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CREOLES AND INDIANS: (POST)COLONIAL DISCOURSES AND POPULAR STRATEGIES IN THE *CANTOS DEL SIBONEY*

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Over the past thirty years, nineteenth-century prose narrative has held a privileged position in the critical analysis of the development of Cuban literature. Critics have been particularly drawn to the anti-slavery narratives produced by the circle of Domingo Delmonte in the 1830s, as the great number of books, articles, and dissertations on this topic attests. This intense scrutiny of Cuban short stories and novels has obscured the importance of poetry in the nineteenth-century efforts to create a national literature. We must not forget, however, that around 1829, Delmonte himself wrote some *romances cubanos* in an attempt to “Cubanize” a popular Spanish poetic form. Nor should we forget that the first book to sell thousands of copies throughout the island was a collection of poetry: the *Cantos del siboney* by José Fornaris achieved this unprecedented success, warranting five editions within eight years of its 1855 debut, and two subsequent editions. While censorship severely limited the Cuban audience of anti-slavery narratives, the *Cantos* collection was able to avoid censorship and expand the reading public, geographically and possibly in terms of social class.

Cantos del siboney also initiated the Indianist literary school known as Siboneyismo, which lasted from the 1850s to the late 1880s. Perhaps because most Siboneyista works are considered popular, low-quality literature, very little critical work has been published on them. Besides the commentary on Siboneyismo in histories and anthologies of Cuban poetry, only two critical articles have been published recently: In 1972 Alberto Gutiérrez de la Solana surveyed the critical responses to *Cantos del siboney* from the nineteenth century through the twentieth. Ivan Schulman’s 1992 essay, which will be discussed below, compares Siboneyista poetry to Cuban antislavery narratives.

The objective of this present essay is to add depth to the critical discussion of Siboneyismo. After evaluating relevant critical approaches to nineteenth-century Indianism, I will provide an overview of the literary and historical context in which Siboneyismo emerged. Then, by reading the poems in *Cantos del siboney* through the theoretical frame of postcolonialism, I will examine three important elements found in the poems of the collection: the engagement of the poetic voice in dialogue with two indigenous characters; the use of an allegory in which Creoles and Spaniards were represented by two indigenous groups; and the appropriation of the figures of Christopher Columbus and Bartolomé de Las Casas. I will then highlight some of the formal and thematic strategies that Fornaris incorporated into the *Cantos*, presumably as a way to expand the readership to include people from provincial and rural areas, and those with less sophisticated literary

tastes. This discussion of readership concludes by raising questions about the place of popular poetry in the development of a national literature and of the nation itself.

Critical Approaches to Indianism

Cantos del siboney poses a challenge for the application of contemporary theories for three reasons: it is a collection of Indianist poems, it was written under colonial rule, and it lacks a clear nationalist bent. The term *Indianism* has been defined by various literary critics. Noting that it was common all over Latin America by the 1880s, Max Henríquez Ureña points out that Indianism was a sort of literary Americanism (1:174). Aída Cometta Manzoni describes Indianist literary works as treating the native Americans “in a superficial way,” as “objects of the past, or only as an ethnic reality” (20). Concha Meléndez distinguishes two variants of Indianism, one that exoticizes and idealizes the indigenous peoples, and another that creates sympathy for their social position (13). In his 1998 unpublished dissertation, John Kyle Echols defines Indianism as a discourse analogous to Orientalism as elaborated by Edward Said. Echols explains that, whereas Orientalism paved the way for European colonialism in the Middle East and Asia, Indianism facilitated the conquest of the Americas. Once American republics gained independence, Creole elites deployed Indianism for their own neocolonial interests of maintaining economic and political power over the lower classes. Echols examines nineteenth-century Indianist literary texts from the Dominican Republic, Mexico, and Peru, demonstrating how the Creole elites used this literature to disseminate their (often competing) visions of the nation.

While Echols makes a worthy contribution, his thesis does not address Indianist works produced under colonial rule, as in mid-nineteenth-century Cuba and Puerto Rico. It is not clear that writers on these islands foresaw their colony becoming a nation, or saw themselves as the leaders in a potentially sovereign state. (José Luis González makes this point with reference to nineteenth-century Puerto Rican intellectuals (52).) Nor does Echols attempt to interpret entire collections of Indianist poems, and instead deals with individual poems and single narratives. For example, Echols’s analysis of Dominican works treats the play *Iguaniona* (1867), the epic poem *Anacaona* (1880), and the novel *Enriquillo* (1882), but leaves aside the collection of poems by José Joaquín Pérez, *Fantasías indígenas* (1877), which is the most similar in form to the *Cantos del siboney*. It seems that the genre of the poetry anthology, with its numerous smaller narratives and lyrical pieces collected under a single title, frustrates the coherence and compactness of argument that are facilitated by longer narratives in prose or verse.

Another approach to a body of Indianist poems is found in Ivan Schulman’s 1992 essay “Social Exorcisms: Cuba’s (Post)Colonial (Counter)Discourses.” Here Schulman draws parallels between the poetry of Siboneyismo and the anti-slavery prose narratives of the Delmonte group. Schulman concludes that these sets of works employed “formulaic” treatments of blacks and Indians, respectively (943). Furthermore, “both engaged in textual formulations which embedded social exorcisms that, in their execution, ran counter to strains of the dominant discourse” (947). Schulman establishes that Siboneyista poetry was postcolonial in at least three respects. First, in accordance with the definition given in *The Empire Writes Back*, the poetry was part of the culture “affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present” (Ashcroft *et al.* 2). Second, the poetry underscores Cuba’s natural and cultural differences with Spain through the depiction of the tropical climate and the local flora and fauna, as well as through the use of native lexical items. Third, Siboneyista poetry engaged in an “appropriation of the Indian

as an instrument of abrogation” (Schulman 944). Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin note that abrogation and appropriation are the two essential or necessary processes of postcolonial writing. In other words, Cuban Creole writers now took up some of the same codes of describing the Indian that Europeans had used to justify Conquest, but these writers employed the codes to condemn the Conquest and to “undermine Spain’s moral and political authority in the New World” (942). Schulman also argues that Siboneyista poetry is counterdiscursive, counterhegemonic, and countercultural in that it subtly criticized nineteenth-century Spanish colonial rule and expressed “a thinly disguised desire for political and economic freedom” (943). While Schulman’s evaluation of Siboneyista poetry offers an entry to contemporary theoretical approaches to this corpus of texts, the article’s main drawback is its very brief and general treatment of only a few Siboneyista poems.

Indigenes in Cuban Verse

The Indianist theme was relatively common in Cuban literature of various genres, starting the early nineteenth century. In 1819 José María Heredia penned a drama titled *Moteczuma*, and in 1846 Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda wrote the novel *Guatimozín*, also about the Conquest of Mexico. In 1837, Ricardo de Palma published the short story “Matanzas y Yumuri” about a supposedly historical incident involving Cuban Indians and Spanish colonists. The same year saw the rediscovery and publication of *Espejo de paciencia*, an epic poem written in 1608, and featuring indigenous, black, and Spanish characters.

Cantos del siboney was the island’s first book of poetry dedicated to the indigenous theme, and it drew on certain aspects of the Indianist poetry written in the 1830s and 40s. For example, in some poems of the *Cantos*, one finds the love theme between native characters expounded in Ignacio Valdés Machuca’s “Villancico” (1833) and in José Jacinto Milanés’s sonnet “El indio enamorado” (1842). Poets José María Heredia and Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés (Plácido) wrote a number of poems about indigenous peoples in Cuba and other regions of the Americas. Plácido and Heredia infused most of these poems with anti-colonial, *independentista* sentiments. In the poem, “En el Teocalli de Cholula” (1820) Heredia judges the “inhumane superstition” of the Aztecs, while in other poems he laments the destruction of the Incas, Aztecs, and Taínos in the Conquest. Two of Heredia’s other Indianist poems—“Las sombras” and “El manzanillo”—are included in *Poesía criollista y siboneísta: antología*, edited by Jesús Orta Ruiz (133-35). “Las sombras,” goes so far as to condemn all Spaniards who abused Native Americans. His only known poem to feature Cuban Indians as characters, “El manzanillo” is a fable about the power of love and resistance to tyranny.

Plácido authored six poems that treated or referred to indigenous peoples. The poems “Jicotencal” and “Cora” are about Tlascalans of Mexico and the Incans of Peru, respectively. Literary critic Jorge Castellanos finds in these two poems liberal ideas of how leaders should govern by respecting the life and will of the subjects (1984: 66). One can also perceive in these poems elements of resistance to tyranny and protest against unjust laws. In “A El Pan” and “Al Yumuri” the poet contemplates the Cuban landscape and imagines the happy life of the natives before the Conquest. Both of these poems lament loss, as they allude to a certain change for the worst in Cuban history and society. None of the four poems about Cuban and non-Cuban natives mentions outright the Spaniards or the Conquest. Probably because of the pressures of censorship, the cause of the Indians’ disappearance had to go without saying. Plácido authored two very politically

charged poems that allude to the Taíno hero Hatuey, who led an armed resistance against the Spanish conquistadors until they captured and executed him. Each of these poems was written for and given to a Cuban exiled for conspiring to make Cuba independent: “El eco de la gruta” to José María Heredia on his final visit to Cuba in 1836, and “Al general mejicano” to Don Andrés de la Flor, a military leader in Mexico at the time he visited Cuba in 1839 (Stimson 61; Castellanos, *Plácido* 82; Instituto de Literatura 1.432). In *Cantos del siboney* José Fornaris followed the lead of Plácido and Heredia by using the figures of native Americans to criticize the Spanish colonial government.

The Origins of Siboneyismo

In the literary works of the 1830s and 40s, the natives of Cuba had simply been called *cubanos* or *indios*. José Fornaris was apparently the first to adopt the term *siboney* for literary purposes to denote the original peoples of Cuba, although in 1846 Pedro Santacilia published an anthropological essay about the culture of the *ciboneyes* (Santacilia 492). The term comes from Book III, chapter 21 of the *Historia de las Indias* by Bartolomé de las Casas. According to that source, the original native people of Cuba were called *ciboneyes*, but as Fornaris explains at the end of the 1855 edition of *Cantos*, he changed the first letter because “[...] existen graves razones para creer que los naturales no pronunciasen la C” (249). Notwithstanding this linguistic note, Fornaris was apparently less interested in historical accuracy than in emphasizing the uniquely Cuban nature of his poems and of the people presented therein. In the same mention of the *ciboneyes*, Las Casas explains that by the end of the 1400s, another ethnic group (now known as *Tainos*) had come to Cuba from the neighboring island of Hispaniola, taken over Cuba and made the *ciboneyes* their servants. Archaeological finds have now confirmed Las Casas’s assertion and also determined that the *ciboneyes* were less culturally advanced than the *Tainos* (Harrington 2: 410). One can hypothesize that either Fornaris and his contemporaries did not know the word *Taino*, or they felt that it was too generic. While *Taino* designates an indigenous group found on the three Greater Antilles, the term *ciboney* is associated in historical texts only with Cuba. In adopting this island-specific moniker, Fornaris and other writers disregarded the fact that the *ciboneyes* had been dominated by other native Antilleans. This portrayal of the *ciboneyes* as free and sovereign was one of Siboneyismo’s manipulations of historical figures to foment patriotic sentiments.

As a literary school, Siboneyismo began with the *Cantos del siboney*. Critic Ambrosio Fornet states that there were five editions of *Cantos* between 1855 and 1863, but Fornet does not specify the dates or titles of those editions (141). There were two more editions of the *Cantos*, one in 1874, and one in 1888. In most cases the *Cantos* were published within other collections of Fornaris’s work, as in the book *Poesías* (1855, 1857, and 1888), and in the *Cantos tropicales* (Paris, France, 1874). While *Cantos* appeared alone in 1862, it may have appeared in *Flores y lágrimas* (1860) and in *Obras* (1862-63). (See the entry on José Fornaris in the *Diccionario de la literatura cubana*, edited by the Instituto de Literatura y Lingüística.) Siboneyismo flourished between the late 1850s and the early 60s. Soon after the first publication of *Cantos*, Fornaris and Joaquín Lorenzo Luaces co-founded a weekly literary magazine that came to be known as the organ of Siboneyismo. They titled it *La piragua*, which translates as *the canoe*, a quintessentially indigenous artifact. The magazine included poems, stories, essays, legends, and songs. While the Indianist theme predominated, the magazine also published lyrical poems,

costumbrista narratives, biographical sketches, and society news. Like many serial publications of the era, *La piragua* lasted only a short time, from 1856 to 1857. One of the magazine's contributors, Juan Cristóbal Nápoles Fajardo (later known as El Cucalambé) published his own book of poems in 1857. *Rumores del Hórmigo*—referring to the Hórmigo River—was mainly a collection of *criollista* poems (that is, poems on rural themes), but it included eight Indianist works. According to the *Diccionario de la literatura cubana*, *Rumores* had at least five editions between 1857 and 1879, and some of its poems became so popular among rural Cubans that they passed into the folkloric repertoire (2:650-651, 966).

Siboneyismo came to a definitive end with the final edition of *Cantos del siboney* in José Fornaris's 1888 collection *Poesías*. In the prologue or "introducción" of this anthology, the author explains that the success of *Cantos* was due to the fact that readers saw in some of the poems a political allegory, in which the Siboneyes represented the oppressed Cuban Creoles, and the Caribs represented the Spaniards that oppressed them (9). Indeed, this allegory runs through many Siboneyista works of poetry and prose, and it could be said to be a unifying factor of the literary school.

It is not clear why the Siboneyista poets chose the Caribs as the oppressors of the *ciboneyes*. Most likely, these writers simply adopted and elaborated on Columbus's image of the Caribs as the malevolent marauders of the Antilles. We do not know if the Siboneyista writers read any historical references to real contact between the Caribs and the *ciboneyes*. While it is accepted that the Caribs raided Puerto Rico, there seems to be no consensus among archaeologists that this group went as far west as Cuba, though some experts admit the possibility (Rouse 114; Sued Badillo, *Los caribes* 3). Neither Rouse nor Sued Badillo cites any historical sources nor archaeological evidence to support the claim of Carib incursions into Cuba.) For these reasons, the Siboneyista's Carib/Siboney allegory may be considered another manipulation of history.

Siboneyismo emerged at a time of political unrest that was touched off, in part, by threats to Cuban slavery. A decade earlier, in the Ladder Conspiracy of 1844, the Spanish colonial government had brutally repressed real and suspected abolitionist plots. This event effectively silenced the intellectuals of the circle of Domingo Delmonte, who had written novels, stories, and poems condemning slavery and the slave trade. Critic José Antonio Portuondo suggests that, consequently, white writers adopted the figure of the Siboney Indian as a literary "disguise" through which they could condemn the despotism of the colonial government and still distinguish themselves from the "*cimarronaje*" of blacks (8).

At mid-century, Spanish control over Cuba was also being challenged. By the 1840s the volume of Cuban commerce with the United States rivaled that with Spain. Furthermore, Spain's 1817 treaty with Britain made the slave trade illegal after 1820. Since the law did not reduce the number of slaves that entered Cuba, many wealthy Cubans worried that Britain might pressure Spain to suddenly end the trade and free illegally held slaves. These two factors led pro-slavery Cuban elites to consider their options, and the situation prompted leaders in the United States to ponder the island's future (Pérez 107-11). As historian Philip Foner explains, by the late 1840s and early 1850s, there were conspiracies brewing on more than one front. Based in the United States, conspiratorial leader Narciso López gathered support from exiled Cubans and pro-slavery North Americans (Foner 41-60). López's aim was to separate Cuba from Spain and annex it to the U.S., leaving slavery intact (55). In eastern Cuba, Joaquín de Agüero and his followers planned to coordinate their efforts with those of López. Narciso López led three filibustering expeditions to Cuba, in 1848, 1850, and 1851; all three invasion attempts were unsuccessful. This last attempt coincided with the failure of Agüero's uprising. Both leaders were captured and

executed by the Spanish government. (Foner acknowledges that other historians portray López and Agüero as having fought for Cuban independence and abolition. One biographer even notes that Agüero freed his eight inherited slaves. See Foner pages 41, 52, and 58; and Agüero y Estrada pages 21, 24-25.) There were three more annexationist plots and rebellions over the next few years, but like the ones before them, they were defeated by the betrayal of informants and the lack of widespread Creole support. The final conspiracy was uncovered in Havana in 1854.

In addition to political strife, Cubans experienced an economic crisis in the decade of the 1850s. As historian Louis Pérez, Jr. explains, Spanish creditors generally offered Cubans scarce credit and high interest rates; consequently, many Cuban planters became burdened with debt associated with the increased costs of purchasing and maintaining slaves. Coffee production had declined significantly since its height in the 1820s and 30s so that somewhat more than half of the coffee plantations went out of business by the early 1860s (113). Nearly 400 sugar plantations also disappeared between 1850 and 1860. The crisis deepened in 1857 when interest rates peaked, causing 250 businesses to close in Havana alone. In the same year, the United States placed higher tariffs on Cuban products, especially cigars; this measure provoked the downfall of many factories in Cuba, while others relocated to sites in Florida (113-114). As the crisis affected the major sectors of the Cuban economy, many Creoles saw their wealth transferred into the hands of others, namely Spaniards. It was in the midst of these political and economic conditions that Fornaris conceived of *Siboneyismo*.

José Fornaris was born in the eastern city of Bayamo in 1827. According to his 1888 prologue, Fornaris's maternal grandparents were Spaniards (10). (None of the sources consulted revealed more about the financial or social situation of Fornaris's family, such as whether or not they owned slaves.) After obtaining his law degree, Fornaris inherited from his father the office of Regidor del Ayuntamiento, or alderman of municipal government in Bayamo, which he held at some time between 1844 and 1852 (Instituto de Literatura y Lingüística 1: 351). Despite this tie to the Spanish colonial regime, he participated in an annexationist conspiracy in 1851, presumably that of Joaquín Agüero. As a result he was confined for five months in the town of Palma Soriano.

Critic Ambrosio Fornet observes that since the execution of Narciso López, the colonial government had fomented a "clima de humillaciones y provocaciones" (142); he also notes that the first publication of *Cantos* in Havana in 1855 occurred only a few months after the execution of the last of the annexationist conspirators (141). The politically charged atmosphere was not limited to Bayamo nor to the eastern region; it spanned the island, creating a ready market for the *Cantos*. Consequently, it was the first book to have sold thousands of copies all over Cuba, since previous best-sellers had been limited to Havana and Matanzas (Fornet 141).

There is little evidence available to substantiate what Fornaris's political affiliations and leanings were after the annexationist era. He was residing in Havana when the Ten Years' War broke out in 1868 in the eastern part of the country. Though his good friend Carlos Manuel de Céspedes was the leader of rebels, fighting for independence and abolition, Fornaris never committed to fighting with or against them. In 1870, he voluntarily left Cuba, citing health reasons (Fornaris, *Poesías* 3a ed. 13). José Lezama Lima writes that his sympathies for independence were well known and that illness was a pretext for leaving Cuba (3: 27). He traveled in Europe before returning to Cuba after the 1878 end of the war. While outside of Cuba, Fornaris published at least two books of poetry, one of which contained the *Cantos* collection. He died in Havana in 1890.

Indigenizing Dialogues, Europeanizing Codes

There are twenty-eight poems in the 1855 edition of the *Cantos del siboney* (or *sibonei*, as it was written in the peculiar orthography of that edition). The first and last poems serve as a frame for the rest. In these poems, titled “Introducción” and “Conclusión: el anciano i yo,” the first-person poetic voice engages in a dialogue with an elderly indigenous man. In another poem titled “La serrana de Jiguani” the poetic voice converses with a young indigenous woman. The main voice in all three poems is that of a nineteenth-century Creole. These conversations between a Creole and living island natives appear to be unique in Hispanic Caribbean Indianism. In almost all of the other Indianist poetry from nineteenth-century Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic, the poetic voice is either that of an indigenous figure from the Conquest era, or it is a third-person speaker, which either stands outside of time or is marked as being from the nineteenth century.

These poetic dialogues also go against the conventional belief that the Conquest had virtually extinguished the native peoples of Cuba by the end of the sixteenth century. Several twentieth-century researchers would argue that Fornaris was not simply imagining indigenous presence in his region. They present evidence that descendants of these groups continue to live today all over the eastern part of the island, retaining distinguishing physical features and cultural practices. See José Barreiro, ed., *Panchito, cacique de montaña: Testimonio guajiro-taíno de Francisco Ramírez Rojas* (Santiago de Cuba: Catedral, 2000); Ramón Dacal Mouré y Manuel Rivero de la Calle, *Arqueología aborígen de Cuba* (La Habana: Gente Nueva, 1984); and Felipe Pichardo Moya, *Los indios de Cuba en sus tiempos históricos* (La Habana: Siglo XX, 1945). Jalil Sued Badillo points out that the *mestizo* descendants of Cuba’s indigenes maintained indigenous cultural traditions and identified themselves as Indians for legal reasons. However, the census excluded *mestizos* from the category of Indian (1995: 32-33). In his article “Presencia indígena en la poesía de Juan Cristóbal Nápoles Fajardo” José Antonio García Molina contends that there are seventeenth-century historical references to indigenous groups, but that at some point the census stopped counting indigenous peoples as such, designating them instead as whites (192, 193).

In what seem to be autobiographical footnotes to “La serrana de Jiguani” in the 1888 edition of *Cantos* (411), and in comments to a story in *La piragua*, Fornaris makes clear that there were indigenous peoples with bronze-colored skin and straight black hair, living near his hometown of Bayamo; he had seen them in his youth, and his mother had taught him some of their legends (51). The poem “La serrana de Jiguani” (to be treated below) explains that the Indians had taken refuge in the mountains, thus surviving the persecution and oppression that befell their fellow natives. The appearance of two indigenous figures, the elder and the young woman, as living representatives of a nearly extinct and mostly hidden ethnic group implies that the Conquest was not altogether successful in bringing all natives under its exploitative control.

In the “Introducción” the elderly Indian requests that the poet write the “history” of his people:

Sé que sois, noble poeta,
De Cuba, mi fértil suelo [...]

Si se olvidan de mi raza,
¿Por qué con plectro divino
No cantas ¡oh peregrino!

La historia del Sibonei? (139)

The poet agrees, noting that the best nineteenth-century Cuban poets, Heredia, Milanés, and Turla, had not sung the deeds of the island's natives, leaving their history virtually unknown. Delighted, the Indian arranges to take the poet to literal or metaphorical caves, and to recite from memory his people's legends and love stories, and other tales of chiefs and vassals, maidens and shamans:

Te conduciré a las grutas
De nuestro verjel fecundo,
y tú cantarás al mundo
La historia del Sibonei. (140)

This conversation authorizes the poet to compose, and it lends cultural authenticity and ethical legitimacy to the poems he is about to write. In other words, these were not stories he stole or simply learned, but rather songs and narratives given to him out of friendship and respect. Furthermore, the Indian elder's permission makes the poet unique among those he imagines to be his peers—bards of great renown and skill (though his own poetic powers are notably weaker). The poet is chosen to receive this knowledge and is charged with rescuing it from obscurity and loss. The poet goes on to affirm his close relationship to the natural environment, “nuestro paterno hogar,” the environment he shares with the Indian (141). In fact, the dialogue takes place beside a river. With a series of stanzas which repeat the word “Sé” (“I know”) eight times, with the phrase “Yo entiendo” once intervening, the poetic voice describes his knowledge of the flora, the fauna, and the geography, as well as the customs of the natives. In addition to the native elder's permission, the poet's familiarity with nature and culture further authorizes him to sing the “history” of the Siboneyes.

This first movement of the poem strategically declines to recognize outright any European heritage besides that of the Spanish language, so that the text presents itself as authentically Cuban. However, there is in Fornaris's “Introducción” what Schulman calls “a dichotomous process of abrogation and preservation” of the “norms of the dominant discourse” (942), since the poet's references eventually do incorporate certain foundations of Western civilization. Mentioning Adam and Eve, Moses, and Solomon, he compares the beauty of the biblical lands to the beauty of Cuba: “Así es hermosa mi patria” (142). As if to return to the native, he compares the island to the Indians' bow, and then metaphorizes the isle as an Indian woman, her head crowned with one continent, and her feet shod with another. Again he reiterates the European tradition:

Si cantó Virjilio en Roma [...]
 Al mismo son, Garcilaso
 Cantó baladas de amor:
 Yo así entre piñas y mangos,
 Palmas, juncos, madre selvas,
 Peregrino de las selvas
 Cantaré la indiana grei: [...] (143-44)

It seems that the local place gives primary authority, but a demonstration of a familiarity with certain Western cultural touchstones gives the poems cultural weight, and places Cuba on the map of “civilization.” Here we see Fornaris's ambivalence about identifying his *Cantos* exclusively with the “salvajes,” as he calls them at one point in the poem: one of the stanzas closes with the lines:

I escucho en estas riberas

De la palma en los ramajes
 Aun sonar de los salvajes
 El indiano caracol. (141)

The 1888 version of this poem, titled “La musa y el poeta,” dispenses with the conversation with a live Indian in favor of a more neoclassical dialogue with an apparition in the form of a sad Indian woman, complete with feathered headdress (Fornaris, *Poesías* 3a ed. 403; Orta Ruiz 325). In the poem, the poet claims his ignorance of the history of the Siboneyes, but the muse agrees to inspire him; and it is she who affirms her knowledge of Cuban nature, compares the island to an archer’s bow, and makes references to the Bible. In the final stanzas of the poem, the muse condemns any poet who would sing in praise of despots, and she concludes by promising the poet fame for depicting the “bloody” history of the “martyred” Siboney people (330). The anticolonial political message is more clear in this 1888 poem, published a decade after the end of the Ten Years’ War, but the cultural message turns toward traditional European codes disguised in native clothing.

One can speculate that after the end of the Ten Years’ War, Fornaris may have seen Cuban nationhood as more attainable than before. For that reason, he may have considered it necessary to begin culturally defining the would-be nation in terms of European “civilization,” rather than even the noble savagery of the Indians. This hypothesis seems plausible when we consider the racial and cultural charge attached to the term “savage” during the war. Historian Ada Ferrer notes that in the course of the armed conflict, Spanish officials constantly portrayed the independence rebel movement as “leading [...] toward immorality and away from civilization and progress,” simply because many insurgents were black (48). Ferrer adds: “In these public representations, insurgency constantly verged on the brink of race war and savagery” (49). By 1888, the image of the native has been Europeanized, the savage civilized.

In the 1855 edition, the “Conclusión” poem marks the transformation of the poet into a Siboney, through a process of self-proclaimed indigenization. The opening of the poem finds the elderly native applauding the efforts of his Creole poet friend. Not only does this Indian find pleasure in the “trovas;” he says that his peers in various regions of the island “awaken and listen” to these “dulces leyendas,” and are moved to tears (245). Even the “sombra” of the martyred Taino leader Hatuey (burned at the stake by Spaniards) listens approvingly to the poet’s songs. In the first six stanzas in which the elder speaks, he notes three times that the poet has successfully captured Siboney experience in his poems despite his not being Siboney: “Sin ser de mi raza [...] / [...] sin ser Sibonei” (245-46). The poetic voice responds by recounting his European pedigree: his parents were born in Italy, he says, adding that “Venecia es el pueblo / Más bello del mundo; / De allá de la Italia precioso jardín” (246). The next stanzas proclaim the poet’s status as a native of Cuba, literally and metaphorically.

Mas yo nació en Cuba,
 Crecí con la seiba,
 La palma, el jagüei:
 Aquí está mi patria,

Yo soi de Bayamo, yo soi Sibonei! (246)

This last line, perhaps the most emblematic of Siboneyismo (even to the extent that it was satirized), echoes throughout the rest of the poem. The poet is a Siboney not only because of his connection to the island and its natural elements (trees, fruits, birds, flowers, lakes, rivers, etc.), but also because he knew about and was able to tell his parents of the cultural practices of the indigenous peoples:

Mas yo les hablaba
 Del arco i las flechas
 I el ancho batei,
 De toscos bohíos,
 De bellas canoas...

Yo soi de Bayamo, yo soi Sibonei. (247)

There is a tension between the Siboney elder's reiteration of the poet's not belonging to his group and the poet's proclamation of himself as a Siboney. One can read this tension as a certain ambivalence on the part of the Creole writer, who seems to want to be native but only symbolically. The text at once distances the poet from a group that, even in the "Introducción," is called "salvaje" (141), while it redefines Siboney as belonging not to a particular ethnic group, but to the land of Cuba. This process of claiming indigenous status while excluding the ethnic indigene on the grounds of his savageness, or lack of civilization, is akin to what Terry Goldie calls "indigenization," a phenomenon he observed at work among the whites in nineteenth-century Australia, Canada, and New Zealand (12, 13, 16). Indigenization proposes a way for the white man to see the indigene as Other and alien, but then to gain from that Other "the potential to become of the land" (16), so as not to himself be alien within the land that he is taking over (12).

Yet another tension arises between the poet's desire to be of the land but also to claim a connection to Europe. Particularly telling is the obligation the speaker seems to feel to proclaim the value of his parents' homeland: "Hermosa es Venecia! [...] / En cuna preciosa / Nacieron mis padres [...]" (247). This rhetorical move is even more poignant in the 1888 version of the poem, now titled "Mi patria," which commences with the bold declaration, "Hermosa es España!" and the second stanza with "Graciosa Sevilla, [...]" The poem continues in the following stanza: "Mas Cuba es mi anhelo / Mi dicha, mi duelo, / Mi sueño dorado, / Mi amor immortal; [...]" (311). The poetic voice alternates between visions of Spain (the parents' homeland) and Cuba, always expressing preference for the island, and concluding with the same emblematic statement. Interestingly, however, this poem (now more nativist than Indianist) subtly appropriates the discourse of Spanish reconquest and defense of its territories: the first stanza ends with: "Allí en dura guerra, / Cayeron por tierra / Las rudas falanges del bravo francés" (311). The fifth stanza reads:

Yo sé que Granada
 Del moro fue amada,
 Y enflora sus campos
 Benéfico el Sol;
 Que fiel Zaragoza
 Al galo destroza,

En justa defensa del pueblo español. (312)

The implication is that historically the Spaniards exercised their right to occupy peninsular territory, and to expel occupying peoples so as to close certain national boundaries. The tacit question is, then, Why should not the Cubans, who love Cuba as much as he does, have the right to defend and rule their own territory and their own people? In both the 1855 and 1888 versions of the text, the speaker's connection to Europe affords him a certain cultural legitimacy (civilization), as well as a political tradition to appropriate for his own Cuban interests. As we shall continue to see, the abrogation most commonly expressed in the *Cantos del siboney* is a refusal of Spain's moral and political legitimacy in Cuba (often couched in Judeo-Christian terms), not so much a rejection of its cultural claims.

Encounter with the *india*

The poem “La serrana de Jiguani” is the only other dialogue between poet and Indian in the 1855 *Cantos del siboney*. The poetic voice recounts how one morning as he takes a stroll on his pony toward the sierras of Jiguani, near Bayamo, he comes upon a “morena vírjen,” with whom he converses (149). First he identifies her as an Indian, then asks her if “¿[t]odavía [...] / Vástagos de los cubanos / Suspiran de amor aquí?” She explains that many Indians still live in the hills, “puros, sin mezcla ninguna, / Aun conservan por fortuna / Las sierras de Jiguani” (150). She even offers to take him to visit her family. The poetic voice exclaims, “¿Qué espíritus os sostiene / Entre rosas i ramajes, / Oh! nieta de los salvajes / De Bayamo y Camagüei?” He also notes that her physical features and her “inocentes placeres” confirm her membership in the “raza de Sibonei” (150). The maiden expresses her joy and pride that her people have been able to live this long, isolated as they were in the mountainous region:

Me es grato ver cual resiste
Mi raza contra la suerte,
I más que el destino, fuerte,
Llegar no quiere á su fin;
[...]. (151)

She then gratefully blesses the wilderness that has sustained her people.

The poet relates the story of Noah’s Ark, comparing the sierra to the vessel that saved a remnant of humanity. The text leaves out, as it must in order to avoid censorship, any indication of why the indigenous people had to take refuge in the mountains. The reference to Noah’s ark suggests that while most of the island’s natives perished in a violent flood—the unnamed Conquest—the family of the *india* survived in their mountain refuge. The portrayal of the sierra as a type of Noah’s ark insinuates that providence was at work in spite of the Conquest and colonization of the island, which itself suggests that the Spaniards may not have had the complete backing of God in their endeavor to control the island and its people.

The maiden’s response is interesting: she first confesses her ignorance of that biblical account, but says that it is the same as her own people’s story in that

Es tan triste, tan siniestra
I llena de maldición
Oh! peregrino! qué gratas,
Dulces palabras dijiste,
Tu voz amorosa i triste
Me seduce el corazón. (151)

It seems she is attracted by his apparent sympathy for the indigenous people. The poet, in turn, reads her attraction to his sympathy as attraction to him:

Escúchame! Yo te adoro:
[...]

Esa vida que tú llevas
Sin ilusión, ni ventura,
Simpatiza, vírjen pura,
Con mi llanto i mi dolor. (152)

The maiden’s rejection of the poet is emphatic, however:

—Amarte! Nunca! Mi mano
 A otra mano ya se enlaza,
 Quiero perpetuar mi raza:
 Yo no puedo unirme a tí.
 Nunca mi sangre a la tuya
 He de unir en lazo odioso:
 Yo amo ya; será mi esposo
 Un indio de Jiguani. (152)

Still there seems to be a mutual feeling between them; the next stanza reveals that “[I]a voz de la simpatía / Con sus dulces vibraciones, / Llevó nuestros corazones / El uno del otro en pos” (152). The poet accepts the (almost) complete failure of his amorous pursuit, and they part in silence.

The *india*'s ambivalence—her attraction to and subsequent rejection of the Creole poet—can be read in a number of ways, but I will emphasize one interpretation here. If the poet's sympathetic sadness and loving words are “seductive,” then they place him in the position of tempter. (Unlike some original conquistadors, however, the poet does not take her by force; instead he treats her gently and respects her wishes.) The *india*, on the other hand, is a representative of a culture that must remain pure, untouched, and unchanged by other cultures. This reading is consistent with the duality of the “civilized man” versus the “noble savage” who lives unfettered by social ills. Despite feeling drawn to the Creole poet, the *india* must maintain the integrity of her culture and “perpetuate her race.” The ending of the poem suggests a continued isolation of the “purest” indigenous peoples; they choose to remain separate from even the Creoles who express sympathetic feelings toward them. This poem places the indigenous people in a time-space position outside of the flow of history. Terry Goldie explains that “the prehistoric” is one of the basic moves that the white man can make with the indigenous pawn on the semiotic “chessboard” or field:

The historicity of the text, in which action makes a statement, whether overt or covert, on the chronology of the culture, shapes the indigene into an historical artifact, a remnant of a golden age that seems to have little connection to anything akin to contemporary life. A corollary of the temporal split between this golden age and the present degradation is a tendency to see indigenous culture as true, pure, and static. Whatever fails this test is not really a part of that culture. (17)

There are three interesting changes in the 1888 version of this poem, which is shortened and retains its original title. The reference to her people's will to survive has been omitted, as is her expressed intention to perpetuate her race; she now simply states that her husband is to be an Indian of Jiguani (1888: 411). Furthermore, there is a footnote, which reads: “Cuando se escribió este poemita se aseguraba que aun existían algunos indios de pura raza en los campos de Jiguani. Yo recuerdo haber visto muchos que si no eran indios descendían de ellos” (411). Curiously, there is no reference to the indigenes' existence in the present. The removal of those lines from the poem and the addition of the footnote suggest that such cultural continuity was no longer part of José Fornaris's ideological agenda for the indigenes. However, we know that there were still people regarded as Indians living in Cuba at the time because José Martí makes reference to them

in his journals of the war of 1895.¹ One might have been able to predict this amendment in Fornaris's thinking. In the text of his story "El orijen de la piragua," published in *La piragua* in 1856 or 1857, Fornaris had expressed an expectation that indigenous Cubans would survive only in poetry. At the beginning of the text, he writes that his mother had identified the Indians to him as a people who had survived, but "que se estinguirán también, sin dejar una sola huella de su paso" (51). If this prediction seems almost like a wish, the author's comments at the end of the story are even clearer. Referring to the life and loves of the natives, he writes:

Este es un inagotable manantial de poesía. ¡Dichoso quien sepa explotarlo! Los hombres civilizados han sucedido á los salvages. El vapor a la piragua. Pero también á la inocencia de aquella raza, á la pureza de sus almas, han sucedido las pasiones de mala ley, falsedad en el amor, la apostasia, el desencanto y el tedio amargo. —Atrás la Piragua! Venga el vapor! Atras los salvages! ¡Bendita sea la civilización!" (112)²

Here the author sweeps the experiences of the indigenes into the realm of the literary in order to make room for progress. Since, by ideological definition, the prehistoric Siboney culture could not change, it was destined to fade away.

While the first edition of the *Cantos* features three poems in which two living indigenes converse with the poet, the 1888 version has conspicuously made those natives disappear from the contemporary social scene. While Fornaris used the image of the Indians to criticize Spanish colonialism and to establish Creole cultural distinctiveness, his treatment of the living indigenes is one that postcolonial criticism associates with settler colonies. In the article "Indigenes and Indigeneity," Jace Weaver points out the following:

The only cultures that do not change are dead cultures, and colonialism has always posited indigenous societies as dying or dead. [...] Once they are removed—literally or figuratively—from the landscape, the colonial conquest of territory that was once theirs can be completely unimpeded with a nod of sentimental regret at their passing. (228)

Weaver's article then links this "declaration of indigenous cultures as vanishing or extinct" to the idea of the colonizer seizing an illusory indigenous status, a process we saw in the poems "Conclusión" and "Mi patria." It could be said that, at the same time that these six poems from 1855 and 1888 engage in both abrogation and preservation of European cultural codes, they also abrogate the category of the living indigene and preserve the category of the literary Indian, primitive and pure.

The Siboney-Carib Allegory

In the prologue of his 1888 anthology, José Fornaris states that he began to write the poems of *Cantos del siboney* in Bayamo in 1850. He describes Bayamo at that time in terms of political oppression and cultural depression: the governors of the area inspired fear and fauning, and they

¹Martí mentions the "indios de Garrido" in at least two journal entries from April 1895. See his *Obras completas*, volume 19, pages 220 and 223. The "indios de Garrido" were apparently Cubans fighting under the Spanish commander Garrido. These soldiers were also known as the Guerrilleros de Yateras, since they were from the Yateras region. They are supposed to have defected to the Cuban revolutionary side and formed the Regimiento de Hatuey, which fought valiantly against the Spaniards in the Battle at Sao del Indio, August 31, 1895. See Padrón Valdés, pages 59, 68, and 148.

²This is a literal transcription and reproduces the orthographic irregularities of the text.

prohibited gymnasiums, presses, and newspapers. The colonial authorities looked with suspicion on literary pursuits and on private gatherings of more than six persons; as a result, writers had to hide their activities. The only way to express patriotism and protest injustice was in symbolic, poetic form (8-9). It was this very political symbolism that Fornaris cites as the reason for the overwhelming success of his Indianist collection:

Por estas razones los *Cantos del Siboney* tuvieron cinco ediciones sucesivas, único caso en esa época en Cuba, en materia de publicaciones literarias. Bien sé yo que esto obedecía á la idea que los versos encerraban. Se veía en ellos un símbolo en el que los indios siboneyes representaban á los cubanos oprimidos, y los indios caribes á los injustos opresores. (9)

Of the twenty-eight poems in the 1855 edition of *Cantos del siboney*, four employ the Siboney/Carib allegory to great political effect. These poems deserve a brief examination because critics have not expounded on the rhetorical strategies of these works. “La laguna de Ana Luisa” (166-75) is a legend that takes place in Bayamo in the distant past. Ana Luisa is the fairest maiden of the region. She is in love with a Siboney named Yarayó, and rejects the advances of an unnamed Carib. Ana Luisa and Yarayó enjoy wedded bliss, until the jealous Carib brutally murders them both. In typical romantic fashion, nature responds violently to the tragedy: a sudden flood sweeps the area, leaving behind a lagoon. The ghost of Ana Luisa rises out of this lagoon from time to time to tell her story and to beg for vengeance. The penultimate stanza appeals to the Siboneyes to leave no Carib alive in the surrounding valleys (175). This legend in verse conceals a potentially political message in a story of personal crime and collective vengeance.

In 1874 Fornaris published an edition of *Cantos* in Paris, France, within the book titled *Cantos tropicales*. This book features another version of the poem about Ana Luisa. Apparently, the event of the Ten Years’ War and his distance from Cuba gave Fornaris boldness of expression, for in this version, the Siboney lover is described as a descendent of Hatuey, and the Carib is replaced by a Spanish soldier named Beltrán (*Cantos tropicales* 27). The end of the poem calls on the natives to rid themselves of the tyrant, and the spectre of Ana Luisa urges not only vengeance, but combat: “¡La guerra! ¡La guerra! / ¡No más las afrentas del pueblo español!” (35). This 1874 version of “Ana Luisa” is marked as having been written in Havana in 1863, five years before the Ten Year’s War began. Interestingly, the 1888 version of the poem, now titled simply “Ana Luisa,” reverts to the Siboney/Carib allegory (453; Orta Ruiz 313-22). In the prologue Fornaris interprets the symbolism, equating Ana Luisa with Cuba, and the Carib with the government that caused her suffering (*Poesías* 3a ed. 10). I would suggest that the poet’s giving Ana Luisa a Spanish name and his neglecting to assign a meaning to the symbol of the Siboney Indian may reveal a desire to distance the contemporary Cuban people from the natives. With the allegory, Fornaris appropriates Columbus’s image of the Carib as absolutely evil and barbaric; by applying that description to the Spanish colonial government, he abrogates the Spanish/European claim to be the source of civilization, but only insofar as civilization has a political and ethical content. However, in this poem and other works, the rhetorical strategy works on more than one level to keep the designation of “barbarian” or “savage” from being applicable to the contemporary Cuban creoles.

The three other poems with the Siboney-Carib allegory share a certain expression of defeatism, or at least deference to the colonial government’s power to overwhelm and impoverish. “Hatuei i Naya” is a dialogue between two lovers. Hatuei is a *cacique* or chief, who appeals to Naya to be his lover. At first this daughter of a commoner is reluctant to pursue a relationship with the warrior she has seen valiantly fighting against the Caribs. She decides to accept the offer when Hatuei reveals that he has lost almost everything—his fortune, his land, his family; his tribe has been dispersed, presumably by war (1855: 176-79). In the poem “El adiós” the speaker opens with the statement that the Caribs are in the process of “extinguishing” his people, killing families as they advance and forcing the Siboneyes out of their lands. He then enumerates all of the things

he leaves behind as he goes into exile (242-44). Rather than show the Siboneyes successfully defending themselves against their Carib oppressors, these poems depict the Siboneyes expelled and ruined.

The third poem, "El cacique Habaguanes," is the clearest expression of patriotic defense and of ultimate surrender (163-65). The poem begins with the *cacique* exhorting his troops to fight the Caribs who are violently extending their power and robbing the Siboney of their way of life. After a long harangue, the speaker's discourse abruptly shifts to narration, as he reveals that his troops are ignoring him and being routed.

Venid, vasallos, i el infame espire
Ante mis plantas en su sangre tinto,
I al Sibonei con moribundos ojos
Pálido ruegue.

Mas me desoyen los vasallos mios,
Ninguno apreste los lijeros arcos,
Sois del Caribe en mis floridos bosques
Víctimas tristes (*Poesias* 1a ed. 165)

The *cacique* then expresses his first intention to leave his homeland, but he decides to stay. His final statement is one of chilling resolve:

¡Mas no! no dejo a mi querida patria,
La aguda flecha del feroz Caribe
Dentro mi pecho en horroroso estrago,
Húndase toda! [...] (165)

The message of patriotic defense expressed in the first part of the poem is neutralized when the speaker accepts his defeat and even desires that his enemy kill him. One could speculate that the *cacique's* surrender helped the poem to pass the censors. With the shift from defense to defeat, "El cacique Habaguanes" muffles a potential call to rebel against the oppressors with what can be interpreted as a rehearsal of the failures of the various conspiracies for independence in the 1820s and for annexation in the 1840s and 50s. Even in the poems with the clearest anti-colonial political message, the Siboney-Carib allegory works to condemn the immorality of the Spanish colonial government, while acknowledging its power. On the other hand, the allegory implies that the Creoles were justified in protesting oppression and defending their homeland.

Europeans Appropriated

Most references in Cuban literary histories to the *Cantos del siboney* and to Siboneyismo in general emphasize the allegory discussed above. However, those references tend to ignore the fact that there were two Europeans that escaped being symbolized as Caribs: Christopher Columbus and Bartolomé de las Casas. (Poet Juan Cristóbal Nápoles Fajardo also made Columbus and Las Casas characters in three of the poems of his 1857 collection *Rumores del Hórmigo*.) The 1855 edition of *Cantos* featured these men in three poems. "El busto del Padre de las Casas" (203-07) is simply a dialogue between the lovers Narina and Salei, who go together to worship an image of the friar. In "Analei" the Siboney by that name dies defending Las Casas from an attacking Carib (183-87). The poem "El cacique de Ornofai" is about the meeting between Columbus (Colón) and the *cacique* Analai (208-16). Upon arriving in the region of Ornofay, Colón erects an altar and celebrates mass while the Siboneyes reverently look on. Afterwards, the *cacique* gives Colón a sermon about God's judgment on those who would destroy and conquer. Colón assures him that he brings only a cross and that he will liberate the Siboneyes from the Caribs.

Colón invites the *cacique* to go back to Spain with him, but Analai refuses to leave his homeland. The poem ends with Colón's blessings on the land of the Siboneyes.

In all three poems, the historical European figures are instruments in the postcolonial processes of abrogation and appropriation, as they function in an allegory with moral and religious implications. Colón and Las Casas are appropriated into the model of native goodness and nobility in which the Siboneyes are already at the center. (Notice how the *cacique* gives the Admiral advice on divine consequences.) The poems implicitly portray these men as the only good representatives of Spain, the only ones worthy of the admiration of the Siboneyes and, by extension, of the nineteenth-century Cuban Creoles. The figures of both Las Casas and Colón also serve to abrogate, or reject—at least partially—the moral legitimacy of Spanish rule by putting the emphasis on Catholic ethics. In other words, these poems legitimize the Catholic mission of the Conquest as symbolized by the admiral and the friar, at the same time that the poems reject the immoral and nonreligious means by which Spain conquered, ruled, and exploited the Native Americans. In the 1888 prologue, Fornaris expressed his concern about the role of religion in colonialism:

Crée el autor de este libro que sus padres, los españoles, fueron crueles y avaros en la conquista y crueles y avaros después de ella. Créé que conquistaron esta isla con la Espada más que con la Cruz, y que han tratado de conservarla con la pólvora y no con el Evangelio. Y todo esto en pleno siglo XIX, siglo de las grandes libertades y de grandes progresos. (11)

The figures of Columbus and Las Casas connect Cuba to what was considered the best of the European cultural tradition, namely Catholicism; the singular way in which these men are portrayed in the *Cantos* is a subtle rejection of Spain's policies on the island.

How the *Cantos* Captivated Cuba

As we have seen, the political climate at the time of its appearance offered the *Cantos del siboney* a market: readers were eager to see in print some expression of their frustrations with the colonial government, even if that expression was found in a handful of poems and was tempered with a defeatist attitude. However, the political climate alone does not account for the vast commercial success of Cuba's first Indianist anthology. There is evidence that José Fornaris intentionally made his book attractive to the masses. In 1863 Fornaris wrote in the prologue of another collection about the need for the poet to "condescend" to the people:

"¿Por qué causa el pueblo está sordo a la voz de los poetas?" A su juicio, porque los poetas no "bajaban" al pueblo, cuando la solución, por el contrario, era 'bajar hasta [el pueblo], estudiar su índole, cantar sus impresiones, halagar su oído con una rima fácil e ir formando por grados su gusto literario. (*Cantos populares*, qtd. in Fornet 145)

Fornaris wanted to attract unsophisticated readers with the simplicity of the language, the musicality of the rhyme and meter, and the familiarity of the themes; the poet even aspired to "develop the tastes" of less cultured readers. Besides writing romantic lyric poetry in general, Fornaris adapted to Indianism many of the formal and thematic features of *criollista* poetry; this strategy may have helped the *Cantos* to draw into the reading audience groups that had previously not purchased many poetry books. Critic Ambrosio Fornet asserts that the audience of the *Cantos* was not only the upper classes of Havana and Matanzas, but also "el público de provincias—sin distinción de clases e incluyendo el de ciertas zonas rurales," especially in the eastern region of Cuba (142). Unfortunately, Fornet does not qualify this statement about the readers' social class, nor does he explain how lower-class or rural people could afford to purchase books and newspa-

pers. Though it is difficult now to determine exactly who was purchasing or consuming Fornaris's poetry, it does seem that he wrote specifically for the non-urban masses.

The language of the poems in *Cantos* is so simple that it has received the condemnation and ridicule of literary critics from that time to this. Ambrosio Fornet argues that it is pointless to judge the *Cantos del siboney* as simply poor-quality verse, since the book was "ante todo un fenómeno sociológico" (141). The anthology came along in the decade after technological advances in the printing industry had cut in half the cost of publishing a book, thereby increasing book production (Smorkaloff 13). Furthermore, the budding of newspapers in the provincial towns during the 1850s contributed to the development of a reading public beyond Havana and Matanzas (Fornet 142). Fornet describes at length the increase in print culture in the provinces during the 1850s. Noting especially the newspapers, magazines, and books published in the eastern cities of Santiago and Puerto Príncipe, Fornet concludes that poets José Fornaris and Juan Cristóbal Nápoles gained commercial success without relying on the Havana public (142-44). These poets responded to the tastes of the provincial readers and thus fulfilled new market demands (144).

The forms of the poems in *Cantos* likely appealed to the aural sensibilities of the masses. In the first edition of the *Cantos*, eight of the twenty-eight poems employ some variety of the *sexteto agudo plurimétrico*. This strophe has six lines with rhyming accented syllables at the end of the third and sixth lines; the first five lines would all be of the same length, but the final line would be at least twice as long. The rhyme scheme of these eight poems is always abécdÉ, where the case of the letters denotes the relative length of the line. Even though the *sexteto agudo* was not very important in Romanticism, perhaps the accented lines caught the fancy of Fornaris's readers, even as the stanzas offered something slightly out of the ordinary. Thirteen poems in the collection consist of the strophic forms of either the *octava aguda* (with eight or more syllables per line) or the *octavilla aguda* (with fewer than eight syllables per line). Each of these strophic forms has eight lines, with rhyming accented syllables at the end of the fourth and eighth lines (ABBÉCDDÉ or ABBÉACCÉ). Fornaris most often used eight and ten syllables per line. According to versification expert Rudolph Baehr, the *octavilla aguda* was common in Romanticism, especially with the octosyllabic line (294). This strophe became quite popular in Spain and in America precisely because it was "easy to remember and to sing" (293).

That a poem be memorable and musical must have been important criteria among rural and provincial Cubans of that time, as many of them customarily set poems to music, and even spontaneously composed poetry to instrumental accompaniment. At least one of the poems from the *Cantos*, "El siboney," did become popular among the peasants; as the author's note in the 1888 edition attests, Cubans in the interior of the island sang it with the music of the *triple* or the guitar (424). It is interesting that the *Cantos* sold so many copies around the island, even though its poems were not in the form most popular among the peasants—the *décima*. The *décima* is a ten-line stanza of octosyllabic verse, usually with the rhyme scheme of ABBAACCDDC. According to critic Virgilio López Lemus, by the nineteenth century, this form had become widely accepted among both popular and cultured poets, and the singing of *décima* had become "a peculiarly Cuban tradition" (44). Poet Juan Cristóbal Nápoles Fajardo did capitalize on the popularity of both the *décima* and the indigenous theme; all of the Siboneyista poems in *Rumores del Hórmigo* are in *décimas*.

Fornaris incorporated into the *Cantos* themes that were sure to elicit a strong response. One such topic is that of romance: of the twenty-eight poems in the 1855 collection, fourteen in some way treat love between a man and a woman. We have already seen "La laguna de Ana Luisa" and "La serrana de Jiguani." Three of those fourteen poems—"Ale i Sari" (145-48), "Oselina" (156-57) and "Leya i Yarino" (232-34)—describe a love troubled by mistrust or abandonment. The remaining nine poems are invitation poems, or they include the element of invitation.

The invitation poem is a subgenre of Cuban *criollista* poetry in which the man entices the beloved woman to come and live with him; he describes the natural beauty of his home and

imagines the activities of their bucolic existence. The invitation poem was common in the nineteenth century. Even Plácido wrote an invitation titled “El veguero” (Valdés 1977: 52-57). Juan Cristóbal Nápoles Fajardo included in *Rumores del Hórmigo* at least two invitations to his dear Rufina. The invitation poem allows the poet to celebrate the natural elements of the Cuban countryside as much as his love for the woman. Critics have noted that the exuberant description of the land and vegetation—especially with a peculiarly Cuban nomenclature—was an important feature of the Creolization or Cubanization of Cuban poetry (Schulman 941-42; Castellanos 2002: 26-33). Of course, the insertion of Cuban lexical items appropriated the Spanish language and used it to lay claim to the land for Creoles. By setting the typically *criollista* invitation poem among the island’s natives of an earlier time, Fornaris led readers to imagine that the Indians had loved their women and their land in the same ways that rural Cubans did.

The prominence of the love theme probably had the added benefit of attracting female readers. In fact, the magazine *La piragua* was directed at women; its prospectus (in the *Índices analíticos*, edited by Menocal and García Carranza) includes the statement: “Venid, pues, hijas de la Cuba actual, venid á cruzar con nosotros el lago encantado de la Poesía erótica, el sombrío golfo de la elejía, [...]” (89).

The *Cantos* collection may also have appealed to a broad audience because it depicted characters from both upper and lower social classes. Some of these characters experienced the kinds of hardships that many Cubans suffered during the political and economic disturbances of the mid-nineteenth century. The *Cantos* poems feature numerous *caciques*, many of them still in authority, as in “El hijo del cacique” (153-55) and “El cacique de Ornofai” (208-16). As we saw above, the poem “Hatuei i Naya” presents a former cacique who had lost his wealth and position. The voice of the poem “La gruta” is in a similar situation, having lost everything but his love for an Indian woman (190-92). The heart-wrenching experiences of military defeat and forced exile are described in the poems “El cacique Habaguanes” and “El adiós,” respectively. Cuban Creoles could see their own social class reflected in the *Cantos*. Many readers may have identified with the powerlessness of the Siboney characters, as they saw Spaniards profit from their financial ruin, and oppress them for political reasons.

There are characters of lower classes, such as Hatuey’s lover Naya and the male speaker in the poem “Mi canoa” (*Poesías* 1a ed. 196-99). There are two interesting cases with regard to the representation of the lowest classes or castes of the indigenous society. In the poem “Las tórtolas de Eloina,” a young Indian woman falls in love with a man named Enrique. He is described thus: “Hoi esclavo, ayer Casique, / Ayer indio i hoi cristiano” (226). This description has historical and political resonance, for it alludes to the conquistadors’ practice of baptizing and renaming natives and forcing them to work. Enrique could be interpreted as a symbol of Cuba and its transformation during the Conquest. Enrique also exemplifies that the cost of gaining Catholicism—so much prized by Cuban Creoles—was the political domination, which anti-colonial Cuban Creoles in the nineteenth century often labeled “slavery.”

The poem “El nabori” makes a similar allusion to the distribution of natives for forced labor, but this poem engages in a rhetorical strategy of evading certain controversial issues (217-19). The glossary of indigenous terms at the end of the volume gives the definition thus: “Nabori.—de Naboria, repartimiento que se hacia [sic] adjudicando cierto número de indios en calidad de criados para el servicio personal” (“*Nabori*—from *Naboria*, [which means] the apportionment that was made, auctioning (or distributing) a certain number of Indians as personal servants” (*Poesías* 3a ed. 251)). The definition emphasizes the legal procedure, as it draws attention away from the person of the *nabori*; the definition also avoids revealing to whom the Indians were distributed. Curiously, the poem itself never mentions the speaker’s legal or social status as a servant. Instead, the text concentrates on his personal experience. The opening line reads, “Yo vivo siempre triste;” the voice goes on to lament his absence from his homeland, his separation from his family, his suffering of mistreatment, and his loss of all happiness. Unlike the other figures who have lost

everything, the *naborí* no longer has even a wife to comfort him; instead he seeks divine intervention to suddenly change his life:

Mis lágrimas enjuga,
Espíritu divino
¡Oh májico Semí!
Piedad, piedad, ¡oh jenio!
Derrama un solo rayo

Que alumbre la existencia del indio Naborí. (219)

It is interesting to note that the main details of the *naborí*'s condition are very much like those of the African slave in nineteenth-century Cuba. While literary condemnations of slavery were prohibited and censored in Cuba at that time, this poem seems to share the strategy of contemporary antislavery literature: the presentation of the abuse, degradation, and misery of the slave elicits the pity of the reader and a moral objection to the institution of bondage. If Fornaris indeed intended this poem to condemn slavery, it should be noted that he found a way to publish on this topic on the island before the Ten Years' War, while other writers either published their abolitionist works abroad or avoided the theme altogether.³

José Fornaris took advantage of the moment and employed the themes, forms, and language with the broadest appeal geographically and socially. The poet also treated political themes in ways that would not cause divisions or lead to censorship. It should be underscored that even the four most politically charged allegorical poems carefully avoid the articulation of a particular plan or destiny for Cuba. In other words, the poems in the *Cantos* collection do not clearly advocate independence, annexation, nor reformism. Instead the poems employ language and themes that could unify Creoles and draw them toward the general cause of the *patria*. In fact, the term *patria* appears boldly throughout the *Cantos*, even though, as Fornaris states in his 1888 introduction, the governing officials heard the word *patria*, or fatherland, as a cry for insurrection (9). In his final edition of *Cantos*, Fornaris chose to update his view of the best known indigenous resistance fighter: the love poem "Hatuei i Naya" was eliminated and replaced with a short poem exalting Hatuey as a brave warrior and martyr. This recasting of the hero may have been written to honor the dedication of the insurgents in the Ten Year's War. Yet, even this poem emphasizes values with which most could agree; the first stanza reads:

La libertad amó con fanatismo
Y fue terrible y fuerte en pelea:
No lucharon los griegos en Platea
Con tan gran heroísmo. (*Poesías* 3a ed. 439-40; Orta Ruiz 322-23)

By stressing love for the island, defense of homeland, and desire for freedom, the *Cantos del siboney* was able to captivate white Creole readers from all over the island, from rural and urban settings, and even diverse political views. Fornaris created an audience that was truly popular for a poetry that was, if not national, at least, in some senses postcolonial.

³Fornaris later wrote and published four poems about enslaved blacks. These poems merit some examination. In addition, few critics realize that the short story "El ranchador" by Pedro José Morillas was first published in Cuba in the journal *La piragua*. Although the story evokes as much sympathy for the white peasant turned bounty-hunter as for the blacks who had escaped slavery, it is important to consider that the organ of Siboneyismo allowed the story's publication, many years before more clearly abolitionist works could appear in print on the island.

Concluding Questions

Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* has been one of the foremost starting points for much of the recent scholarship on the role of narrative in the formation of nations. Anderson argues that the growth of print-capitalism prepared the conditions for people to imagine themselves as part of communities, and these imagined communities "set the stage for the modern nation" (46, 36). He singles out the novel and the newspaper as the media that "provided the technical means for 're-presenting' the kind of imagined community that is the nation" (25). The novel and the newspaper, he says, depict people within society, people connected even without knowing each other, and all acting simultaneously within calendrical time. The newspaper in particular also gave people the feeling that they were all reading the same thing at the same time.

While Anderson addresses the role of the general structure and content of novels and newspapers in fostering imagined communities, he gives the example of a Filipino epic poem to illustrate how its structure could not convey very clearly the idea of simultaneity nor portray characters within a society. However, Anderson leaves open the question about poetry: How did poetry grow into the age of print-capitalism and nationalism? Were there ways in which poetry came to encourage people to imagine themselves as part of a community? In his book *Antecedentes históricos de la formación de la nación cubana*, Josef Opatrný suggests that the Siboneyista writers "contribuyeron, [...] al fortalecimiento de la conciencia común de la comunidad criolla [...]" (139). Opatrný's observations, as well as those expounded in the present essay, challenge critics to develop the methodological and theoretical tools with which to determine the role of poetry, especially popular poetry, in the formation of the nation, the growth of nationalism, and the development of national literature.⁴

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