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Preludio en Boricua: Luis Palés Matos, William Carlos Williams, and the Inextricable Burundangas of Puerto Rican Identity[1]

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Abstract: Unconvinced by the idea that posits U.S. and Latin American race relations as divorced entities, this essay tracks the discourse of mestizaje in its hemispheric development. It does so by focusing on William Carlos Williams's translation of Luis Palés Matos' "Preludio en Boricua" in 1942. By framing this translation within its historical conjuncture, engaging with the criticism that surrounds it, and reading it alongside other texts by both authors, this essay connects this poem and its translation to the broader discourse of mestizaje that was promoted by the Partido Popular Democrático in their construction of a consensual Puerto Rican identity. By reading this context contrapuntally with Williams' situation, I am able to catch another aspect of this Boricua identity in its interaction with an American identity. Williams' translation serves as a place to explore how consensual both identities actually are, as they intersect over this fundamental anti-blackness. In both cases, the construction of these identities enacts an extractive, parasitic relationship to blackness: black people

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serve as a foil, props to be incorporated into the nation in order to serve as the ground of identity.

Keywords: Hemispheric Anti-blackness, Mestizaje, Puerto Rican Poetry, American Poetry, Translation Studies

Resumen: No convencido por la idea que postula a EE.UU. y las relaciones raciales latinoamericanas como entidades divorciadas, este ensayo sigue el discurso del mestizaje en su desarrollo hemisférico. Lo hace centrándose en la traducción de William Carlos Williams de "Preludio en Boricua" de Luis Palés Matos en 1942. Al enmarcar esta traducción dentro de su coyuntura histórica, comprometiéndose con la crítica que la rodea y leyéndola junto a otros textos de ambos autores, este ensayo vincula este poema y su traducción al discurso más amplio del mestizaje que fue promovido por el Partido Popular Democrático en su construcción de una identidad puertorriqueña consensuada. Al leer este contexto contrapuntísticamente con la situación de Williams, se puede captar otro aspecto de esta identidad boricua en su interacción con una identidad americana. La traducción de Williams sirve como un lugar para explorar cómo ambas identidades son realmente consensuales, ya que se cruzan sobre esta anti-negritud fundamental. En ambos casos, la construcción de estas identidades promulga una relación extractiva y parasitaria con la negritud: las personas negras fungen como accesorios para incorporarse a la nación con el fin de servir como base de identidad.

Palabras clave: anti-negritud hemisférico, mestizaje, poesía puertorriqueña, poesía estadounidense, estudios de traducción

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Anti-blackness and white supremacy take different forms historically. In Latin America, logics of mestizaje are a common way of harmonizing violent, racial/colonial histories: "[i]nstead of tokening an egalitarian exchange, mestizaje can enshrine hierarchical difference by being recast as *blanqueamiento* (whitening)" (Wade 482)[2].[3] In the case of Puerto Rico, this logic of mestizaje has become essential to the national discourse of the 'great Puerto Rican family,' as Isar Godreau's work shows: "racial scripts as defined here are closely tied to celebratory notions of nationalism developed under the rubric of mestizaje, or race mixture" (14). In the U.S., it is supposed that the one-drop rule is the prevailing logic, but, as Jared Sexton has shown in *Amalgamation Schemes,* "[i]n the history of white supremacy, we have seemingly contradictory discourses of antimiscegenation and anti-antimiscegenation, of white purity and mestizaje, Anglo-Saxonism and Latinism, inhabiting the same strategic integration" (223). Considering that the "history of

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[2] Wade, P. Racism and Race Mixture in Latin America. *Latin American Research*
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[3] Mestizaje itself also develops differently in each time and place throughout Latin America. Mestizaje within the Mexican nation, for example ––closely tied to José Vasconcelos' ideas in "La Raza Cósmica"–– will have a much more extractive relationship with indigeneity. Although indigeneity is not unimportant to the Puerto Rican version of mestizaje, I focus on the important role of blackness within this national discourse: "Unlike most forms of stereotyping [...] the "scripts of blackness" I analyze essentialize black people and black communities [...] according to attributes presented in the dominant discourses as primarily positive and often celebrated as exceptional qualities of the mixed-race nation" (Godreau 14).

both the island and its diaspora [are] facets of a single historical process," the case of Puerto Rico is a good vantage point from which to examine the development of what Sexton calls two seemingly contradictory discourses on race (Ayala and Bernabe 11). As I understand it, Puerto Rican identity has been formed through a dialectical process of back and forth translations between the island/colony and the continent/empire. Thus, translations come to name, in my work, not just movements between languages, but the hemispheric movements of racial ideology.

Much has been written about the relationship between the intellectual project of the criollo Puerto Rican intelligentsia of the early twentieth century, which included important figures like Antonio S. Pedreira and Tomás Blanco, and the PPD's economic and cultural policies during its first run of political hegemony (1952-1968). In order to attend to the racial dimension of the PPD's construction of Puerto Rican identity, this essay focuses on a younger member of La Generación del Treinta: Luis Palés Matos. While someone like Pedreira had a more classically segregationist stance,[4] Palés Matos' *Tuntún de Pasa y Grifería* (1937 1st ed, 1950 2nd ed) is commonly understood as a watershed moment for racial dynamics on the island, as it is read as one of the first books of poetry to emphasize the African roots of Puerto Rican identity.

William Carlos Williams, the important American modernist poet born in New Jersey to a British father and a Puerto Rican mother, published a translation of the first poem of Palés Matos' *Tuntún*, "Preludio en Boricua," in a small modernist magazine named *American Prefaces* in 1942. Although his spoken Spanish was never fluent, translation was an important part of his poetic practice. In

[4] Essentially, for Pedreira, "out of this fusion comes our confusion" (Roy-Fequiere 15).

this essay, I read William Carlos Williams's translation of Palés Matos' poem with a focus on the racial tensions that are already there in the original, but that are made even more complex with Williams's version. I read "Preludio en Boricua" as a prelude to the boricua identity that will be proposed by the PPD after the constitution of the E.L.A. By reading it contrapuntally with William Carlos Williams' translation, I am able to catch another aspect of this Boricua identity in its interaction with an American identity. Williams' translation serves as a place to explore how compatible and "consensual" both identities actually are, as they intersect over this fundamental anti-blackness.

Luis Palés Matos and the Tuntún

In its moment *Tuntún de Pasa y Grifería* was controversial because of its valorization of Afro-Puerto Rican language: "Palés Matos' call for the creation of an Antillean poetry that would better reflect the racially mixed character of Puerto Rican culture provoked reactions as varied as outrage, derision, fear, and applause in different sectors of the reading public" (207 Roy-Féquière). In the last two chapters of her book, *Women, Creole Identity, and Intellectual Life in Early Twentieth-Century Puerto Rico*, Magali Roy-Féquière very deftly reads some poems from *Tuntún de Pasa y Grifería,* while also giving a good history of its reception and how it became such a canonical work in Puerto Rican literature. Even if it was controversial, it ended up being part of the shift towards ideas of mestizaje espoused by the Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, and its director, Ricardo Alegría: "Alegría deployed the idea of racial harmony repeatedly, and in the process created the hegemonic narrative about racial mixing that underpins Puerto Rico's national identity" (Lloréns 121).

To be sure, in its moment this book was a step towards a slightly different racial logic, and it generated much debate on a topic that was usually silenced by the Puerto Rican intelligentsia of the time. Even if Roy-Féquière's analysis can illustrate this fact, her conclusion is that his poetry was "unable to radically question those fanciful representations of Otherness so entrenched in Western culture" (228). Palés' negrista poetry ultimately falls back on reductionist tropes that construe the "African element" as primitive, sensual, and closer to animality than the white Puerto Rican. Roy-Féquière analyses the controversial reception this book received, as it was discussed in various Puerto Rican newspapers by important figures of La Generación del Treinta like Tomás Blanco and Margot Arce. I quote her at length:

My analysis of Margot Arce's essays on the "black poetry" of Luis Palés Matos has shown that there existed a consensus among the members of the Puerto Rican *Generación del Treinta* with regard to the definition of race. There was also a shared belief in the "primitive and sensual character" of black peoples. Viewing culture as emanating from biology, both detractors and apologists of Palés Matos [...] agreed that the white race was the producer of true culture and civilization. [...] The black race's function was to be an untamed wilderness, a natural resource that could be used to replenish [...] the 'soul' of the Western world. (231)

Furthermore, Roy-Féquière points out that many important critics of Palés's work closer to today have been quick to construe her and other like-minded critics as "recalcitrant readers who are unduly sensitive to the racist stereotypes of this poetry" and their readings as "misreadings," somehow missing the point (247). I subscribe to Roy-Féquière's analysis and would only add that the canonization of Palés' poetry and his figure as a national poet

is co-constitutive with the hegemonic ideology of racial democracy on the island, which "claim[s] that because the majority of the population is mixed, 'race' and racism are almost nonexistent" (Godreau).

Nevertheless, there is more to be said about his poetry. Palés' work is, after all, part of the avant-garde and this can be seen stylistically in his inclusion of everyday speech, "welcoming what were then 'unpoetic' colloquialisms into his poetry" (209 Roy-Féquière). These elements are part of the reason why there would be so much affinity between Williams' and Palés' work: "[w]hile Palés' near Gongorine style and Williams' apparent free-flowing verse may seem incompatible, Williams immediately grasped that Palés had written a poetry that uses local talk and humor with utmost seriousness" (149, Cohen). In fact, as Julio Marzán has noted, the "boricua" in "Preludio en Boricua," the first poem of his *Tuntún*, refers not only "to Borinquen but to the island's colloquial idiom" (148, Cohen). This is another important similarity between Williams and Palés, since the former often said that he didn't write in English, but in American, in the same way that Palés seems to be writing in Boricua rather than in Spanish.

William Carlos Williams' trip to Puerto Rico

In April 1941, William Carlos Williams went to Puerto Rico for the First Inter-American Writers' Conference, hosted at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras. There he gave a talk entitled "An Informal Discussion of Poetic Form" in which he pondered the influence that Spanish could have on U.S. poetry, speculating that perhaps it could "shake us [North American poets] free for a reconsideration of the poetic line" (xxxvii Cohen). This position is congruent with his life's work. Throughout his poetry there is a desire to reformulate the poetic line, inherited from the English

poets and transformed in/through the everyday speech of America (the U.S.). This is what I am referring to above with Williams' insistence on writing in "American."

For some critics this "American" line is not only English, but is also "partly rooted, from his earliest work, in the poetic space of the Caribbean" (140 Noel). What Urayoán Noel is referring to here is, in part, the use of Spanish in Williams' poetry from the very beginning of his work, as in one of his first successful books, *Al Que Quiere!*, that has, as is evident, its title in Spanish. Some of what will be his most well-known poems, like "El Hombre" and "Danse Russe," are already included in this early collection.

In spite of the fact that these references are there even in his early work, much criticism has simply read Williams as an Anglo-modernist poet. Over the last few decades some work has been done to try to expand this limited notion of Williams as only American (U.S.) and move towards a more pan-American or hemispheric notion of his work: "Williams' recovery of a Latin American modernist poetics through his translations in *By Word of Mouth* suggests a horizon for his poetics beyond the Anglo-American modernism in which he is a central figure" (141 Noel). Williams' horizons were definitely broadened by this trip to Puerto Rico, in which he ended up meeting Palés Matos, who gave him a copy of his *Tuntún de Pasa y Grifería.*

Fruitful as Williams' trip to the island might have been for the development of his poetic line, we need to understand the First Inter-American Writers' Conference in the context of this complex colonial relationship. In his book, *The Poetry of the Americas: From Good Neighbors to Countercultures*, Harry Feinsod describes the event: "when the US Department of State engaged Williams in April 1941 to visit the island for the first time [...] they hoped to mitigate the nationalist political climate on the island inflamed by

Albizu Campos, Corretjer, Burgos, and the independence movement" (72). Even if he had personal reasons for attending this event, it happened as a part of a government initiative, brokered by Williams' friend, the poet Muna Lee, Luis Muñoz Marín's wife at the time, who worked in the U.S. Department of State from 1941-1965 as a "cultural affairs specialist."

While I wouldn't want to conflate Williams in an undifferentiated manner with the U.S. Department of State, we have to understand his interventions as at least under the shadow of this "assimilationist and imperial cultural diplomacy mechanism" that he was a part of (72 Feinsod). In his reading of Williams' participation in the conference, Feinsod is careful to underscore this tension. The seven poems that Williams chose to read —written years before this event— were all about his personal blood connections to the island. These poems, according to Feinsod, "constitute a partial corpus of Caribbean 'origin poems'" (77). On this occasion, Williams seems to be very self aware of those Caribbean roots that Noel and Marzán have identified in his early poetry and his poetry in general. His selection of poems for this conference is evidence of that self awareness and can be read as a "bicultural self-fashioning" (78 Feinsod).

This self-fashioning is also strategic. Feinsod delves into the politics of that self-fashioning, offering up what seems to me a direct criticism to critics like Noel and Marzán: "[c]hampions of [Williams'] biculturalism hardly note that his origin story tracks shifts in the exertion of US soft power over several generations, dating back to his familial ties to prominent pro-annexationists in New York's Puerto Rican colonia" (78). Feinsod is referring here, in part, to Williams' direct connection to Julio J. Henna.

Feinsod reads this relationship along with other moments through Williams' autobiographical writings to

say that his "nostalgic self-portrait screens out how his cultural diplomacy fits into longer patterns of US hegemony" (78). Feinsod's points are hard to argue with and they help provide political bearings to revisionist readings of this poet that, in their desire to highlight his connections to Puerto Rico, have glossed over some of the actual political content of those connections or, to think of it in another way, have romanticized his familial allegiance to the island while ignoring the content of his politics; falling, in a sense, for Williams' own romantic self-portrait. There is a parallelism between how Williams' figure is romanticized and the way in which this translation of *Preludio in Boricua* is read by Urayoán Noel. In stressing Williams' Caribbean roots while putting his anti-blackness to the side, Noel misses the fact that what sets the conditions of movement here --what makes possible this translation-- is anti-blackness.

The Limits of Difference or Blackness as Limit

In his reading of William Carlos Williams' translation of Luis Palés Matos's poem, Urayoán Noel argues that Williams' "American poetics insists on a Caribbean difference that resists easy translation" and that Williams' approach to translation "preserves a certain graininess, a nonequivalence between languages that preserves in turn a political space" (139 Noel). In Williams' own words we could call what he does a "not-to-be-called translation" (149 Cohen). This approach makes sense if we consider Williams' idea of the American idiom, of the specificity of the vernacular. If for Williams himself faithful translation is not necessarily impossible —hence he publishes the translation with a note expressing "profound apologies to the poet"— the type of translation that Noel reads him as doing is a translation across vernacular languages that tries to generate a 'mood' in some sort of transcultural way: "[t]he mood is

West Indian, as are the words which portray the mood" (148 Cohen). In his essay on this translation, Peter Ramos describes it thus: "Williams seems far less interested in conveying the exact corresponding words for, or even the exact sense of, the original so much as its "tone"— reconstituted and recontextualized in this highly constructed U.S. American English" (103). Ramos refers us to Walter Benjamin in his essay on "The Task of the Translator:" "[T]ranslation does not find itself in the center of the language forest but on the outside facing the wooded ridge; it calls into it without entering, aiming at that single spot where the echo is able to give, in its own language, the reverberation of the work in the alien one" (76). Rather than translating from Spanish to English we must read this as a translation from Boricua to American. Indeed, we could think, with Benjamin, of this translation as the reverberation of the Boricua in the American.

Palés' poem lends itself well to this type of approach. In fact, for many years *Tuntún de Pasa y Grifería* had remained untranslated in its entirety precisely because of its extensive use of unconventional language, which Williams decides to translate in unconventional or, to follow Noel, grainy terms: "Williams' approximate translation is less about distilling an essential language than about the proliferation of differences across and along Caribbean American landscapes" (144 Noel). When the grainy translation succeeds, according to Noel, it manages to reproduce "the baroque orality of Palés Matos' original in eccentric transcultural terms" (142 Noel). Noel points out some moments in the text that illustrate this idea of the grainy translation. One such example of success is when Williams translates "bochinche de ñañiguería"— which refers to the Abakuá Afro-Cuban secret society— into "voodoo chatter." This manages to translate the Cuban referent through other parallel-but-different Afro-Caribbean

and African American referents legible in English, while also maintaining the gossip aspect of the bochinche. A less successful translation is when Williams decides to translate the onomatopoeic tuntún into "mixup," which completely loses the musical quality of the tuntún, but plays with the element of "mixing" that is already present in the poem.

In that same verse, Williams translates "pasa y grifería" as "kinkhead and high yaller." Where kinkhead makes total sense to describe either pasa or grifería, (which both refer to afro-textured hair) high yaller is a more willful translation. The term is a variant of "high yellow," which was a (pejorative) term used to describe light-skinned mulattoes in the United States. Noel reads this "not necessarily as carelessness on Williams' part [...] but rather as attempting, however fitfully, to convey the energy of Palés Matos' distinctly Afro-Caribbean landscapes and language, not in English but in Williams's own eccentric (Caribbean) American idiom" (143).

In this moment of Noel's essay there is a bifurcation. While this "high yaller" example is useful for him to underscore his idea of the nonequivalent translation, it also inevitably underscores the tense racial dynamic that is already there in the original poem and that Williams is adding to in his translation. Even if that "high yaller" does open up "the possibility of a poetics of translation attuned to [...] an interminable practice of difference," it also showcases an important underlying sameness (143 Noel). The bifurcation in the essay is both conceptual —with this opposition that I am trying to set forth between difference and sameness— and narrative, in the sense that Noel briefly reflects on these racial problems, but proceeds down the conceptual, granular path that he has been setting up. The reason he has to do this is because that racial reading more or less forecloses the granular reading. Noel says so himself

when he interprets the note that Williams includes with the translation of the poem, in which he says that "[s]ome of the words cannot be rendered into English at all, not even in American [n-word] talk" (148 Cohen). Noel's reading of this is that, in framing this translation as a translation into English, Williams seems to be contradicting his insistence on his American idiom: "[p]aramount here is [...] the privileging of a depoliticized fluency, so that the translator would appear to be the language master with Afro-vernacular English relegated to little more than a tool at his disposal" (143-144 Noel).

I say this reading (more or less) forecloses Noel's granular reading because of his interest in that "interminable practice of difference," which, with this, exits that open range of the interminable and is now very starkly determined[5] by the racial limit. While I do concede Noel's point about the work that Williams's translation of Palés' poem is doing by calling into the question "the organic unicity of [...] English," his essay is limited by the fact that it doesn't examine that sameness that, as I will try to argue, enables this interlingual exchange: anti-blackness (148).

Even though Feinsod doesn't focus for too long on this instance of translation in his brief section on Williams, he does offer some insight pertaining to how anti-blackness works in the poems. His outlook on Palés' poem aligns with the one I have outlined in the beginning of this chapter through Roy-Féquière's work, but he adds an important element regarding that move, transition, or translation between the different racial contexts of the U.S. and Puerto Rico: "[w]hile mainland US writers have been found guilty of cultural appropriation for such linguistic gestures [(what

[5] Latin *determinare* "to enclose, bound, set limits to," from de "off" (see *de-*) + *terminare* "to mark the end or boundary," from terminus "end, limit."

he calls linguistic imitation and racial masquerade)], parallel tendencies in Puerto Rican poetry since the late 1920s led to local debates as to whether *negrista* poetry reproduced or subverted racial discourses" (79 Feinsod).

When Williams translates Palés' poem from American to Boricua he is also translating it —in its alternate meaning of moving from one place to another— from the already fraught racial context of Puerto Rico into the differently fraught racial context of the U.S.:

> The racial epistemology characteristic of the Puerto Rican Generation of 1930 eludes mainland discourses of racial imitation. Williams' translation adds a secondary masquerade by exporting this complexity across linguistic boundaries. The proliferation of mashed diction --*mixup, kinkead,* and *messaround*-- scars the poem's surface with the semantic struggle of that exportation. Thus a new racial form enters Williams' work, coding his racial poetics through translation and cultural export. (79 Feinsod)

If, to follow Feinsod, Williams' translation of this poem is scarred, my initial reading of this translation will consist of applying some pressure on those scars and seeing what I find (79).
The first scar is the previously mentioned "high yaller" in the verses "[m]ixup of kinkhead and high yaller / And other big time mixups," which translate the opening lines of Palés' poem, "[t]untún de pasa y grifería / y otros parejeros tuntunes" (54-55 Cohen). Contrary to the act of poetry itself —with its seemingly interminable semantic range— we could understand translation as a series of choices that a translator makes as to how to bring that which is in the over *there* of the other language into the *here* of the translation:

"[t]he intention of the poet is spontaneous, primary, graphic; that of the translator is derivative, ultimate, ideational" (Benjamin 76). The translation is, in this sense, *determined* by the poem. The choice, then, to add "high yaller" is confounding, given that Williams could have easily chosen a word like "nappy" to be "faithful" to the original poem, no more and no less than pasa y grifería. On the other hand, the choice of "high yaller" makes sense musically. Where Palés has a rhyme between "[t]untún de pasa y grifería" and later "[b]ochinche de ñañiguería," the translation mirrors that rhyme with "[m]ixup of kinkhead and high yaller" and "[m]essaround of voodoo chatter" (54-55 Cohen). In this I agree with Noel when he says that, even though Williams himself says that the translation "makes no attempt to give the musical sense of the original," there are clearly moments like this one where one can sense a musicality, even if it is a "scarred" musicality (148 Cohen).

Although musicality might be said to justify that first "high yaller," the second time Palés' poem says "[t]untún de pasa y grifería, / este libro que va a tus manos / con ingredientes antillanos / compuse un día," the translation reads "[m]ixup of black boy and high yaller, / [t]his book to your hands / [w]ith ingredients from the Antilles / [s]um up a day" (56-57 Cohen). Where before Williams had at least preserved half of the metonymy in an uneasy tension, the "high yaller" manages to pull along whatever metaphoric language is left in the verse along with it, now completely concretizing the phrase with the black boy and the high yaller. Williams' changes make the meaning of the stanza completely different from the original, but, even if we were to judge the translation by itself without recourse to how faithful it is or not to the preludio, it's hard to make sense of the verses and how they work together, even in the basic

grammatical sense of the correspondence between subjects and objects.

In Palés' poem the tú in "este libro que va a tus manos" is supposed to address, meta-poetically, the reader who actually has *Tuntún de Pasa y Grifería* in their hands. In Williams' version it doesn't quite work in the same way. In Noel's reading, the fact that Williams translates "pasa y grifería" as "black boy and high yaller" "has the effect of literalizing Palés Matos' second-person invocation" (145). Based on this, he says that "[i]n Williams' reworking, the 'you' refers directly back to the black boy and to the mixup against which identity is negotiated" (145 Noel). I disagree with this reading. The assertion Noel is able to make by pulling on this unsteady moment goes against the content of the translation and therefore against its political implications. For example, when he reads "mixup of black boy and high yaller": "[i]n a metonymic sleight of hand, the nappy head gives way to the black boy, as if to underscore the tension between "high yaller" and "black," between the euphemistic racial term and the materiality of the black body" (144-145 Noel). I fail to see any such tension that is being underscored by this conjunction. It seems that Noel is suggesting that, in these final lines, the translation itself is attempting to problematize and maybe even redeem all of the loaded racial moments that have preceded this final moment by opening up a distance between the concrete body and the injurious speech. Is the translation really underscoring any tension between the actual black body and the use of the pejorative "high yaller" if it is also reproducing, unproblematically, something like "an aristocracy macaca / [b]ased in trip[e] and corn pone" (55 Cohen)? Even if we were to read that last stanza as proffering up an invitation for speech, what hope of speech is there for a subject that has already been characterized as belonging —now in Franco-Steeves'

translation for added clarity— to "a monkeyed aristocracy" (27)? Even if there were a tension to conceivably pull at, I think that, in these poems, it is always-already foreclosed by the position the speaker has textually constructed for himself.

It is telling, then, that this moment, in Noel's reading, is a moment in which the translation's insistence on "the proliferation of difference is made clear" (144). There certainly is in this translation —this mixup— a proliferation of differences in the sense that meaning is, to an extent, opened up, moved around from one context into another, changing the meaning and even altering the contexts themselves. One of the ways in which this is true in the translation is with the exporting and importing of different racist/racial categories across linguistic and geographical boundaries.

One could argue whether this is difference or not, but even I would certainly insist on the radical historical specificity of terms. Nonetheless, even if we respect the specificity of terms, the referents for all the words that are floating around in this field of signifiers are, unfortunately, the same: black people, here or there, wherever they are. If there is a difference that is being proliferated here, it is the difference between one racist thing and another racist thing, a Boricua racism and an American racism.

Translating American/Boricua Anti-Blackness

Up until now, we have considered translation mainly within the notion of crossing from one language into another, as if there were an a priori border between languages. In Naoki Sakai's work, translation is not only the register of "a border crossing but also and preliminarily an act of drawing a border, of bordering" (83). In his conceptualization of translation, languages and nations

acquire their internal unity through the border that a "co-figurative" translation institutes: "[i]n other words, the unity of a national or ethnic language as a schema is already accompanied by another schema for the unity of a different language" (Sakai 75). Sakai understands this mode of co-figurative translation as historically situated within colonial modernity. In this model, nations and national languages are generated through translation, conceived as a "a technology by means of which an ethno-linguistic community is rendered representable as a 'geo-body,' thereby constituting itself as a substratum upon which national sovereignty can be built. 'People' is nothing but an idealization of this substratum" (Sakai 179).

Sakai is useful in delineating a broad context in which to understand how translation is put to work at the level of the modern state to facilitate its own constitution: "[h]ere translation [...] is also an ambiguous act of creating continuity out of discontinuity; it pertains to a political labour which generates social relations" (71). Can we think, then, of Williams' translation of Pales Matos' mestizaje poem from the Boricua into the American as pertaining to "a political labour which generates social relations" (Sakai 71)? In order to answer this question, let us begin again with Palés.

In Puerto Rico, this production of an ethno-linguistic community theorized by Sakai will center around the Spanish or, in particular, the Boricua language. This is an anti-colonial strategy, in some sense. As Isar Godreau explains, "in the context of enduring colonial discourses that stressed the natives' incompetence for self-government, claims to Spanish heritage and European traditions validated Puerto Ricans as equally capable of self-government as any European nation" (122). This Eurocentric tendency of Hispanophilia on the island is not without its

white supremacist component: "Hispanophilia arose out of the two-pronged desire of an aspiring criollo class to culturally differentiate Puerto Rico from the United States, on the one hand, and "domesticate" the destabilizing signs of blackness, on the other" (Godreau 122).

As we will see, Palés Matos' poetry was important for both these processes. I understand poetry here as working in the strata of what Raymond Williams calls structures of feeling. With him, I can read a poem as a small structure -- "a set, with specific internal relations, at once interlocking and in tension" -- that tracks "a social experience which is still in process, often indeed not yet recognized as social but taken to be private, [...] but which in analysis [...] has its emergent, connecting, and dominant characteristics, indeed its specific hierarchies" (Williams 132). In this sense, poems help us track "meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt," at a stage in which they have not yet been "formalized, classified, and [...] built into institutions and formations" (Williams 132). It is necessary to make a distinction, then, between the moment in which Luis Palés Matos published his *Túntún* in 1937 and the moment in which it was taken up by the hegemonic political institutions after the 1950s. In the same way that I maintain a distinction between Williams and the U.S. Department of State, I also would like to hold on to Palés Matos as separate from the Partido Popular Democrático. At the same time, the centrality of Palés Matos' place in Puerto Rican culture cannot be understood without taking a brief look at the history of this political party.

The Partido Popular Democrático's Construction of National Consent

The Constitution of Puerto Rico was approved by the constitutional convention on February 6, 1952 and so began

the Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico. This new constitution received its legitimation from the U.S. Government via Public Law 600, which was signed by President Truman on July 3, 1950 (Ayala y Bernabe 163). César Ayala and Rafael Bernabe summarize the process instituted by P.L. 600: "Puerto Rico residents would vote to accept or reject the terms of P.L. 600. If they voted in favor, they would elect a constitutional assembly, which would draft a constitution for Puerto Rico" (163). The most important term in P.L. 600 specified that this new constitution would only occupy itself with the management of the insular government (Ayala y Bernabe 163). The new constitution would not alter the island's colonial relationship to the U.S. Regardless of this evident specification in the law, "Muñoz Marín and the PPD still claimed that P.L. 600 implied a *profound change*[6] in the nature of the relation with the United States. This claim hinged on the phrase [...] that indicated that the law was to be adopted [...] in recognition of the principle of government by consent" (164).

In spite of the lack of a substantial change in the colonial relationship, the creation of the E.L.A. enabled the U.S. to inform the U.N. that Puerto Rico was no longer "a non-self-governing territory" (Ayala y Bernabe 171). This led to a series of debates within the U.N. regarding the need to keep monitoring the situation in Puerto Rico and the question of whose responsibility that would be. Ayala and Bernabe identify two general positions on colonialism that were taken within the discussion. They call the first one --articulated by the U.S. delegation[7]-- the "subjective approach" to colonialism. The U.S. delegation argued that "no restrictions of Puerto Rico's sovereignty could be described

[6] Emphasis mine

[7] Of which Resident Commissioner Antonio Fernós-Isern was a part of.

as colonial if Puerto Rico had *consented*[8] to them. Once it had been determined that the Puerto Rican people had consented to the existing structure, no further proof was needed that self-determination had been attained" (172).

I bring up this historical account around consent because it enables us to understand the colonial relationship between the U.S. and Puerto Rico, particularly the role the PPD took on as mediators and constructors of the consent that was used to justify it during this historical conjuncture. We must understand consent as linked to consensus here, as referring to a common sense and a common feeling around which the nation will gather. In his "Ten Theses on Politics," Jacques Rancière explains that "[t]he essence of consensus [...] does not consist in peaceful discussion and reasonable agreement [but] [...] in the nullification of surplus subjects" (42). In this way he will conclude that "consensus consists, then, in the reduction of politics to the police" (Rancière 42). Sometimes, as with the Gag Law of 1948, the police will actualize itself via the actual police, but more than that, for Rancière, "[i]t is this exclu-sion of what 'is not' that constitutes the police-principle at the core of statist practices" (36).

In his important essay on Puerto Rican nationalism, "De Albizu a Madonna: Para armar y desarmar la nacionalidad," Carlos Pabón explains how, after having suppressed the revolutionary brand of nationalism espoused by Albizu Campós via the Gag Law of 1948, Muñoz Marín co-opted nationalism and its flag. Pabón explains that "in this way, Muñoz fundamentally altered the discourse of 'the national' and appropriated for himself the most beloved symbol of nationalism --the flag-- transforming it into an emblem of

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[8] Emphasis mine

the State in name of a politics of social consensus"[9] (39). This turned "la puertorriqueñidad" into a "discourse for the domestication of social consensus, that is, a discourse that privileged a consensual identity: 'we are all Puerto Rican, above any difference'"[10] (Pabón 42). In this way, this discourse attempted to invisibilize or subsume conflicts over class, gender, and race in Puerto Rican society (Pabón 42).

In highlighting the fact that this consensus that the PPD crafted was tailored to consent to U.S. colonialism, we can consider this colonial compact as an attempt by the colonized elites to enter into a common feeling of humanity with their colonizer. In a speech delivered to the Association of Teachers in 1953 Luis Muñoz Marín explains that our (Puerto Rican's) loyalty to the U.S. is the

> lealtad de hombres libres ¡Y lealtad de hombre libres puertorriqueños! No de hombres libres de otra parte, o de otra raza, u otra lengua, sino de hombres libres específica e inconfundiblemente puertorriqueños. ¡No es lealtad de coloniales subordinados! Aunque es lealtad de iguales, tampoco lo es de similares.[11] (5)

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[9] "De este modo, Muñoz alteraba de manera fundamental el discurso de 'lo nacional' y se apropiaba del símbolo más preciado del nacionalismo —la bandera— transformándola en emblema del Estado a nombre de una política de consenso social" (39). Translation mine

[10] "[...] discurso domesticador de consenso social, es decir, un discurso que privilegió una identidad consensual: 'Todos somos puertorriqueños, por encima de cualquier otra diferencia.'"

[11] "loyalty of free men! And the loyalty of free Puerto Rican men! Not of free men from another place, or another race, or another tongue, but of free men who are specifically and unconfoundably Puerto Rican. It is not the loyalty of colonial subordinates! Even though it is the loyalty of equals, it is not the loyalty of those who are similar." (5)

As I have mentioned before, the Puerto Rican national identity was a way for the criollos to differentiate themselves culturally, while claiming the equality that a white, eurocentric notion of identity would bring: the loyalty of equals, though not "similars." As with any discourse of whiteness, it must be stabilized by a founding distinction. What Muñoz Marín describes is not the loyalty of men "of another race, or another tongue, but of free men who are specifically and unconfoundably Puerto Rican" (5).

The Inextricable Burundangas of Puerto Rican Identity

In this section I focus on the role that blackness and the ideology of mestizaje played in Muñoz Marin's construction of la puertorriqueñidad while highlighting the importance that Palés Matos's work played for such a construction. As Ileana Rodríguez-Silva explains in the conclusion to her book, *Silencing Race: Disentangling Blackness, Colonialism, and National Identities*, Palés Matos's black verses "signal a moment in which the island's hegemonic classes sought first to contain and later, by 1950, to define where expressions of blackness could take place. This place was the sphere of cultural and creative production constructed as one separate from that of political action" (224). In this way, I can understand how Palés Matos and William Carlos Williams are enacting "a political labour which generates social relations" in this instance of translation (Sakai 71). The co-figurative model of translation described by Sakai functions here to create a border between English/Spanish-American/Boricua that lends both identities legitimacy within a white supremacist, Eurocentric framework.

In writing, respectively, the Boricua and the American languages in their poetry, these poets are already working towards constructing the structures of feelings of their

respective "people." As the Boricua language is in a colonized position in this scenario, it strives to acquire the legitimacy of the "civilized" through this co-figurative translation. But what does this translation reveal of the Boricua in the American and vice-versa? Let us remember that Sakai describes translation as an "ambiguous act of creating continuity out of discontinuity," that is sameness out of difference (71). Far from being a mechanism for separation, this linguistic border is the "preludio" of a white, colonial consensus that spreads through the hemisphere; Muñoz Marín's "loyalty of equals" (5).[12] To begin my own analysis, I quote at length from the beginning of Muñoz Marin's 1953 speech to the Association of Teachers:

> Ni tiempo ni sitio puede haber mejor que esta gran asamblea de maestros en este segundo año del Estado Libre Asociado para expresar algunas ideas sobre cómo hemos de esperar que se desenvuelva la cultura puertorriqueña. [...] Creo que estamos cerca del preciso momento histórico en el que si no tomamos comando deliberado del proceso cultural, a base de examinar cómo es y de examinarnos sobre cómo debiera ser, se puede malograr la personalidad puertorriqueña en inextricables burundangas[13] sin mucho pie ni cabeza.[14] (3)

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[12] Like Isar Godreau explains: "from the point of view of the Puerto Rican criollo bourgeoisie, establishing racial distinctions (and distance from the racialized poor and black masses they sought to lead) was just as important as it was to U.S. colonizers" (170).

[13] Burundanga – mezcla o revoltijo de cosas inútiles o de poca importancia.https://bayamonweb.azurewebsites.net/cai/**africanismos**/

[14] There can be no better time or place than this great assembly of teachers in this second year of the Free Associated State to express some ideas about how we should expect Puerto Rican culture to develop. I am referring to culture not in the literary, scientific, or artistic sense, but in a

As we can see, Luis Muñoz Marín and his party were heavily invested in "taking deliberate command of the cultural process" (3). Otherwise, according to Muñoz Marín, the "Puerto Rican personality will be spoiled by inextricable burundangas without heads or tails" (3). His use of the word "burundanga —an africanism that means something akin to mix-up— to refer to that which endangers the Puerto Rican personality is telling. Especially when we read it in light of the PPD's cultural policy.

As I mentioned earlier, the ICP heavily promoted the ideas of mestizaje that underpin the PPD's notion of puertorriqueñidad (Lloréns 140). This included making new editions of Luis Palés Matos' work with illustrations by the Puerto Rican artist Rafael Tufiño: "[i]n 1957, Alegría commissioned illustrations from Tufiño for the ICP's third *Cuadernos de Poesía* [Poetry Booklet]. This booklet featured the poetry of Palés Matos, the [white] father of Puerto Rico's black poetry" (Lloréns 140). Alegría also commissioned "Tufiño's *Majestad Negra*[,] (1958) [...] an iconic rendition of Palés Matos' *Mulata Antillana*, celebrated by male artists and writers during this period. This mixed-race woman, a creation of the male imagination, is exalted as the symbol of national sensuality" (Lloréns 141).

As a part of this institutional capture of blackness, Rodríguez-Silva explains how "Palés' black verses became central to the island's education curriculum. Administrators selected Palés Matos' problematic representation of blackness as one of the few referents to the racial history of

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broader sense, which includes these, of all the attitudes, habits, [and] values of a human community. [...] I think we are close to the precise historical moment in which, if we do not take deliberate control of the cultural process, by means of examining how it is and by examining ourselves as to how it should be, the Puerto Rican personality could be spoiled in inextricable burundangas with no heads or tails.

the island" (224). This process persisted throughout the century and various artistic monuments to Palés Matos' work have been commissioned by the ICP. A notable, and perhaps obscure example of this is Jack Delano's 1989 musical piece *Burundanga* or *Cantata Antillana*, which is based on Palés Matos' long poem "Canción festiva para ser llorada" from the *Túntún*. The poem begins and ends with its refrain: "Cuba -ñañigo y bachata- / Haití -vodú y calabaza- / Puerto Rico -burundanga-[15]" (Palés Matos 119).

Although Palés Matos doesn't have a monopoly on using Afro-Puerto Rican Spanish, the centrality of his figure to the PPD's cultural policy is enough to link Luis Muñoz Marin's use of "burundanga" to the racial imaginary that is conjured up in his poetry. At the same time, by staying a bit longer with the discourse of Muñoz Marin's speech we can observe how his use of burundanga is dual: it functions as a way of thinking both race and translation.

When Muñoz Marín finally outlines how he thinks the Puerto Rican personality should develop in order to overcome its inextricable burundangas, he begins by setting out economic goals that the free Puerto Rican man should aspire to. Nonetheless, he explains, "it is clear that in order to effect these economic goals certain changes are required, changes in the ways of doing and the ways of seeing. We need better work disciplines, imposed more by understanding and habit than by vigilance..."[16] (7). Even though Muñoz Marín doesn't say "laziness," his remarks inscribe themselves into a long tradition of "the

[15] Palés Matos. *Túntún de pasa y grifería*. Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1993.

[16] "Se ve claro que para efectuar estos objetivos económicos se requieren ciertos cambios culturales, cambios en las maneras de hacer y de ver. Se necesitan mejores disciplinas de trabajo, impuestas más por el entendimiento y la costumbre que por la vigilancia..." (7)

criminalization of laziness in the territory throughout its colonial history, indeed before the US invasion in 1898" (Zambrana 127). In linking his portrait of the ideal "free Puerto Rican man" with work, he condemns those deemed as lazy to inhumanity: "[l]aziness, lacking or refusing work, is linked to masculinity through these forms of control. To discipline a population to work is to construct the race/class norm of (white) masculinity" (Zambrana 127).

In an important essay titled "The Plantation Complex in the Colony of Puerto Rico: On Material Conditions," Rocío Zambrana explains that "[s]tereotypes about vagrancy, idleness, and refusal to work that still today seek to control and eradicate resistance to and flight from the world of capitalist modernity are sites of the ongoing actualization of the racial norm" (105). We must understand Muñoz Marín's remarks, then, as a site for the actualization of the racial norm. In this moment in his speech, he frames the ideal Puerto Rican man as the one who can pull himself up by the bootstraps from the inextricable burundanga in which he is mired, which manifests in him as a latent laziness. This is something that the free Puerto Rican man needs to be willing to learn from U.S. culture, he needs to have the "disposition to adapt the good wherever he may find it, but according to the genius of his own culture, not as a weak imitation. The world has something of the angel and something of the monkey in it: may culture be less far from the angel and less close to the monkey"[17] (Muñoz Marín 8). Muñoz Marin's language here is reminiscent of Palés Matos' "monkeyed aristocracy," not only in its obviously racial subtext, but also in its mystifying baroque syntax.

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[17] "Disposición a adaptar lo bueno del hombre donde quiera que lo encuentre, pero de acuerdo con el propio genio de la cultura de uno, no como débil rendimiento a la imitación. El mundo tiene de ángel y de mono: que la cultura esté menos lejos del ángel y menos cerca del mono."

The second moment in which Luis Muñoz Marín uses burundanga in his speech, he is speaking about the things that the free Puerto Rican man should not adopt from U.S. culture. In particular, Muñoz Marín is very concerned with what linguists would now call code switching: "[i]t's alright to adopt turns of phrases and words from the English when this gives more energy or precision to Spanish [...]; but we should not turn the two greatest languages in the world into a 'burundangous' and impoverished papiamento"[18] (12).

In this way, burundanga becomes the site where two important negations that must happen for Puerto Rican identity come together: men not "of another race, or another tongue, but [...] free men who are specifically and unconfoundably Puerto Rican" (Muñoz Marín 5). In taking "deliberate command of the cultural process," Muñoz Marín attempted to extricate the inextricable burundangas that threatened Puerto Rican's bid for "equality" and "progress" (3). Like Frank Wilderson III writes in his *Afropessimism*, second class citizens like Puerto Ricans can "become citizens, because they are still Human" (102). For Wilderson, this capacity to progress up the ladder through the language of equality stems from the fact that "Humans" "are not Black, they are not slaves" (102).[19] Indeed, Muñoz Marín's desire for

[18] "Bien está que se adopten giros y vocablos del inglés cuando eso da mayor energía o precisión al español [...] ; pero no debemos hacer de dos de las grandes lenguas del mundo un burundangoso y empobrecido papiamento."

[19] I do not have the space to properly outline Wilderson's idea or Afropessimism as a whole. I offer up another quote from the book with its accompanying footnote in order to explain that, for Wilderson, White and non-Black subjectivities have a parasitic relationship to Blackness, through which they acquire their status as Humans: "White and non-Black subjectivity cannot be imbued with the capacity for self-knowledge and intersubjective community without anti-Black violence; without, that is, the violence of social death. In other words, White people and

Puerto Rican culture to be "closer to the angel and further from the monkey" is reminiscent of what Wilderson calls a "narrative arc of transformation," which "calls upon Blacks as props," harnessed "as necessary implements to help bring about [...] psychic and social transformation, and to vouchsafe the coherence of [...] Human subjectivity" (102).

The discourse of mestizaje was vital for this reinscription of blackness into the national identity, as it is only through this containment that Muñoz Marín can position Puerto Ricans as "equals." As we've seen, Palés Matos' work was central to this cultural shift. We must understand his poetry then, even in its early apparition, as a part of these broader cultural and political processes. It is, very fittingly, a "preludio en Boricua." To return to Naoki Sakai's description of translation, then, as pertaining to "a political labour which generates social relations," I contend that this instance of translation is indeed generating social relations and shuttling structures of feeling across the hemisphere (Sakai 71, Raymond Williams 132). If the social relations that end up coalescing around Palés' poetry, Muñoz Marín's speech, and the PPD's policies can be said to be mestizaje within the Spanish/Boricua context of the island, I argue that mestizaje is indeed being translated across the hemisphere through Williams' translation. Furthermore, this translation of mestizaje is precisely what sets the basis

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their junior partners need anti-Black violence to know they're alive.* / * Junior partners are people who are Human but not White hetero males. For example, people of color and White women who are targets of White supremacy and patriarchy, respectively, and, simultaneously, the agents and beneficiaries of anti-Blackness. This category also includes LGBT people who are not Black and Indigenous communities. They are 'partners' because, as with White hetero males, anti-Blackness is the genome of their paradigmatic positions and because they suffer at the hands of contingent violence rather than the gratuitous or naked violence of social death" (94).

for the possibility of a consensus of white "equals" across American/Boricua; to quote Jared Sexton, "contradictory discourses of antimiscegenation and anti-antimiscegenation, of white purity and mestizaje, Anglo-Saxonism and Latinism, inhabiting the same strategic integration" (223).

William Carlos Williams's mestizaje mixups

In Peter Ramos' appreciation of the events of this translation, it is clear to Williams that "Preludio en Boricua" is a poem about "the racial, sexual, and linguistic Bochinche of the Americas, however modified to fit his U.S. version of it, the endless mestizaje of colonial/indigenous conflict to which the poetry of Latin America will consistently address itself" (104). This is certainly feasible, since, as Lisa Sánchez González has demonstrated in her reading of Williams' *In the American Grain,* (1925) he was already reproducing the paradigm of mestizaje in his early work.

In his dependence on mestizaje discourse, Sánchez González describes Williams' as being as limited as other important Latin American modernists (45). Certainly, thinkers like the Mexican José Vasconcelos with his *La Raza Cósmica* (1925) or the Brazilian Oswald de Andrade with his *Manifiesto Antropofago* (1928) are important interlocutors to keep in mind when pondering the development of mestizaje as a hemispheric, though differential, phenomenon within the avant-gardes. In fact, Mareia Quintero Rivera has seen how mestizaje became a founding myth for "projects (like that of the avant-garde movements) as well as in the discourses of order (like the populist and authoritarian regimes of Getulio Vargas in Brazil and Rafael Leónidas Trujillo in the Dominican Republic)." As I have hoped to show thus far, this aligns with the case in Puerto Rico, in which mestizaje is central to the avant-garde (Palés Matos) as well as to the discourse of order (Muñoz Marín's PPD).

Bringing this discussion to William Carlos Williams, then, is a way of understanding how mestizaje is traveling across the hemisphere and how it is transforming within Anglo-American circuits.

As I mentioned earlier, Williams went to Puerto Rico with the stated agenda of expanding his poetic project through his proximity to Spanish. Peter Ramos has identified Williams' poem "The Gentle Negress" -- published first in a magazine in 1943, and later as a part of Williams' *The Wedge* (1944)-- as one in which we can "see how his translation of the Palés Matos poem affected his own verse. In other [...] terms, we can see how his translation of the Palés Matos poem has its afterlife in Williams's own work" (106). Indeed, the "reverberation" of the Boricua in the American is not limited to "Prelude in Boricua," but it seems to keep expanding and transforming in Williams' work (Benjamin 76). While the two versions of this poem are very different and both respond to Palés Matos' work in different ways, I would like to focus our attention on the second version of the poem, published in 1944:

The Gentle Negress

Wandering among the chimneys
my love and I would meet
I with a pale skin
she as brown as peat
Her voice was low and gentle
and full of surprise
that I should find her lovely
and would search her eyes

with a longing hard to fathom
from what she said
as I sat to comfort her

lying in bed. (Collected II: 94)

The poem describes the memory of frequent encounters -- "on tenement building rooftops, out of society's sight" (Ramos 107)-- of two lovers, he with pale skin and she "as brown as peat" (Williams 94). In his reading, Peter Ramos is right to highlight that, even though this poem lacks "the minstrel/Afro-Caribbean dialects that Williams employs in the speaker's voice in his translation of Palés Matos, the idea of sexual race-mixing—both its social prohibition and neurotically obsessive recurrence in the New World—is present here" (107). Certainly, the figure of the "gentle negress" developed in this poem is comparable to Palés Matos' "mulata antillana." The mulata woman portrayed by Palés Matos is one "'in whose maternal curve is hidden the prolific harmony of sex' ("Pueblo Negro"), whence springs the 'torrid love of the mulatto woman' ("Mulata-Antilla")" (Eric Williams 6). Meanwhile, the "gentle negress" portrayed by Williams here is much more subdued: "Her voice was low and gentle / and full of surprise / that I should find her lovely" (94).

Although Williams' earlier versions of mestizaje conceived of the indigenous woman as a metaphor for the (masculine) civilization of the (femenine) land, his encounter with Palés Matos and the translation of his work seems to make available this almost foundational, eroticized vision of a black woman. The speaker in this poem seems to be a sort of American reverberation of Palés Matos' speaker. Regardless of the particulars of each fantasy, these are both fantasies in which, to bring up Hilda Lloréns description, a "mixed-race woman, a creation of the male imagination, is exalted as the symbol of national sensuality" (141). This is clear in the case of Palés Matos, but can we think of "The Gentle Negress" as also a symbol of national sensuality?

I argue that the answer is yes, but we must account for the fact that mestizaje in the early 20th century American context takes place, like in Williams' poem, "out of sight." We must understand this poem, then, as an early (1944) example of the shift towards "what some scholars have called 'the Latin Americanization of U.S. race relations' (Bonilla-Silva 2004): a situation wherein a binary black-white model of race is said to give way to more a permeable and highly differentiated multiracial arrangement" (Sexton 28 Kindle). This change in U.S. race relations will become more visible after the 1960s. In *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States* (2003), Eduardo Bonilla Silva traces the shift that took place in post-civil rights America towards a "new kinder and gentler white supremacy" (Bonilla Silva 182). He describes it as a "new racism" in which "the maintenance of systemic white privilege is accomplished socially, economically, and politically through institutional, covert, and apparently nonracial practices" (Bonilla Silva 182). This "new" white supremacy is accompanied by the ideology of colorblindness: "[t]his ideology, as it is the norm all over Latin America, denies the salience of race, scorns those who talk about race, and increasingly proclaims that 'We are all Americans'" (Bonilla Silva 183). As Bonilla Silva explains, the ideology of colorblind racism that will become prevalent in the U.S. after the post-civil rights era takes its cues from Latin American mestizaje (182). If Pales Matos' "Preludio en Boricua" is a prelude to the Boricua identity that will be proposed by the PPD, Williams' translation is a prelude to the mestizaje discourse that will emerge in post-civil rights U.S. in the form of colorblind racism.

Conclusion

In finding similarities between the speakers across these two authors' work, we can affirm that what unites them is a certain mode of relation to a mulata sensuality that can only constitute itself from the position of whiteness. In these sexual fantasies of the eroticiziced and racialized black body, consent is as manufactured as the production of national consent. National consent is, in turn, partly produced through these fantasies. As Sexton has explained, "race is 'a division of species' effected and maintained by the technologies of violence and sexuality that underwrite the social formation" and "it is in the register of fantasy [...] that this matrix of forces is most vividly staged and those obligatory 'scenes of subjection' find their touchstones of coherence" (138-140). Focusing on this particular instance of translation reveals the reverberation of Palés Matos' language of mestizaje in William Carlos Williams' poetry of the American concept. They come together in the fantasy of the mulatta.

In highlighting translation not just as the register of a movement, but, following Naoki Sakai, as the tracing of a border, we can track the development of a white, supranational consensual identity that asserts itself throughout the hemisphere. As we saw in the case of Palés Matos and Muñoz Marín in Puerto Rico, collectively reaching for this identity through the capture and nullification of blackness is an attempt to reach the dissimilar equality of a white Spanish speaker, thus 'eluding' the colonial yoke through consent. On the other hand, Williams' example is an early iteration of "a permeable and highly differentiated multiracial arrangement" that will become ever more ubiquitous in American culture (Sexton 28 Kindle).

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