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Afro- Hispanic REVIEW

Las palabras que ~~habían~~ ^{me enseñan} en ~~tu~~ ^{mi} ~~voz~~
con los pejes en el agua te ~~no~~
En el silencio ~~traspasando~~ ^{traspasando} el tiempo
de tu ~~mi~~ ^{estoy} ~~estoy~~...

No es la sirena ~~de otro mar~~ ^{de otro mar} que
que el ave ~~que~~ ^{que} ~~se~~ ^{se} ~~en~~ ^{en} ~~el~~ ^{el} ~~mar~~ ^{mar}
el canto ~~de~~ ^{de} ~~la~~ ^{la} ~~ave~~ ^{ave} ~~que~~ ^{que} ~~se~~ ^{se} ~~en~~ ^{en} ~~el~~ ^{el} ~~mar~~ ^{mar}
que es festivo de ~~la~~ ^{la} ~~ave~~ ^{ave} ~~que~~ ^{que} ~~se~~ ^{se} ~~en~~ ^{en} ~~el~~ ^{el} ~~mar~~ ^{mar}

No cantas ~~mas~~ ^{mas} ~~tu~~ ^{tu} ~~voz~~ ^{voz} ~~con~~ ^{con} ~~el~~ ^{el} ~~mar~~ ^{mar}
me ~~del~~ ^{del} ~~mar~~ ^{mar} ~~que~~ ^{que} ~~se~~ ^{se} ~~en~~ ^{en} ~~el~~ ^{el} ~~mar~~ ^{mar}
~~que~~ ^{que} ~~se~~ ^{se} ~~en~~ ^{en} ~~el~~ ^{el} ~~mar~~ ^{mar} ~~que~~ ^{que} ~~se~~ ^{se} ~~en~~ ^{en} ~~el~~ ^{el} ~~mar~~ ^{mar}
sin ~~tu~~ ^{tu} ~~voz~~ ^{voz} ~~tu~~ ^{tu} ~~voz~~ ^{voz}

ARTICLES

Transmedia Archive: History, Race, and Revolution in *El diario que a diario* by Nicolás Guillén

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Nicolás Guillén (1902–1989) was a prominent poet prior to the Cuban Revolution. From the beginning of his career, social and political concerns stand out as meaningful motivation for his work. For instance, he wrote “España, poema en cuatro angustias y una esperanza” in solidarity with the Republicans during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939). Shortly after Fulgencio Batista took power in 1952, Guillén went into exile to Chile, Brazil, Sweden, Poland, and Mexico, among other countries. By then, he had already published *Motivos de son* (1930), *Sóngoro cosongo* (1933), *West Indies Ltd.* (1934), *Cantos para soldados y sones para turistas* (1937), and *Elegía a Jesús Menéndez* (1951). After the triumph of the July 26th Movement in 1959, he returned to Cuba, supported the revolution, became president of the Unión Nacional de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba (UNEAC), and worked as a member of the National Council of Education. Guillén received the title of National Poet and became a symbol of the revolutionary letters. In the following study, I analyze his book *El diario que a diario*, a poetical collection of relevant events in Cuban history, to explore how the materiality of poetic language responds to a context of political change and radical expectations inspired by utopian thinking.

***El diario que a diario*: Transmediality and Poetical Memory**

The experimental book *El diario que a diario* has four editions (1972, 1979, 1985, and 1995). Though the first includes some illustrations, the last edition is richer in visual elements that reinforce the potential of its hybridity. From its first edition, the book integrates diverse speech forms from various moments in Cuban history, such as journalistic writing, chronicles, advertisements, and official notices. At the same time, it preserves poeticism given its dialogues with the tradition of versification and its exhibition of intertextual references to other poets, such as Eliseo Diego. The merging of heterogeneous resources including written, oral, and visual expressions creates a transmedia composition that engenders a powerful effect on the reader. According to Marshall McLuhan, the mixing of media unleashes their potential, leading to creative outcomes:

The hybrid or the meeting of two media is a moment of truth and revelation from which new form is born. For the parallel between two media holds us on the frontiers

between forms that snap us out of the Narcissus-narcosis. The moment of the meeting of media is a moment of freedom and release from the ordinary trance and numbness imposed by them on our senses. (63)

This innovative transmedia form appears in *El diario que a diario* appears in both its mixing of visual, oral, and written expressions, and also in its mixture of poetic, journalistic, and advertising speeches. The amalgamation re-organizes chronological time to provide new perceptions of history and the act of writing. Guillén acknowledges the importance of formal plurality from the outset of his career. He wrote to Gumersindo Nápoles in 1929:

La poesía Gumersindo, como todo, ha cambiado, está cambiando. Lo que llaman Vanguardismo por decirle de algún modo, no es una escuela, sino muchas escuelas. Mejor aún: es el ansia de encontrar un nuevo modo de expresión que desposeyendo a la poesía de su propio ropaje postizo, lacrimoso como un mendigo con tracoma, pueda dar a conocer el ansia del poeta en una forma más sincera. ¡Oh, si pudiera expresarse la poesía eliminando el verso! Se está, desde luego, en un plano de los tanteos, de búsquedas, de inquietudes. (Pérez 23)

El diario que a diario denies the exclusivity of verse and builds a transmedia compound that enhances the search for poetic expression. The book takes a radical approach to the indistinction between genres to insert the lyric word in the public arena, and the exposition of subjectivism in informative media such as the newspaper.¹ It also manifests a programmatic work on the materiality of poetry, echoing the words of fellow poets such as Mariano Brull, who experimented with sound associations that Alfonso Reyes named *jitanjáforas*. According to Rachel Price, Brull's experimentation is connected to a concrete aesthetics that had a transhistorical presence in the nineteenth- and mid-twentieth-century Atlantic: a presence was inextricably linked to global capitalism, mass production, and developmentalism in the context of struggles for sovereignty like those in Cuba and Brazil (8). This concrete artistic tendency reflects on the meanings of objects and considers their relations of dependency, their historicity, and their conditions of production. Guillén adopts this writing orientation in his early explorations of the materiality of "afrocubanista" language. For example, the phonetics in the poem "Canto negro," from *Sóngoro cosongo. Poemas mulatos*, stresses the musical presence of Afro-descendant identity:

¡Yambambó, yambambé!
Repica el congo solongo,
repica el negro bien negro;
congo solongo del songo,
baila yambó sobre un pie. (*Summa poética* 79)

In form and meaning, the lines convey the musical effects associated with Afro-Cuban culture. By stressing the vowels "o" and "e" and using the onomatopoeic words "yambambó," "yambambé," and "yambó," Guillén embodies poetry with

rhythms that to African heritage. As Íñigo Madrigal observed, Congo was a Cuban region where immigrants from the African Congo lived. The word “solongo” refers to a tribe in Angola and a dance of Haitian Bantu people (79). These details enable the interpretation of “Canto negro” as a celebration of cultural affinities across African diasporas based on the material dimension of language. Roberto González Echevarría specifies that Guillén, a self-described Afro-Antillean poet, considered Afro-Antilleanism to be “not merely a thematic with sociopolitical relevance but also part of a general poetic revision at the core of modern poetry written in the Spanish language” (302). This poetic examination is based on a simultaneous exploration of formal and semantic features of poetry inspired by an African cultural background. Poems like “Canto negro” open a linguistic space beyond Spanish language to re-integrate African voices into Cuban memory and to provide a sense of plurality.

El diario que a diario (1995)² demonstrates Guillén’s continued enthusiasm for material experimentation in poetic writing. *El diario que a diario* includes arrangements of typography and images that emphasize the optical materiality of poetry. The book’s diversity of speech, merging of verse, prose writing, and visual elements dialogue with two poetic pieces in the Latin American tradition: both *Artefactos* (1972) by Nicanor Parra—a set of poetic postcards that included aphorisms, advertisements, and philosophical reflections—and *Sabor a mí* (1973) by Cecilia Vicuña—a poetic journal related to the military coup against the socialist government of Salvador Allende in Chile in 1973. *El diario que a diario* shares with these books its eclectic format, as well as its interest in history and archival organization. The transmedia principle of composition in Guillén’s book has remained unexplored given that most of the images belong to its last edition in 1995, and the few existing images included in the first edition were overlooked in compilations such as *Obra completa* (1980), edited by Ángel Augier, and *Summa poética* (1976), edited by Íñigo Madrigal. This study retrieves the importance of the integration of text and image in *El diario que a diario* to analyze the distinct archival power of transmedia writing.

The images included in the last edition (1995) of *El diario que a diario* surpass the function of mere illustrations because they add connotations or contradict their adjacent texts. The transmedia compound of image and text in poetry can be called a verbal icon, in accordance with William Wimsatt’s affirmation that it is “not merely a bright picture (in the usual modern meaning of the term image) but also an interpretation of reality in its metaphoric and symbolic dimensions” (x). Rather than provide a clear view of the world, the verbal icon challenges the mechanisms of visibility and triggers multiple perspectives and contradictions. Its metaphorical dimensions correspond to the “live metaphor” that, according to Paul Ricoeur, is “a semantic innovation which has no status in already established language” (*Interpretation Theory* 52). I suggest that the verbal icon produces cognitive value

by undermining fixed appreciations of reality and enabling artistic approaches to historical events. In *El diario que a diario*, the verbal icon assembles visual elements, semantic procedures, and metaphoric projections to reshape the meaning of Cuban history. The following figure indicates how the literary arena becomes a place to invoke and reflect on the past:

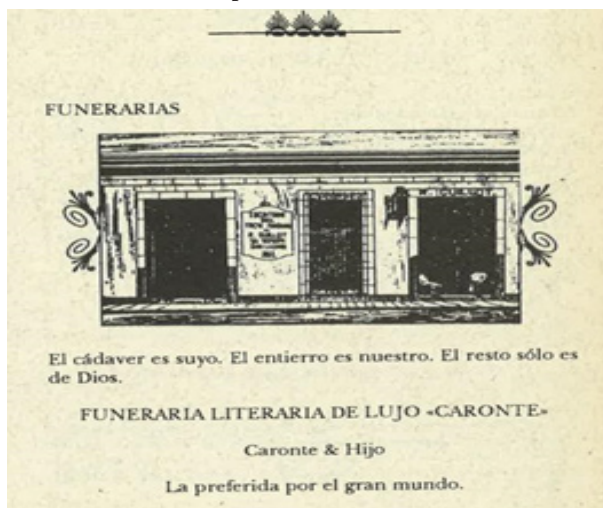


Fig. 1.

The metaphorical dimension in Figure 1 arises from the conjunction of mythological reference to Charon and the image of an old Cuban building.³ I suggest that the metaphor of “the funeral home” works as the book’s poetics. Death is understood as a productive source for the funerary business, just as the gathering of historical facts validates the archival condition of the book. The corpse connotes the historical data that is available to the reader, the burial indicates the organization of this information in writing, and “the rest” conveys the surplus meaning created in interpretation. In these terms, Figure 1 indicates that the dead body of history is reanimated by its participation in the transmedia writing of the book, where it acquires new connotations. Immediately after this excerpt, there is the advertisement of the “Great Funeral Home Berceo”:

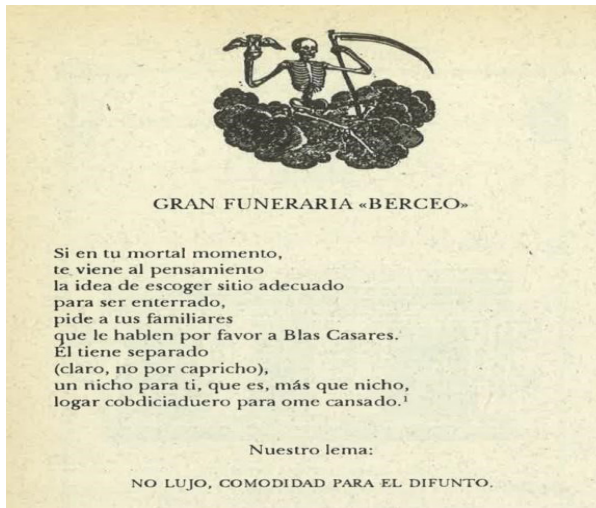


Fig. 2.

Vera Kutzinski, author of the most insightful approach to *El diario que a diario*, interprets that the reference to Gonzalo de Berceo, a thirteenth-century Spanish poet, “illuminates the positive aspects of Cuba’s cultural *barroquismo*” (204) because he was the “first Spanish poet to insist on writing in the language of the people” (204). This perspective dialogues with Guillén’s concern for “incorporating into Spanish letters the dynamics of colloquial speech” (205). I propose that the plurality of speech connoted by Berceo also underscores the diachronic life of language. The quotation in Old Spanish, “logar cobdiciaduro para ome cansado” (52), from *Los milagros de nuestra señora*, functions as a mark of Guillén’s style. The archaic language triggers an experience of estrangement which reorganizes chronological time and provides new possibilities to imagine Spanish literary tradition in an atypical context. *El diario que a diario* inhabits a literary zone where the imitation of the past transcends mere repetition. Instead, mimicry generates a creative revision of past forms.

Meaningfully, the text in Figure 2 insists on the convenience of contacting Blas Casares for an ideal burial. The incorporation of Old Spanish clashes with the name “Blas Casares.” Casares participated as a frogman in the 1961 invasion of the Bay of Pigs supported by the United States (Zeitlin). The illustration of the skeleton with a scythe compares Casares with a harbinger of death, who embodies the dreadful meaning of one of the most traumatic and divisive episodes of Cuban history.⁴ This section amplifies the metaphor of the funeral home. The integration of anachronistic elements forces the writing to exhume episodes of the Cuban struggle for sovereignty that will lead to the revolutionary present. Ultimately, by proposing death as a resource for history, the book underlines its concern with the

tragic consequences of past domination on the island. Both the cruelty of slavery and the submission to foreign powers in pre-revolutionary Cuba are axial topics throughout the book that emphasize the denigration caused by colonialism and neocolonialism.

Te entrego mi poema. Algarabía
en lengua de piratas y bozales
donde de todo material había:

No sólo los Urrutias y González,
los ya Rojas y Alonsos, los Angulos,
y en fin otros diversos animales,

sino los tristes que ponían sus culos
a que aquellos señores los patearan
con patas no de gentes, mas de mulos. (“Epístola” 10; emphasis added)

The line “te entrego mi poema *algarabía*” stands as a meta-poetic comment. Kutzinski translates “algarabía” as “noisy chatter” and reads this notion as Guillén’s trope for the baroque nature of Latin American writing: “In Guillén’s Antillean version, the Baroque is a kind of literary argot, a written language alive with the same heterogeneity and playfulness that characterizes colloquial speech” (204). This observation implies that the hybridity of the book is not only composed of a plurality of diction from the oral and written realms, but also by different sociolects of people with influential last names and people equalized with beasts. The affiliation of Guillén’s book with the Latin American Baroque and Neo-Baroque culture derives from its radical acknowledgement of the overlapping cultural diversity in the region. This method exceeds an accumulative structure because it privileges the “tongue of the pirates and of the slaves from Africa.” In this sense, I propose that *El diario que a diario* is a space for the repressed voice of history that reflects on slavery, oppression, and public forms of racism that have prevailed in twentieth-century Cuba.

There are fictional advertisements embedded in the book that address racialized discriminatory practices in the Cuban job market: “Se busca a una muchacha para atender a un niño de dos años. Si no es blanca, o mestiza, que no se presente. Calle X N° 60” (72). A footnote attempts to explain the context of the notice: “No hemos podido encontrar la calle X en el Vedado, por lo que suponemos que ya no existe. Pero existió sin dudas antes de la Revolución” (72). Kutzinski interprets “X”: “As a floating signifier, it represents something that has no specific location, that exists but cannot be pinpointed or isolated, either before the revolution or afterwards” (191). This explanation conveys the complexity of

the timeline in Guillén's book. It indicates the persistence of racism even though its forms might have been transformed. I understand this lack of information and ambiguity exemplified by "X" in the advertisement as a symptom of the dialogue between *El diario que a diario* and the circumstances of its writing: the time of the revolution. The book stresses the persistence of racial inequality in Cuban history to postulate that the struggle against discriminatory practices powers the history of the revolution.

Utopian thinking imbues the time of the revolution with hope. The enthusiastic support for revolutionary Cuba was based on factual evidence of Cuban resilience, like their self-defense during the invasion in 1961, the efforts invested in the literacy campaign, and the reappraisal of national and Latin American culture through institutions such as Casa de las Américas. I propose to understand utopianism in this context as the display of concrete utopia, a notion coined by Ernst Bloch (1885–1977) to refer to the concrete prefiguration of a desired future. For example, Bloch asserts that *Don Quixote* is the utopian event of literature par excellence, because it materializes the wishes of its protagonist to assert the return of a nobler age: "El caballero es llevado, una y otra vez, al pasado, a la creencia de que en su propia época, tan distinta, tenían todavía calidez acciones caballerescas, representaciones de combates de amor, de felicidad" (129; vol.3). Like *Don Quixote*, utopian subjects search the past for traces of their wishes to demonstrate the previous concreteness of their utopia. Their success would be a warrant of the possible fulfillment of a utopian future.

From this perspective, far from the etymology of utopia (no place), the utopian time is not an empty time invested in an inexistent future, rather a time full of signs energized by the force of hope. The utopian impulse reorganizes the past to encourage expectations of radical change that would lead to the promised future. I argue that, after the Cuban Revolution in 1959, Guillén joined the revisionist endeavors of artists and intellectuals to interrogate history from the concrete utopian perspective. *El diario que a diario* materializes the concrete utopian impulse by assembling a transmedia archive to trace the prefiguration of the revolution in Cuban history.

Poetics of Strategic Anachronism

More than a para-history or a poetic mischief with historical aspirations, *El diario que a diario* is a poetic delimitation of an epistemological field. Its organizing principle is the utopian revolutionary impulse. Produced in the time of the revolution, this book reveals the urgent need for scholars and artists to come to terms with history. From the poetic ground, its writing method is what I call "strategic anachronism." This is a selective resource that makes past events available for the present according to the expectations of radical change and the revolutionary utopia. The act of remembering by way of strategic anachronism operates along with a teleological projection that asserts the Cuban Revolution as an inexorable destiny.

According to Alejandro de la Fuente, the official revolutionary position negotiated continuities and ruptures for the creation of its own past based upon the idea that the revolution was part of a progression that began in the nineteenth century. The revolutionary officials represented themselves as José Martí's and Mambises' heirs as well as part of an epic trajectory of one hundred years of struggle (297). This long-term notion of the time of the revolution appears in a flyer in *El diario que a diario*, where José Martí performs an anachronistic participation in a 1959 event:

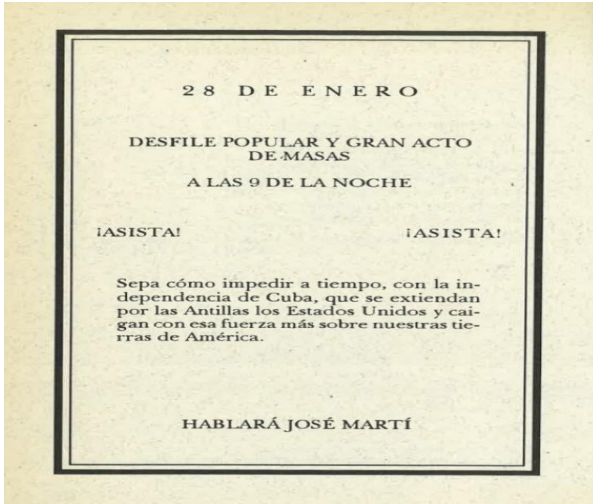


Fig. 3.⁵

In the timeline of the book, the flyer corresponds to the moment after the fall of Batista's dictatorship. The incorporation of Martí offers an anachronistic element that unsettles the understanding of time in the excerpt. It is an indicator of a postwar dispute about memory in post-revolutionary Cuba. The reappropriation of Martí looms large in cultural productions that favor the conception of a long-term revolution. Augier affirms that: "El triunfo de la Revolución Cubana el primer día de 1959 constituyó para el poeta [Guillén]—como para la inmensa mayoría del pueblo cubano—la realización de un sueño por el que libraron cruentas batallas, desde principios del siglo XIX, varias generaciones criollas, batallas donde siempre participaron las armas sutiles pero poderosas de la poesía" ("Nicolás Guillén: esquema de la Revolución" 53). The assertion of the historical continuity of the revolution is an example of the utopian understanding of the triumph of the revolution, because it conveys the possibility of its prefiguration in personalities such as Martí. From the visual point of view, Figure 3 suggests the transhistorical continuity of the political flyer, characterized by its conciseness and the reference to appealing icons. The anachronistic mention of Martí, in capital letters, fits these

features and effectively implies the persistence of anticolonial strife in the Cuban imaginary.

The strategic anachronism in *El diario que a diario* works beyond a mere chronological disruption. It stresses the friction in racial interactions during the Cuban War of Independence. The black subject embodies the transhistorical struggle for emancipation as a metonymy of the end of oppression. Guillén introduces the voice of the white oligarchy to re-enact the silencing of subordinated social groups that were essential during the struggle for independence. The following image works as a political advertisement discouraging sympathy for the movement for independence.

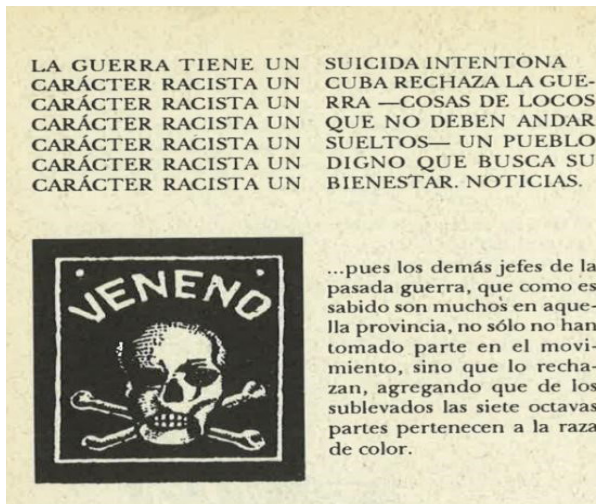


Fig. 4.⁶

Figure 4 reminds the reader of the racial conflicts in Cuban colonial society during the War of Independence. According to Oscar Zanetti: “La renuencia de la oligarquía a involucrarse en la lucha por la independencia, hizo de esta un movimiento de capas medias, cuyos líderes y participantes eran principalmente profesionales y otros blancos de modesta extracción, así como negros y mulatos libres; gente toda carente de nexos esenciales con la esclavitud” (130). Guillén stresses this social fragmentation to underscore that racial conflicts materialized transhistorical contradictions prefiguring the advent of the revolutionary utopia.

The newspaper works as a microcosm of the political atmosphere at the time that manifests racist public speech as a quotidian practice. The inverted racism in Figure 4 depicting the insurrection as discriminatory to white people is an ironic comment that ridicules the voice of the white oligarchy. This intention is reinforced by the ambiguous visual organization of this passage. The text in capital letters

does not specify the race that is discriminated against, and the symbol of warning indicates a lethal danger that is universally recognizable, but not mentioned. The disambiguation appears at the end in lowercase when the “colored race” is finally referenced. This writing style compares race-based segregation during war with the visual economy of communication, in which ideological polarizations manipulate what is visible according to the collective in control of speech.

The use of ambiguity also blurs the specification of which war is at stake. In Cuban history, the conflict of race implies the War of Independence, but also invokes the revolutionary war in the twentieth century. As Lilian Guerra asserts, the racial conflict during the revolution was based on a distrust of black people, on the basis of their sympathy with Batista:

His courting of black societies and unprecedented promotion of blacks to the rank of general in the national army made him an honored, if not beloved, patron to many blacks who were otherwise politically ignored . . . supporters of the dictator discredited opponents as white racists; opponents of the dictator discredited supporters as ignorant blacks. (52)

The racial tensions signaled in Figure 4, which survived into twentieth-century Cuba, assess the value of the war and the nuances regarding affiliations of black subjects in the long-term struggle for liberation. The ambiguity and the anachronistic effects of writing in *El diario que a diario* underline the racial struggle at the center of Cuban memory as a concrete trigger of the revolutionary utopia.

The anachronistic style of the book favors imprecision to purposefully merge the past and the present of the revolution into a heterodox notion of a newspaper. It goes beyond current events to display a diachronic scope that verifies the transhistorical presence of the revolution. The press and periodical publications were familiar to Guillén early in his life. Íñigo Madrigal remembers that Guillén’s father was the director of the only newspaper in Camagüey: *Las dos repúblicas*. Also, he was an important personality of the Liberal National Party (15).⁷ This environment informed the design of *El diario que a diario*, which exhibits the appearance of a newspaper by simulating past forms selectively, as the cover of the first edition of the book may suggest:

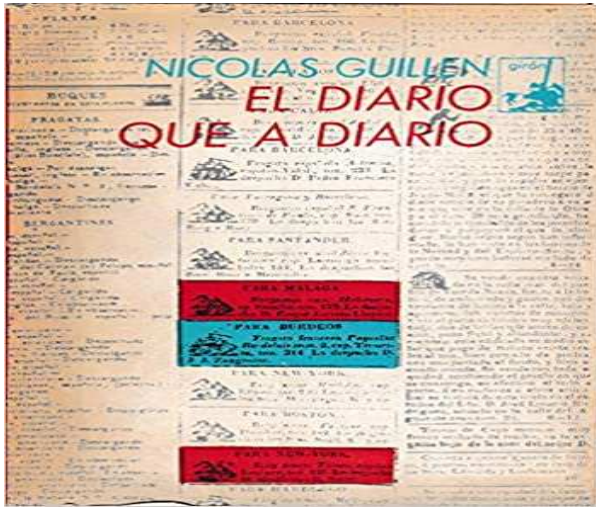


Fig. 5.

This cover evokes advertisements in Cuban newspapers of colonial times that mention ships with several destinations, as well as notices of freedom seekers. The book introduces itself from the beginning as a simulacrum of past forms. According to Jean Baudrillard, the simulacrum questions the organizing principle of truth because “the simulation threatens the difference between the ‘true’ and the ‘false,’ the ‘real’ and the ‘imaginary’” (3). This indistinction is the subversive mark of the simulacrum. I argue that *El diario que a diario* uses the ambiguity of the simulacrum through verisimilar archaic speech, historical information, fictional advertisements, and fake news to subvert the documentation of Cuban history. This procedure introduces alternatives to archiving the past and materializing the prefiguration of the revolutionary utopia in race-based struggle. In the section “European Slaves,” Guillén introduces equivocal combinations of image and text to imagine unexpected presentations of oppression in Cuban history.

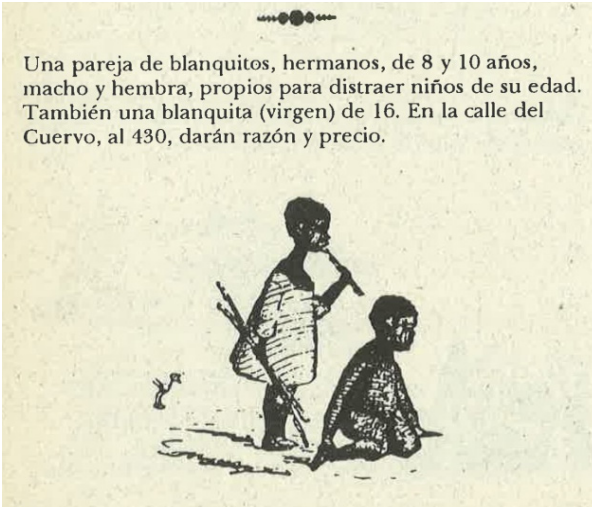
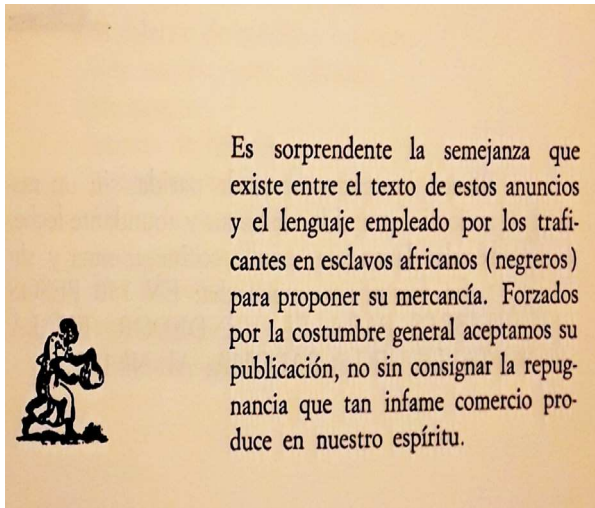


Fig. 6.⁸

Reading *El diario que a diario* as a simulacrum implies a focus on how the book challenges race organization in the Cuban imaginary because the simulacrum questions the factual empirical information and the legitimacy of representational relationships. Figure 6 explores the semiotics of race to indicate the complexities of color-based bias. Contrary to what the reader might anticipate, the advertisements suggest that the people subjected to slavery are white people, but the images show black subjects. Guillén proposes to approach the text beyond racial presumptions about fossilized connotations of “black” and “white.”

In the poem “¿Qué color?” published in *La rueda dentada* (1972), the same year as the first edition of *El diario que a diario*, Guillén undermines biased interpretations of skin color. He criticizes Evgeni Evtuchenko’s remarks on the death of Martin Luther King Jr.: “His skin was black, but with the purest soul, white as the snow” (*Man-Making Words* 55). Guillén condemns the association of positive attributes with white color and the opposite with black: “What pure black thoughts / were nourished in his fertile brain”, “And why not, / why couldn’t that heroic pastor / have a soul that’s black?” (57). Guillén denounces lexical racism and reclaims beauty and goodness to black skin, as well as urgently transforming symbolic paradigms of color.

Fig. 7.⁹

The section “European Slaves” is complemented by the disclaimer in Figure 7: “The similarity between the text of the following announcements and the language that the traffickers in African slaves (slave traders) used to advertise their merchandise is indeed striking. *Compelled by generally accepted custom* we have agreed to print these notices, however not without emphasizing the repugnance with which this infamous commerce fills our spirit” (Kutzinski 15; emphasis added). The contradictory convergence of image, language, and the actual racialized logic of slavery distances from a literal reading and promotes a critical approach to transhistorical racism in Cuba. Beyond the reference to slavery throughout the colonial times, the notion of non-black slaves introduces an anachronistic temporality that connects black slavery with more contemporary forms of oppression, where white people are deprived of their freedom by labor exploitation and human trafficking. The book proposes a hypothetical memory in which slavery is experienced by both black and white people.

Antonio Benítez-Rojo argues that *El diario que a diario* challenges historical coherence and subverts the bureaucratic account of the plantation through a “mad archive” (432). However, far from madness, the book exceeds historical mimesis to propose a reflection on race as a re-organizing principle of history that is, also, a concrete sign of the struggle that would lead to the revolution in the twentieth century. The book does not depend on factual events or empirical evidence but is a legitimate creative apparatus that links past and present, establishing non-chronological connections in search of the prefiguration of the revolutionary utopia. In these terms, this book is a heterodox archive embodying a poetic simulacrum that is neither true nor false, but that presents an alternative vision

of historical facts to support the revolution as a long-term presence. The book does not address the past by verification but by prosing a methodic suspicion about patterns of dominance and racial segregation. The composition of the book ensures this historical and creative complexity.



Fig. 8.¹⁰

It is possible that the editors of the last edition of *El diario que a diario* (1995) chose Figure 8 for its playful reference to the history of the press in Cuba. It is taken from *Muestrario del mundo o Libro de las maravillas de Boloña* (1968), a book by Eliseo Diego containing poetry, prose, short stories, and images. Some of these pictures were taken from the catalogue (1833). Notwithstanding this connection, the books by Diego and Guillén have different purposes. While Guillén focuses on Cuban history, its episodes of oppression, and its revolutionary future, Diego proposes a contemplative approach to Cuban history that lacks political connotations. Guillén underscores the dialogue with Diego before the incorporation of Image 8 in his book, dedicating the poem “Epistole” to him. In this poem, Guillén apologizes humorously about his writing style in *El diario que a diario*: ‘Juro por los sinsontes y las flores / que en aquesta ocasion no he pretendido / provocar con mi verso tus furores’ (9). These lines request complicity from Diego and warn against his experimentalism.

The catalogue of José Severino Boloña was an advertisement for his printing workshop inherited from his father Esteban Boloña, one of the most notable typographers of eighteenth-century Cuba. Severino had a sharp vision about the

printing industry: “La imprenta dicen que es símbolo de la eternidad . . . pinta la palabra, habla a los ojos, colora y da cuerpo a los pensamientos; de suerte que sin dificultad puede llamársele arte de las artes y ciencia de las ciencias” (Fornet 26). His remarks indicate the modern enthusiasm for printing forms, the faith in mass reproduction, and the promise of capturing reality for posterity. The interest in the material force of written expression intertwines Severino’s catalogue and the projects by Diego and Guillén. Diego was fascinated with the correspondences between image and text in the catalogue. He perceived that they work together “tal como se responden frente a frente, en una sala vacía, dos espejos” (Bello 232). Likewise, Diego’s book replicates this cooperation of image and text, while Guillén’s book undermines their symmetry by questioning the relationship between print media and truth.

Mayerin Bello reads the dialogue between Diego’s *Muestrario* and Severino’s catalogue as a sign of Diego’s understanding of the book as a space in which multiple authors preserve authorship (248). *El diario que a diario* (1995) adopts this notion of intertextuality with exceptional particularities. The incorporation of the image from Severino’s catalogue, previously used by Diego, into Guillén’s book surpasses the function of a mere illustration to question the complicity of writing with regimes of domination in Cuba. For instance, in the book by Diego, Figure 8 opens the section “Intercálase la historia del anticuario” with a short story about a collector in Cuba who discovers Aladdin’s lamp but is not interested in its importance (103–09). The image works as an ornamental additive that indicates the city of Havana as the geographical location for the story. In contrast, in Guillén’s book Figure 8 accompanies the poem “Súplica,” ironically commenting on the inscription of the image “La siempre fidelísima ciudad de La Habana”:

Ésta es, señor, la fúnebre tragedia que lloramos
 las habaneras fidelísimas vasallas
 cuyo poder mediante Dios rogamos
 para que por la paz o por la guerra,
 por tratados tal vez o por batallas
 logremos el consuelo en nuestra tierra
 de ver en breve tiempo aquí fijado
 el pabellón de Vuestra Majestad.
 Esta sola esperanza nos alienta
 para no abandonar la patria y bienes,
 estimando, añorando el dulce yugo
 del vasallaje en que nacimos. (29)

The assemblage of the image, the poem, and historical references dynamically depict a fragmented pre-revolutionary Cuba, where the ruling class

privileged colonialism order jeopardizing private interests. The lines emphasize the docility of the Cuban elite in the face of foreign domination and its dismissal of the emancipatory movement. The ironic attribution of “fidelísima” to Havana city stresses that fidelity to the Spanish crown meant betrayal to Cuban sovereignty. These clashing ideological positions reveal the plurality of senses of belonging in the context of anticolonial struggle. From an anachronistic viewpoint, the always “fidelísima” Havana could also depict the city as a follower of Fidel Castro. This allusion questions the meaning of genuine fidelity during revolutionary times and warns about the risk of neocolonial acceptance of dependence. It is noticeable that the non-linear arrangement of time through transmedia writing in *El diario que a diario* builds an alternative epistemological field with which to approach history. Even though it does not document events, the book produces effects of presence that convey the repressed components of revolutionary memory.

Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht proposes to understand the “production of presence” as a material communication: “Any form of communication, through its material elements, will ‘touch’ the bodies of the persons who are communicating in specific and varying ways” (18). He claims that because poetry is not subordinated to meaning it is the more powerful example of the simultaneous effects of meaning and presence (18). With its transmedia form, its metaphorical force, and its plural temporality, *El diario que a diario* produces a zone of presence for a poetic archive of the revolutionary utopia based in transhistorical racial tensions. Collecting moments of dominance, the book asserts the value of resistance and supports the defense of national autonomy. For example, Figure 9 corresponds to the time immediately after Cuba’s independence, when the country was occupied by the U.S. Army. The visual and textual elements condemn the circumstances of shameful Cuban submission to foreign powers.

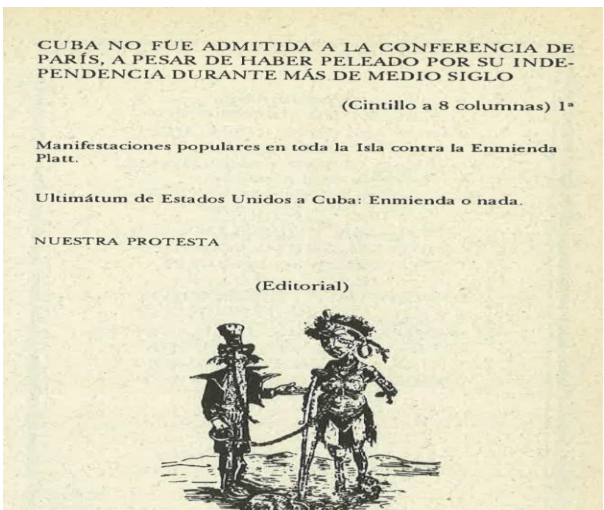


Fig. 9.¹¹

This excerpt refers to the Paris Conference (1898) held after the Spanish-American War which sought to settle the future of Spain's last colonies. Also, it indicates the neocolonial control sought by the United States on Cuban soil. The lines in capital letters ironically express that despite Spain's loss of dominance in America, Cubans were still not allowed to participate in the formulation of the treaty related to their sovereignty. The text in lower case stresses American interventionism in Cuba by referencing the Platt Amendment, which remained in force from 1901 to 1934. This document established the end of the U.S. military occupation in Cuba, including economic arrangements and a protection agreement. The notice reminds the reader of the United States government's pressure on the Cuban government to incorporate the amendment into the Cuban constitution. The emphasis on these events in *El diario que a diario* asserts that the struggle for Cuban emancipation during the nineteenth century was outrageously incomplete. It was a mirage that would achieve actual fulfillment through the revolution in the twentieth century.

The image incorporated in Figure 9 introduces an anachronistic element that revisits the memory of slavery as a foundational legacy of the Cuban nation. The naked subject in chains, likely a black person, is a visual metaphor of Cuban submission to foreign powers. The excerpt undermines any victorious narrative of emancipation by re-inscribing a transhistorical racialized struggle in the national imaginary. This approach is restated in a section entitled "Curiosidades," which aims to signal the memory of slavery in the long-term process of liberation:

En la vitrina del diario «Centro de la Marina», se halla expuesto a la curiosidad pública el artístico machete que una comisión de veteranos de la independencia de Cuba regaló al general Leonard Wood el 20 de mayo último con motivo de la instalación de la república. El arma reposa en un magnífico estuche fabricado con las más preciosas maderas del país. Según se dice, el general ha correspondido gentilmente al hermoso gesto de los veteranos obsequiándolos a su vez con un ejemplar de la Enmienda Platt, encuadernado y en cuya tapa frontal figura un grabado que representa el águila norteamericana con las alas abiertas en toda su envergadura. (66)

This excerpt depicts a forced kindness involved in Cuban American political relations. The title "Curiosities" exemplifies how irony in the book derides the tendency to belittle central issues of neocolonialism in Cuban affairs. The description of the "machete" works as an ekphrastic comment that amplifies the meaning of its material beauty by stressing its symbolic implications. The "machete" (dress sword) is a metonymy of the mambises who fought in the confrontations for Cuban independence: The Ten Years' War (1868–1878), the Little War (1889–1890), and the War of Independence (1895–1898). The mambises were mostly combatants of African descent who represent the power of resistance in Cuban history. The "machete" evokes their work in plantations and sugar mills and indicates the slave origin of many soldiers who fought for the promise of freedom. Skillfully, Guillén proposes the convergence of the machete, a sign of emancipation, and the Platt

Amendment, a sign of fragile sovereignty, to critically examine the situation of dominance in Cuba that has set the revolutionary utopia in motion since the colonial period.

Even though the account of the revolution cannot focus on a radical novelty to come, it is possible to address its virtual presence in the past. This means tracking down its prefiguration throughout Cuban history. This is the reason why the poetic archive refers directly to the revolution only in the last pages.

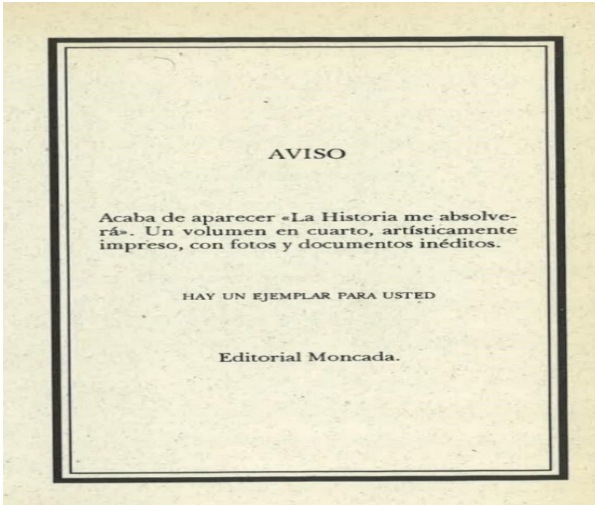


Fig 10. ¹³

The announcement refers to “La historia me absolverá” of Fidel Castro, one of the foundational documents of the revolution archive. It was his self-defense in the trial that followed the attack on the Moncada barracks on July 26, 1953. The advertisement announces unpublished segments of the book to claim its richness and historical value. This announcement illustrates that the documentation of the revolution was as crucial as the creation of the so-called “New Man.” As Guerra demonstrates, the iconographic record of the revolution proved key to the success of the July 26th Movement from the beginning of its combat in the Sierra Maestra. The guerrilla insurgents mobilized the media to foster support for revolutionary activity, utilizing the work of the photographer Andrew St. George: “Fidel and other leaders knew that the images St. George crafted could *speak for them* more loudly and more clearly than the rebels could . . . speak for themselves” (88; emphasis in original). The search for an ample documentation of the revolution resonates with the core of *El diario que a diario*. Its purpose is to create a poetic account of the Cuban revolutionary utopia as a long-term struggle for liberation. Thanks to the anachronistic simulacrum, the book mimics past forms of advertisement, literature, and journalism, among others, to legitimize the path toward a revolutionary Cuba.

In conclusion, *El diario que a diario* exemplifies how poetical artifacts offer an unorthodox space to think about history. This piece of experimental writing endorses that, as Jean-Luc Nancy states: “poetry means, not a literary genre as such, but the limit of ‘literature,’ of ‘writing,’ where nothing is written but coming of a presence, a coming that can never be written or presented in any way” (ix). The transmedia operations in *El diario que a diario* challenge the limits of writing. Its experimental style provides poetical presence to marginalized episodes of the historic archive to demonstrate that racial tensions constitute the lasting engine of the Cuban Revolution. The retrospective orientation of the book signals revolutionary reality as a concrete utopia with a transhistorical presence in Cuba. In other words, Guillén’s book asserts the continuous urgency of radical change based on the awareness of long-term racialized conflicts.

Notes

- ¹ Guillén’s tendency to incorporate a prosaic diction was groundbreaking for the “coloquialista” style that flourished in the late fifties and sixties in Cuba. As Virgilio López Lemus explains, this trend emerges under the Batista dictatorship, together with the guerrilla struggle, and continues vigorously after the triumph of the revolution (29).
- ² I use *El diario que a diario*’s 1995 edition in this investigation and indicate differences with other editions when it is necessary.
- ³ The image of the building was incorporated in the edition of 1995.
- ⁴ See the edition of 1995.
- ⁵ The first and 1995 editions had the same format regarding this excerpt.
- ⁶ This image appears in the first edition of the book, and subsequent editions, including the compilation of Guillén’s work edited by Angel Augier.
- ⁷ Guillén says: “Yo nací en una imprenta, al abrir los ojos a este mundo, era mi padre, recién llegado de la manigua heroica, según se decía a la sazón, codirector de un diario liberal, *Las Dos Repúblicas* y yo crecí durante varios años (toda mi infancia) bajo ese clima. De niño, me eran familiares palabras como prueba de galera, editorial, prueba de plana” (Morejón 11).
- ⁸ See the 1995 edition, but similar images appeared in the section “Esclavos europeos” of the first edition of the book.
- ⁹ Figure 7 belongs to the first edition. The image does not accompany the text in the edition of 1995. The visual allusion to black subjects in the section “Esclavos europeos” is preserved only in the editions of 1972 and 1995.
- ¹⁰ This image was added to the 1995 edition. The images of 1995 edition entail the anachronistic orientation provided by the first edition of the book.
- ¹¹ This image of Figure 9 was added only to the edition of 1995.
- ¹² The same typography appears in all the editions.

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