia, raiz de uma distinção da América ibérica que tem muita mais pertinência que a América Latina que ainda é hoje predominante nos discursos e no imaginário destes países. De fato, as eventuais críticas a este termo e modelo de representação do subcontinente se limitam a criticar a gênese francesa e colonialista do termo, mas não propõem uma alternativa coerente. Já o Freyre, o mesmo que nas primeiras obras procura uma distinção, passa a ser considerado, precisamente pelo espanhol Julián Marías, um precursor da unidade intelectual e cultural da Hispânia: "Pienso que nadie va a contribuir más que Gilberto Freyre al acercamiento entre España y Portugal — esas dos naciones sentadas juntas, dándose la espalda, mirando en direcciones opuestas" (10). Marías nota que as duas nações ibéricas têm sofrido de uma indiferença e separação dentro do mesmo território por séculos, e se vai se dar uma aproximação histórica ela virá desde a América, desde a América Hispana. Esta América Hispânica de Freyre - um pouco esquecida, talvez por causa de hipertrofia de *Casa Grande* e da trilogia na leitura da sua obra – tem o homem situado nos trópicos como modelo do sujeito histórico relevante e traz em si a proposta de um diálogo com os clássicos da filosofia ibérica do século XX. Um tanto esquecidos também eles em benefício de pensadores de outras latitudes, desconsiderando assim o tempo tríbio que nos obriga a refletir sobre os três tempos do nosso ser no lugar que ocupamos no planeta cultural, histórico e físico.

6. Conclusões

Vimos então que é possível identificar uma importante transformação no pensamento de Gilberto Freyre sobre a América Latina que, aparentemente, tem sido pouco estudada até hoje. Passando de um elogio à particularidade virtuosa da natureza do conquistador português sobre os outros exploradores europeus nas américas, a um reconhecimento da hispanidade, da matriz ibérica, como valor cultural da nossa região e inclusive à proposta de uma disciplina especifica derivada da Tropicologia, a Hispan-tropicologia. Esta constatação, que em si mesma não representa necessariamente uma proposta teoricamente ambiciosa, deriva de forma quase espontânea da aproximação ao pensamento do Autor para além das obras que compõem a "trilogia". É extremamente comum se deparar com comentários, especialmente críticas, sobre o Freyre basicamente a partir de uma leitura, às vezes incompleta, da trilogia ou simplesmente de *Casa Grande & Senzala*. Uma exploração mais ampla permite verificar como a obra dele seja mais rica e, especialmente, mais complexa no relativo especificamente a sua análise das particularidades da realidade brasileira no contexto regional.

Uma abordagem deste tipo, ampla e inclusiva, permite também integrar o elemento biográfico para tentar procurar as causas, ou pelo menos os detonantes, da mudança que se procura aqui delinear. Como vimos, o papel do Brasil e sua posição, do ponto de vista teórico, dentro da reflexão sobre a América Latina, se vê fortemente influenciada pelo clima político e ideológico conjuntural do momento. O próprio Autor o reconhece explicitamente anotando como a relação da América Latina com a conjuntura mundial tem variado conforme as diversas predominâncias que lhe tem afetado as situações. Seja a predominância ibérica, inglesa, francesa ou "ianque" (Freyre, *Americanidade*), todas elas têm influenciado as formas como nos interpretamos enquanto nações aos nos compararmos com aquelas que exercem algum tipo de atração, seja de tipo econômico ou cultural, seja de forma concreta ou idealizada. A mentalidade política oficial e o clima intelectual acadêmico da região procurava outros rumos

para estabelecer os pontos de comparação na compreensão do Brasil e seu posicionamento com relação aos vizinhos, às vezes se espelhando na potência norte-americana para se distinguir da latinidade arcaica e outras se inspirando na herança clássica europeia para se distanciar da mentalidade economicista reinante nos Estados Unidos. Já no caso do Freyre, um Autor admirado, especialmente fora do seu país, e que sempre fugiu aos cânones da vida acadêmica formal, o fator biográfico parece definitivo. Ele vai estabelecer o ponto de comparação com a raiz europeia, mas não necessariamente para se distinguir da América anglo-saxã, mas para explorar as semelhanças com a Hispânia. Ele também não contemplava a veia latina como elemento de comparação que assemelharia a raiz ibérica com outras culturas como a francesa, por exemplo, mas reivindica a componente hispânica que depende fortemente de influências extra europeias. Isto é, ele reivindica de forma original a distinção entre a Europa burguesa (Inglaterra e França) e o Brasil orientalizado, fruto dos traços mouros e judeus trazidos pelo português (Melo) e, na segunda parte da sua obra, pelo espanhol também. É o contato direito e pessoal com o mundo intelectual espanhol o que faz com que algumas ideias deste ambiente ecoem explicitamente na sua reflexão sobre a nossa América. A ideia do homem situado, não somente se articula nas propostas mais maduras do Autor, mas parece estar em surdina, de maneira embrionária - talvez de forma em parte inconsciente para o próprio Freyre - no enfoque caraterístico das suas obras iniciais e mais conhecidas. O particular método dele, uma espécie de etnografia indireta e não declarada, uma espécie de biópsia do cotidiano, incluiria em si mesma já a intuição da inseparabilidade do ser social e cultural com seu contexto num sentido amplo que inclui todas as esferas do vital, exercendo ele mesmo uma influência inegável sobre aquele.

No fim das contas, a ênfase dada, especialmente em *Casa Grande & Senzala,* à particularidade do espírito português parece responder mais à necessidade de colocar a figura da família patriarcal como alicerce da sua análise. Âmbito em que realmente a colonização portuguesa parece apresentar diferenças essenciais com a espanhola. O termo de comparação específico que o Autor estabelece neste período inicial na sua obra, a família patriarcal, realmente permite definir fortes diferenças entre a cultura espanhola e portuguesa nas suas colônias americanas. Porém, as congruências de fundo que estruturarão, de forma explícita, a sua enunciação posterior de uma comunhão dos povos hispanos da América eram identificáveis, especificamente na sua metodologia e no estilo de escrita, já desde seus primeiros trabalhos. A cotidianidade do homem situado, a ideia do homem e suas circunstâncias, que ele retomara diretamente do pensamento filosófico espanhol nas suas obras posteriores, parece já se insinuar no seu original viés metodológico. Só nos anos mais maduros da sua obra Freyre assumira as "consequências" disto, o que implica o reconhecimento de uma raiz comum hispana que, inclusive, era para ele necessário estudar profundamente desde uma perspectiva exclusiva e *ad hoc*.

Assim, o Freyre, amplamente reconhecido como um autor original, especialmente por causa da sua abordagem que enquadra as consequências profundas e históricas da vivência cotidiana e que procura sempre valorar a singularidade positiva do contexto local onde esta experiência é forjada, em contraposição contínua à emulação gratuita do pensamento e os paradigmas das metrópoles, tem restado até agora uma referência quase que exclusiva para a análise da realidade histórica brasileira. Quando, como vimos, ele foi capaz de estabelecer um olhar refletivo para entender a cultura do próprio país por meio da comparação com outras culturas seguindo critérios que pareciam fugir das prioridades dos interesses políticos do seu tempo. O que lhe confere grande valor enquanto forjador de um enfoque que mira a exaltar as particularidades diferenciais da América Hispana como um todo, ainda que reconhecendo, é claro, a unicidade das expressões situadas. O olhar do Freyre parece assim perfeitamente passível de oferecer ferramentas valiosas para compreender os processos particulares das realidades da América Latina fora do contexto específico brasileiro por ele estudado. O que, aliás, contribuiria a ressaltar nexos para além de distinções territoriais, linguísticas ou

simplesmente impostas e que não se veem necessariamente refletidas na realidade cultural e histórica da região.

Notas

[1] Comumente se identifica como a "trilogia" freyriana o conjunto das obras *Casa Grande & Senzala, Sobrados e Mucambos e Ordem e Progresso.*

[2] Sobre o tema da incorporação dos pensadores espanhóis na formação do Freyre, esta autora tem publicado o livro Gilberto Freyre e o pensamento hispânico: entre Dom Quixote e Alonso el Bueno.

[3] Trata se do filme "*Aguirre. The Wrath of God*" de 1972.

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FORUM FOR INTER-AMERICAN RESEARCH (FIAR) VOL. 12.1 (JUN. 2019) 101-115
ISSN: 1867-1519

Declensions: Conceptual Migrations across Empires

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Abstract

The goal of this essay is to propose a new model for comparative analysis, the 'declension,' and test its applicability on two figurations that have traveled across contingent and competing empires: the creole and the renegade. Within grammar, a declension is the "variation of the form of a noun, adjective, or pronoun, constituting its different cases" (OED) and evokes the way in which words mutate as their function in the logic of the sentence changes. If transferred to the realm of literary and cultural studies, the declension can be used to map the adjustments that key concepts in Atlantic history and literature undergo as they traverse space, time, and language systems. Although some terms have remained essentially the same or have varied only slightly across centuries – as in the case of renegado/renegade or criollo/crioulo/creole – the politics attached to them changed significantly. The declension offers a tool to trace and document migrations of concepts along transatlantic and interamerican lines, gesturing at the interconnectedness of imperial spaces.

Keywords: Declension, creole, renegade, entangled American history, Atlantic history

The study of Atlantic History is the study of contingent and interconnected experiences. Within Atlantic History, discussions of phenomena that span centuries and continents are indissoluble from micro-investigations of small places and the lives of single individuals. Theories of "entanglement" by scholars such as Trevor Burnard, Eliga H. Gould, and Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra have advocated historiographies that underscore the transcultural origin of putatively 'national' narratives, unveil their multiple transfers, and switch between regional, national, and transoceanic registers. Our study hopes to contribute a tool for the writing of "microhistory … in an Atlantic mode" (Burnard 35) by zooming in on what Ann Stoler calls "the tactical mobility of concepts" (837) across the Atlantic, as the multiple entanglements of Atlantic cultures did not result only in a transfer of people, goods, and narratives, but also key concepts. To best address the changing semantics and politics of these "travelling concepts" (Bal 29), we resort to the paradigm of *declensions*.

Within grammar, a declension is the "variation of the form of a noun, adjective, or pronoun, constituting its different cases" (OED). By evoking the way in which a word mutates as its object of reference changes, I suggest that key concepts in Atlantic history such as 'creole,' as well as 'renegade,' 'neophyte', and 'pirate,' undergo radical changes in meaning as they travel across oceans, centuries, and geographical contexts, although their form changes only slightly. From the 16th to the 19th century, the term 'renegade,' for instance, has crossed a variety of cultural contexts and undergone multiple shifts in meaning. In the 19th-century North American frontier context, a 'renegade' was an individual who relinquished white society and chose to live with the Natives. A century earlier, Cotton Mather used the term with reference to Christian captives in Barbary who embraced Islam to enjoy the privileges granted to converts or to avoid certain death. In 17th-century Europe, 'renegadoes' were Christians who joined the armies of corsairs in Barbary, which by then were known as the "renegade states" (Fuchs 50). The idea of a neophyte is

in many ways equal but opposite to that of a renegade, as both concepts reflect the same practice and conversion, from two antipodal viewpoints: that of conversion as apostasy (a turning away from a dominant culture or belief) or as revelation (an embracing of it). Before the end of the 19th century, the history of the term 'creole' was also one of oscillations. The term originates from the Spanish-Portuguese 'criollo/ crioulo' and was applied to individuals born in the New World. Some sources claim that the term did not originally differentiate between races (Garraway 20; Hazaël Massieux 5-6), while others associate early understandings of creoleness with whiteness. Yet, sources underscore a progressive racialization of the term: by the end of the 19th century the term was refashioned as "exclusively Caucasian" (Kein 131) and decisively reflected European perspectives.

A declension differs from a chronological timeline in so far as it describes an oscillatory movement and not a linear one. Consider, for example, the first Latin declension:

aqua, -ae, F. *water*

	SINGULAR	PLURAL
NOM	Aqua	Aquae
GEN	Aquae	aquārum
DAT	Aquae	Aquīs
ACC	Aquam	Aquās
ABL	Aqua	Aquīs

The first declension singular starts and ends with *–a*. The last part of the plural oscillates between *–is* and *–as*. *–Ae* appears in both in different positions and *–arum* represents an isolated termination. Consequently, in the logic of our declension model, a word can revert to its original meaning, go back and forth between two meanings, assume an anomalous meaning in a determinate context, or terminate its declension on a completely different, even reverse meaning, from the moment of coinage. Moreover, the goal of a declension is not to document a general linear evolution; the model is designed to follow the parallel evolutions of the word structure across time, space, and translation, as well as the meanings and politics attached to it.

A second, figurative meaning defines declension as "the action or state of declining …; a declining or sinking into a lower position," and, secondly, as the "deviation or declining from a standard; falling away (from one's allegiance), apostasy" (OED). The pejorative meaning of declension indicates the fall of an object from a condition of grace to one of abjection, and openly parallels this downward trajectory with the act of apostasy – a conversion judged from a point of view of abandonment and betrayal. Similarly, declensed concepts and the figures they define have left a state of recognizability (Settler or Native, European or Indigenous, Christian or Muslim) to enter a condition of ontological instability mirrored in literary and cultural texts by a series of textual ambiguities. Hence, our study will not only attempt to sketch declensions of terms, but also provide examples of the textual ambiguities that gesture at the semantic instability of these terms. Authors who grapple with declensed concepts and the categories of people they encompass almost invariably reflect on these shifts of meaning either by thickening the ambiguity[2] around them or by trying to dissipate it and settle for a univocal meaning. The first posture will be referred throughout this study as *ambiguation* and the second as *disambiguation*.

A Declension of Creoleness

Every definition of the term 'creole' that confidently circumscribes a single category of people is to be distrusted. Ralph Bauer and Antonio Mazzotti urge not to underestimate the size and entity of the early modern debate around creolization; it was "a wider Atlantic phenomenon that not only spanned the three centuries of European colonial rule in the Americas but also cut across the boundaries of the various European empires" (Bauer and Mazzotti 2). Each European empire constructed a different discourse on creolization destined to gain complexity in post-empire aftermaths. In some regions, these debates continue to the present day. Hence, definitions that do justice to the history of the word 'creole' are fluid, mindful of contradictions, and open to incongruities. The reason is best explained via Virginia Domínguez's words in *White by Definition*: "two types of Louisianans consequently identify themselves today as Creole. One is socially and legally

white; the other, socially and legally colored. The white side by definition cannot accept the existence of colored Creoles; the colored side, by definition, cannot accept the white conception of *Creole*" (149). The massive shifts in meaning of the word creole experienced over its history resulted in contrasting understandings of the creoleness rubric. Quite remarkably, the *Oxford Dictionaries* offer three contradictory definition of 'creole': 1) "A person of mixed European and black descent, especially in the Caribbean"; 2) "A descendant of Spanish or other European settlers in the Caribbean or Central or South America", 3) "A white descendant of French settlers in Louisiana and other parts of the southern US." The first definition anchors creoleness in mixed-race ancestry, the last one makes an argument for exclusive whiteness, and the second omits the racial component altogether. The different geographic indications (the Caribbean, the Caribbean and Central South America, Louisiana and the Southern U.S.) also suggest that the meaning of the word changes according to context.

Moving back to the colonial and early American history of the word 'creole,' many of the available definitions offered by scholars of creoleness – especially in the abundant literature of Louisiana creoles – emphasize the term's multiple trajectories. Although there is consensus on its Spanish/Portuguese origin and on its applicability to individuals born in the colonies, what follows are overviews of the shifts and oscillations that marked the history of the word 'creole' in the Americas, especially with regards to race. In her influential study on *Africans in Colonial Louisiana* (1992) Gwendolin Midlo-Hall foreshadows the intricacies of defining creoleness: "*the most precise current definition* of a creole is a person of non-American ancestry, whether African or European, who was born in the Americas" (157; emphasis added). She subsequently explains that "the word creole has been redefined over time in response to changes in the social and racial climate. … It came to mean people of exclusively European descent born in the Americas" (157). In her 2000 book on Louisiana creoles, Sybil Kein builds on Midlo-Hall's inclusive definition to create her own, partly ex negativo: "Creoles are the New World's people, and, given the known historical data, the term *should not exclude* anyone based on color, caste, or pigmentation" (xv; emphasis added). Like Midlo-Hall, Kein is aware of the shifting racialization of the term, which, as she explains later, was appropriated in the 19th century by "a class of people who were pure, white, and unblemished by a dash of the tar brush" (131). Doris Garraway (2005) also lingers on the racial inclusivity of the term in its early usage: "the Hispano-Portuguese terms '*criollo/ crioulo*' … originally referred to both blacks and whites born in the colonial Americas" (20) and then proceeds to explain that later the word "developed a more restricted usage, referring only to whites" (20). Ira Berlin (1996) contradicts the assumption that the word 'creole,' in its early stages, was racially inclusive: "'Creole' derives from the Portuguese *crioulo*, meaning a person *of African descent* born in the New World" (253; emphasis added), but refers to Midlo-Hall for insights into "the complex and often contradictory usage in a single place" (253).

Our discussion of the creole declension can start from Midlo-Hall's statement that "the word creole has been redefined over time in response to changes in the social and racial climate" (157). In the course of its history, the word 'creole' has traversed not only different imperial contexts and different languages, but also various stages of racialization. One of the most prominent intellectuals of 19th-century Louisiana and advocate of creole white exclusiveness, Charles Gayarré, unintentionally embeds an ante-litteram definition of declension in his lecture "The Creoles of History and the Creoles of Romance," delivered at Tulane University, New Orleans, in 1885.

> In every nation the human language has modified itself in the course of time. The spelling and pronunciation of words have changed. Their original meanings has frequently become obscured and misapplied. But few have met the striking transformation of the word *Criollo* in Spanish and *Créole* in French – at least in the United States – if not in any other part of the world, for it conveys to the immense majority of the Americans of Anglo-Saxon origin a meaning that is the very reverse of

> its primitive signification. (Gayarré, qtd. in Dominguez 144)

Gayarré touches upon the linguistic micro-changes that affect a declensed word across time and translation, especially spelling and pronunciation: i.e. crioulo (P), criollo (ES), créole (FR), creole (EN). He also anticipates that declensions can result in a reversal of the original meaning. Above all, Gayarré's intervention indicates how incisively the linguistic and semantic shifts addressed by the declension model mark the history of the word 'creole.' The aim of this paper is, however, to suggest that the same model can be applied to a variety of terms, especially in the vast, entangled realm of Atlantic history. The following pages outline *one* declension that may trace the main oscillations of the term 'creole' and ground them on exemplary texts. It is important to clarify that the declension delineated in this study lays no claims to exhaustiveness. Several declensions can be traced in different geographical locations, as well as grounded on different selections of primary material. Since, as it has been established, declensions imply repeated shifts of meaning and thus generate textual ambiguities, the present analysis will anchor the declension of creoleness in literary and cultural texts to better emphasize, when possible, strategies of ambiguation and disambiguation.

Scholars of creoleness agree that, in the 18th century, 'creole' meant born in the colonies and lacked racial connotations; it equally applied to white, black, or mixed-race individuals. Historian Charles Barthelemy Roussève offers a baptismal record of "a slave from Jamaica, referred to as a 'nègre créole'" (24) from 1779 as evidence that the word 'creole' could designate a black individual. In addition to archival documents such as baptismal records, testaments, court acts, and newspaper clippings, evidence that the term 'creole' until the 19th century equally applied to white Louisianans and Louisianans of color is found in cultural texts as well. Arguably the most prominent artistic expression in the Creole language before the 19th century, creole folk songs inaugurate our declension of creoleness in Louisiana, especially because they are concerned with phenomena of interclass and interracial romance, racial intermingling, passing and visual confusion, and are particularly relevant to studies of textual ambiguities. Probably composed by slaves in the 18th century and further developed in the 19th (Kein 122), creole folk songs narrate of a dynamic society where the crossing of racial and social lines was not anomalous.[3] An illustrative example that the noun 'creole,' until the 19th century, applied to people of color is "Criole Candjo,"[4] a song of undetermined origin, but certainly popular in Louisiana as well. Its protagonist, a "Criole" lad, looks finer than any local white lad ("In zou' in zène Criole Candjo, / Belle passé blanc dan dan là yo," Krehbiel 118). By claiming that he was more handsome than any white lad, the lyrics racially connote the "Criole Candjo" as a person of color, or, to put it with Thompson, an "irresistible Afro-Creole seducer" (258).

The 19th century sets in motion the oscillations that will mark the history of the term, as well as its progressive politicization and racialization. In 1803, the Louisiana Purchase marked the ending of a society that contemplated three main racial categories: the white, European-descended population, the free people of color, and the African American slaves, but from 1803 on "the Creole had to choose a racial designation in the binary system enforced by Protestant Anglo-America" (Kein 282). As the Anglo-American social order relied on a rigid racial binary that split the population into white or black, the creoles of Louisiana – especially the free creoles of color – found themselves in a position of ambiguation, where they were urged to clearly mark their racial affiliation. In 19th-century Louisiana, free people of color pressed against the limits of the Anglo-American social and racial order. Many of them were wealthy and influential citizens, owned slaves, and, most importantly, they felt culturally French and showed little appreciation of the imported American culture (Kein 74).

The poetry anthology *Les Cenelles*, edited by Armand Lanousse in 1845, is illustrative of the predicament of free people of color in Louisiana. The famous anthology is a collection of works by Louisianan authors of color and is acknowledged to be the first collection of African American poetry in U.S. history,[5] but is often "excluded from major anthologies of African American

literature (see Haddox 757). This might be due to the absence of race-related issues: "in the poetic expressions of the contributors to *Les Cenelles*," Latortue and Adams explain, "the tyranny of the color line and the burden of race were to find only rare and subtle acknowledgment" (ix). The elusive racial politics of the collection have made it hard for scholars of American literature invested in a militant concept of Black art [6] to place *Les Cenelles* within either the American or the African American literary canons. In Lanousse's introduction to the volume – which promises to be "a brief, precise exposition of the reasons for the [volume's] existence" (xxxvii) – the racial identity of the authors remains unacknowledged. This, in combination with the consistent adoption of French romantic aesthetics, can be read as a 'whitening' of these authors' experiences. One must also consider, however, that in these years, the category of free people of color was being assimilated into Anglo-American styled blackness and Louisianan creoleness was being equalized with a European-styled whiteness. In this framework, *Les Cenelles* constitutes an ambiguating moment in so far as it resists this polarization by positing a European styled blackness as the basis for an emerging Louisianan literary canon.

The thinness of racial politics in *Les Cenelles* is also reflected in its use of the word 'creole,' which appears sporadically across the anthologized poems and almost consistently in connection with whiteness or no specific racial identity. The addressee of Dalcour's "Lesaveux" (Declaration) is also a "créole" (48), but the speaker makes no reference to her outward appearance; the same is true for the "barde créole" (creole bard) in Armand Lanousse's own "Le Songe: Á Mademoiselle C***" (The Dream: To Ms C***"). In Pierre Dalcour's "Un an d'absence" (One Year of Absence), the speaker never stops loving his "créole aux yeux bleus" (Dalcour in Latortue and Adams 34, blue-eyed creole), his "blonde créole" (Dalcour in Latortue and Adams 36). Camille Thierry's "Ange aux yeux noirs, ange créole" (black-eyed angle, creole angel) has black eyes, but this detail is irrelevant to identify the addressee's racial identity, as "the full black eye; the raven lustre and classic weight of hair" could have been a marker of the "French physiognomy" and therefore, supposedly, of whiteness (Dominguez 133). It is important to note that the influential 1945 English translation of *Les Cenelles* edited by E. M. Coleman is titled *Creole Voices: Poems in French by Free Men of Color*. In Coleman's understanding of the collection's poetics and politics, the category of creoleness gains unequivocal prominence. Coleman's title is antipodal to Lanousse's and his poets' cautious assignation of creoleness, which shows how the politics of the term have significantly shifted.

The ambiguity of creole identity reached its peak with the end of the Civil War and the Abolition of slavery. The category of *gens de couleur libres* was now legally undistinguishable from the former slaves and from the white population – the ambiguity became untenable. The introduction of Jim Crow laws and the segregation of public spaces urged the creoles to clarify their racial affiliation, and practices of disambiguation proliferated as a consequence. In books, pamphlet, articles, and public talks, white Louisianans insistently argued that unblemished white ancestry was a requirement to rightfully be called a 'creole'; Louisianans of color who were not able to claim it were pronounced black and banned from creoleness. It is in Gayarré's "The Creoles of History and the Creoles of Romance" (1885) that a vocabulary of disambiguation manifests itself with particular vigor. Gayarré's lecture is driven by the urge to dispel suspicions that creoles are anything else but white, which he does with palpable frenzy. The concept that creoles are "native[s] of European extraction" (2), "native[s] of pure white blood" (3), and without "a particle of African blood in their veins" (3) is reiterated ad nauseam – much to the author's delight, who, by his own admission, "cannot repeat it too often" (7).

Among the absolutisms that punctuate Gayarré's talk, the metaphorical materiality of his divisive language is particularly striking. He conceives a "line of demarcation – I may say an impassable one – … between what may be called these two halves of the population, and not the slightest cause of pretext was ever given for confounding the one with the other" (2). Later in the text, this 'color line' takes the form of a mountain range: "It raised Alpine heights, nay, it

threw the Andes as a wall between the blacks, or colored, and the natives of France, as well as the natives of Louisiana, or Creoles" (6), and eventually becomes a "barrier of adamant" (10). Gayarré's metaphors are reminiscent of Zygmunt Bauman's more recent image of the barricade in "Modernity and Ambivalence" (1991), which he employs to denote the situations of those social groups that, within the processes of nation-making, "defy classification and explode the tidiness of the grid" (15).

> They are the disallowed mixture of categories that must not mix. They earned their death-sentence by resisting separation. The fact that they would not sit across the barricade had not the barricade been built in the first place would not be considered … a valid defence. (15)

Gayarré's language is one of the forces that contributed to the building of a barricade between whiteness and blackness in a society that under French and Spanish domination had welcomed a certain measure of race and class fluidity, as illustrated by the folk songs and the European-styled blackness of *Les Cenelles*.

What is perhaps most relevant for our study of the ambiguation caused by declensions is the casus belli that animates Gayarré's lecture: a retaliation against the fiction of George W. Cable, especially his novel *The Grandissimes* (1880), for its allegedly unfair depiction of Louisiana creoles. *The Grandissimes* roots the most prominent creole families of Louisiana in a history of interracial marriages, imagining that the head of a prominent creole family of New Orleans, Honoré Grandissime, has a half-brother of color by the same name. What in Gayarré's eyes discredits Cable's novel is his use of textual ambiguities, which many critics identify as a distinctive feature of his writing. [7] Gayarré resents that a fictional creole lady may be "the intimate friend of the colored queen of the Voudous, and a Voudou herself – a Christian and a Voudou – a worshiper of Christ and of the serpent at the same time. Mr. Cable is fond of mixtures" (31-32). The excerpt displays the conflict between ambiguating and disambiguating vocabularies, used by Cable and Gayarré respectively. Gayarré does not waste time investigating the complexity and poignancy of Cable's character, who combines Christianity with Voodoo; quite the opposite, he dismisses it as evidence of the author's fraudulence.

The racial binary imposed on Louisiana after 1803 eventually prevailed. The *Plessy v. Ferguson* court case in 1896 "legally dismantled" the category of free people of color (Kein 131), who were condemned to function, for the most part of the 20th century, "within a legally segregated and unequal environment designed to keep them in degradation and servitude" (Davis 235). The end of the 19th century marks therefore a complete oscillation within the declension, crystallizing the equation between creoleness and whiteness.

The 20th century ushers a new oscillation of the term 'creole' and a new shift in the declension that awards the term different politics and a renewed inclusivity in terms of race. In *The Negro in Louisiana*, a seminal study dated 1937, historian Charles Barthelemy Roussève disproves the claim of "certain southern writers" (Roussève 22) that only whites of pure French and Spanish ancestry could call themselves creoles (see Midlo-Hall 158). Roussève notes that "'free people of color' and their descendants, persons of mixed French, Spanish, negro, and Indian ancestry … have always referred to themselves, when born in Louisiana, as 'Créoles de couloeur'" (24). He then calls upon a significant "body of evidence" to justify his own use of the compound "colored Creole" in his own work, which he has every intention to use "freely" (24). Another text that contributed to the redefinition of the term 'creole' is Joseph G. Tregle's "Early New Orleans Society: A Reappraisal" (1952) (followed by "On That Word 'Creole' Again: A Note" in 1982). In a belligerent register not unlike Gayarré's, Tregle exposes "the creole myth" (21) of aristocratic whiteness as mere fiction, arguing that the association of creoleness with white Europeanness "does demonstrable violence to historical truth" (Tregle 20), while

> it is abundantly clear that in the 1820's and 1830's "Creole" was generally used in Louisiana to designate any person native to the state, be he white, black, or colored,

French, Spanish, or Anglo-American. (23)

After Roussève and Tregle reestablished racial inclusivity, the term shifted again towards yet another connotation that exalted, instead of the 'native' element (in the 20th century this was long past being a marker of difference), the heterogeneity of ancestry. Consequently, for Afro-New Orleaneans in the 1970s, Midlo-Hall notes, "the designations 'black' and 'creole' were irreconcilable" (158). A text, among others, that crystallized a meaning based on heterogeneity is "Éloge de la Créolité," by Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant, which defines creoleness as "mixed culture" (894),[8] "polyphonic harmony" (902), and the "interactional or transactional aggregate of Caribbean, European, African, Asian, and Levantine cultural elements, united on the same soil by the yoke of history" (891). "Éloge" deracializes the category of creoleness in favor of a paradigm that assumes mixed-race ancestry but does not require its mapping: "In multiracial societies, such as ours, it seems urgent to quit using the traditional raciological distinctions and to start again designating the people of our countries, regardless of their complexion, by the only suitable word: Creole" (893).

"Éloge" is a disambiguating as well as an ambiguating gesture. It is disambiguating, as it retains the defining gestures of manifestos. It is ambiguating in so far as it resists the "requirement for transparency," to use Eduard Glissant's phrasing (*Poetics of Relation* 190), that had been essential to the advocates of white creoleness, and aims for a strategic opacity in Glissant's sense: a refusal to be judged according to an alien scale and its intrinsic hierarchies, a "subsistence within an irreducible singularity," where "irreducible" quite literally means the impossibility of being reduced (190). The authors of "Éloge" also integrate ambiguity in their understanding of creoleness, which is – to return with circular motion to the beginning of this section – mindful of contradictions and open to incongruities. Creoleness, according to "Éloge," bears the marks of colonial displacement and "its negation," it springs from both "acceptance and denial," and remains therefore "permanently questioning, always familiar with the most complex ambiguities." The answer to the creole question is thus one that interpellates "immense unknown vastitudes" (892).

"Damned for both Worlds": The Renegade

The previous section suggested that the declension model may help tracing the evolution of the term 'creole' across contingent imperial projects and their post-Empire configurations. Gayarré's ante-litteram conceptualization of what I here term 'declension' confirms the viability of this paradigm for the category of creoleness, and important studies[9] have exhaustively addressed the ambivalence of the creole experience over the centuries. The next step will be to hypothesize declensions for different key terms in Atlantic history to test the viability of this model on a larger scale. The term 'renegade,' for example, lends itself to a similar classification.

The three definitions of 'renegade' provided by the *Oxford Dictionaries* shed light on some important dissonances. The first entry defines 'renegade' as "a person who deserts and betrays an organization, country, or set of principles"; the second shifts the emphasis from the secular to the spiritual, "a person who abandons religion; an apostate," but adds that this meaning is "archaic." The characterization of the renegade as an individual who betrays either country or religion is important to introduce the first shift in the declension, which transfers the term from the religious to the cultural sphere, from apostasy to desertion – although the two categories remain, to a certain degree, enmeshed. The third definition – "A person who behaves in a rebelliously unconventional manner" – gestures at the last part of the 'renegade' declension, where the term indicates a subversive individual existing beyond the law and on the margins, but also, on a more positive note, a revolutionary.

"Rebelliously unconventional" behavior evokes a mixture of criminality and heroism, and it is the oscillation between these two poles that marks the 'renegade' declension. The following pages will highlight salient moments in the evolution of the word from 'renegado' to 'renegade,'[10] from the 17th century until today, with special emphasis

on the shift that allowed "the vilest word in the English language" ("Exploits of Daniel Boone #2") to designate some amongst the "heroes of the American Revolution" (Russell 3). The tension between villainy and heroism generates much of the ambiguity that characterizes this declensed term. It also prompts questions such as when did the term shed its stigma and become associated with anarchic heroism? What historical events enabled this shift? Our example[11] of 'renegade' declension begins with Cotton Mather's anathema against Christian 'renegadoes' in Barbary and ends with present-day texts where 'renegade' is synonymous with the underbelly of society, counterculture (see Russell 20), or rebels and dissidents (see Hamilton 1). As the analysis of Mather's text will show, the second instance of ambiguity embedded in the notion of 'renegade,' in addition to the tension between villainy and heroism, is connected to the identitarian instability implied in this condition. Renegades, Colin Calloway explains "rarely, if ever, completed the transfer of allegiance from one society to another. … The term implies incomplete acculturation. Confusion, not conversion, typified the renegade experience" (44).

Puritan minister Cotton Mather vehemently pronounced himself against renegadoes in two sermons: *Letter to the English Captives, in Africa: From New England* (1698) and *The Glory of Goodness* (1703). In these two sermons, Mather's main concern are the American Christians experiencing captivity in North Africa after their ships had fallen prey to Barbary pirates. The sermons express condolence for their situation in a mostly sympathetic tone, but also contain strikingly severe warnings against "stretch[ing] out their hands unto the Impostor Mahomet, and his accursed Alcoran" (Mather, *Glory* 40), and thus becoming "wretched renegadoes" (Mather, *Letter* 4-5). Mather acknowledges little value in apostasy. The actions of renegadoes are despicable, cowardly, and weak beyond comprehension. "One would have thought," he muses, "that if any thing should have made them turn Infidels, it would have been their Adversity," but "the Renegades ... were those who suffered the least share of Adversity" (Mather, *Glory* 42) and lived in "Gentlemen's Houses" in "Idleness, and Luxury, and Liberty" (43), while those "who toiled" were immune to apostasy (43). These lines indicate that the act of renegation involves culture as much as religion: they imply that, to become a renegado, one first has to breach the Puritan dedication to hard work and frugality. The "total and final backsliding" (43) into apostasy is merely the consequence of a gradual disengagement from Puritan social and communitarian tenets: in other words, the product of a *declension* in its pejorative sense of descent into abjection.

As anticipated, a key concept in Mather's understanding of the renegade experience is confusion. The term occurs twice in *A Pastoral Letter to the English Captives in Africa*, when Mather claims that God has "filled [the renegade] with confusion" (4) and condemned him/her to "Eternal Confusions in another World" (Mather, *Letter* 11). The confusion inherent to the act of renegation is best expressed in the following passage:

> How Forlorn, how Undone, how Damned for both Worlds had you been, if you had been given over to become such vile Deserters? You saw the strange Hand of God, upon Them: You saw them Hated, Loathed, Scorned, both by the Baptised and the Circumcised: You saw they got nothing, but were Temporally more abject than they were before, & Eternally siezed by Chains of Darkness impossible ever to be taken off. (Mather, *Glory* 43)

In this passage, the tone softens and veers towards compassion. Mather does not Other renegades; he does not resort to the less-then-human epithets he reserves for North Africans, such as "dragons" or "monsters" (Mather, *Letter* 10-11). Rather he *ambiguates* them, and casts them in an in-between condition marked by "eternal confusions" (Mather, *Letter* 11), where they are "Damned for both Worlds" and abhorred "both by the Baptized and the Circumcised." Hence, the renegado's is an indecipherable fate, and a less intelligible kind of damnation was reserved to those who, to put it like Calloway, did not complete the transfer of allegiance.

The figure of the renegade gains momentum

on the North American Frontier, where fears of cultural contamination and anxieties regarding territorial hegemony become all the more relevant. In this context, the renegade retains the negative markers one sees in Mather, yet, s/he leaves the margins to occupy an important place in the American mythopoesis. In this context, the renegade "evolved into an embodiment of American paranoia, fear, and guilt" (Barr 1). In the 19th-century United States, the word renegade has veered decisively towards the secular sphere; its main meaning is no longer apostasy or spiritual defection, but cultural transfer. It is mostly applied to individuals who have abandoned white civilization and joined Native American tribes.[12] Figures of "indianized white men" (FitzGerald passim) occupy a significant position in the national mythology. An example of that is the iconic Daniel Boone, who, having fought on the side of the Americans, is not remembered as a renegade. The opposite is true for his infamous "antithesis," Simon Girty (Slotkin, qtd. in Barr 3), who caused significant losses to the American army while fighting for antagonistic Natives tribes. This section will document the next step of the renegade declension – the American Frontier – and its ambiguities through the two 19th-century renegades Edward Rose and Simon Girty, with special emphasis on the oscillation between heroism and villainy.

Popular texts dealing with Frontier renegades such as E. G. Cattermole's *Famous Frontiersmen, Pioneers and Scouts* (1883) and Washington Irving's *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville* (1837) reproduce some of the stereotypes associated with Mather's religious renegades. To begin with, renegades are caught in between worlds. Cattermole explains that Girty fought for the Natives as well as for the Americans with equal fierceness (92). Similarly, in spite of Rose's rapid ascension in the Crows' power ranks, Irving points out that he remains to them "a stranger, an intruder, a white man" (228). Irving views Rose's involvement in tribal politics as detrimental to the tribe itself, which he allegedly pushes to the edge of an intestine war. Both Girty and Rose are remembered for their dissolute morals: the former being a heavy drinker (Cattermole 97), the latter possibly killed by a disease "brought on by his licentious life" (230). Most importantly, both characters are ultimately negative examples or Frontier "antitypes" to use Slotkin's term (291). However, while Mather was categorical in the condemnation of the renegades' deeds, Cattermole's and Irving's final judgments on their atypical 'heroes' show significant margins for ambiguity.

According to Daniel Barr, literature from the 19th century conducted a systematic vilification of Girty that eventually allowed him to reach a mythical status comparable to Daniel Boone's (see 1). Yet, he claims that these texts "labored to expunge all traces of humanity from his myth" and "portra[y] a man who is at best a remorseless killer and at worst an emissary of Satan sent to destroy God's chosen people" (6). Consistently with Barr's reading, *Famous Frontiersmen* frames "the renegade" (Cattermole passim) Simon Girty as a monstrously cruel individual. The chapter begins on an ominous note: "The name of Simon Girty was a synonym for terror. … Savage cruelty gloated over its prominence" (89) and ends on a similar one. Other passages in the text, however, present a different assessment of Girty's life and career, one that challenges the reputation of Girty literature as exclusively vilifying. Cattermole allows that "no champion of savage cruelty ever held such indomitable sway over his barbarous associates" (94). Terms such as "champion" and "indomitable" betray a measure of awe. This posture is not limited to Cattermole but returns in other texts that narrated Girty's life. In *Simon Girty the Outlaw*, Uriah Jones speaks of "the genius of Simon Girty" (qtd. in Barr 7) and James T. Morehead calls him "an incendiary" in his speech "An Address in Commemoration of the First Settlement in Kentucky" (qtd. in Barr 7). Cattermole is even more explicit in pointing out Girty's merits by embedding different voices, like that of one Simon Kenton who never "fail[ed] to think or speak of the renegade, except in the most affectionate manner" and as "fearless, skillful, and heroic" (92). Cattermole also introduces a second chronicler who remembers Girty as "a man of extraordinary strength, power of endurance, courage and sagacity" (98).

The oscillation between villainy and heroism is even more pronounced in Washington Irving's account of the "renegade" (Irving 228) Edward

Rose in *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville.* The narrator often reproduces narratives that construct renegades as a threat: for instance, Rose makes "exceedingly generous" (229) gifts of American goods to his adoptive tribe, a gesture that brings to mind what was known to be "the most infamous of the … renegadoes' achievements," the transfer of technology to the enemy (Fuchs 51). While Girty is known for having inflamed conflict between settlers and Natives, "inciting them to take up arms against the Americans" (Cattermole 93), Irving's account on Rose is surprisingly celebrative of the renegade's talent for diplomacy. Rose "is said … to have opened [the Blackfeet's] eyes to the policy of cultivating the friendship with the white man" (230). The Eurocentric quality of this statement is evident, as Rose is attributed with introducing the Natives to the notion of amicable negotiation, but the narrator doubtlessly speaks of Rose's mediation skills with admiration. [13] The term "hero" appears repeatedly both in Cattermole (92, 96) and Irving (230) with reference to renegades. Irving's "vagabond hero" is particularly worth noting, as it underscores the renegade's "incomplete acculturation" (Calloway 44) and ultimate lack of belonging.

The implications of the term have significantly changed from the previous century and Mather's sermons. In both cases, it remains dense with ambiguity: in Mather the renegado is suspended in a vacuum between two religions, thus, his/her condition and motives remain illegible. The perception of the Frontier renegade oscillates between villainy and heroism, and the figure already gleams with the positive streak that would become dominant in later stages of the declension. Although Mather's text foreshadows the identification of a community of believers with a national community, his renegadoes are primarily religious apostates. In the 19th century, with the burgeoning of an American national conscience, renegades are those who revert the template of the Frontier by choosing 'the wilderness' over 'civilization.' Religious betrayal, however, does not fully cease to be part of the renegade's character. When Cattermole lyrically refers to Girty as "a host of evil spirits" (99), he points at an outcast and a man possessed. But the simile also defines Girty through a vague non-Christian spirituality, suggesting he has left his faith as well as culture.

Positive connotations become dominant in 20th- and 21st-century uses of the term, which identify the figure of the renegade with cultures of resistance. The following paragraphs will center on recent works of non-fiction that carry the word 'renegade' in their title. As a direct follow-up to Frontier renegades, it is worth taking a look at Steven Rinella's article "The Renegade," published on *American Heritage* in 2001, where the conservative white author specifically addresses the thin membrane between heroism and villainy and aims for a re-evaluation of the figure of 17th-century French explorer Etienne Brulé, who lived with the Hurons and was possibly killed by his adoptive tribe. Rinella laments the wave of revisionism that allegedly vilified old pioneers in the 90s and asks whether "maybe the old pioneering villains should be re-examined for heroic attributes." Rinella lingers on Brulé's attempt to boycott his countrymen's imperialist project as an admirable endeavor, but at the same time celebrates Brulé through an exceptionalist vocabulary of Frontier heroism and pioneering, branding these practices as anti-imperial. "It's odd," Rinella notes, "that no one ever discusses Brulé as an early force against globalization, a person defending an indigenous way of life that was fading." In Rinella's evaluation, Brulé becomes an instrument of "anti-imperial imperialism," to use Frank Kelleter's formulation (31): As the author strives to disentangle Brulé front European imperialism, he entangles him in discourses of American exceptionalism. Rinella's renegade is a hero in disguise, "pointed at with scorn on all sides," called a "lunatic" and "a total pagan" (Rinella) by his imperialist countrymen, through his defection to Indian life Brulé becomes enmeshed in practices of American nation-building.

Although it would be necessary to trace a declension of 'renegade' that is exclusive to African American culture, for the moment our analysis will linger on lamentably few instances. The concept of the renegade slave, or the slave who escaped, has been used with reference to Maroon communities in the 17th century.[14] In her book *Renegade Poetics: Black Aesthetics and Formal Innovation in African American*

Poetry (2011), poet and critic Evie Shockley uses the word renegade to describe "the rebellious, nonconformist approaches the poets in [her] study have taken in their aesthetics" (15). She also draws attention to Harryette Mullen's use of the word 'renegade' in her poem "Denigration," which Mullen intersperses with words containing the morpheme 'neg' or 'nig' but with remote or no etymological connection with Blackness, such as "denigration" itself, "enigma," "neglect," "negligible," "negate," and others, among which "renegade." Mullen draws an arch between Maroons and Spanish renegades, reflecting, as a matter of fact, on the term's declension from the Spanish to the English context: "Though Maroons, who were unruly Africans, not loose horses or lazy sailors, were called renegades in Spanish, will I turn any blacker if I renege on this deal?" (Mullen 19). In the logics of "Denigration," none of these words, including renegade, "can escape the racial connotation" (Shockley 15).

An empowering use of the term 'renegade' in *Poetics* can be found not only in the book's corpus, but in its paratext as well. Shockley dedicates the book to a list of names, and then adds "Renegades, All." Through this gesture, Shockley reclaims and repossesses the term 'renegade,' divesting it of its derogatory value and infusing it not only with subversive power, but also with love. The author's emotional commitment to the "renegades" she dedicates her book to adds up to her reclaiming of the word in her title and argument. Shockley not only repossesses the word intellectually to indicate a subversive aesthetic, but also emotionally to honor the character and work of a community of individuals dear to her. The act of reclamation is therefore both public and private.

A similar repossession through emotional investment involves Maroon descendant David Williams. In an interview with BBC, Williams defines Maroons as "marauders, renegades who would live in the hills and come down to try to free the other slaves, steal livestock and fight the white landowners." Williams equates renegades with "marauders" but also with agents of resistance who sabotaged slave owners – "a thorn in the side of the English planters" ("The Rebel Slave") – in solidarity with fellow slaves. "I feel quite proud to be honest," Williams continues, "I wouldn't say I'm a renegade, and I don't resent authority but I think there's a bit of that in me now today." In this last comment, Williams, too, equates renegades with individuals who "resent authority," but, most importantly, he admits that this label makes him "proud." William's standpoint is reminiscent of bell hooks, when in *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (1989), she explains that her pseudonym is a tribute to a distant relative who 'talked back': "I claimed this legacy of defiance, of will, of courage, affirming my link to female ancestors who were bold and daring in their speech" (hooks 210). Both William and Shockley proudly participate in a community defined by the act of renegation as subversion.

This shows that renegades currently occupy a desirable position in the American imagination, as contemporary authors – albeit from opposite sides of the political and race spectrum – show a generalized investment in establishing a continuity, be it familial, ideological, or emotional, between renegades of the early Americas and of today. Rinella urges his readers to reconsider Etienne Brulé's exploits; Williams, Shockley, and Mullen highlight the continuity between Maroon communities and present-day forms of Black activism. While Cattermole dismisses Girty's personality as "unenviable" (92), current assessments of the renegade experience show otherwise. It might be helpful at this point to remember Gayarré's ante-litteram definition of declension, according to which a word could assume "a meaning that is the very reverse of its primitive signification" (Gayarré, qtd. in Dominguez 144). Gayarré claims this is the case for 'creole,' but the same can be said about 'renegade.'

In "Tense and Tender Ties," Ann Stoler invites us to use comparisons as windows onto interactions across borders, with an eye on universal principles and the ways in which they are applied in different imperial spaces (see 847). Moving away from universal principles in favor of a more limited focus on the microhistory of single concepts and figurations, this analysis tests the declension as a practice of comparison. By observing the reorganization of racial, moral, and religious constellations around the life span of a word, declensions reverse the act of translation, which is at the

basis of the comparative endeavor. While translation seeks different words to express (almost) identical meanings across languages and cultures, declension traces the different meanings articulated by (almost) identical words. They bring to light what Glissant in *Le discours antillais* calls "equivalences that do not unify" (466), mapping the drastic semantic oscillations of words that remain substantially unvaried across centuries and empires.

Endnotes

[1] The research work that led to these result was carried out in collaboration with Barbara Buchenau. This article builds on a argument developed in Buchenau, "'Neophytes', ‚renegados', ‚creoles': Dynamiken der (Dis) Ambiguierung in nordamerikanischen Diskussionen des Wandels vom Kolonialismus zur Nationalstaatlichkeit." The argument was part of an application for a Research Group (Forschergruppe) titled "Ambiguität und Unterscheidung: Historisch-kulturelle Dynamiken," which Barbara Buchenau, along with other Principal Investigators, submitted to the DFG (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft) in 2018. The funding for the Research Group proposal, coordinated by Benjamin Scheller and based at the University of Duisburg-Essen (Historisches Institut), was approved in September 2018. For more information see the Research Group's description at https://www.mercur-research.de/projekte/ambiguitaet-und-gesellschaftliche-ordnung/

[2] My understanding of ambiguity derives from Scheller et al. 2018. See also Hoffarth and Scheller, *Ambiguität und die Ordnungen des Sozialen im Mittelalter* (2018): esp. the introduction tot he volume: "Ambiguität und die Ordnungen des Sozialen im Mittelalter: Zur Einführung."

[3] One example among many others of these multiple crossings is the song "Vous t'e in Morico!" ("You are a Blackamoor!" Monroe 37), inspired by the true story of a woman who sued a neighbor who insinuated that she was of mixed-race descent. The speaker begins the song by revealing Toucouyoute's attempt to pass as white, depicting a liminal figure that dwells at the intersection of class and race. "Toucouyoute, mo connain vous, vous t'é in morico!" ("Toocooyute, too well I know, a Blackamoor are you!" Monroe, 37). It is only after the speaker's revelation that Toocooyute's blackness may obstacle the addressee's social ascendance, as before, one assumes, Toocooyute passed as white: one has to know her "too well" to know she is not. See Thompson, "'Ah Toucoutou, ye conin vous': History and Memory in Creole New Orleans."

[4] M. L. E. Moreau de Saint-Méry describes the Candio as "un africain ou nègre créol, occupé de plaisir, et chérissant sur-tout la danse" (Moreau de Saint-Méry in Jenson,254).

[5] See Langer Cohen and Stein 253; Jaynes 506; and the entry on "Les Cenelles" in *Oxford References*, http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095558100.

[6] For a discussion of Black Aesthetics see Shockley 2011. Especially 2-3, where Shockley questions a vision of Black art as necessarily "associated with militant, revolutionary politics and angry, incisive criticism of white supremacy and racial oppression" (2-3).

[7] Aylin Turner speaks of a poetics of "mild incongruity" (14), Ekstrom notes that Cable's editors believed that the author's "greatest fault" was "confusion" (Gilder, qtd. in Ekstrom 88). Finally, the English newspaper *Saturday Review* wrote that "a certain dimness of style" gave Cable's writing a "hazy effect" (qtd. in Ekstrom 154).

[8] Translations by Mohamed B. Taleb Khyar, published in *Callaloo* in 1990.

[9] In addition to those mentioned in the former section, see the seminal texts by Bauer and Mazzotti (eds.) 2009 and Goudie 2006.

[10] For information on the comparable figure of the *Dönme*, the Jewish convert to Islam in Turkey, refer to the work of Kader Konuk, especially "Eternal Guests, Mimics, and Dönme: The Place of German and Turkish Jews in Modern Turkey" (2007).

[11] It is important to reiterate that multiple declensions are possible.

[12] See also Barbara Buchenau's work on cultural conversion in Early America, especially "The Captive's Crucible: Haudenosaunee Violence in Early North American Narratives of Christian and Cultural Conversion" (2013); "Ethnic Performance and the Self-Representation of Frederick Philip Grove" (2012); "The Goods of Bad Mobility: Pierre-Esprit Radisson's Relation of my Voyage, being in Bondage in the Lands of the Irokoits, 1669/1885" (2012); and "Alternate Identities and Creolities in Canadian Literary Discourse" (2008).

[13] The narrator also tributes Rose with the resolution of another "tumult" (230) between Natives and settlers. The episode is similarly Eurocentric and the narration is confusing as to who originates the conflict, but eventually the narrator blames the Natives, who "became insolent" (230).

[14] Maroon' was "the name given by English speakers to black people who ran away from slavery to live in isolated, hidden communities in the hills of Jamaica or the South Carolina swamps" (Schockley 15). For more information on the connection between renegade and Maroons, see also Lokken 2014, and Vaughan 2012.

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FORUM FOR INTER-AMERICAN RESEARCH (FIAR) VOL. 12.1 (JUN. 2019) 116-125
ISSN: 1867-1519

'Early' and 'Modern' indigenist Practices – A Comparative Analysis of the Ecuadorian and the Mexican cases [1]

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Abstract

The field of indigenism has been studied from a wide range of perspectives since the 1970s. The reflections presented in the following essay are part of an attempt to contribute to these efforts from a different angle. Studies of indigenism usually focus on the official indigenist politics and on the scientific approaches that legitimate them. On the following pages I will try to go beyond these approaches in order to understand the significance of the practice which makes indigenism possible in the first place, comparison. Practices of comparison are not only the foundation of science, but of thinking. In concrete terms, the objective of the present work will be to reflect on how 'modern' indigenist practices in the 1940s were influenced by 'earlier' comparisons in the form of structured structures and structuring structures in Bourdieusian sense. For this purpose, I will analyze and contextualize the early contributions of Mexican and Ecuadorian institutional indigenists to the official journal of the InterAmerican Indian Institute named América Indígena and relate them with 'earlier' indigenist production.

Keywords: Indigenism, Practices of Comparison, Cultural Anthropology, Social Anthropology

Introduction

Indigenism, understood as a political and cultural movement whose starting point may be situated at the verge of the 19th century, was triggered by the imperious necessity of rethinking, renegotiating and redefining the relations between indigenous and non-indigenous populations within the context of the consolidation of 'modern' national projects in post-colonial America. In disregard of the diversity of motivations, notions and actors present during the phases of formation and consolidation of the movement, indigenism is today basically associated with the work of the *Instituto Indigenista Interamericano* (I.I.I.), which was an institution created in 1940 by governmental delegates of the whole continent – excepting Canada, Haiti and Paraguay – in an attempt to coordinate and regulate the production and development of indigenist notions, ideals and policies. The 'institutionalization' of the movement at this level was only the first step within a series of (geo)political-administrative measures which also included the creation of equivalent institutions on a national level, the 'professionalization' of indigenists and the consolidation of specific forms of international cooperation – a sort of 'development politics' *avant la lettre*.

The predominant conception of 'institutional indigenism' being the 'real' indigenism represents precisely a huge obstacle in the matter of studying this phenomenon in its whole dimension and complexity. Built on the premise that replacing the common top-down institutional approach with a non-structural bottom-up approach is not enough in order to overcome this limitation, the following work will remove the focus on indigenism as an ensemble of notions, ideals and policies negotiated and applied within an institutional frame, in order to place it on how indigenists reflected while developing and legitimating such notions and ideals in the very first place. This approach, which could be defined as a *second-order approach* in analogy to the Luhmanian concept of *second-order observation* – focus on how observers observe –, will concentrate therefore on the elementary social practice with which humans perceive and

interpret 'reality' in order to build their notions and ideals, namely *comparison*. The application of this perspective has two primary objectives: on the first place to demonstrate that 'modern' indigenist notions and ideals are significantly connected to 'earlier' *practices of comparison* and, in second place, to contribute with some theoretical considerations which could be useful to study this matter in the future.

Concretely, the following essay will analyze how some practices of comparison belonging to what I call 'early colonial indigenism' – the production of indigenist notions and ideals in the early colonial period – remain the core of 'modern' institutional indigenist notions and ideals during the first decade of institutional life of the I.I.I. For this purpose, I have chosen to focus on the 'modern' institutional indigenist production of two paradigmatic national cases, namely Mexican and Ecuadorian institutional indigenism, and the early colonial indigenist production of two well known 'Indian rights advocates' which I would rather call 'early colonial indigenists', namely Vasco de Quiroga (1470/78-1565) and Bartolomé de las Casas (1484-1566). [2] On the following paragraphs I will reflect about the practices of comparison present in the most important articles published by representatives of Mexico and Ecuador in the official scientific publication of the I.I.I. called *América Indígena* from 1941 until 1950, and relate those practices with the ones present in the work of Quiroga and Las Casas. The theoretical frame used in order to approach the following analysis consist of some sociological reflections developed by Pierre Bourdieu for studying the *habitus* and the *political field*.

It is important to highlight that the focus of the present work will be laid on the production of those institutional Indigenists who were able to publish their articles in *América Indígena*, which automatically leaves aside the contributions of other institutional actors and of those who weren't aligned with institutional indigenism, as it is the case for example of indigenous organizations.

Structuring Structures - Mexico

In his book *Le sense Pratique* (*Sozialer Sinn*) Pierre Bourdieu argues that conditioning related to circumstances of human existence create systems of durable and transmittable dispositions, which he identified as *habitus*. The most decisive aspect of these *systems of dispositions* isn't however their role as *structured structures* – as Bourdieu describes them –, but their capability of transforming through repetitive application into durable and transmittable *structuring structures* (98). In this new form, systems of dispositions do not only explain the consolidation of certain practices but, more importantly, their perdurability. Although Bourdieu recognizes the existence of strategically conceived actions and reactions apparently independent from this dynamic, he also let us understand, that structuring structures strongly influence the way actors order their ideas before they can think strategically. Analog to the theoretical premise that stimuli can only generate certain reactions in actors who are conditioned to perceive them, it is conceivable that institutional indigenists thought in a similar way as some of their predecessors precisely because they were strongly influenced by concrete systems of dispositions which never ceased to exist, especially due to their continuous improving adaptability to new contexts.

The first article published on the first number of *América Indígena* (1941) was written by no other than the first director of the I.I.I. and Chief of Indigenous Matters of the Mexican government, the historian and educator Luis Chávez Orozco. It is necessary to emphasize that this first article, due to its foundational character, enjoyed not only a high level of legitimacy between indigenists but also considerable authority. In fact, the 9th article of the convention which gave birth to the I.I.I. states that the director of the institute will need to have "recognized competence in indigenous matters and her/his own *comparative knowledge* about the indigenous problem" (my translation and my cursive) (InterAmerican Indian Institute 16).

In this article entitled "Chiapas de los Indios", Chávez Orozco takes a critical stance on the colonial period, especially regarding its socioeconomic aspects, and compares the contributions of the two indigenous rights advocates mentioned above: Bartolomé de Las Casas and Vasco de Quiroga. Chávez Orozco

argues that Las Casas was a demagogue whose legacy was long forgotten by Indians because it only took place in the world of ideas, while Quiroga – or "Tata Vasco el Bueno", as he is supposedly remembered in Michoacán – was worshiped by Indians because he gave them the technical and artistic knowledge required for economic survival within the new colonial order (8). Although Chávez Orozco didn't make explicit statements in regard to his own indigenist notions and ideals, he clearly positioned himself with help of the comparison of how these two early colonial indigenists compared: while Las Casas fought for the recognition of the 'humanity' of Indians, Quiroga`s emphasis was the social and economic transformation and assimilation of Indians. As a historian, Chávez Orozco actively adjusted national history in order to permit the perdurability of concrete structuring structures by delegitimizing 'conflicting' figures. Furthermore, by choosing this specific historical comparison for such an important occasion, Chávez Orozco essentially confirmed the existing connection between early colonial and institutional 'modern' indigenism.

Returning to Chávez Orozco's comparison of both priests, it is unquestionable that he was aware of the importance of Las Casas' contribution regarding the legal status of Indians during the colonial period and even beyond. [3] Las Casas was one of the main actors within the theological-philosophical debates which took place in the first half of the 16th century, contributing decisively to dismantling the common idea that Indians should be classified as *barbarians*. This Idea, product of the Aristotelian-Aquinian theological tradition, which could be understood as an even 'earlier' form of indigenism, considered *barbarians* as not-humans and therefore "slaves by nature" (Pagden 16). [4] Las Casas's position in this regard didn't question the existence of barbarians and the right of western Christian kingdoms to enslave them, [5] but merely the assumption that Indians belonged to this category. The success of Las Casas and those who shared his ideas, however, created the necessity to rethink the category 'human' since, even as equitable royal subjects, it was 'unthinkable' that Indians could be considered completely equal to white western European Christians. [6] Besides contributing to the official abolition of Indian slavery, Las Casas's merit, from a comparative perspective, was the overcoming of 'classical' ethnological comparisons based on *similitudes* towards ethnological comparisons capable of building complex human categories. For this purpose, Las Casas and some of his adherents helped to establish the *tertium comparationis* 'culture' instead of 'nature' as the basis for new comparisons. In this sense, Indians could be categorized as humans because they proved to be able to create institutions, laws, language and complex social structures – besides proving to be susceptible to religious conversion –, but were classified as 'culturally inferior' in comparison to white western European Christians, who represented the highest cultural stage. [7]

Chávez Orozco's conflict with the figure of Las Casas certainly didn´t rest in his legal achievements, but in the establishment of 'culture' as the principal parameter of comparison. The comparison between Las Casas and Quiroga took place at a time in which cultural anthropology, as the legitimate scientific approach to study human diversity, was being displaced by social anthropology. The difference between both schools laid in the possibility of its application. In general terms, for cultural anthropology the idea of culture couldn't be hierarchical because it is essentially incomparable (*cultural relativism*). The 'modern' cultural anthropological approach tried to explain processes of *acculturation* mainly from a comparative historical perspective without the explicit intention of applying this knowledge for practical purposes. On the contrary, social anthropology opted for the tertium comparationis 'social'. All existing tertia comparationis, even cultural elements, were declared primarily social. The main goal of this approach was to enable a systematization of knowledge and therefore the creation of 'universal rules' to be applied for practical purposes (Barth 119). Once this was accomplished it was possible to compare every society, identify 'common problems' and create generic strategies to deal with them. [8] Social anthropology needed to be pragmatic and focused on the present. The categorizations made by cultural anthropology, even if they did recognize the existence of a cultural hierarchy,

didn't understand 'backwardness' necessarily as a 'problem', but as an outcome of a unique constellation of factors – cultural, economic, social and even environmental – which influenced the cultural development of a certain group. Asymmetrically, social anthropology understood 'backwardness' as the consequence of identifiable social 'deficiencies' or 'problems' which needed to be overcome. 'Backwardness', in this sense, gave each group a value, introducing new normative categories like 'miserable' or 'decadent'. [9] The consolidation of the global categories 'poor' or 'underdeveloped', which occurred only one decade after the creation of the I.I.I., is certainly a further consequence of the application of this logic.

Although the cultural approach of Las Casas and the scientific approach of cultural anthropology are significantly different, Chávez Orozco's intention was to make a statement regarding the scientific-political identity of the new institute. In this sense, his article must be understood as a strategic statement. There are several aspects why the establishment of social anthropology as the leading scientific-political basis of comparison was so important: social anthropology was promoted by some of the most important universities and research institutes of the United States, very much linked to governmental institutions and the country's economic elite; its 'modern' functional-structuralist character imported from Great Britain and the possibility of employing it as a domination mechanism to administrate colonial or subordinate subjects made it a strategic project of 'national security'; the consolidation of the national projects depended completely on the solution to the so-called 'Indian problem'; etc. The master-minds of the creation of the I.I.I. – for example the US American John Collier, and the Mexicans Juan Comas and Manuel Gamio – were all sympathizers of this school. A country like Mexico, with great influence in the formation of ideas in Latin America was, with the strategic support of the United States, predestined to lead the continental efforts toward a new era of relations between Indians and Non-Indians using the most effective means. [10]

At this point is where the figure of Quiroga becomes crucial. Inspired by the work *Utopia* from Thomas Moore (1478-1535) and the *Leyes de Indias* – especially the *Leyes de Burgos* (1512) –, Quiroga believed that in order to overcome slavery, exploitation and discrimination, it was necessary to 'convert' Indians into productive royal subjects. For this purpose, Quiroga created the so-called "Town Hospitals", which were settlements constructed following European urban patterns, where Indians should live a European life. The Indians who were carefully chosen for this matter couldn't leave the towns without permission, had to live in artificial patriarchal family units, had to learn specific skills in order to work in regular time schemes and were obligated to abandon their languages and traditions in order to speak Spanish and become exemplary Christians. Besides expressing his admiration for Quiroga's ideals, Chávez Orozco built an analogy between Quiroga and a certain Bishop Olivera, who applied a similar strategy 200 years later in the same *comparative space* (Chiapas, Mexico). Chávez Orozcos' description of Vasco de Quiroga as a venerated man who was rightly sanctified by the church shows furthermore how indigenists from countries with a deep rooted Christian tradition saw themselves: as a 'modern' version of exemplary missionaries. [11]

The main similarity between Quiroga, Olivares and the social anthropological approach promoted by the first director of the I.I.I. was certainly the proper formulation of the 'Indian Problem' as a socioeconomic problem. It is not possible to 'accuse' Chávez Orozco of apparently neglecting 'culture', because he belonged to those indigenists who favored the idea of constructing 'plurinational' States in which Indians could enjoy autonomy granted due to their strong cultural identity (Giraudo 28). A possible explanation for the inconsistencies between a 'Town Hospital Model' and a 'Plurinational State Model' regarding 'culture' would be clearly the prioritization of the administrative dimension. In this sense, the importance of 'culture' as a comparative parameter wasn't inexistent, but simply limited to the scope of 'recognizing' Indian cultural units and identifying their cultural characteristics in order to develop autonomy projects under governmental *indirect administration*, which

is precisely the political function that social anthropology played, especially in regions under colonial control. This interpretation coincides with Giraudo's observation that Chávez Orozco`s favor for Indian political autonomy derives from his closeness to the Marxist – Stalinist – theory of "Oppressed Nations", which precisely claims for socioeconomic equality in a federal political model based on cultural identity (28). Within this comparative context Chávez Orozco published his second article for *América Indígena* entitled "The Democratic Institutions of Mexican Indians during the Colonial Period" (my translation), in which he praises the capacity of Indians to rule their own matters in a political system which grants them a certain autonomy.

The focus on 'culture' for recognizing and identifying purposes is a constant within the Mexican contributions to *América Indígena*. Alfonso Caso, a recognized Mexican archeologist and educator, affirms in his article "Definition of Indian and the Indian" (my translation) that it is imperative to find a definition for "Indian" which could remain valid "forever", projecting this certain way of comparing to the endless future (240). The Mexican anthropologist Manuel Gamio states in his article "Considerations about the Indian Problem in America" (my translation) that more social investigations should be made in order to make the "right classifications" and avoid giving other population groups the "treatments for social improvement" (my translation) designed for Indians (18). The Mexican journalist Javier Uranga, who wrote two articles for *América Indígena*, went so far to even entitle one of his articles "Don Vasco de Quiroga, what we need to do for Indians" (my translation). Uranga agreed so much with Quiroga's practices that he transcribed all the rules of the "Town Hospitals" in his article, indirectly affirming that they should still be taken literally in the present (58).

Abstract Notions and Ideals - Ecuador

The Mexican case presented before illustrates clearly how practices of comparison associated with 'modern' institutional indigenism are the result of the reproductivity and perdurability, but also of the active and conscious adaptation of earlier practices of comparison. Quiroga's 'progressive' early colonial indigenism will remain valid under the eyes of those who choose to interpret 'reality' with the help of a comparative constellation constructed around social and not cultural comparative parameters. The example of the "Town Hospitals" illustrates how 'differences' can transform into 'problems' and how socioeconomic 'disparities' could be understood as 'deficiencies'. Furthermore, the administrative ambition of 'progressive' early colonial indigenism represents the core of 'modern' institutional indigenism.

In countries where 'progressive' early indigenist production was isolated and remained mostly 'unregistered' in the collective memory, the link between institutional indigenism and 'modern' practices of comparison was weak or non-existent. The Ecuadorian experience with the 'reactivation' of 'progressive' early indigenist practices of comparison, like for example through historical narratives, nation building projects or revolutions – all being decisive in the Mexican case –, was rather bleak. Because of the perpetuation of the *Hacienda* domination system and its interweaving in the social and political dimensions – including religion –, all attempts to alter the status quo were considered not only an attempt to destabilize the country, but also an attempt to destabilize the 'natural order'. The increasing influence of *Haciendas* in the history of colonial and republican Ecuador shows furthermore how the consolidation of a certain domination system correlates positively with the consolidation of a specific way of comparing, namely the one which understands Indians as naturally 'others'. [12] The perpetuation of the notion of a 'natural order' – structured structure – in which Indians are conceived as 'others' is therefore the direct consequence of the perdurability of certain de-humanizing practices of comparison – structuring structures –, like the ones Las Casas tried to delegitimize in the famous "Valladolid Debate" and throughout his whole life.

Although the majority of Ecuadorian early institutional indigenists supported the practice-oriented 'progressive' agenda of the I.I.I., the local *comparative universe* – cognitive frame – in which they were used to compare and upon

which the national power structures were built was still dominated by the aforementioned abstract comparisons. Therefore, the incompatibilities between the agenda of the I.I.I. and the Ecuadorian *indigenist field* – in allusion to Bordieu's concept of the *political field* – can't be reduced to institutional-political weaknesses like the lack of financing and political support, as Marroquín (173-178) and Becker (51, 54) suggest, but laid mainly on comparative conflicts. [13] Becker confirms this assumption when he states that the *Instituto Indigenista Ecuatoriano* (I.I.E.) "was largely limiting its activism to well-meaning liberal pronouncements" (51). As a matter of fact, on an institutional level Ecuador was one of the leading members in the early phase of institutional indigenism: the country was a founding member of the I.I.I., it created its own Indian Institute – I.I.E. – before others did (1943), the countries' government was the first south American government to ratify its adherence to the program and its institution was the first one to publish its own journal in the whole continent – although it stopped being published after only four issues – (46). However, at the same time, the I.I.E. excluded indigenous actors from the project although their main organization, the *Federación Ecuatoriana de Indios* (F.E.I.), had a very much progressive position toward indigenism and was perfectly aware of the continental developments in this matter, which can be observed in the pages of Ñu*canchil Allpa*, their own newspaper. A clear example of how strong these comparative structures were and how they kept existing even decades after the creation of the I.I.E. is the application of the agrarian reform law in the 1960s, from which not only Indians but also peasants and institutional actors with 'progressive' views were excluded (Eisenlohr 127).

The common image of 20th century pre-institutional Ecuadorian indigenism was a combination between 19th century 'romantic' indigenism' – especially literary – and the ideals of the failed liberal revolution of the first decade of the 20th century. The invisibility of socialist and indigenous indigenism due to political and 'natural-order' concerns was reinforced by the 'professionalization' of indigenism, in which mainly *mestizo* lawyers and sociologists with 'moderate' comparative views were allowed. The 'father' of Ecuadorian indigenism, Pío Jaramillo Alvarado, fitted well within this frame: he had a juridical and a sociological background, had occupied several governmental appointments and had academic experience. His first book titled *The Ecuadorian Indian* (my translation) (1922) is generally considered the first and the most important Ecuadorian indigenist contribution besides literary pre-institutional production. [13] Jaramillo Alvarado's pre-institutional indigenism lacked a real connection to any specific anthropological school or 'indigenist tradition'. In this regard, Jaramillo Alvarado's legacy has elements that could be found in social and in cultural anthropology as well as in Peruvian and Mexican indigenism: sometimes he argued that Indians should become participants of the market economy, sometimes he argued that Indians should return to their *Ayllus* "in order to find their values as social unity" (my translation) (Moreno Yánez 57).

As said before, while Mexican indigenism intended to assimilate Indians into a white-mestizo national project through methods of induced acculturation following the example of Quiroga's "Town Hospitals", Ecuadorian indigenism was still very much concerned with understanding and negotiating the idea of an 'Indian nature', something which Las Casas had done five centuries before. Although Las Casas indeed spent some time actively trying to protect Indians from the *Encomienda* – an 'early' version of the *Hacienda* –, his practical interventions were mostly directed toward Spaniards. Las Casas struggled to create a common sense between the Church, the *Encomenderos* and the authorities regarding the treatment of Indians based on a reconception of their 'nature'. *Encomiendas* were only wrong if they disrespected the right of Indians to be treated as colonial subjects with the same rights as Spaniards, although from a lower cultural level. Analogically, Jaramillo Alvarado was an active defender of Indian rights, but he didn't question the legitimacy of the white-mestizo social order based on racial and cultural hierarchies naturalized by the *Hacienda* system. The stronger similarities between Jaramillo Alvarado and Las Casas's approach can be found ironically in Jaramillo Alvarado's discourse

at the *First InterAmerican Indianist Congress* in Pátzcuaro, where the I.I.I. was created and where Las Casas is buried:

> It is more urgent to educate the landowner [*Hacendado*] in his responsibility as an owner in the comprehension of what the Indian means as human capital, as an instrument of production and consumption, than providing the assistance to Indians at the rural schools (my translation) ("Situación Política, Económica y Jurídica" 77).

In contrast to the recurrent participation of Mexican institutional indigenists in *América Indígena*, Jaramillo Alvarado, despite being Ecuador's main indigenist, only published one article. Disappointingly, his article entitled "Situation of indigenism throughout the continent" (my translation) is a simple summary of reflections about the different indigenist contexts existing in America. Nevertheless, it fortunately entails at least some statements which allow us to find more consistencies between his indigenism and the abstract debates about the nature of Indians which took place in the 16th century. Regarding the indigenist context in the United States, Jaramillo Alvarado argues that the 'real problem' in that country weren't Indians but 'Blacks'. With the following commentary Jaramillo Alvarado clearly positions 'Blacks' in a lower racial-cultural stage as 'Whites' and Indians, just like Las Casas did when he suggested that more slaves should be imported from Africa in order to relieve Indians from work based on the conception that Indians could be able to reach a higher cultural level, but 'Blacks' couldn't:

> The North American problem with minorities is not the Indian but the fifteen million Blacks embedded in the main cities of the Union. It is possible to suppose, that if they could turn those millions into North American Indians they wouldn't hesitate (my translation) ("Situación del Indigenismo" 128).

This dehumanization of 'Blacks', which constitutes one of the biggest critiques to Las Casas's early colonial indigenism, is also present in the work of another Ecuadorian institutional indigenist, Humberto García Ortiz. García Ortiz was one of the many lawyers-sociologists who worked with Jaramillo Alvarado in the foundation of the I.I.E., where he was appointed head of the Sociological Department. In 1942 García Ortiz wrote his only article in *América Indígena* with the title "Considerations about an Indian legislation in Ecuador" (my translation) in which he analyzed the advantages and disadvantages of creating an exclusive – paternalistic – legislation for Indians within the Ecuadorian legal system. However, real hints about his pre-indigenist notions and ideals can be found in a book published before 1940. During the research for his book "Short exposition of the results obtained in the sociological investigation of some indigenous communities in the Province of Imbabura" (my translation), García Ortiz came in contact unintentionally with some Afro-Ecuadorian communities living in the Chota basin. His sociological reflections about this experience are resumed in a subchapter titled "Chota". In this subchapter García Ortiz argues that 'Blacks' can't be the object of study of sociology but rather of a kind of 'infrasociology' "because sociology studies the spirit and 'Blacks' belong to the world of nature" (my translation) (Ayala Mora 273).

The second Ecuadorian indigenist of importance after Jaramillo Alvarado was the sociologist Victor Garcés. Garcés assisted the *First InterAmerican Indianist Congress* in 1940 together with Jaramillo Alvarado, was the second director of the I.I.E., and very much involved in the first years of institutional life of the *House of the Ecuadorian Culture* in Quito. His pre-institutional experience was largely the product of his cooperation with the *International Labor Organization* (I.L.O.), for whom he worked as a representative in Indian affairs. The categorization 'Indian race' and the adjectives 'backward' and 'miserable' were often used in the documents in which he worked, which suggests that his indigenism was influenced by some 'modern' practices of comparison. In a document from 1946 with the title "Living Conditions of the Indigenous Populations in American Countries" (my translation) he referred to all American Indians as "deadweight holding

back progress" (*Living Conditions* 1). Garcés wrote a total of four articles for *América Indígena*. His indigenism can be better appreciated in his first article titled "The sociability of Indians" (my translation), which was published in 1942. In this article the author explicitly agrees with the evolutionist Herbert Spencer in the existence of an evolutionary social scale whose highest point is the 'social stage' to which of course only 'Whites' and 'Mestizos' belong. [15] His concrete proposal was that the I.I.I. create a valid classification of human settlements on basis of their economic, cultural and social conditions. He argued that Ecuadorian Indians, especially those who he defines as "Indians in their first quality" (my translation), which could be understood as 'Indians in their natural form', don't have 'social feelings' and that their nexus with other individuals are never deep, implying that their settlements belonged to the lowest evolutionary stage ("Sociabilidad del Indio" 63-66). Sharing Garcés's racial views, the famous Ecuadorian Doctor Pablo Arturo Suárez states in his only article in *América Indígena* with the title "The Real Situation of the Indian in Ecuador" (my translation), that Indians suffer "under the degenerative force of their own race" (my translation) (62).

Probably the last Ecuadorian institutional indigenist of importance and at the same time the first Ecuadorian institutional indigenist with a real anthropological background was Gonzalo Rubio Orbe. Rubio Orbe's first book was published as late as 1947. Becker denotes that Rubio Orbe was "very influenced in his interpretations by social science trends in Mexico" (49), which describes an important consequence of the institutionalization of the *political field* and the professionalization of indigenists. This aspect was already discussed by Bourdieu when he suggested that the production of notions and ideals could be monopolized by institutions. Coinciding with Bourdieu's opinion, Blanchette interprets the role of the I.I.I. as a *clearinghouse*, namely a place where knowledge is being centrally depurated, produced and transmitted (33). Rubio Orbe published two works for the *Instituto Indigenista Interamericano*, one in the journal *América Indígena* in 1949, and one in 1965. In both texts he affirms that education is the best way to 'incorporate' Indians to 'progress' in accordance to institutional indigenism priorities. In 1971 Rubio Orbe was elected director of the *InterAmerican Indian Institute* and went to live in Mexico. Since his appointment as director, Rubio Orbe stopped publishing articles with his own indigenists opinions – although he kept teaching and writing elsewhere – in order to use this space for supporting the achievements of institutional indigenism and commemorating the life work of some of the first institutional indigenists – especially of those with social anthropological views –, something similar to Chávez Orozco's commemoration of Quiroga's work. The idea of 'Indian nature' isn't present in the work of Rubio Orbe.

Conclusion

The arguments presented here must be contrasted with the case of other countries and backed up by further contextual investigations. Nevertheless, the present approach has already proven to be of great use in order to achieve the main objectives of this paper, namely, to prove that indigenism as a practice doesn't have a 'before and after' because it is based on comparison. Practices of comparison are timeless in the sense that 'early comparisons' are always decisive components of future comparisons even if they claim to be 'new' or 'modern'. Thanks to the analysis of the Mexican and Ecuadorian cases, it was possible to observe how practices of comparison can acquire their own dynamic by becoming *structuring structures* and not only *structured structures*. The comparison between Mexico and Ecuador shows furthermore how the institutionalization of practices can accelerate this process considerably – as seen in the case of the later Ecuadorian indigenists. Regarding the specific case of the abstract comparison of 'human nature,' it would be very interesting to observe how this idea evolved through time – not disappearing – and how it influenced different practices and further ideas like racism and eugenics. In the specific case of Ecuador, it would be interesting to analyze how the development of a weak national indigenism enable the consolidation of the strongest indigenous movement in the continent, precisely

the contrary as in the Mexican case.

Endnotes

[1] This article was written within the framework of the Collaborative Research Center SFB 1288 "Practices of Comparing. Changing and Ordering the World", Bielefeld University, Germany, funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG), subproject B02, *Modernity between 'Indigeneity' and 'Blackness': Inter-American practices of comparing in the fields of cultural production, social sciences, and politics*.

[2] The reflections presented in this essay are part of a wider attempt to understand indigenist practices of comparison. However, they are also motivated by two experiences gathered at different international conferences in 2018. On those events I implied that the work of the Spanish priests Bartolomé de las Casas (1484-1566) and Vasco de Quiroga (1470/78-1565) could be understood as 'indigenist', precisely because their way of thinking/comparing is still very present in 'modern' indigenist practices of comparison. This assumption provoked so much skepticism, especially between young researchers, that writing about this specific matter became itself a further objective.

[3] The efforts of the Escuela de Salamanca and Las Casas influenced Pope Paul III to expedite the document *Sublimis Deus*, in which he affirms that Indians where reasonable beings capable of been converted pacifically.

[4] The concept of *barbarian* was 'Christianized' by Pope Gregorio VI in the eleventh century, leveling it to *pagan*.

[5] Pope Nicholas V and Pope Alexander the VI had granted the kings of Portugal and Spain the rights to enslave barbarian and pagans in the conquered lands.

[6] It could be interesting to think about the possibility of classifying both moments, the 16th century debates about the 'humanity' of Indians and the formation and consolidation of the indigenist movement, as breaking points in the history of comparing humans and, therefore, thinking humanity. The results of this reflection depend on the definition of 'social change' used for the analysis and to what extent this definition allows different degrees of social change. Furthermore, it would be of interest to reflect about the capacity of abstract (Las Casas) and practice oriented (Quiroga) practices of comparison for achieving social change.

[7] Although the classical cultural approach of the Boasian school was against the application of anthropological knowledge in order to foster change within Indian communities, the employment of 'culture' as the comparing parameter doesn't necessarily imply, that 'change' was never envisioned. The most important theologian within the debates which gave Indians the right to be considered humans or 'not-barbarians', the Spanish priest José de Acosta (1539/1540-1599/1600), conceived America as a great laboratory where 'Non-Christians' could be studied in order to create knowledge useful to the expansion of Christianity (Pagden 150). The importance of 'change' within cultural anthropology increased considerably in the 20th century. The creation of "Acculturation Studies" as a 'modern' field of research by the *American Anthropological Association* in 1936 is only one example (De La Cadena 205).

[8] To give something or – like in this case – someone a 'value' is itself a modern practice of comparison. For Nietzsche 'value' cannot be seen as a factor to be used in order to establish a relation between *comparatas*, because 'value' is only valid in relation to the *comparata* which is being attributed to. 'Values' can only illustrate deficiencies. In this regard Nietzsche replaces the idea of 'value' with the idea of 'sense', which isn't limited to single comparison operations, but which attempts to understand the whole universe in which the comparison is embedded. Precisely this approach legitimates the notion of 'social practices of comparison'.

[9] US American scientific associations like the *Social Science Research Council* and the *American Council of Learned Societies*, strongly linked to the US Government and private donors like Nelson Rockefeller, financed the cooperation between John Collier and Mexican anthropologists in order to create the *InterAmerican Indian Institute* (De La Cadena 205).

[10] This 'paternalistic' form of understanding indigenism later became one of the main critiques against it.

[11] The weakness of the *Hacienda* or *Encomienda Model* during the early colonial period allowed Indians to co-shape the power relations between them and the Spanish settlers. It was the consolidation of de-humanizing *practices of comparison* that allowed the progressive disarticulation of Indian Institutions and the consolidation of this model until the second half of the 20th century and in some places even until today. More about the relation between *Haciendas*, State and indigenous Communities can be found on Olaf Kaltmeier's work, especially in his book *Kulturen der [De-] Kolonialisierung. Indigene Gemeinschaften, Hacienda und Staat in den Ecuadorianischen Anden von der Kolonialzeit bis heute* (2016).

[12] The weak connection with the 'centers' of social anthropological production – Mexico and the USA – and the *institutional* incompatibilities with the neighboring Peruvian pre-institutional socialist indigenism were further impediments.

[13] Ecuador indigenist literary production was known in all the continent and even abroad. Today the most renowned indigenist works are "Cumandá" (1879) from Juan León Mera, an example of 'romantic indigenism', and "Huasipungo" (1934) from Jorge Icaza, an example of 'social realism'.

[14] The connection between racial evolutionism, racial anthropology, eugenics and other racial sociopolitical and scientific projects may also be connected through 'systems of dispositions' to early de-humanizing practices of comparison.

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Book Review Section

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FORUM FOR INTER-AMERICAN RESEARCH (FIAR) VOL. 12.1 (JUN. 2019) 127-128
ISSN: 1867-1519

Weird American Music, *by Dorothea Gail. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2018. (Book Review)*

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Dorothea Gail's *Weird American Music* is a comprehensive and insightful resource tool on popular music, with strong emphasis on the conflicts between authenticity preservation and capitalistic strangulation engendered by market forces within certain music subcultures in the United States of America. These diverse subcultures and musical genres are "representative of the late twentieth- century United States" (12). The writer channels her experience as a long-standing scholar and musician through the monograph tailored for the fields of Musicology and American Studies.

The "weird" in *Weird American Music* emanates from the "in-betweeness" created by tension between authenticity and the market; and between the intrinsic experience of identity and the cognizant mercantilism of identity (3). Gail's argumentation revolves around five case studies, namely, the defiant Detroit techno band, Underground Resistance or UR, the conservative Christian rock music band, BarlowGirl, the seemingly hybridized Native American and Chicano music of Jackalope, the classical music of Charles Ives and the self made jukebox music of Waffle House.

While artists strive to eke a living through their artistry, they are often encumbered by stringent rules imposed by power blocs within the market circuits, which Gail in her introduction, links to the consumerist culture championed by a neoliberal market economy. Neoliberalism is blamed for the erasure of wholesome ideas, annihilation of the labour force and economic stratification. Consequently, the appreciation of musical works with inherently predominant core values is dependent on their survival within the stipulated environment (4-5).

The writer examines the impact of neoliberalism on artistic identity, the ways in which artists handle co-optation and sustain authenticity. Surveying a time span of three decades (1980-2010), she investigates the evolution in dimensions of artistic expression, and their significance within the American cultural landscape. Each case study is approached from different roads of enquiry, for instance, while commercialization dominates the discussions on UR and Jackalope; identity politics prevails within the argumentation on BarlowGirl and Charles Ives.

Situated in Detroit which is prominent for its lively music scene, notably Motown, techno, and Jazz, the Underground Resistance, for one, maintains authenticity through its ideological stance which involves a tenacious adoption of alternative measures such as defiance against ethnic categorization, exploitation of the mainstream music industry, collective expectation of normative media indulgences, etc. Gail notes that UR's defiance correlates the struggle against enslavement, exploitation and impoverishment which mark the history of Black and Native Americans, respectively. The weirdness of UR is made palpable in its unorthodox self portrayal as being visibly invisible. Their promotional materials show images of the band members' faces hidden behind diverse objects like gas masks and bandanas. The aim is to intensify the mysterious personae, as well as to fortify the political assertion of being subversive.

Although the band, as argued in Chapter Two, has astutely navigated and carved a niche in the music market through modesty and the non-licensing of their musical productions to major record labels, its detachment from the mainstream creates a financial instability made evident by the minimal patronage received within the US . But this posture ironically gives it a commercial advantage, and has led to the crystallization of a solid fan base in Europe (33-91).Whereas UR achieves operational autonomy and creates music on its own terms, the opposite

appears to be the narrative of the now defunct 'religio-centric' all-female band, BarlowGirl.

In Chapter Three, Gail scrutinises the multiple nuances embedded within the American Christian belief system which highly influences BarlowGirl. The band's identity is shaped by themes such as spiritual warfare and Christian militancy, portraying Christianity as one under siege. Here, a recurrent theme is chastity. This is a message asymmetrically targeted at young females, and excluding young males. Fundamental Christianity sets high puritanical standards for the female, and Gail reminds us that women are put in charge of the preservation of moral purity and marital sanctity, whereas men are allowed to be fallible and subject to libidinous whims. Gail asserts that parental agency in the imposition of these ideologies derails the BarlowGirl's capacity to achieve artistic autonomy. She remarks on the band's inability to make crucial decisions without a guide, rendering self as subjugated and susceptible to the uncanny pressure of conformity (147). Consequently, the artists are neither able to establish a self-identity nor can they become active agents. Their musical production highlights an identity conflict derived from parental expectations and divine injunctions. Gail argues that the paradigm invariably reflects a repressive dimension of the Christian ideology catalyzed by a neo-liberally induced economic decline and the fear of the loss of white privilege (103-158).

Drawn from several case studies, Gail's conclusions are instructive, especially in light of the evolving cultural dynamics mirrored by the market and societal interplay, enthronement of identity politics, erasure of classism, and neoliberalism's pervasive commodification of societal elements. While artistic and humanistic ventures tend to be undervalued, Gail maintains that gainful dividends for artistic engagements remain the basic signifier of authenticity (347-372).

Weird American Music is characterized by well defined concepts, convincing ideas and most importantly, by accessible language - a testimony that academic works need not be stylistically complex- in order to deal with complex topics. Moreover, the volume points to areas where further research is necessary. Ultimately, the writer's inclusion of ethnographic field notes grants an alluring edge to the case studies, making the book a pleasant and abundant read. In summary, *Weird American Music* is 'weirdly' engaging, informative, entertaining and comprehensible.

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