ARTICLES

Before and Beyond Genette: Cuba's Nicolás Guillén and the Empowered Paratext

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Abstract:

Gérard Genette led the way in exploring, identifying and characterizing those accessories of the literary text—prologues, titles, introductions, epigraphs, etc—that he came to call paratexts. His original cataloging of them in the late twentieth century was recognized in world literature as significant. However, despite the many hundreds of usages from which he derives his conclusions concerning types, positions and functions of paratexts, there is a decided and yet influential insufficienty in his contribution. This is particularly noticeable to a scholar who deals with the third world, from which Genette takes a very small and superficially analyzed minority of his examples. Samir Amin's idea of Eurocentricism and its penalties are relevant here; for, particularly when we know a poet who is as richly inventive as Cuba's Nicolás Guillén, we find examples of the usage of paratexts, much of it preceding Genette's discoveries and provided to us in creations that are more mature and dynamic, more appealingly literary than those of the poets usually cited by the lauded Frenchman.

Key words: paratext, epigraph, Genette, Guillén, Eurocentrism, metropolis, inclusiveness, periphery, combativeness

On dealing with the subject of the paratext it is almost obligatory to bear in mind the writings of the late literary theorist, Gérard Genette (1930-2018). He has gained widespread fame for his work in relation to narratology, including his study of paratexts, or accessories of literary creations such as titles, dedications, prologues, introductions and epigraphs. His contributions have been so fundamental and influential that it has become customary for subsequent researchers of these subjects to employ terminology that he has invented for aspects of his work. The acclaim he has been accorded makes it essential in the interest of scholarship that attention be paid to a highly consequential omission which may keep from view some fruitful uses of paratexts as devices that play an important role in literary creations. The scope of Genette's contribution can be revised by bringing into the picture uses of the paratext that make it dynamic, as is illustratable by reference to the typically dramatic poetry of the Cuban writer, Nicolás Guillén.[1] When this is done, a restriction is revealed in Genette's inventory, notwithstanding his apparent extensive activity.

In his book *Seuils* (1987) [Thresholds or Paratexts], Genette refers to more than eight hundred authors who have used, alluded to, or commented on paratexts. The great majority of these authors, more than ninety percent, are European or North American. The total number of writers from other parts of the world mentioned by him and including Spanish American and Caribbean writers is fewer than two dozen. When a theorist such as Genette writes about a literary genre or category such as the paratext and makes it his territory, having rechristened key parts of the terminology, the impression is given that the work is substantially completed. Very few would suspect that Genette had left a gap to be filled or that this gap had already been filled unbeknownst to the theorist even before he had begun his task of analyzing the paratext. Nicolás Guillén, a poet from Cuba, had achieved this feat as a complement to his poetic creation, renowned for its superb inventiveness and pronounced musicality and enriched by its author's sharp wit, high intelligence, broad knowledge, humane inclusiveness, good humor, and absorbing communicativeness.

1 As this study develops and to measure the originality of Nicolás Guillén's achievement, let us bear in mind the following words from Genette, remembering that Guillén's creations preceded Genette's conceptualizations by several decades: "[…] the paratext is neither on the interior nor on the exterior: it is both; it is on the threshold; and it is on this very site that we must study it, because essentially, perhaps, *its being depends upon its site*" ("Paratextes," *Poétique*, Paris: Le Seuil, 1987, 69), as quoted by Richard Macksey in his "Foreword" to Jane E. Lewin's translation of Genette's *Seuils* (1987): *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (1997), xvii.

I will look first at the use Guillén makes of the epigraph, one of the several paratexts for which Genette has attempted an inventory of the forms and functions. This background may serve also as a frame from which to view other uses of the device, such as those introduced by Guillén. It will also allow us in the course of the essay to observe evolution in the poet's use of the paratext.

Genette recognizes three main conventions of presentation employed in the use of epigraphs: the allographic (by a different author), the autographic (by the author himself) or the anonymous (from an unknown source) (153-156). He observes four varieties of the instructive function of the epigraph (159-163). The first is to justify the title of the literary work; the second, to introduce an initial commentary concerning the text and ensure that the reading of the work is properly oriented, promoting the author's point of view; the third, to cite a prestigious author or work as a source of the epigraph and thus give greater credibility to the work; the fourth, to conform to the tradition or the custom of offering an epigraph. The dynamic conflictive epigraph, which we will discover to be potent in Guillén's poetic usage, is excluded from these functions.

The limitation in Genette's list of the possible functions of the epigraph is similar to that of other well-known and influential writers. For example, Jorge Luis Borges, the Spanish American most cited in Genette's book, with echoes of his statement "[…] cada escritor *crea* a sus precursores" (2: 228) [every writer *creates* his precursors], views epigraphs as illuminators of his texts. John Barth, in advocating for the abolition of the epigraph in his *The Friday Book* implies that his view of them coincides in large part with Genette's fourth function (the use of the epigraph to fulfill the mere custom of using an epigraph) and that at best they serve as metonyms for the works that are being offered (xix). He demonstrates the fact that, despite his post-modernist restlessness revealed throughout this book, he still lacks the combative spirit that would allow him to see how to use the unendorseable or defective epigraph. Borges and Barth are names that evoke literary daring and originality, but not so much so when they use the epigraph. For, whereas Barth will speak audaciously for abolition of the device, in his practice of it he does nothing that would have disturbed Genette's classification of the instructive function of the epigraph. Borges, for his story "Las ruinas circulares" (Borges, 1: 435-440) about a son who is dreamed into existence, chooses, as a typical conventional epigraph, the predictable

> *An[d] if he left off dreaming about you…* (sic)
> Through the Looking Glass, VI (sic)

And the general trend seems to emphasize the Genettian posture of concordance, which, as Alec Nevala-Lee put it, "is a whispered aside from the author just before the curtain rises."

Guillén's employment of the epigraph is infrequent, suggesting an uneasy recognition of the fact that the device as he knew it to be practiced in general carried a risk of superfluity before which he showed restraint. The economy that we may observe in his use of this device is a characteristic of his writing in general. He seems to reserve the epigraph for certain special moments in his poetry, when he gives the device exceptional treatment, providing it with attributes not commonly found in the traditional epigraphs described by Genette. And, given the principal characteristics of Guillén's poetry, its dramatic liveliness, its confrontational vigor, it is predictable that his preferences would be for epigraphs that are vibrant and dynamic in their function. Indeed, if in his initial use of the device Guillén may be seen to enhance the instructive power of epigraphs and endow them with greater autonomy than those that Genette observed, in time he came to introduce forms and functions of the device with which the famous theorist was apparently not familiar when he wrote his influential book: epigraphs which become the target or the foil of the poet's focus.

Guillén's first use of the epigraph comes upon us as a sudden flurry of seven epigraphs within his grand "Elegía a Jesús Menéndez" (1951) [Elegy to Jesús Menéndez], the murdered leader of Cuba's largest trade union, the union of sugar workers. Guillén deploys them adroitly, fitting them to each of the seven sections of the poem. They contribute, in relationship to each other, a narrative and dramatic function that enables them to speak for themselves, since they assist in developing the tragic-heroic sentiment, moving the poem along, and giving themselves a dynamic presence in this balanced literary work, one that combines epic, lyric and dramatic qualities.

For the first section of the "Elegía…" he makes an epigraph of the following words from the Spanish poet Luis de Góngora y Argote (1561-1627):

> *... armado*
> *más de valor que de acero.*
> (*1580/1625 Poesía*: 584, Poema 49, 17-18)
> [… armed
> more with valor than with steel.]

This quote prepares the reader for the circumstance that is going to be presented in

the text, about a valiant but physically defenseless hero. In addition, the presence of Góngora at the beginning of the poem, and exhibiting the stylish syntax that he bequeathed to the Spanish language as of his time, indicates to us that the content of the text is capable of having various epochs of relevance. On making this selection, Guillén would likely have been very well aware of the success that such contemporaries of his as his close friend Rafael Alberti (1902-1999), as well as Dámaso Alonso (1898-1990) and Gerardo Diego (1896-1987), all members of the Spanish Generation of 1927, were having in resuscitating and making lasting Góngora's stature, on the basis of sound analysis and fine emulation.

The epigraphs taken from Lope de Vega (1562-1636), Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés (Plácido) (1809-1844) and Alonso de Ercilla y Zúñiga (1533-1594), for sections three, four and five respectively, intensify the experience by giving close-ups of different moments of the same drama. Lope helps to express the antipathy universally felt toward the criminal killer:

> *…si no hay entre nosotros*
> *hombre a quien este bárbaro no afrente?*
> (*Fuenteovejuna*, III, i)
> […is there no one among us
> whom this barbarian does not offend?]

Plácido emphasizes the hero's purity of character:

> *Un corazón en el pecho*
> *de crímenes no manchado.*
> (Valdés, 326)
> [A heart in his chest
> unstained by crimes.]

And Ercilla prepares us for the search for and the finding of the notorious coward and criminal:

> *Vuelve a buscar a aquel que lo ha herido,*
> *y al punto que miró, le conocía.*
> (*La Araucana I*, "Canto IIII," 35, 5-6)
> [He searches again for the one who wounded him,
> and the moment he saw him, he knew him.]

The quote from a U.S. newspaper that is the epigraph to the second section of the poem brings North American journalism to the scene, with a list of rising stock market prices that are signs of investor happiness in reaction to the murder of the organizer of Cuban sugar workers:

...hubo muchos valores que se destacaron.
New York Herald Tribune
(Sección Financiera)
[…there were many stocks that stood out.]
New York Herald Tribune
(Financial Section)

This opens the way to the sixth epigraph where the celebrated Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío (1867-1916) paints a picture of the United States, with the Statue of Liberty, adorned in all its imperialist cynicism:

Y alumbrando el camino de la fácil conquista,
la libertad levanta su antorcha en Nueva York.
("A Roosevelt," 639-642)
[And lighting the path to easy conquest,
liberty raises her torch in New York.]

Then comes the concluding one of these epigraphs:

Apriessa cantan los gallos [The cocks are singing merrily
e quieren crebar arbores.[2] at the dawn's first lights.]
Poema del Cid

It is chronologically the first, taken from a poem too old, written in the period 1140-1207, for its author to be known by name as an individual with definitive dates of lifespan. But these deficiencies, far from impinging on the reliability of this source, tend rather to give it oracular power, as it predicts through the voices of singing cocks, symbols of revolutionary change and sustained hope, the imminent new time

2 Joseph Gulsoy, a specialist in the language of this period, assisted in this translation. Except where otherwise specified, I have undertaken all translations. The date of the *Poema del Cid* as discussed by scholars with this interest has been established to this point as being no more precise than between 1140 and 1207. See Ángel Valbuena Prat (35-38).

of a triumphant revolution.

Each one of these epigraphs, even outside of the world of Guillén's poetry, is potent. But combined, in their interrelationship and their firm connection to the text, they possess greater strength. In his study Genette cites no case of the use of multiple epigraphs within a single poem. He lists a few novels, mainly Gothic ones, that carry an epigraph with each chapter (149-150), but makes no comment about their relationship to each other, to any dramatic function. As a reader of poetry he very likely would have found Guillén's use of multiple epigraphs to be remarkable had he observed that the Cuban poet gives to these epigraphs a sense of identity, character and autonomy, sufficient for them to assume roles, to participate with ultimate empathetic effect among themselves in the tragic but finally hopeful drama of the poem. These epigraphs could seem heterogeneous, but Guillén unites them, causing them to share, as Borges might have usefully put it, a precursor identifiable with Jesús Menéndez.

This manner of empowering epigraphs by linking them is made all the more effective and coherent in the composition since, from the beginning of the text itself, Guillén employs the technique of deeply engaged personification. He presents the canes, Menéndez's erstwhile wards in a sense, and now suddenly his would-be protectors, in urgent, dramatic and ultimately pathetic interaction with him:

> Las cañas iban y venían
> desesperadas, agitando
> las manos.
> Te avisaban la muerte,
> la espalda rota y el disparo.
>
> [The desperate canes were bending
> to and fro, waving
> their hands.
> They were warning you of your death,
> your pierced back and the gunshot.]

By adding combatants, through this use of personification, to the heroes and villains implied in the epigraphs, Guillén strengthens the dramatic and dynamic intensity of his poem.

Even more dynamic are a class of epigraphs that are to be found functioning in more of Guillén's poems than any other. They may be called, from the viewpoint of the author, negative (in the sense of adversarial) or defective epigraphs. I consider a

defective epigraph to be one that provokes a disapproving reaction in the author and in the reader because it possesses a perceptible insufficiency or disagreeableness of content that keeps it from being persuasive or instructive in its role as an epigraph, in the readily compatible Genettian sense, and renders it susceptible to adversarial treatment. In what we will come to recognize as Guillén's special contribution, the defective epigraph, a category neither identified nor included by Genette, will come into prominence. In the hands of the right poet the defective epigraph, so treated and made dynamic, is capable of yielding exceptionally valuable contributions to the art of literature.

Such epigraphs are not taken into account by Genette, or they escaped his notice in the course of his massive research. As we have seen, the French theorist, like so many others, is centrally concerned with epigraphs that bear a direct, closely allied relationship to the text and are endorsed by the author. Guillén treats defective epigraphs with various degrees of opposition, producing various levels of dramatic effect, thus making a rich contribution to his poetry. The courageous, corrective, combative spirit that they manifest is a hallmark of his writings in general.

In "Elegía cubana," the first of six elegies collected in 1958,[3] Guillén uses an epigraph excerpted from the presumably authoritative and encyclopedic *Larousse Ilustrado*:

> CUBA, isla de América Central, la mayor de las Antillas, situada a la entrada del golfo de México… *Larousse ilustrado*
>
> [CUBA, Central American island, the largest of the Antilles, situated at the entrance of the Gulf of Mexico…]

On the face of it, this epigraph is neither negative, defective nor objectionable. It is a distanced, neutral, brief description of Cuba's geographical location. But the poem that follows it begins:

> Cuba, palmar vendido,
> sueño descuartizado,
> duro mapa de azúcar y de olvido…

3 A collection that has come to be known as *Las grandes elegías* [The Great Elegies]. See these six elegies in Nicolás Guillén's *Obra poética 1922-1958 I,* 255-293.

[Cuba, sold off palm grove,
dream torn apart,
cruel map of sugar and of neglect…]

initiating the metaphorical enumeration of the ills besetting the Cuba of 1952, the litany of which will constitute the rest of the poem. The text of the elegy thus implicitly contradicts the geographically-focused epigraph, one that misleads in any connotation it might have of pleasantness. Guillén demonstrates his awareness of its fallibility and ensures that such a connotation is invalidated, by modifying "map" negatively in "duro mapa" [cruel map] in the immediate vicinity of the epigraph.

The poet abandons the field of physical geography to which this epigraph is entirely devoted in order to attend intensely and broadly to the social experience lived in that space. But he does not see the geographical and the social as complements of each other, or the geographical as the determinant of the social in the manner of Montesquieu.[4] Rather, Guillén is showing in this case the disconnect between the physical environment and the social sphere, as he does even more pointedly and contrastively in his poems, such as "Canción carioca" [Song from Rio de Janeiro] dealing with the deprivations that underlie the superficial allure of that city, a poem written in 1953, one year after the "Elegía cubana," and in his essays, such as "Haití: La isla encadenada" (1941) (*Pp 1929-1972 I*, 155-160) [Haiti: The Chained Island]. In all this we discover the procedure of a writer who compulsively corrects the illusions implicit in a superficial, insufficient description of Cuba. Instead of treating the epigraph merely as a "paratext," as a threshold to the work, Guillén integrates it into a central purpose of the work, attempting to rescue Cuba from a dictionary's misleading and well-circulated definition.

The achievement of having the epigraph play such a vital role in lending vigor, passion, pace, scope and unity to the elegy leads one to wonder whence the urge for Guillén to extend his mastery to his productively adversarial treatment of what he recognizes as the disagreeable, defective or insufficient epigraph that will be displayed in poems we will be examining. The roots of this urge may be seen to lie in an experienced distrust of colonial or neocolonial sources of information or education, education that does not respect or take sufficiently into account his reality. This tendency in Guillén may be noticed both in his poetry and in his prose,

4 We find it prudent to make the clarification and distinction here because of the carefully researched interest Guillén showed in the general topic of the influence of French literature in Cuba in his essay of 1981, "Notas y apuntes sobre la influencia francesa en Cuba," *Prosa de prisa (1929-1985) IV*, 61-78.

in the time of the Revolution and preceding January 1, 1959. Thus in his elegy "El apellido" (1951) [The Last Name], lamenting his ignorance of his lost (African) name, he begins the poem:

> Desde la escuela
> y aún antes… Desde el alba, cuando apenas
> era una brizna yo de sueño y llanto,
> desde entonces,
> me dijeron mi nombre. Un santo y seña
> para poder hablar con las estrellas.
> Tú te llamas, te llamarás…
> Y luego me entregaron
> esto que veis escrito en mi tarjeta,
> esto que pongo al pie de mis poemas:
> las trece letras
> que llevo a cuestas por la calle,
> que siempre van conmigo a todas partes.
>
> [From school days
> and even before… From my first light, when
> I was merely a wisp of sleep and tears,
> from those times,
> they told me my name. My password
> for talking with the stars.
> Your name is, your name will be….
> And then they gave me
> this one that you see written on my card,
> this one that I put at the foot of my poems:
> the thirteen letters[5]
> whose burden I carry with me,
> whose burden I feel wherever I go.]

In his essay "Cuba-Paraguay" (1965), Guillén defies his orthodox schooling and becomes a pioneer, ahead of Eduardo Galeano,[6] in vindicating the creator of an

5 The phoneme "ll" in Spanish is treated as one letter.

6 Eduardo Galeano, *Las venas abiertas de América Latina* (308-313); translated by Cedric Belfrage as *Open Veins of Latin America* (206-212).

independent Paraguay, José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia. As one of the beginners of the process of rescuing Dr. Francia from the steady stream of calumny to which such leading poets as Pablo Neruda[7] had carelessly come to contribute, Guillén wrote:

> […] desde mi lejano bachillerato sabía yo, porque así me lo enseñaron quienes tenían interés en que yo lo aprendiera de ese modo, que el doctor Francia era "un tirano brutal." Las anécdotas más terribles le hacían una fama diabólica, mientras se ocultaba cuidadosamente su gran papel en el rescate de la independencia paraguaya, la independencia absoluta, al frente de la revolución de 1811. El tiempo me dijo la verdad […].[8]
>
> *Prosa de prisa III*, p. 297.

> […] from my distant high school days I knew, because that's what those who had an interest in my learning it in that way taught me, that Dr. Francia was "a brutal tyrant." The most terrible anecdotes created for him a diabolical fame, while they carefully hid his great role in rescuing Paraguayan independence, its absolute independence, as he led the

7 In Neruda's "Canto general" (1950) (316-721), a work of poems in which Neruda presents himself as the voice of the Americas, he places Dr. Francia in a section of the book reserved for "Verdugos" [Tyrants]. He devotes to him a poem in which some of the calumny referred to here by Guillén and which had originated in attacks on Francia, most notably by paid literary agents of the then dominant British imperialism when the leader of Paraguay—in those times the most prosperous and peaceful of Latin American countries, as we see from Galeano (*Open Veins*, 207-212)—refused to be coerced by the British into opening up to them any part of the economy of his country (see also my article: "Power Without Responsibility: The Function of Words in Augusto Roa Bastos's *Yo el Supremo,"* 195-216).

8 The unbalanced education about which Guillén writes here will be found to be a weakness affecting the formation of theorists and critics in North America and Europe. A footnote in Aijaz Ahmad's very useful book, *In Theory* […] (329), speaks eloquently to the issue:

> It is symptomatic of the whole drift of American Left criticism that Frank Lentriccia's *After the New Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), surely the central and in some ways a genuinely brilliant summation of the vast changes that have occurred in US literary criticism and theory in the two key decades between 1957 and 1977, makes scant effort to locate the disciplinary developments in any history other than the literary-theoretical. It is only by holding on to one's own memory and by fixing this memory on stray remarks here and there that one recalls, while reading the book, that these same twenty years were known in other kinds of narratives for quite other sorts of developments, such as the revolutions in Algeria, Cuba, Indonesia and Southern Africa. (*In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*, London: Verso, 1994, 329)

In the two bilingual English-Spanish anthologies of poetry of the English-speaking Caribbean which I produced a few years ago: *Poetas del Caribe inglés: Antología* (2009) and *Poetas del Caribe anglófono* (2012), I included a thematic index which contained a surprisingly large number of poets in the region who contributed pungent criticism of colonial education to the volumes.

revolution of 1811. Time told me the truth [. . .].

Genette's mindset is one that is comfortable with conformity, is that of a grammarian, disposed to repeat or add to what is established. He protects and makes things tidy, distinguishing what belongs to the center from what is marginal or peripheral. We notice that, in the course of making his observations concerning the historical and normal positioning of epigraphs, he intimates in one instance the religious inspiration of his conformity. He cites the example of Julien Green (1902-1998), the French novelist, placing an epigraph on the spine of his book, *Léviathan* (1929) (150). Having done that, Genette does not continue with his narrative about the positioning of epigraphs. He turns to focus instead on the content of this epigraph: "If I were God, I would have pity on men's hearts," the text of which Green had taken from Maurice Maeterlinck's *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1902) without showing any qualms about using it. But Genette seems disturbed since he interrupts his description to comment that François Mauriac (1885-1970), Green's senior and Roman Catholic "distinguished colleague," has "denounced" the content of the device as "sacrilegious epigraph," demonstrating the conservative religious tutelage of the period. Interestingly, even when Genette comes upon a case such as this one that places him in the environment of what he might well have considered to be the negative or defective epigraph, the French theorist is not nudged to inquire whether in some part of the world such epigraphs are put to constructive poetic use, in the manner of Nicolás Guillén.

The functions which Genette attributes to the epigraph, of interpreting or giving prestige to the work of which it is the threshold—whether it points to the interpretation of the title or of the work, or to the prestige of the epigraph or its author, or simply to the prestige that the use of an epigraph implies—make it difficult for him to capture the importance or even the presence of a category that can be designated as the defective epigraph. The risk of simply disregarding this type of epigraph is increased if one conceptualizes the paratext as exclusively a threshold to the work, with no space for it to function as an integral part of the text. Given Guillén's combative spirit in the quest for justice, it is perfectly understandable that he is going to demonstrate his antipathy; and the inevitable consequence is that such an epigraph, which is necessarily allographic or anonymous, will go beyond being a mere paratext, not integral to the text. Rather, it is going to figure directly in the text, to receive there its author's due censure for being a faulty epigraph.

This is the process of engagement by which the words of Yevgeny Yevtushenko

cross the threshold, in the form of an epigraph, and enter into Guillén's poem "¿Qué color?"[What Color?], dedicated to Martin Luther King Jr. (*Op 1958-1977 II*, 241-242):

> *Su piel era negra, pero con el alma*
> *purísima como la nieve blanca…*
> Evtushenko (según el cable), ante
> el asesinato de [Martin] Lutero King
>
> [His skin was black, but with a soul
> as perfectly pure as white snow…
> Yevtushenko (according to the cable), on
> the assassination of [Martin] Luther King]

Guillén attacks Yevtushenko's words with ferocious sarcasm, reiterating the word "negro," to insist on its meaning of pure goodness, reflecting the courageous and constructive actions for which the great parson is famous. In the dramatic confrontation that takes place within the text of the poem, he rescues King from the condition of inferiority that the then Soviet poet would have given to him with those words. There are several ironies in this gesture of Yevtushenko. Clearly, it wasn't his intention to insult Martin Luther King Jr.; it seems that he intended to send to his readers a rapid obituary in reaction to the shock caused by the murder of the great fighter for the dignity of black people and for peace. Yevtushenko's quote is followed by the words "según el cable" [according to the cable], referring to the most rapid means of transmission of news in those times, when the Soviet citizen Yevtushenko was serving as the head of his country's news bureau in Havana, covering such developments as the "October Crisis" or "Cuban Missile Crisis" of 1962.[9] Now this man, who ought to be an ideological comrade, is revealing to Guillén, in a moment of spontaneity and urgency, a lapse that places him in the

9 Nicolás Guillén, as President of the Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba, was usually attentive to Cuban visits by important Soviet writers, among others. Yevtushenko (1932-2017) was in Cuba during the 1960s when he played a role in significant events. He served as bureau chief for the Pravda news agency during what was known as the October Crisis or the Cuban Missile Crisis. He co-wrote the screenplay for the film *Soy Cuba*, the first version of which was not generally regarded in Cuba as a success (see the temperate, balanced, and informative recently revised article "I Am Cuba" in https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Am_Cuba). Nevertheless, I have searched all of Guillén's published and yet to be published work, and have found the epigraph to "¿Qué color?" to be the only reference made by Guillén to his Russian colleague.

camp of the others.

In "¿Qué color?" the emphatic, compensatory, and resounding heralding of blackness, the word stressed musically and occurring with alliterative frequency, unites at a level of great moral and ethical elevation the hero's soul with the color of his skin, his thoughts, and his love, giving tight coherence to the poem. If we were to seek here an element that would be fuel for deconstructive fire in the poem it would not be hidden, as Jacques Derrida[10] might have expected it to be. Rather, it would be, as is customary with Guillén, at the heart of the poem, among its climactic lines, and tied to love, the crowning emotion, where we would find lines in which black love came to be universalized and made a part of love for humanity: "Qué negro amor, / tan repartido / sin color" [What a black love, / so widely shared / without color]. This widened role, far from contradicting, strengthens the moral premise of the poem, before the poet again resorts to blackness, treating, at the end of the poem with direct finality, the offensive and objectionable epigraph. This conclusion, with its appeal to consensus broadened by the rhetorical question that, assured in its moral stance, demands an assenting answer, affirms the natural acceptance and goodness of King's blackness. The answer also normalizes the change of tone from sarcasm in the poem's opening lines to the candor of the closing ones that is supported by the inclusiveness of widely shared love. With procedures not envisaged by the leading theorists dealing with the subject, Guillén makes, with his treatment of the epigraph, a potent poem. His way of making the epigraph essential—central and not marginal—is consonant with his integrative worldview, one that never acquiesces in notions such as periphery being inferior to metropolitan and that acknowledges no marginalized space as befitting his part of the world.[11]

After the rectifying torrential usage of the word "negro," Guillén ends this demonstration of his use of the defective epigraph with the lines:

Qué pensamientos puros negros	[What pure black thoughts
su grávido cerebro alimentó.	were nourished by his weighty brain.
Qué negro amor,	What black love,
tan repartido	so widely shared,

10 See Joseph Adamson's concise "Jacques Derrida," *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory*, 296-297.

11 Samir Amin in his book *Eurocentrism* (1998) (89-92) has criticized the tendency of scholars and others to give in to a belief in the rationality of European culture and ideas despite its largely unexamined mythical foundations.

sin color.[12]	regardless of color.
¿Por qué no, por qué no iba a tener el alma negra aquel heroico pastor?	Why not, why would that heroic parson not have a black soul?
Negra como el carbón.	Black as coal.]

Note how, in the first line, Guillén's masterly employment of syntax makes it possible for him to take the idea of purity from the epigraph, where it was misused, and juxtapose it rectifyingly alongside "negros" in "puros negros." He underlines the rectification by devoting the rest of the poem to the idea of Dr. King's purity: the purity from which springs the civilized gesture of sharing indiscriminately, regardless of color, and the purity of having a black soul from which emanate the purest essential thoughts:

…negro amor,
tan repartido
sin color
or
…el alma negra
…
[n]egra como el carbón.

By recognizing the negative or defective epigraph as a special category that provokes an adversarial attitude, Guillén appreciates the structural benefit that is derived from the usage of this device. He again exploits that insight, that potential for dynamism, and intensifies the emotion of his poems when in two compositions of his book of love poetry, *En algún sitio de la primavera: Elegía* (1966) [In Some Springtime Place, Elegy], he contends with two epigraphs in a way that gives

12 Guillén's moral and ideological consistency in this regard is observable not only here within the poem. It is there too to be observed in his prose and other poetry. The idea shown here of shared love without regard to color was clearly expressed and combined with other maxims in Guillén's prose, in a speech he gave thirty-one years earlier in Madrid on July 6, 1937, at the International Congress of Writers in Defense of Culture. Looking forward hopefully to a time better than that of the hatred and violence of the Spanish Civil War, he ended the first of his speeches invoking "…¡hombres ya sin colores, sin guerras, sin prejuicios y sin razas!" […men finally without colors, without wars, without prejudices and without races!] (*Páginas escogidas*, 166).

extended purview to his preoccupation. The first of them, in Poem XIII, taken from François de Malherbe (1555-1628), is:

> *Le temps est médecin d'heureuse expérience;*
> *son remède est tardif, mais il est bien certain.*
> *Malherbe*[13]
> [Time is a doctor who gives good results;
> his remedy is slow, but very sure.]

He tries to apply the remedy to himself, reciting Malherbe's words in soliloquy and evaluating their effect on his moment of crisis. He gives them a real trial because he truly needs and is searching for relief from this devastating feeling of loss, occasioned by the breakdown in relations with his beloved . His failure to recognize and acknowledge what is offered by this epigraph—consolation—is not as abrupt, definitive, or sarcastic as is what is offered by the epigraph that attempts to characterize Martin Luther King Jr. in "¿Qué color?". Removed also from the treatment of the deficient epigraph in this poem (XIII) is the indignant and vituperative tone that extends throughout "¿Qué color?". Instead, employing affectionate language, he approaches his co-practitioner and specialist in consolations, to thank him for his friendly intent, even though it fails in this case. The failure, as our poet understands it, is not entirely the fault of Malherbe who, nevertheless, does not have the right to feel satisfied with his calm and intellectualized prescription for putting to an end the pain of separation, because, on doing that, he doesn't fathom the full dimension of the emotion that it is left to time to resolve; nor does he appreciate the difference between the experience of the victim and that of the observer. Malherbe's words have caused the abandoned Guillén to feel even more abandoned. And nevertheless, as a measure of his desperation, and, without having any other possibility of a remedy, Guillén inserts terms of endearment as he ends the poem and avoids the total rejection of the possible efficacy that time can provide. He resorts to a question that accepts the possibility of consolation in a future indefinite time, but with the doubt that he can survive the actual experienced interval of time:

Muy bien, Malherbe,	[Very well, Malherbe,
muy bien, mi viejo amigo,	very well, my old friend,

13 This epigraph by François de Malherbe is from the first stanza of his poem "Stances," *Poésies, Livre II*.

¿y mientras tanto? and in the meantime?]

This relative gentleness heightens by contrast Guillén's impassioned rejection of the words and the sentiment of the epigraph to "¿Qué color?" and suggests the poem's rooting in a deep sense of identity he feels with Martin Luther King Jr.. This is expressed not in soliloquy, reflecting the intimacy of the love poem, but in words that are said out loud, with the desired effect of influencing large gatherings. The coincidence between King and Guillén may first be noticed with regard to theme. Guillén began his systematic publishing at the national level in 1929, the year of King's birth, with a series of essays in defense of the black sector of the Cuban population, taking up as the central issue, widespread discrimination on the basis of skin color. King, at approximately the same age (27 in 1956), took up the same issue, ultimately giving his life for it in the United States (1968).

Perhaps this sense of identity is deeper than is felt at the conscious level, for traces of it may be found in Guillén's poetry, including in some of his other uses of the epigraph, as we will see in the following paragraphs. As early as in 1956 in a prepared statement that King read concerning the conclusion of the Montgomery bus boycott that he led in connection with Rosa Parks's refusal to give up her seat to a white man, he included the poetic assertion: "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." The statement, which subsequently became a key focus of King's rhetoric,[14] was adapted by him from a longer, less elegant one made a century earlier by the Unitarian clergyman, social activist and firm abolitionist Theodore Parker (1810-1860).[15] The full statement, condensed and endorsed by King, indicates, in the context of the pain of social injustice, that an end to it is long

14 King would use this quote on at least five more occasions: 1) in 1958 in an article entitled "Out of the Long Night," published in *The Gospel Messenger*, Feb. 8, 1958, 13-14); 2) in 1964 in a graduation speech at Wesleyan University (http://www.carlruby.com/the-arc-of-the-moral-universe-is-bending-toward-justice/); 3) in a 1965 speech "Our God is Marching On" or "How Long, Not Long" after the Selma march on the steps of the Alabama capital, Montgomery (https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/our-god-marching); 4) in a 1967 speech "Where Do We Go From Here" to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yeVITdHsY6I) and 5) in his 1968 sermon "Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodore_Parker).

15 The Parker statement that King so elegantly paraphrases is: "I do not pretend to understand the moral universe: the age is a long one, my eye reaches but little ways; I cannot calculate the curve and complete the figure by the experience of sight; I can divine it by conscience. And from what I see I am sure it bends toward justice," *The Collected Works of Theodore Parker: Sermons and Prayers*, ed. Frances Power Cobbe (London: Trübner & Company, 1879, 2:48), as quoted by Rufus Burrows, Jr., in his *Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Theology of Resistance*, p. 261 ("Chapter 1" footnote 63).

in coming but that it will come.

Coinciding with the time of King's use of the statement, between 1956 and 1968, but in a different context: that of attempting to overcome the pain of lost love, Guillén resorts to the epigraph from Malherbe that I have been examining. Parker's statement, as adapted by King, and Guillén's epigraph from Malherbe are close in their content, both of them contemplating the theme of the possibility of relief from long-term suffering. The two are structured similarly, with the positive ending allowing in each case the preceding acknowledged handicaps to be surmounted, the parallel effect being perceivable in the cadence as well:

> Malherbe: "Time is a doctor who gives good results;/his remedy is slow, but very sure."
>
> King: "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."

A difference between Guillén and King is the unquestioning acceptance given by the latter to the authoritative consoling assurance. Guillén does not allow Malherbe to leave contented with his epigraph. He troubles him by asking further what is to be done while the pain lingers indefinitely, thus exposing the inadequacy of the French poet's solution. Guillén thereby produces another instance of the contested epigraph, through the latent highly significant coincidence of sensitivity between three distinguished minds: his own, Martin Luther King Jr.'s and Theodore Parker's.

The other epigraph employed in *En algún sitio...* , in "Poema XV," is also not just a bystander, positioning itself statically to the lower right of the title, a place that it has learned to occupy by force of generic habit. Nor is it just a look-alike to a central motif of the poem. It is a highly charged module that is made centrally functional in the construction of the poem. Taken from Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer (1836-1870), it reads:

> Como yo te he querido, desengáñate,
> así no te querrán.
> (*Rimas y leyendas*, "LIII", 143-144)
> [Like I have loved you, don't delude yourself,
> they will never love you so.]

The words of the epigraph, like their author, reappear as part of the text of this last poem of Guillèn's book of fifteen poems, with only the slightest modification sufficing to allow the words to become Guillén's words also, as sadness twins

the two poets. The words fit smoothly into this latter poet's desperate but failing attempt, infused with pathos, to have his still distanced loved one heed his plea for her to return and end the rupture. Guillén leads up to his paraphrase of the words of the epigraph within the poem by providing the following profile of Bécquer, thereby duplicating the experience of the loss of love:

> Bécquer, cuya tristeza me acompaña,
> en cuya voz la vida pasa
> con sus morados velos fúnebres […].
> (*Op 1958-1985 II,* 412)
> [Bécquer, whose sadness accompanies me,
> in whose voice life passes by
> with its purple funeral veils […].]

The latter of the two epigraphs of *En algún sitio...* comes in the context of the poet's awareness that this is the end of the communication, of the distanced dialogue: an end beginning in sadness as the poet identifies himself with Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer, the Spanish Romantic poet, and the author of the epigraph. He is highly admired by Guillén who described him in prose within a year of writing this poem as "inmenso y delicado" [immense and delicate].[16] Among its troubling implications, this epigraph introduces the possibility of jealousy, of other suitors competing with him. This makes the epigraph intolerable and useless to him as further company. In any case, we have noticed in Guillén the strong tendency to embrace the positive view at the close of his dramatic narratives, as we witnessed at the end of the "Elegía a Jesús Menéndez" with its optimistic final epigraph. And here in this love poem our poet will refuse to abandon the hope that what he treats as the crowning emotion, love, will triumph. As the final stanza continues, there is a steady shift in the mood of his language, from the hard resignation conveyed by the indicative in which the epigraph or references to it are expressed, to the subjunctive, employed in a resurgent and extravagant wave of optimism, which then, with our poet's memory of his recent history, including the restive role played in it by the intrusive epigraph, has to be tempered, with plain realistic language:

16 See his paper "Rubén Darío," given at the conference "Encuentro con Rubén Darío en Varadero de Cuba" (1967), written less than a year after *En algún sitio de la primavera: Elegía* (1966).

Ay, ojalá sea
en algún sitio de la primavera
húmedo al beso de la luna nueva,
donde tiemblen campánulas sonando
en saludo a tu fúlgido regreso,
y vengas tú
con lentas flores de naranjo
por entre aplausos y corales.

Pero vuelvo a decirlo,
No sé si esto será inocencia y fiel candor,
Si no será tal vez pedir más de la cuenta.

De veras que no sé.

[Oh, oh that it could be
in some springtime place
humid with the new moon's kiss,
where bellflowers tremble ringing
their greeting to your resplendent return,
and you will come
with slow orange blossoms
amid applause and chorales.

But I say it again,
I don't know if this is all innocence and faithful simplicity,
if it's perhaps not asking too much.

I really don't know.]

Nevertheless, the heights of lyricism that the poet reaches in his final expression of hopeful mood counters decisively all previous negative notions including the epigraph, leaving to be overcome only the hard plain fact that at the end of this poetic work the lost loved one is still absent, but not hopelessly.

Because of the active role it grows to achieve within these poems, the epigraph

is not merely a paratext but a vital part of the text.[17] In both cases the epigraph is made dynamic and is kept by dialogue, albeit between distantly separated interlocutors, at a high level of dramatic intensity. The drama also reveals an ironic magnanimity extended by our poet to Malherbe, who fails in his consoling mission in "Poem XIII;" while in "Poem XV" the drama demonstrates the partial coincidence of vision between Guillén and Bécquer. The latent capacity of the epigraph to function overtly within the text, that Guillén brings to light, leads us to wonder whether Genette, had he discovered this usage, would have assigned to it a new nomenclature that acknowledged this dual function. It is a matter of profound sadness that he cannot do that now.

In this regard it is helpful to mention Guillén's use of other paratexts that would be highlighted in Genette's book fifty-six years later. With Guillén, with his contentious brilliance on behalf of social justice, devices such as titles, prologues, and epistles are, like epigraphs, made to dramatize productive issues; and with his penchant for economy, he can even treat all of these paratexts together in one cluster.

As early as 1931, as if in strange anticipation of his innovation with other paratexts (prologues, epistles, forewords, titles), Guillén, in presenting his book of poetry, *Sóngoro cosongo*, wrote challengingly against prologues as they were then employed (*Obra poética 1922-1958 I*, 101-102). He wanted the pages they occupy to be "frescas y verdes, como ramas jóvenes" (101) [fresh and green, like young branches]. As for the place prologues would occupy, he stated that he preferred them coming at the end of the work, perhaps as epilogues, a placing that would obviate some of the false promises and other fakery, similar to some of those treated mockingly in part of Genette's fourth function of the epigraph, the function of mere fashion. Guillén also demonstrates his eventual enervation with the formal repetitiveness of the prologue by substituting the epistle for it in his book *El diario que a diario* (1972) [The Daily That Every Day],[18] whose title signals an intense degree of meaningful innovation. The "que" is a key to the title's ingeniousness. Because of its presence, we have an ellipsis, a form of chaos apt for announcing

17 At the very beginning of his discussion of epigraphs (*Seuils*, 147), Genette weighs the merits of the term "exergue" as a possible substitute for "epigraph." He favors the latter, pointing out that naming a literary device on the basis of where it is placed (outside of the work, from the Greek *ex ergon*) is not felicitous. Guillén's capacity to make text, rather than merely paratext, of the epigraph, having it function inside the poem, would almost certainly lead him to prefer of the two the received substantive term "epigraph."

18 In her translation of *El diario que a diario*, Vera Kutzinski translates the title as *The Daily Daily*, ignoring completely, with her inappropriate tidiness, Guillén's disruptive conjunction "que."

the debased, inhumane world of the fateful clamor of the slave trade and auction that is about to be exposed. The title coheres too with other fittingly ravaged components of the book: with the belittled and undermined prologue ("Prologuillo no estrictamente necesario" [Not Strictly Necessary Little Prologue]),[19] with the embarrassment about the unmanaged chaos admitted in the epistle ("Epístola") and with the repulsive turbidity of such literary compositions as "Sonnet." The "que" of the title points to all this mess. For being overwhelmed by it, by the predominance of social distress that it augurs, our poet apologizes at the outset in his "Epístola," addressed by name to his fellow poet and friend, Eliseo Diego, known for his limpid, elegant verses.[20]

In the antithetical way hinted at when Diego is mentioned, Guillén later produces a new kind of approved prologue. He places after the title of his book, *La rueda dentada*, also of 1972, a "Prólogo" which is an exquisite musical parable about revolutionary cooperativeness. This is a prologue with pages "fresh and green, like young branches," as he had demanded of the genre in general in 1931. We had learned too from the autographic prologue to his book *Sóngoro cosongo* (1931), that its title, with its pronounced Sub-Saharan African phonic features, was born in part as his reaction to what he had perceived to be bias by sections of the Cuban bourgeoisie against the use in poetry of Cuban popular speech in his book of one year earlier, *Motivos de son* (1930) [Son Motifs]. He was, with the combative, musical, Guillenian title, which he invented in 1931, reinforcing the African cultural heritage; because the phrase *"sóngoro cosongo*," without denoting any fixed referent but rich with emotion derived from the music and the combativeness, has become entrenched and ubiquitous in Cuban popular speech.[21]

There is yet another epigraph whose contribution needs to be assessed. It is taken from the poetry of Emilio Ballagas, Guillén's compatriot and contemporary, and has been with the reader from the beginning to the end of the book, *En algún sitio*..., functioning as a third and pervasively influential guide to its reading. This

19 He employs the title of the first poem to undermine twice, by using the diminutive and the adverbial qualification, the prestige of the prologue genre.

20 In a lecture he gave at the University of Toronto not long after Guillén died in 1989, Eliseo Diego amid unstoppable tears lamented the passing of his dear friend, the Francisco Quevedo (1580-1645) of our time, consummate master of poetic forms and styles, who would always suit them to well and humanely considered subjects.

21 It has shown up too in other parts of Latin America; for example, a well-regarded restaurant in Lima, Peru, which serves traditional Lima food in an ambience providing "música criolla," enjoys the name "Sóngoro Cosongo." Those who know in Havana the restaurant "La Vita Nuova" that features pasta and pizza would not be surprised at the parallel Peruvian development.

is again not simply an epigraph or one that functions like any of his previously examined epigraphs. This one compels us to notice once more, manifested in a different way, Guillén's emphasis on economy in his practice. There occurs here

Yo te doy a la vida entera del poema.
[I give you to the whole life of the poem.]

the merger of two paratexts: an epigraph and a dedication; because Ballagas's words are endorsed by our daring and superbly innovative poet. They are converted into an unusual dedication in which the poetic creation that has taken hold of the poet through the loved one and that has turned out to be occasioning such hope and despair is bequeathed to the loved one, so that she may experience and understand the tumult that he has been living. The sharing of poetry itself, with its antitheses, thus becomes his last hope.[22]

The true masters are the creators. We, as critics or readers, can observe, if we are open and sensitive enough, precisely how creators use the resources that are at their disposal. For literary creators have a common storehouse of linguistic devices which, if they do not already exist in the form in which they wish to use them, can be modified so that they conform to the design of their creation. With the great masters, the process of adaptation is fluid and spontaneous; they sense that compositions ought to be elaborated in a certain way and they execute them in that way, perfectly, just as Guillén is wont to do. Critics are slower: only after absorbing the work in its totality can they dare to speak of the dynamism of its parts and organize their reportage in such a way that they do not comment on any device, part or element without bearing in mind its relationship with the rest of the composition.

The work of the theorist is the most distanced. Theories are put to the test when they are judged in relation to the range of their applicability. In the field of literature, theorists tend to lead a tense existence, because they are constantly challenged by the boundlessly creative talents of writers who are dispersed throughout the world and whose works may be distant culturally and psychologically from the practice with which a given theorist is familiar. The theorist seeks relations—correspondences, contrasts—among works of various authors of the same or of different epochs and of the same or of different social

22 In fact Guillén presented the manuscript to his loved one on completing it.

circumstances. On the basis of that information, the literary theorist proposes a theory, which at best is applicable globally. Literary theorists, then, should have ample knowledge of a great range of subjects and above all of literature if they want their theories to be applicable to the greatest extent possible. Their knowledge of literature may also validate the selection of the works most suitable to illustrate their theories. Of course, the theorists cannot know all literature and not even all the great writers that could be instructive for them.[23] There are potential handicaps that can skew their vision: for example, the natural attraction of their nation's literature may occupy a disproportionate part of the theorists' attention and awaken pride in them. It isn't surprising that Mikhail Bakhtin, a theorist of great international fame, takes, with indubitable validity, as his admired illustrator of his theory of the novel, his compatriot Fyodor Dostoyevsky, and of his theory of poetry, although not as extensively employed because the novel is his favorite genre, his also great compatriot, Alexander Pushkin.[24]

A likely consequence of the respect or even awe that Genette has earned by the indefatigable effort he put into his partial study of the paratext is that subsequent researchers have been reluctant to go beyond the bounds he established for his examination of the genre. His survey of its use, with its predominance of so-called "First World"[25] producers, led him and his followers to findings that they consider to be fully representative of the genre, wherever it is practiced. In his book, *Eurocentrism*, the Egyptian economist Samir Amin highlights the center/periphery axis that defines and tensely sustains the capitalist system and its social organization (141-142). Amin recognizes the center as the locus of greater comfort and advantage and therefore as being less or much less likely than the periphery

23 Nicolás Guillén should by no means have been considered to be an obscure writer by any French literary theorist. He became Cuba's National Poet by acclamation with the victory of the Revolution in 1959 and retained that status until his death in 1989. He spent some four and a half years from 1953 to 1958 in political exile during which time he resided frequently in Paris. His impeccable biographer and editor of collections of his work, Ángel Augier, also tells us that his poetry was on the curriculum in French schools and that in 1978 he was awarded an honorary degree by the University of Bordeaux where an international conference on his poetry was held. Before that, in 1954, he received the well-publicized Lenin International Peace Prize and carried out, in the spring of 1965, invited speaker visits to ten of France's leading universities, all this, mitigating somewhat the indignity he had suffered when he was briefly detained in Ellis Island in 1949. Why then did he escape Genette's searching eye?

24 In my article "Si Bajtín hubiera conocido a Nicolás Guillén," [If Bakhtin Had Known Nicolás Guillén], I suggest a very strong challenger for Pushkin's place, given the arguments used by the famous theorist in this case.

25 See Aijaz Ahmad, "Three Worlds Theory: End of a Debate," *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (287-319).

to be the site of agitation for change or for effecting change (144). His focus is socio-economic, but his observations are strikingly analogous to literary ones. In fact, within Nicolás Guillén's poetry itself, models of combative writing from a peripheral stance abound. The poem "Problemas del subdesarrollo" [Problems of Underdevelopment][26] is an example of the many poems in Guillén's work that with deft irony, rich music and riveting wit, face head-on the condescension and other discourtesies ascribable to the center/periphery paradigm. So that, when this poet encounters this Eurocentric paradigm in a context in which an epigraph is applicable, he is well prepared for the experience, as also should be his critics.

One doesn't get sensitized to the presence and functions of paratexts, especially beyond those provided by Genette in the worlds of his Euro-centered focus, without enquiring about the life of these devices in civilizations and countries where a European literary language is conspicuously used and divulged, such as in India, or where translation into a European language leads to the possibility of paratranslation, as in China.[27] In these cases we find, as readers of English, issues and attitudes arising from imperial and colonial habits that were acquired over long periods of time. They are now being addressed largely in the field of paratranslation, a field in which we may readily see, as applied to tensions in such diverse areas as social status and marketing, the far-reaching relevance of Nicolás Guillén's 1931 Caribbeanized innovations. See, for example, with regard to China, Sara Rovira-Esteva's 2016 study of the translation into English, Catalan and Spanish respectively of the "chick lit" novel, Chun Sue's *Beijing Doll*. This study reveals the impact of economic development and rivalry on the target audiences' reception of the work. In the case of the British-Indian audience, the 2018 study by Pallavi Rao, entitled "The Five-point Indian: Caste, Masculinity, and English-language in the Paratexts of Chetan Bhagat," shows the enduring concern for social status revealed in Genettian paratext usage even when the author attempts to hide this concern. Thus we see that Guillén's rejection of colonial class barriers in his title

26 See comments on this poem in my book *Cuba's Nicolás Guillén: Poetry and Ideology* (177) and my translation of it into English for my book *Nicolás Guillén: A Bilingual Anthology* (387).

27 It is also used by the Nobel Prize (1992) winning poet Derek Walcott, from the small island country of St. Lucia, in the English-speaking Caribbean, with a population of only 160,000, when he titles one of his poetry collections *Omeros* (1990) to allude to linkages with Homer's epic *Odyssey*.

Note the extended fields of paratext required by theatre (speech patterns, costumes and set) in my translation into Spanish of Derek Walcott's *The Joker of Seville* (1974), which he based on Tirso de Molina's (1579-1648) seventeenth century Spanish play *El Burlador de Sevilla* (1616).

and prologue to his book, *Sóngoro consongo*, of 1931, uses paratext more creatively to confront the unacceptability of social inequality. The Chinese and British-Indian writers find ways of broadening the use and definition of paratext, but they fall short of the dynamism of Guillén's usage. Their chattiness relaxes the reader as they shun the trenchant power of Aristotelian and Guillénian dramatic intensity.

One consequence of the greater comfort enjoyed by the center, and that is quite conspicuous in the literary sphere, is the possibility of the emergence of a firm emotional identification of prominent figures from the periphery with the culture and way of life of the center. Peruvian-born novelist Mario Vargas Llosa (1936-) is a prime and acknowledged example among Latin Americans of his craft, leaning to a Spanish identity in his later years. His Paraguayan colleague Augusto Roa Bastos (1917-2005), having been pushed from his own country by the dictatorship of Alfredo Stroessner and from his refuge in Argentina by the looming one of Rafael Videla, and pulled by French literary currents, including Eurocentered literary theory,[28] finally saved himself and his Paraguayan national identity, when some important traits of democracy briefly returned to his country. Roa Bastos thus, near the end of his life, placed himself in the spacious realms of the periphery in which he could create anew or reconnect with the salient characteristics of his early literary work as well as with his democratic social commitments. At this late time Roa Bastos declared that of his two most famous novels, *Hijo de hombre* (1960) and *Yo el Supremo* (1974), the former was "el que más quiero" [the one I love more] (as quoted in *El País*, August 19, 2003). A main character in that one shows the stellar traits of a Jesús Menéndez and, as such, is more appealing than both his counterpart in the same novel and Dr. Francia in *Yo el Supremo*, as he had been presented, perhaps faultily, by Roa Bastos himself, under the influence of the French theorists. That is to say, Roa Bastos finally regained the peripheral position that Guillén had steadily maintained.[29] This lifelong position of Guillén and the ultimate one of Roa Bastos gave them both the freedom to create without the strictures that might be imposed by inappropriate, inadequately formed theorists. In fact, it gave them the capacity to be of help to theorists.

28 In his article, "Eurocentrism and Academic Imperialism," Seyed Mohammad Marandi makes a persuasive argument that Eurocentric thought exists in almost all aspects of academia in many parts of the world, especially in the humanities (https://www.google.ca/search?q=%27Eurocentrism+and+Academic+Imperialism%27&oq=%27Eurocentrism+and+Academic+Imperialism%27&aqs=chrome..69i57j0.25598j0j4&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8).

29 Guillén, with his more combative and insistently political nature, found scarce solace in his French exile (1953-1958) and was never drawn to identify with the perspective of the center. For an example of how this discomfiture is reflected in Guillén's poetry, see my article, "National Ties and Metonymic Imagery: The Epistle as Used by Nicolás Guillén."

No one could have put and illustrated the case more strongly and eloquently for the inclusion of a Third World perspective in a humane literary vision than does the Cuban poet, critic and literary theorist Roberto Fernández Retamar in his splendid book of 540 engaging pages, *Para el perfil definitivo del hombre* (1981) [Toward The Definitive Profile of Humanity]. Fernández Retamar clinches his argument by taking and adapting his inclusive title from the poem "Llegada" [Arrival], the initial poem of Guillén's book *Sóngoro cosongo* (1931).

If Genette had taken the time to know Nicolás Guillén's writings and their context, it is possible that he would have been able to produce a theory of the epigraph that was more globally applicable. Guillén, the great creator, was always opening paths for grateful critics; and there are theorists who are not aware of how much has escaped their vision because they did not know his work well or at all. At the same time, it is fitting to reserve substantial gratitude for Gérard Genette, the theorist; for without his leading intervention in the area of the epigraph and of the paratext in general, among his beneficial labors, we might not have come to appreciate as fully this revealing example of Nicolás Guillén's groundbreaking achievement: this Cuban creator's ability to preempt and modify the literary device canon and to anticipate and illustrate with his unique and humane artistry aspects of the literary art that are such a joy for readers to discover.

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