

COFRESÍ BY ALEJANDRO TAPIA Y RIVERA: THE DUPLICATED PORTRAIT OF PIRACY AND ITS LEGACY OF VIOLENCE

Cofresí de Alejandro Tapia y Rivera:
el retrato duplicado del pirata y su legado de violencia

Wladimir Márquez-Jiménez, Ph. D.
Regis University
Correo electrónico: *wmarquez@regis.edu*

Abstract

In this article, I analyze the novel *Cofresí* by the Puerto Rican author Alejandro Tapia y Rivera as a vehicle through which the author intervenes, during the second half of the nineteenth century, in the discussions about the status of the island and the alternatives to attain self-rule. Tapia y Rivera through the duplicated portrait of the pirate makes the case, before his peers of the enlightened elite, against independence war, favoring more peaceful alternatives such as the reform of the colonial pact. At the same time, after a careful reading of the novel, it is clear that violence is an inevitable occurrence when a decolonization process is underway.

Keywords: nation-building fictions, Caribbean pirates, bandits, violence, decolonization.

Resumen

En este artículo, analizo la novela *Cofresí*, de Alejandro Tapia y Rivera, en tanto vehículo a través del cual el novelista y dramaturgo puertorriqueño interviene en las discusiones acerca del estatus político de la isla durante la segunda mitad del siglo XIX y las alternativas a considerar para obtener autodeterminación y gobierno. A través de la presentación duplicada del pirata, se hace una opción a favor de la reforma del pacto colonial y se advierte acerca de los peligros de una guerra de independencia. Ahora bien, en la novela se postula, también, que la

violencia es algo inevitable cuando se pone en marcha un proceso de descolonización.

Palabras clave: piratas caribeños, bandidos, violencia, descolonización, literatura.

Recibido: 9 de mayo de 2022. *Aceptado:* 20 de julio de 2022.

Piracy has always represented crime on a massive scale. In the Caribbean throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, pirates relentlessly attacked merchants' property on the high seas. For that very reason, they were considered *Hostis Humani Generis*, enemies of humankind. As such, they have been placed outside of the law, literal out-laws subject to the violence of any state. What is most interesting about this, however, is that piracy was, as Marcus Rediker explains: «... a way of life voluntarily chosen, for the most part by large number of men who directly challenged the ways of the society from which they exempted themselves» (64). Pirates arose against the merchant, naval or privateering vessels' order, considered oppressive and unfair, establishing a sort of brotherhood, a fraternity that operated in the margins of social conventions. This allows one to ponder the fact that the pirate ship is the ultimate space of heterotopia, to employ the concept coined by Michel Foucault (1986). A heterotopia is a discursive space of difference operating in non-hegemonic conditions that, as a notion of human geography, has been consistently linked to forms of resistance because it somehow challenges or contests the space we live in (Johnson 76). Heterotopias are worlds within worlds. They are emplacements on which a contingent system of rules, practices and regulations produces something different that, at the same time, mirrors *this* space, the space around us, the space in which we live our everyday lives. The heterotopia, in sum, simultaneously reflects and contests ordinary spaces (Johnson 76).

Foucault himself thought of the ship as the heterotopia *par excellence*; however, as we have said before, we can consider the pirate ship as the ultimate space of heterotopia because it is an emplacement that contests and reflects the merchant, naval or privateering vessels' order and, at the same time, creates a textual space that is the embodiment of adventure, freedom, ruthlessness, and wickedness.

This article compares and contrasts the romantic vision¹ of the pirate against certain social and cultural dimensions of piracy, as can be seen in the novel *Cofresí* (1876) by Puerto Rican author Alejandro Tapia y Rivera. I will pay special attention to their social relations and corporate consciousness, and to their rulemaking as the main foundation of the pirates' ship order. The novel by Tapia y Rivera offers a duplicated, mirrored portrait of piracy: on one hand, we have the romantic hero, Cofresí himself, who is depicted as a rebel outside of the law and society, who is his own law, who obeys only his will and appetites, and who laughs at dangers and his enemies, but at the end winds up redeeming himself by paying deference to the status quo. On the other hand, we have Cain, his heterotopic double, who provides a window to reflect on the violence embedded in nation building. And that violence takes place in pirate ship that, as Peter Johnson says, offers, as a space, a «sideways analysis of existing material spaces in order not to anticipate the future, but to reflect upon and disturb the present» (95). The pirate community presents a space «in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect» (Foucault 24). *Cofresí*, the novel, stages a reflection upon an era in which two different orders clash, the Spanish colonial order, and the arising capitalist era, making evident that Puerto Rico is not synched up with its historical time, exposing its crisis, its heterochronic nature. The pirate community presented in the novel is what, ultimately, drives and makes possible that reflection.

The novel about the pirate Cofresí written by Alejandro Tapia y Rivera is not the first one but is indeed the most important in the corpus². Tapia y

¹ Marcus Rediker in *Outlaws of the Atlantic* argues that Romantic writers populated the seas with “imaginary creatures, fit for aesthetic contemplation” (2). Romantics, thus, emptied the seas of actual ships, and sailors working in bilge waters, and living in cramped spaces.

² There are five novels that reflect the life and exploits of the pirate Cofresí. Three of these novels are from Puerto Rico and two others Dominican; and there are also four plays most notably *The return to home* by Salvador Brau. There is also in Puerto Rico a large oral tradition that was gathered by Cayetano Coll and Toste in *Puerto Rican Legends* (1928), J. Alden M. Madsen and Aurelio Espinoza in “Porto Rican Folklore: Folk-tales” (1929) and Gustavo Pales Matos in *Cofresi Ballads* (1942). Moreover, the oral tradition has led also to a production of poems that add to the Pales Matos, half a dozen poems of unequal quality and nearly a dozen short stories appeared in periodicals in Puerto Rico during the first half of the twentieth century.

Rivera is one of the central personalities in the nineteenth century Puerto Rican literature. In words of José Luis González: «There is no doubt that it corresponds to Tapia the honor of being the initiator of Literature in Puerto Rico» (62)³.

In the novel, the authorial voice claims to be rigorously abiding by historical facts and folk traditions surrounding the story---the latter making Roberto Cofresí a champion, a folk hero. The author states that the novel draws on the traditions that he remembers hearing as a child. On the other hand, in several footnotes, the author reveals the historical sources upon which he develops the vicissitudes of Cofresí: the Memories of Don Tomás Córdova, who was then secretary of the governor of the island. Despite the attempt to adjust to historical events and experiences, in the novel, there is an element that is not present in the corpus of texts on Cofresí: the

In the novels, in particular, can be seen the wavering between history and legend that is evident in other texts such as biographies. Given, therefore, all variations offered by the popular tradition, it should not surprise us that the novels are also very different. Some more, some less, they have their foundation in oral traditions. Thus, there are multiple versions of the legend of Cofresí and that gives way to the possibility of introducing changes in the life of the pirate. Francisco Ortea's novel, *The Treasure of Cofresí* (1889) and Julio González Herrera's, *Twice called the Glory* (1944), are good examples of this. Both novels develop two of the elements or motifs that are part of the oral tradition: the patriotic heroism and the pirate treasure hunt. Neither novel elaborates in detail the biography of Cofresí, neither feels concern for accuracy. In these novels, Cofresí has dissimilar functions. In the novel by González Herrera, Cofresí becomes an instrument of criticism of the Dominican elite --- only an alien is concerned about the project disturbing the sleep of the Dominican hero Juan Pablo Duarte, namely, releasing the Dominican Republic from the Haitian yoke; in Ortea's novel, meanwhile, the pirate Cofresí embodies the desire for adventure and full freedom of spirit. The "treasure" Cofresí bequeathed to a loving couple who star in the story is that of a life away from social ties. There is another novel called *Huracán* by the puerto rican autor Ricardo del Toro Soler, that novel and *Cofresí* by Tapia y Rivera, are the only ones in which the subject of the imperial domination has been problematized, and intent to address the question for the options available to free Puerto Rico from a colonial oppressive rule; in the novel by Ricardo del Toro Soler the drama of Cofresí becomes metaphor of the alternatives that can be chosen to get rid of the Spanish colonial rule: assimilation, autonomist or independence, which ultimately can be understood as gradations. At the same time, in the novels by del Toro Soler and Tapia y Rivera, the issue of the emergence of the United States as a hegemonic power in the Caribbean is present. In both novels, then, there is dramatized the motif of the Caribbean as imperial border, to borrow the expression of the Dominican writer Juan Bosch

³ The original quote is in Spanish: «[es] innegable que a Tapia corresponde la gloria de haber sido el iniciador de la literatura en Puerto Rico» (62). The translation is mine.

existence of good and evil pirates. One might ask, then, if Tapia y Rivera has produced a mirroring duplication in the figure of Cofresí, which presents two different kinds of communities capable of creating, as Foucault says, «a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill-constructed, and jumbled» (Diacritics 27). This mirrored portrait of the pirate could be seen not only as the staging of one of the larger trends of romanticism, that is to say, «the (...) dichotomy of light-dark seen in Radcliffe's and Scott's novels» (Hull 72), but also as documenting the anxieties of the Puerto Rican elite before the demands of their times: being the *light*, self-determination, independence itself, and the *dark*, the violence embedded in nationhood, as has been seen all over South America. The novel also features an entertaining, yet conventional, romantic plot that helps to characterize the two groups of pirates by allowing them to reveal aspects of themselves that otherwise would be put out of the sight of the reader.

The first five chapters of the novel serve the purpose of presenting the cast of characters, the two sides of the pirate crew: Ricardo, the first mate, and Cofresí, the captain, versus Juancho and Caín, the wicked members of the pirate crew. In the middle, we found two women: Rosa and La Charrasca. Rosa is Ricardo's fiancée, La Charrasca is Caín's woman. The two women provided an occasion for the *Noble Outlaw* to be portrayed, as well as his counterforce the Villain. Rosa offers the opportunity to show Cofresí as a *hero of sensibility* in his regard for women, whereas Charrasca reveals the crass misogynist that is Caín.

There is a love story between Ricardo and Rosa that is disrupted by Juancho who, envious of Ricardo's luck, kidnaps the young lady. Later, Cofresí will reestablish the order by rescuing Rosa and taking her back to Ricardo. However, he ignores that Juancho, a member of his own crew, is the perpetrator. Simultaneously, Caín is at a gambling house betting on a card game. He loses all his money but tries to recover it violently by killing one of the gamblers treacherously. Caín buries the «treasure» in Charrasca's house while arguing with her because he suspects that Charrasca is after all his burials. Later that day, on another part of the island, we witness the raid of a ship with the U.S. flag. During the raid, Caín kills a woman, and is about to execute a small child as well; Juancho, meanwhile, backstabs the captain of the U.S. ship. Cofresí saves the kid—that is to say, he saves the last of the innocents—exposing how despicable Caín and Juancho are. Co-

fresí is disgusted by the actions of Juancho and Caín, which ultimately sets the scene for a mutiny. Cofresí saves himself by killing Caín who attacked him while sleeping. Once again, Caín acts traitorously, and Cofresí rights the wrong. He entrusts the little orphan to a Spaniard priest who will care for him. Afterward, he goes to Charrasca's place to unbury one of Caín's treasures. He would later hand the treasure over to the priest in order to secure the future of the little one. The priest praises the pirate and wishes that Cofresí could return to the fold because he is still capable of doing good. A little after, Cofresí is captured while looting a U.S. cargo ship and is condemned to capital punishment along with his crew. Before getting executed he confesses his sins to José Antonio, the Spanish priest, and repents of all his actions. The novel ends with the priest looking up at the sky and seeing a new and bright future taking over Puerto Rico due to Cofresí's conversion and, subsequently, his execution.

Because of the existence of good pirates and evil pirates, one might ask, then, if Alejandro Tapia y Rivera has made Cofresí a twofold figure⁴. As a pirate, Cofresí would bring together, at the same time, a romantic epic, and a heterotopic tale. Both stories would stage the anxieties of a certain sector of the elite which hesitates at the option of violence as a founding force of the nation. Caín is portrayed as a kind of devious brother (Dabove 285). Caín is the evil pirate, Cofresí's counterpart. Through Caín takes place a process of metabolization, of assimilation, of the nation-state's founding violence into a superior realm: that of the re-establishment of the colonial pact, the preservation of the status quo. That is why Cofresí's conversion and the death of Caín are necessary and compulsory. The conversion of Cofresí, and the presence of Caín, together posit a sort of symbolic duality in the novel. Caín and Cofresí embody the options of Puerto Rico as to the possibility of achieving full self-determination.

Marcus Rediker maintains that pirates «constructed a culture of masterless men» (*Outlaws...* 87). Piracy, as an experience, stages the cons-

⁴ We have to concede that mutiny is not a rare event in literature; however, most of the time embodies the rebellion against an oppressive order, the clash between good and evil, i.e. between the strong-willed seafarers and the captain of the merchant ship who hands out increasingly harsh punishments, and abuse to them. An example of this would be the *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1789). That is why the aborted mutiny on board of Cofresí's *Mosquito* is so meaningful, since the pirate ship is typically an egalitarian rather than an oppressive order. We will further explain this later.

ciousness of seamen as a group exploited and treated with inhuman brutality by captains, merchants, and officials, that is to say, by powerful figures at the service of early capitalism. Thus, they removed themselves from the yolk of any form or manifestation of authority. They were alien to ideas such as church, family, disciplinary labor, or the State. Pirates also had a heightened sense of kindness, of belonging, that «manifested itself in an elaborate social code» (*Outlaws...* 82) which favored above all a collectivist ethos. That «corporate consciousness» came from the conviction that they had the choice in themselves. Rediker states that pirates developed a self-righteousness strongly linked to an idea of a world that could be seen as traditional, mythical, or utopian (*Outlaws...* 82) –or heterotopian should we say instead– because pirates built that world for themselves based upon an egalitarian social organization, and a particular notion of revenge and justice. «To perpetuate such community, it was necessary to minimize conflict not only on each ship but also among separate bands of pirates. Indeed, one of the strongest indicators of consciousness of kind [among pirates] is the manifest absence of discord» (*Outlaws...* 79).

The pirate Cofresí, elaborated by the folk tradition as a generous bandit, is portrayed by Tapia y Rivera as a man that inhabits a world free from any form or manifestation of authority and submission. However, Cofresí has his other, his double, in Caín, the greedy criminal. His greed disturbs and dislocates the egalitarian world of the pirate crew. It is precisely this conflict that is proposed by the opening words of the novel: «The character is not uplifting, but his legend is: and you will see him» (9). Subsequently, what does that mean? It is sure to say that the good pirate belongs to that space “in which men are justly dealt with, in which pirates called themselves *Honest men* and *Gentlemen*, in which they speak of *Consciousness* and *Honor*, a righteous world (*Outlaws...* 82). A different world that disrupts, for a short while, the familiar landscape of mercantilism/capitalism, and its (oppressive) relations of production. In other words, a heterotopic world that provides that «sideways analysis» that makes it possible «to reflect upon and disturb the present» (Johnson 95). Caín embodies that present upon which one should reflect. The novel is at the same time, thus, an “uplifting legend”, and a cautionary tale.

In the novel, Alejandro Tapia y Rivera accounts for the different versions regarding the events surrounding Cofresí, versions he knows very well. Tapia y Rivera understands that there is a hero (Cofresí) and an

offender (Caín), who is false, cowardly, and vile. A dialogue between Cofresí and Ricardo, his first mate, reveals that Tapia y Rivera is aware that Cofresí is less than a hero and more than a pirate⁵. In this dialogue, in which the pirate relates why he is persecuted—it is known that it has to do with piratical acts against American ships—he declares also, in a boastful way, that he has been in prison and has escaped; that he has stolen the boat in which they now sail and the cannon it is equipped with. It seems to me that this unedifying dimension of Cofresí makes necessary the inclusion of an alter ego who is called unequivocally after its violent and perverse nature, Caín. Thus, the novel staged the cohabitation of two figures: the bandit versus the pirate.

One might think that, as outlaw subjects, the bandit and the pirate perform the same functions within the narrative of the nation. However, even though there are meeting points between the two concepts, there are also significant differences that are accentuated when one considers the geographical area: the Caribbean as opposed to continental Latin America.

The bandit as a foundational trope of the national Latin American cultures, during the nineteenth century, has been represented, on the one hand, as an opposing force, a demonic force that operates (and threatens the citizen as a subject) at the interior of the liberal epic of the nineteenth century (Dabove, 3). The pirate, meanwhile, within the Latin American legal imagination has been frequently represented as another presence but not as an *Ottherness*—in the conventional sense—, but as a strange, foreign subject (Gerassi 8; Dabove 296). The pirate found himself outside the nation's scope, and as such he could embody either the appetites, that is, the desirable alliances that nascent Latin American republics could establish within the concert of nations; the models at which one should aim to fully immerse himself in modernity, or rather the fears and apprehensions of abandoning a model of society in order to embrace another. If Caín, as a bandit, is this demonic force described as an otherness, as a radical other:

⁵ Walter Cardona Bonet proposed that Roberto Cofresí was a criminal, a smuggler, and a convicted murderer long before becoming a pirate. Cardona Bonet presents a memo dating from 1821, and originated in the Civil Court of San Germán, requiring the arrest of the defendant Juan Bey, buddy of Roberto Cofresí in committing “several criminal acts,” which placed the pirate from Cabo Rojo's activities not associated with marine life, but with theft and conspiracy (46-47). Cardona Bonet also documented that Roberto Cofresí was imprisoned until December 1821, the date in which he escapes from prison (49-50).

«the sum of all fears of the lettered city» (Dabove, 285), he, perforce, must be suppressed. Meanwhile, it seems that Cofresí does not fit entirely the description of the pirates that Gerassi-Navarro and Dabove provide in their books. This, in the first place, is due to the fact that Cofresí is not a foreign subject. Secondly, he is not a metaphor for a social, economic, or political model (foreign) to which the nation could be ascribed. Cofresí is another matter, and as such, he points to a deep structure not too different in meaning from those that can be seen in pirate novels such as Justo Sierra O'Reilly's *El Filibustero* (1842), Soledad Acosta de Samper's *Los Piratas de Cartagena* (1886), Vicente Fidel López's *La Novia del Hereje* (1850): the lettered city, imagining itself and responding urgently to real conflicts that challenge its integrity and sovereignty.

Tapia y Rivera strongly indicates that Cofresí, as a character, is the product of a «hallucinated imagination, a result of illiterate narration of misdeeds, that the popular mind, almost always so prone to the marvelous, too often transforms into enviable and seductive deeds» (23). Furthermore, Ricardo joins Cofresí's crew moved by «some sort of romantic enthusiasm» (89). Romantic literature is very present not only in the system of representation of the pirate but also in the depicted world itself. Cofresí becomes a pirate, Tapia y Rivera appears to suggest, because his imagination is captured by this representation of a free and equal spirit; brave, chivalrous, and avenging as well⁶. At the same time, Tapia says the legend accompanies the character, and we might add, exceeds it, and surpasses the space of the novel itself:

People censured and yet did not hate him, due to the time period being here as it was elsewhere: too romantic, as not to fuse the flattering with the immoral; and the audacity, courage and selflessness that we have spoken of before, unfortunately tend to captivate, at certain times, above all, a considerable part of humanity. (135)⁷

⁶ David Cordingly argues that a long line of melodramas such as *The Successful Pirate* (1713) by Charles Johnson, along with *The Corsair* by Lord Byron or the novels by Walter Scott and Robert Louis Stevenson gave shape to the pirate character we all know and admire (244). In the Hispanic world no doubt that the model is *La canción del pirata* by Espronceda.

⁷ «Las gentes le censuraban, y sin embargo, no le aborrecían, porque la época era aquí como lo había sido en otras partes, demasiado romántica, para no armonizar lo inmoral

The aforementioned fragment allows us to judge the deeds of Cofresí far beyond the space of the novel. It provides the key to interpreting the actions of the historical Cofresí, the legendary character of the novel; it emphasizes, therefore, that around the figure of Cofresí there has been built, is being built, and will be built a fable of foundation and cultural identity. This also anticipates the process of inventing a Puerto Rican tradition that will make it possible for a beach club in Cabo Rojo to commemorate in 1991 the bicentennial of his birth with a statue, which was funded by the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture. So, as the focal point of the invention of a tradition, Cofresí is, in an exemplary way, Puerto Rican. Therefore, the Gerassi-Navarro model is not enough to fully explain it. Gerassi-Navarro stresses that the novels in which pirates are represented as Americans stage a debate on national identity. The authors look at the past trying to imagine the future we aspire to, that is, trying to find over there the model of society we wish, we long for, and that will legitimize our ideals. Thus, Europe (France and England) and Spain never cease to be considered vertebral elements of the project (8). This raises two meaningful absences in the debate about foundational fictions: «that of the indigenous people and blacks. How did these individuals fit into the American Project? » (105-107). The answer to this question is a negative one: Indians and blacks do not fit, are marginalized, otherized, and thus are inevitably doomed to failure in these «nation-building fictions» (107).

Kenneth J. Kinkor notes that it is possible to think about the pirates of the Atlantic as «social do-gooders» (198). Kinkor points out that European pirates are far from being «chance associations of individual criminals» (196) and can be seen as a subculture outside the law, engaged in a rudimentary maritime insurrection, a blind uprising, in a sort of *montonera* directed against the institutions of authority of the merchant marine and the mercantile empires themselves, «almost a slave revolt» (196). Kinkor goes further and suggests that piratical communities fit quite well in the paradigm of the French Revolution: «*liberté, égalité, fraternité*» (197). Thus, it is not surprising that Cofresí is celebrated as a national hero in times of restraint, in moments in which the presence of the hegemonic power wants to impose its manifest destiny or, rather, wants to maintain

con lo halagüeño; y la audacia, el valor y el desprendimiento de que hemos hablado, han solido cautivar por desgracia, en ciertas épocas, sobre todo, a una parte considerable de la humanidad». Translation is mine.

its absolute power. Pirates, real pirates –not the privateers– are on our side, the side of the subaltern; this is why Cofresí becomes an emblem for the political solution that many Puerto Ricans want for the island: the recognition of autonomous rights. This happens thanks to the fact that, in the novel, Father José Antonio offers Cofresí a chance to redeem himself, to be a part of something larger than his own blind and «illiterate» rebellion. Father Jose Antonio recovered Cofresí for the decolonizing cause. Therein lie the traits that Cofresí withholds as a «do-gooder».

As previously mentioned, Cofresí does not adjust to the model by Gerassi-Navarro, and that also happens because the execution of Cofresí, his defeat, rather than offering a “dim future for those surviving the conflicts” (8) promises us, in the figure of the rescued child –complementary to the conversion of the pirate– a change for the better. Hence, the novel ends with Tapia y Rivera proposing an optimistic ending of sorts.

As I have already mentioned, this novel consigned Cofresí’s bifrontal face. As Walter Benjamin says, there is no document of civilization that is not at the same time a document of barbarism (Benjamin, *Speeches...* 182). In Tapia y Rivera’s novel this takes place: Caín is Cofresí’s negative double. If one is moved by a romantic and novelesque imagination, the other is moved only by greed –for, as we recall, Cofresí despises money–. Cofresí is portrayed as a gentleman, whereas Caín is subject to descriptions that are morally degrading; they animalize him:

... blood was the food that occasionally was needed by his kind, in which the element *beast* (...) predominated. He acted by instinct since his passions were merely occasional causes. He was born a murderer the same way one is born deformed, only that within him this horrible trend was adorned, with the assistance of anger that blinded him, the greed that fueled his appetite, and the envy that was his essence... (49)⁸

Caín is the sum of all evils, of all vices. He brings together the most horrid sins that make it impossible to move towards the making of the social contract. Caín is a monster, a wild beast that systematically rejects so-

⁸ In Spanish on the original. The translation is mine.

cial order; that order of determinations and obligations upon which social life rests. Being subject, says Juan Pablo Dabove, is equal to being bound, tied to the law. To be subject to anything is to consent to the subjection of a higher level of power for which there is no outside, as the exterior is inhuman, wild, feral (289). That is precisely the portrait of Caín being offered to us. For this reason, he must be removed, suppressed.

Cofresí, meanwhile, as Father Jose Antonio tells us, is a better person than he seems to be:

... his exterior does not reveal what is referred against him...
It always consoles not to lose faith in humanity: I think with good company, he could still be saved. His imagination has gone astray, and his willingness will harm him; but his heart does not seem corrupted. Perhaps he is not so bad. (178)⁹

In Cofresí the possibility of rectification, of redemption exists. He is a misdirected force, yet a force that can be useful. Tapia y Rivera, in the figure of Father José Antonio, takes on the task of transforming this force into a positive one. It is worth noting, in this regard, that Father Jose Antonio is a Spanish priest. He becomes a metaphor for a Hispanophile and Catholic lettered city and makes clear the deep structure of the text: the class to which Tapia y Rivera belongs—one should not forget that he is of Spanish origin as well—is the one called to resolve the political status of the island, transforming the living and dislocated forces of society into a productive and moral force. In this way, literature plays a major role in this process of configuration of the new Puerto Rican political subject. Consequently, to this gesture of Cofresí's transformation corresponds another, the suppression of the Other, the monster, as a condition of the possibility for the existence of a new colonial pact. That is why Cofresí killed Caín, when the latter wanted to perform mutiny. I think that brings two things to light: first, that Cain is not a pirate. Marcus Rediker, C.R. Pennell, and other specialists on the subject of piracy insist on highlighting the sense of brotherhood that prevailed among the pirates. They point out that the pirates never mutinied against a pirate captain, who served as an equal for

⁹ In Spanish on the original. The translation is mine.

all purposes. They mutinied against the despotic and spurious authority of the merchant captain. Therefore, this episode poses a challenge in terms of the deep structure of Tapia y Rivera's text: either Caín is not a pirate, or Cofresí's authority is spurious and despotic.

Caín's rebellion, then, stages a conflict: the lettered city versus the bandit. Because after all, if Caín is not a pirate, then he is a bandit. Caín, as a bandit, embodies a barbaric force that escapes beyond the material and symbolic control of the enlightened elite (Dabove 6). Thus, to legitimize itself, the elite must suppress it, tear it out by its roots. Cofresí serves this purpose, and thus it is evident that even in his rebellion he never stopped being a companion, a subordinate of this social class. This is the second thing that the killing of Caín reveals. Cofresí's subordination to the enlightened elite is demonstrated in his meetings with Father Jose Antonio, shortly after Caín's death. Thanks to a mutual recognition between the priest and the pirate, Cofresí comes to admit that there is still justice among men, and the priest confirms this by saying the pirate heart is not corrupt (Tapia y Rivera, 176); this is also seen in the transformation of the pirate shortly before his execution, when he finally embraces the «forces of good» thanks to the prayers and intercessions of the father: «I believe in God, and He forgives me!» (265), the almighty Cofresí ends up crying.

Shortly after Cofresí's execution, Father Jose Antonio visits the pirate's tomb and prays for the newly rammed earth. With the peace that characterizes a man of the cloth, who believes he has done much good in God's Kingdom, Father Jose Antonio wonders if Cofresí has attained salvation. In fact, the priest is pretty much sure this is the case: his intercession, his power to persuade Cofresí that the path of violence is not the solution has worked the miracle. And this miracle of conversion becomes a metaphor for the desire that is inside of Tapia y Rivera to convert supporters of the independence such as Ramón Emeterio Betances¹⁰ into the cause of peaceful decolonization. Tapia y Rivera is convinced that the route is one of serene and patient negotiation and not one of violence characteristic of uncultivated spirits. This is why the narrator exclaims after the father leaves Cofresí's tomb, "The sky just calm; would it be a smile from an evil that ends and good that is born?" (266). This makes the death of Cofresí a sacrifice, by subsuming the violence of this rebel in the

¹⁰ Betances was the leader of the 1090 Lares Revolution, which, was violently suppressed in few days due to a denouncement.

higher realm of the interests of Puerto Rico, turning Cofresí into a sort of hero-martyr. Here is where the element in which the vicissitudes of Cofresí differ regarding the concerns raised by Gerassi-Navarro for American pirates. Cofresí, thanks to his redemption, now becomes part, an emblem of the peaceful decolonization option of Tapia y Rivera.

The most interesting part of this double elimination is the existence of a residue that undermines, from the inside, the attempt to domesticate violence. The surviving child, the little one that Cofresí delivers to the care of Father Jose Antonio –for his parents have died in Cofresí’s boarding– that boy whose image is the last thought Cofresí has before his conversion, that child receives Cain’s inheritance, the buried treasure¹¹, a result of violence

¹¹It is interesting to draw attention to the following detail: David Cordingly, in his book *Under the Black Flag*, states that the motif of the buried treasure first appeared in Robert Louis Stevenson’s novel, *Treasure Island*. If we take note of the date of the publication of *Cofresí*, (1876) and contrast it with the publication of *Treasure Island* (1883), one can see that Puerto Rican novelist anticipates the Scottish in the presentation of the idea. Now if, in addition, we notice that Tapia y Rivera has said his story comes, in part, from the Puerto Rican popular oral tradition, it is sufficient to conclude that the theme was already present in the Hispanic popular imagination. In that regard, one should note that the Puerto Rican historian Salvador Brau published, towards the end of the nineteenth century, two popular folkloric texts: *An invasion of filibusters* (1881) and *A Hidden Treasure* (1885). In both the motif of hidden treasure appears. The reason seems to come from the Hispanic tradition: the association between the miser and the money kept from public view. That association between the miser and the burial of money is one of long standing. Cervantes in *Don Quixote* offers us the story of the miser Moorish Ricote burying his fortune on the outskirts of the city where he used to live. Apparently, this was a common practice among the Moors who were expelled (Miguel Ángel Galindo Martín, 59). It must be remembered, then, that the narrator of the Tapia y Rivera’s novel when describes Cain, emphasizes his greedy nature, “gold was in him greed in a certain way since he used to bury it” (43). In any case, the motif of treasure finding/hiding is one of the oldest in the folklore (Jane Garry M. Hasan El-Shamy). The open sesame of Ali Baba, for example, corresponds with this, and has multiple variants and cultural traditions in countries as diverse as China, and Iceland. Another variant of the motif was collected by the Grimm brothers in the “Simeliberger” tale in which a mountain hides a treasure that belongs to twelve thieves and can be found only through a secret formula, a kind of spell that compels the mountain to open and deliver what is inside. Aladdin’s lamp from *One Thousand and One Nights* also exploits this subject. Another variation that I could find was the one offered by *The Beowulf*, in which a dragon is guarding a treasure hidden in a cave. Though it is very difficult to establish a priority in time in literature regarding the motif of the hidden treasure, it is true that the motif usually involves the association between greed and dirty money, which favors that the money be hidden or buried. Then, on

and crime. If this child is, then, the one in which one must believe, and hope, that Cofresí's deeds will be of any benefit; if this child is the future, then the future will be inoculated of violence, that, stubbornly, will have to come back, as though it were a fixation, a quirk impulse.

WORKES CITED

Textos primarios

Tapia y Rivera, Alejandro. *Cofresí*. Barcelona, Ediciones Rumbos, 1967. Print.

Textos secundarios

Acosta, Úrsula. *¿Quién era Cofresí?*. Puerto Rico, 1984.

———. *Cofresí y Ducodray: Hombres al margen de la historia*. Río Piedras, Puerto Rico, Editorial Edil. 1991. Print.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of*

Benjamin, Walter. *Discursos interrumpidos I*. Prólogo, trad. y notas de J. Aguirre, Madrid, Taurus, 1987. Print.

Benjamin, Walter. *Sobre el programa de la filosofía futura y otros ensayos*. Barcelona: Planeta, 1986. Print.

Benjamin, Walter, Willi Bolle, and Celeste H. M. R. Sousa. *Documentos De Cultura, Documentos De Barbárie: Escritos Escolhidos*. Sao Paulo: Ed. Cultrix, 1986. Print.

Bosch, Juan. *De Cristóbal Colón a Fidel Castro; El Caribe, frontera imperial*. Madrid: Alfaguara, 1970. Print.

Cardona, Bonet W. A. *El Marinero, Bandolero, Pirata y Contrabandista, Roberto Cofresí (1819-1825)*. San Juan, P.R: s.n., 1991. Print.

Cardwell, Richard A. *The Reception of Byron in Europe*. London: Thoemmes Continuum, 2004. Print.

Cohen, Paul A. *History in Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997. Print.

the side of the ill-gotten goods, it is almost natural the association between the pirate and the hidden treasure. In any case, it will be for future work to track down the motif of the buried treasure and examine its development in the Anglo and Spanish literary tradition.

- Coll, y T. C, and Ricardo E. Alegría. *Leyendas*. San Juan de Puerto Rico: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 1971. Print.
- Cordingly, David. *Under the Black Flag: The Romance and the Reality of Life Among the Pirates*. New York: Random House, 1996. Print.
- Dabove, Juan Pablo. *Nightmares of the Lettered City: Banditry and Literature in Latin America, 1816-1929*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007.
- Dehne, P. and Matthew Brown (Ed.), Informal Empire in Latin America: Culture, Commerce and Capital.” *JOURNAL OF LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES*. 41 (2009): 164-165. Print.
- Díaz Soler, Luis M. *Puerto Rico, desde sus orígenes hasta el cese de la dominación española*. Río Piedras, P.R.: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1994. Print.
- Eagleton, Terry. *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1990. Print.
- Edmondson, Belinda. *Caribbean Romances: The Politics of Regional Representation*. New World studies. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999. Print.
- Fernández Valledor, Roberto. *El mito de Cofresí en la narrativa antillana*. [Río Piedras, PR]: Editorial Universitaria, Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1978. Print.
- . *Cofresí mitificado por la tradición oral puertorriqueña*. Ponce: Casa Paoli, 2006. Print.
- Foucault, Michel. “Of Other Spaces”. *Diacritics*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Spring, 1986), pp. 22-27. *JSTOR*. PDF file.
- Gaztambide, Arrillaga C. *Historia de Puerto Rico Cronológica e Ilustrada, sus Hombres y Mujeres (1492-1989)*. San Juan, P. R: Rammallo Bros, 1989. Print.
- García, Díaz M. *Alejandro Tapia y Rivera: su Vida y su Obra*. San Juan: Editorial Coquí, 1971. Print.
- García-Passalacqua, Juan M. *La narración de la nación: ensayos de estudios culturales puertorriqueños*. Caguas-Gurabo, P.R.: Universidad de Turabo, 2005. Print.
- Gerassi-Navarro, Nina. *Pirate Novels: Fictions of Nation-Building in Spanish America*. Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 1999. Print.

- González, José Luis. «Literatura e identidad nacional en Puerto Rico». En *El país de cuatro pisos y otros ensayos*. Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán. 1989. pp. 43-84. Print.
- González Herrera, Julio. *La Gloria Llamó Dos Veces: novela histórica basada en la vida del patriota dominicano Juan Pablo Duarte y del pirata puertorriqueño Roberto Cofresí*. Ciudad Trujillo: Impr. La Opinión, 1944. Print.
- Healy, David. *Drive to Hegemony: The United States in the Caribbean, 1898-1917*. Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988. Print.
- Hernández, José. *Piratas y corsarios: de la antigüedad a los inicios del mundo contemporáneo*. BolsiTEMAS, 43. Madrid: Temas de Hoy, 1995. Print.
- Hobsbawm, E. J. *Bandits*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1981. Print.
- Hobsbawm, E. J., and T. O. Ranger. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. Print.
- Hobsbawm, Eric J. *Rebeldes primitivos: estudio sobre las formas arcaicas de los movimientos sociales en los siglos XIX y XX*. Libros de historia / Crítica. Barcelona: Crítica, 2001. Print.
- Hull, Gloria T. “The Byronic Heroine and Byron’s The Corsair”. *Ariel: a Review of International English Literature*. Vol. 9, No 1 (1978). PDF file.
- Jameson, Fredric. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press. 1981. Print.
- Johnson, Peter Graham. *On Heterotopia*. Thesis (PhD). University of Bristol, 2010. PDF file.
- Johnson, P. (2012) ‘History of the Concept of Heterotopia’ *Heterotopian Studies* [<http://www.heterotopiastudies.com>]
- Kinkor, Keneth J. “Black men under black flag”. *Bandits at Sea: A Pirates Reader*. New York: New York University Press, 2001. Print.
- Konstam, Angus. *Piracy: The Complete History*. Oxford: Osprey Pub, 2008. Print.
- Langley, Lester D. *Struggle for the American Mediterranean: United States-European Rivalry in the Gulf-Caribbean, 1776-1904*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1976. Print.

- Lucena, Salmoral M. *Piratas, Bucaneros, Filibusteros y Corsarios en América: perros, mendigos y otros malditos del mar*. Caracas: Grijalbo, 1994. Print.
- Ludmer, Josefina. *El cuerpo del delito: un manual*. Buenos Aires: Perfil Libros, 1999. Print.
- Mason, J A, and Aurelio M. Espinosa. "Porto Rican Folk-Lore: Folk-Tales." *Journal of American Folklore*. 42.164 (1929): 85-156. Print.
- Maingot, Anthony P., and Wilfredo Lozano. *The United States and the Caribbean: Transforming Hegemony and Sovereignty*. Contemporary inter-American relations. New York: Routledge, 2005. Print.
- Moreno, José A., "Class, Dependency and Revolution in the Caribbean: Preliminary Considerations for a Comparative Study of Aborted and Successful Revolutions", *Journal of Developing Societies*, 6 (1990) p.43. Print.
- Morfi, Angelina. *Historia crítica de un siglo de teatro puertorriqueño*. San Juan, P.R: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 1980. Print.
- Ortea, Francisco C. *El tesoro de Cofresí*. Mayagüez, P. R: Tipografía Comercial, 1889. Print.
- Palés Matos, Gustavo. *Romancero de Cofresí*. San Juan, Puerto Rico, Imprenta Venezuela, 1942.
- Palmer, Ransford W. *U.S.-Caribbean Relations: Their Impact on Peoples and Culture*. Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1998.
- Pennell, C R. *Bandits at Sea: a pirates reader*. New York: New York University Press, 2001. Print.
- Quiñones, Francisco Mariano. *Apuntes para la historia de Puerto Rico. Río Piedras: Instituto de Literatura Puertorriqueña*, 1957.
- Ramírez Brau, Enrique. *Cofresí: Historia y Genealogía de un Pirata, 1791-1825*. San Juan, Puerto Rico: Casa Baldrich, 1945. Print.
- . *Orígenes Portorriqueños... Del Año 1653 Al 1853*. San Juan, P. R: Imprenta Baldrich, 1942.
- Rediker, Marcus B. *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. Print.

- Rediker, Marcus. *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2004. Print.
- . *Outlaws of the Atlantic. Sailors, Pirates and Motley Crews in the Age of Sail*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2013. Print.
- Rivera, de A. Josefina *Diccionario de Literatura Puertorriqueña*. San Juan, P.R: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 1970. Print.
- Sommer, Doris. *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993. Print.
- Starkey, David J., Jaap de Moor, and E. S. van Eyck van Heslinga. *Pirates and Privateers: New Perspectives on the war on trade in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*. Exeter maritime studies. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997. Print.
- Trías Monge, José. *Historia constitucional de Puerto Rico*. Río Piedras, P. R.: Editorial Universitaria, 1980. Print.
- Wagenheim, Olga Jiménez de. *Puerto Rico: An Interpretive History from Pre-Columbian Times to 1900*. Princeton, N. J.: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1998. Print.