

RESEÑAS

JORGE CAMACHO. *Miedo negro, poder blanco en la Cuba colonial*. Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2015. 272 pp.

Jorge Camacho's book, *Miedo negro, poder blanco en la Cuba colonial*, traces a multifaceted trajectory of racialized fear of black Cubans in colonial Cuba, which originates as panic over the prospect of a Haitian-style slave insurrection, and evolves into other phobias of racial contact, influence, and integration. Thoroughly researched, the book is a lucid approach to canonical as well as overlooked intellectuals and their roles in defining and defending white *criollo* culture vis-à-vis Social Darwinist, moral, and nationalist criteria.

Bookended by an introduction and conclusion, *Miedo negro, poder blanco* is divided into eight chapters. The first chapter explores how the fear of slave insurrection permeated social discourses and informed abolitionist thought and literature throughout the nineteenth century. The second chapter teases out the complicity between the physical marginalization of *los negros curros* in Havana and the criminologist underpinnings of *costumbrista* literary representations of black spiritual, psychological, and social existence intent on provoking repulsion in the white reader. In chapter three, Camacho analyzes the fluctuating representations of black *niñeras* during slavery. Whereas their unique position as child-rearers was cause for concern for creole elites, who feared they could conceivably be a negative influence on the white children they cared for, their roles as wet-nurses called into question the racialized contours of black/white proximity. A meticulous reading of the affective, moral, and social preoccupations of interracial sexual relationships as portrayed in anti-slavery novels forms the basis for chapter four. Here, Camacho focuses his attention on the ways in which the *mulata* operates as a sexualized, insidious trope, due to the fact that she was a figure that could cross, or at least complicate, the color and class lines upon which white hegemony constructed and maintained itself. Chapter five revisits José Martí's well-known chronicle on the earthquake in Charleston in 1886 and identifies in the Cuban's descriptions a gesture of racializing African American's response to the tragedy, while normalizing how white Americans reacted. In chapter six, Camacho considers Francisco Calcagno's novel, *Los crímenes de Concha* (1887), and examines how Cuban *letrados* utilized "ethnic psychology" to continue ascribing alterity to *ñáñigos* after emancipation. The seventh chapter underscores that Afro-Cuban dance, music, and mannerisms were considered immoral and corruptive influences on white *criollo* culture. Finally, chapter eight looks at Martí's

unease about the “racial inheritance” of Afro-Cubans and how this idea conflicts with his later writings about racelessness and equality.

This book makes many valuable interventions into the study of racial politics in Cuba. Camacho situates his analysis at the cusp of a critical issue, namely, the paradox that although white Creoles feared that proximity to Afro-Cubans would corrupt their culture, the former’s wealth, prestige, and privilege relied on the latter’s exploited labor. The author’s nuanced examination of the contours of this catch-22 opens up productive avenues for understanding the diverse racialized registers of anxiety and stigma at play in both colonialist and anti-colonialist discourses of power. The immense value of Camacho’s book resides in his illuminating treatment of the diverse ideological maneuvers, deployments, and tropes of *poder blanco*, including the ways in which social meanings are ascribed to cartography, linguistic repertoires, and body politics.

Camacho’s insights into the spatial politics of otherness enrich contemporary approaches to Havana’s urban architecture and ecology. As a physically and psychologically distancing construct, Camacho poses alterity as a cornerstone of the logic of city planning, which sets the stage for current issues surrounding economic mobility, equity in housing, and racial segregation in Havana. Concomitantly, Camacho’s sociolinguistic approach to *lenguaje bozal* showcases the convergence of linguistic ideologies and racialization, which prompts him to question the defining characteristics and motives of anti-slavery literature. For example, he notes the paradox that in the novel *Francisco*, Anselmo Suárez y Romero can side with the plight of enslaved members of the African diaspora while, at the same, decrying their corruptive influence on Castilian linguistic purity. Camacho extends this gesture to show that even abolitionist-leaning writers like Cirilo Villaverde and Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda drank heavily from the well of respectability politics in their physical and moral critiques of black bodies and behavior. Accentuating such nuances spotlights the fact that race is not strictly a dichotomous issue, but rather one whose relationality begets complex oscillations, coexistences, and reformulations. Nowhere is this more evident than in the book’s treatment of José Martí’s views on race, which bifurcate into, on the one hand, reinforcing notions of biological inferiority derived from ethnocentric, evolutionary rhetoric in the 1880s and, on the other, anti-racist stances that promulgate a spiritual understanding of humanity and the universe in the 1890s.

Above all, the book represents a critical contribution to the social construction of race in Latin American and Caribbean contexts. Scrutinizing the diverse tactics, both overt and veiled, of white supremacy convincingly challenges the supposed invisibility or normalization of

whiteness and suggests that its agents are conscious of the tenuous and affective fragility of the racial construct upon which their personal, class, and nationalist imaginings rely. Ambitious in scope, yet clear in execution, Camacho's book offers a commendable panorama of race in nineteenth-century Cuba. Astutely researched and accessible to a wide range of readers and disciplines (such as literature, critical race studies, African Diaspora studies, sociology, linguistics, ethnomusicology, art history, performance studies, architecture, and urban studies), *Miedo negro, poder blanco* effectively interrogates an array of understudied racializing attitudes, manifestations, and trends, paves the way for nuanced understandings of Afro-Cuban marginalization in the twentieth century (such as the massacre of the Partido Independiente de Color in 1912), and, more broadly, exposes the cracks in color-blind insistences both inside and outside of the island.

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JOSÉ CHECA BELTRÁN. *Demonio y modelo. Dos visiones del legado español en la Francia ilustrada*. Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2014. 191 pp.

El revisionismo histórico es sin duda necesario. Previene la inercia mental y nos obliga a replantearnos ideas que de otro modo correrían el riesgo de anquilosarse. En este sentido, el libro de José Checa Beltrán merece el elogio de todos los interesados en el XVIII. En sintonía con trabajos suyos anteriores, se propone aquí demostrar que la tan divulgada creencia de que la Francia ilustrada poseyó una imagen muy negativa de España es en gran medida falsa. O, al menos, que debería matizarse. Amparado en la evidencia de numerosos textos, el autor afirma que destacados escritores y medios franceses de aquella época resaltaron la importancia del legado español en ciertas áreas de la producción cultural, como la novela y el teatro, reconociendo el magisterio de los escritores españoles de los siglos de Oro sobre la literatura francesa del Grand Siècle. Lo que no evita que, en otro nivel, incluso esos mismos autores asumieran los típicos prejuicios negativos de la Leyenda Negra.

Los cinco capítulos en que se divide el libro abordan los diversos aspectos del problema que el autor considera más relevantes. En el primero, "España demonizada," expone el plan central de la obra, resume el estado de la cuestión y explica las razones que justifican la existencia de una visión negativa de España en la Francia del siglo XVIII, si bien, siempre matizando que esa visión no fue tan extrema ni estuvo tan generalizada