

mérito en las manos de Stark. A lo largo del libro, el autor ilustra sus planteamientos o conclusiones a través de cuadros familiares particulares. Éstos, abundantes en el texto, logran la difícil tarea de dar rostro humano a aquellos sujetos, víctimas del sistema esclavista, quienes en la mayoría de los documentos históricos no dejan de verse como propiedad de sus amos o estadísticas de importación. Las historias de estas familias suceden ante los ojos de los lectores como pequeños cuadros narrativos, microhistorias de vidas hasta ahora olvidadas. En éstos, Stark demuestra que es capaz de ser un preciso narrador de la condición humana, a pesar de la escasísima información que tiene a su alcance.

Jeroen Leinders. 2013. *Tula: The Revolt*. Translated by Brian Doyle-Du Breuil. London: Hope Road Publishing; 2nd edition. 196 pp. ISBN-10: 1908446269, ISBN-13: 978-1908446268.196.

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Jeroen Leinders's novel, *Tula: The Revolt*, translated by Brian Doyle-Du Breuil is a welcome addition to the gradual interest in the genre of African Caribbean historical maroon communities and slave revolt narratives. *Tula* joins the list of narratives, fictional and historical, such as Aphra Benn's *Oroonoko* or *The Royal Slave*, Namba Roy's *The Black Albino*, *My Name is Not Angelica* by Scott O'Dell, Alejo Carpentier's *The Kingdom of This World*, Aimé Césaire's, *The Tragedy of King Christophe*, and Derek Walcott's *Henri Christophe: A Chronicle in Seven Scenes*.

Set in Curaçao, the largest of the Dutch Caribbean islands, *Tula: The Revolt* begins as a peaceful protest movement for better treatment of the enslaved, as dictated by law. For the pacifist Tula, problems could be solved by talking to the plantation owner, and failing that, appeal directly to the governor. The seed for this awakening among enslaved is the news about the successful Haitian revolution, in addition to news that Holland itself had become a colony of France. The logic then as articulated in

the novel is that since France had abolished slavery in her territories, it was reasoned that the enslaved in Curaçao, a Netherlands colony but now under France, would also be freed (52-55). The narrative is quick to point out, however, that France would never compel the Dutch to free their slaves in the Caribbean. The great disappointment felt among the enslaved waters the seed of the revolution. Leinder subtly inserts the second difficulty facing the leaders of the enslaved: how to persuade the general enslaved population to rise up not for total liberation but for a modification from a slave system to an indenture system. The major obstacle here is that majority of the people fear the whiplash more than they desire improved conditions of service (17). Leinder implies at this early stage in the novel that this narrow vision by the enslaved of a modified slave system in which they can continue to be enslaved is bound to fail. Slavery cannot be modified; it can only be abolished. Thus they start off by believing that their victory does not rest in weapons, but in a unity of spirit. But that unity, like plants, needs to be cultivated carefully and patiently, but time is against them (14).

The novel reveals the disturbing realities of competing loyalties that Tula struggles with: one, the pacifist influence of Christianity, and two, the influence of his African mentors, Jorboe, and Tula's father's fatalistic attitudes to slavery and belief in the inevitability of white supremacy over blacks. These confuse Tula for a while (18). From the white priest the enslaved are taught that the wages of their enslavement is entry into the white man's Christian heaven, and hence they needed not fight for fair treatment and freedom on earth, so it is not surprising that Tula turns to him for counsel. He fails at this point to fully understand that the priest represents a religion that is used to justify slavery, and to kill any spirit of rebellion by preaching acceptance of the *status quo* for the promise of paradise after death. Improbable as it seems, it is fascinating how Tula does not recognize the priest's duplicity when he refuses to bless his marriage to Speranza. Leinder inserts this episode to reveal the Catholic Church's collusion with the slave plantation system. Dim witted as Tula seems to be represented here, this nevertheless prepares him to better understand the priest's latter behavior as a failed diplomat for the white government during the war (21:110-116).

Leinder sets out to make Tula a Christ figure as well as a warrior hero. He succeeds ultimately to weave the two character types together in the believably throughout the narrative (50). In making Tula sometimes incredulously naïve in his thinking that there can be rapprochement between masters and enslaved, Leinder defends his style by making Tula engage Judeo-Christian philosophy that justified slavery, in an attempt to educate his people about the legitimacy of their demands. But as Audre Lorde has written *inter alia*, it is not possible to use the master's tools to

dismantle the master's house unless they are rehomed and rezoned to such a point the master no longer recognizes them. At this point, Tula has not learnt the art of dissembling yet to be able to signify on the master while sounding like him as a way of subverting the master through his own philosophy of justice. He is tortured and sent off to the docks.

Tula's transfer to the docks in the capital as punishment for being a trouble maker in the plantation follows the narrative pattern of the hero who must suffer persecution at home, as part of the trials, flee his place of birth and go on a journey of growth and maturity in wisdom. While in the city, Tula is shocked by one fact; not all the blacks, represented by Paolo, support his ideals. They prefer personal financial gain that the system guarantees them than to fight for its ending. This also reveals the divisions between the city or house slave and the field slave. Paolo is the Fanonian self-abnegating black man in *Black Skin, White Masks*. Paolo's auto-racism is instructive on the consequences of slavery and racism on blacks (69). Pablo's rejection of Tula's ideals also foreshadows the treachery of Codjo later in the story (98).

But like all heroes who initially go into exile, Tula returns to his plantation with new experiences, skills, and determination to fight on. Tula's exposure in the city, coupled with having been tortured by his master's son before being deported to the city, hardens him and he is now ready to accept Louis's militant ideology. Subsequently, he organizes a mass march to the capital. This so frightens the planters that they also flee to the capital inventing stories of black brutality against all whites. Louis takes a couple of drunken whites as prisoners to facilitate any future negotiations. This is seen as evidence of terrorism against all whites. This initial stage of the rebellion as the novel implies is too easy to last (84-85). Leinder also insinuates that freedom that comes so easy often confuses the unfree who had not been prepared for this sudden liberty. This is a critique of the leadership for their lack of planning to deal with post-liberation issues. The people have all their lives been ordered around and told what to and not to do. Suddenly they are free. Consequently, alcohol becomes the immediate goal after freedom. Tula and Louis do not take into consideration the existence of bad and self-ish elements such as Pedro and his friends. Their drunken and violent behavior fuels the accusation that Tula and his people are blood thirsty and murderous anti-white "savages" out to slaughter every white on site. A typical story that is often used to spread fear and panic and justify the brutality of counter-attacks. Pedro and his drunken friends beat up the captured white man at the Klein Santa Martha plantation. Their acts of indiscipline create division among the people and they divert attention away from the real goals of the revolt, and in the process undermine Tula's leadership (86-87). Leinder's intention is not to paint the blacks

as all good because of their suffering, and all whites as evil. Indeed, he succeeds in giving humanity to some whites in the characters of Miss Lesire, a white woman who welcomes and hides Tula and his people in her plantation, risking the ire of other whites and vigilantes. However, all the other white people band together and plan how to use the army to retake the plantations and re-impose slavery (90-91).

Leinder's novel critically reveals the causes of failure of several slave rebellions. Tula's continuous naïveté, Bastaan's and Louis's simplicity in their war plans, the unpreparedness of the majority of the people for freedom, the treachery of the white plantation owners, the use of superior fire power, internal dissensions among the enslaved, treachery by some enslaved against their own people for silver coins, and finally, exhaustion of spirit. The fact that Tula and his people do not win any concessions, is a telling critique against Dutch colonial practices in the Caribbean, often considered benign.

Tula: The Revolt is written with a romantic flare that details the joys and sorrows of Tula and Speranza in their tortured journey of love. Similar to Oroonoko, both Tula and Speranza are heroic slaves in their own ways. Speranza is the unofficial leader of the women and children, and guards them with her life as Tula guards the warriors. Yet the romance remains undeveloped because the novel does not read like a romantic tale with an African flavor, but is heavily garnished with the texture of European romance tales (21-22). Some of the novel's strength lie in the use of narrative flashbacks. The flashbacks are narrative retrievals providing historical background to foreground Tula as a future hero. Tula is presented to us as a sensitive adolescent with a developmentally challenged brother, Quako. The fishing trip undertaken by the teenagers with Quako is instructive on Tula's nurturing and caring nature, important qualities in a hero. Tula is presented also as family centered and hence his fight is to preserve and protect the families of enslaved Africans. Through these flashbacks we encounter a Tula who stands up for his brother against the white master's command. When Quako dies from exhaustion during cane cutting, Tula is deeply hurt but hardly does anything.

Tula is a good suspenseful novel. The novel raises Tula to the level slave rebel heroes such as Cudjoe, Nanny, Macandal, Nat Turner, Toussaint L'Ouverture, Queen Mary, among others. As an important contribution to Caribbean literatures, *Tula* should find its place in university courses in Caribbean and Dutch literatures and histories. This is an easy to read novel in spite of some contrived scenes that one finds in these kinds of novels, especially the fight scenes, the stereotypic portrayals of the role of women, the white population, and Tula's predictability of goodness. All in all, a good, well-written and enjoyable novel, a wonderful contribution to Caribbean literature and to slave narratives.