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THE WHITE GAZE. CUBAN DEPORTEES IN FERNANDO POO DURING THE 19TH CENTURY

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Abstract

During the second half of the 19th century, several Cuban independentists were deported to Fernando Poo, an island in the Gulf of Guinea. Some memoirs describing their travel and their stay on the island were published later on, in New York and Havana. Although they have been read as historical sources about Cuban independence, as sociolinguistic sources for Spanish language in Equatorial Guinea or as ethnographic sources about Cuban influence in local Guinean dances, the article considers that they are an expression of a colonial gaze by colonial subjects. Cubans independentists saw local Africans as savages who were in need of civilization, applying on them the same colonial mindset they wanted to overcome in their homeland, therefore promoting Spanish colonialism in Africa.

Keywords

Cuban independentists; Fernando Poo; Spanish colonialism; Deportation narrations; Colonial gaze

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In a recent article, Raúl Marrero Fente proposes a paradigm shift in the interpretation of colonial Latin American history: he suggests a global approach to the Spanish Empire which takes into account the representations of its different geocultural areas (Africa, America and Asia) and how literature and historiography are presented in colonial texts in order to understand domination and rebellion processes which took place in colonial societies (Marrero Fente 2018, 46). Six texts published in New York and Havana in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, describing the brutalities suffered by many Cuban deportees to the island of Fernando Poo because of their political ideas, are the perfect corpus to carry out this global study of the Spanish Empire. In addition to political testimonies, they include descriptions of Spanish African colonies and show the reaction of Cubans from different social backgrounds to the Spanish domination. In this sense,

the destinations of convict transportation, deportation, and exile, then, were contact zones among, and places of governmentality of, individuals subjected to multiple punitive regimes and with distinct ethnic, linguistic, and political backgrounds. Analysing them creates a unique opportunity to study the manifestations of individual and collective solidarity and conflict among prisoners, as well as the authorities' strategies of control and repression (Vito, Anderson and Bosma, *Transportation, Deportation and Exile: Perspectives from the Colonies in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* 2018, 9)

Cuban deportees narrations, which can be described as 'prison narratives' following Marturano, have been studied as historical texts linked to the history of Cuban independence (Vito, Gabriel, González Echegaray, Márquez Quevedo, Shaffer), as linguistic sources, especially related to the Cuban loans in Equatorial Guinea's Spanish (Castillo Rodríguez, Granda), as sociopolitical testimonies of Cuban Independentists (Barcia) and as ethnological sources showing the presence of American musical instruments, dances or secret societies in contemporary Equatorial Guinea (Aranzadi). Susan Martín Márquez's is their most recent reading. She sees in them three narrative frame-

works to which she grants great rhetoric importance: exploitation of the Black legend against Spain to defend the cause of Cuban independence, denunciation of Middle Passage and survival of slavery practices on the island of Cuba, and identity reconceptualization motivated by the forced coexistence among Cubans of different races and social classes due to deportation.

However, these memoirs have not been read as colonial texts and do not appear in the anthologies of colonial literature related to the Gulf of Guinea. Although Luis Alberto Sánchez speaks of prison novel within Latin America's political novel and states that "the relationship between prison and literature is found on the very birth of Spanish-American novel" (Sánchez 1968, 442), which means that these texts could qualify as postcolonial texts, the reading that I propose here is somewhat different. Based on the reflection proposed by Whiteness studies and their problematization of race, my intention is to show that, basically, these are colonial narratives which create a categorization between a white European Self (despite being Cuban and, therefore, colonial subject of the Spanish Empire at the time of narration) and a black African Other. This reading, therefore, blurs the categories colonized – colonizer as it proposes a vision of the white Cuban subject as a colonizing entity which colonizes with his gaze and discriminates against black people, whether Caribbean or African.

Deportations to Fernando Poo in the 19th century

On June 20, 1861, the *Gaceta de Madrid*, the official gazette of the State, published a royal order directed to the governor of Fernando Poo and its dependencies indicating that "H.M. the Queen, given the special conditions of the island, has disposed a penal colony to be created on it". Prime Minister O'Donnell's government, without a clear colonization project for the island, sought to turn the Spanish possessions on the Gulf of Guinea and the Mariana islands into penal colonies. Many of those exiled there were Cuban independentists (see Barcia, González Echegaray and Márquez Acevedo), but the first to arrive were

those arrested and condemned for having participated in the uprising of Loja and Iznájar, the so-called 'bread and cheese revolution', which took place on June 28, 1861. Led by Rafael Perez del Álamo, a large group of rural laborers shouted "long live the Republic, down with the queen!" and assaulted Guardia Civil barracks, in Iznájar, Córdoba, because of their bad working conditions, frustrated by not being able to access the benefits of Madoz's confiscation (Gabriel 2007, 211). According to Gabriel, thirty-three of them were deported to Fernando Poo, but after the death of four and seeing the situation of the rest, those left alive were released and returned to the Peninsula.

However, although minimum conditions to accommodate possible contingents of deportees had not been established, colonial authorities continued to send insurgents or Cuban and Filipino suspects of independentism to the African island of Fernando Poo. Once there, they had to fend for themselves and, in many cases, they fled as soon as they could or died victims of the brutality of Spanish soldiers or the unhealthy life conditions. Those deportations and their results (Gabriel estimates that between 1861 and 1895, some 1,600 political deportees were sent to Fernando Poo) passed to the Spanish collective imaginary and stigmatized the island of Fernando Poo as a God forsaken hole (Gabriel 2007, 211) or as a cursed place (García Cantús 2005, 479).

That was the mental image that any half-informed average Spanish reader had: unhealthy regions with which the Government did not know what to do, whether to turn them into penal colonies, to populate and exploit them, or to definitively abandon them. Hence, the newspaper *La Iberia* indicated in 1886 that

colonization is [sic] this country perfectly unknown, and its serious problems forgotten by the general opinion, occupied in everyday questions and worried about living day to day. For colonization require [sic] constancy, and nothing is more inconstant than our people (Bibliografía 1886).

The possibility of establishing penal colonies outside of the Metropolis, as Great Britain had done in

Botany Bay (Australia) or as France would do in Cayenne or New Caledonia, was a subject which worried criminal attorneys of the moment; several treatises devoted to the subject were written, although they were published many years later, so, once again, the state had put the cart before the horses. In 1878, jurist Francisco Lastres published a report about the penal colonization of the Marianas and Fernando Poo, written for an 1875 Royal Academy of Moral and Political Sciences contest. Even if he recognized that "the government has always proceeded without method, without any preparation and, therefore, it is not surprising that the results have been negative" (Lastres y Juiz 1878, 31) and that "it is not enough to fill ships with criminals and to throw them like cargo on the island beaches, which is what has been done so far, proceeding with a cruelty unworthy of serious and humanitarian governments" (Lastres y Juiz 1878, 59), he advocated for the establishment of penal colonies in the islands of the Gulf of Guinea and the Marianas. There should be sent "all those condemned to more than eight years, whatever the nature of the sentence" (Lastres y Juiz 1878, 62). His proposal included sending men and women and facilitating marriage between deportees "not only as a means to increase population but as a moralistic element" (Lastres y Juiz 1878, 63) in addition to using religious agents in penal colonies, because "without the intervention of chaplains it is impossible to obtain the amendment of convicts, no matter how great may the virtues and merits of lay officials be" (Lastres y Juiz 1878, 17).

Pere Armengol i Cornet, a legal reformer, promoter of the construction of Barcelona's Modelo prison, also presented a report to the contest, but his conclusions were quite different. After going through the history of British and French penitentiary colonization, he indicates that deportation as a sentence was not admissible because it did not intimidate criminals (Armengol y Cornet 1878, 95); because, if deportees did not bring their families with them, "brutal instincts give rise to shameful and repugnant acts that all observers of the French and English colonies have witnessed" (Armengol y Cornet 1878, 97); because public finances cannot afford it and because convicts cannot be sent to breathe "an unhealthy air" or treat them "in

a way that would only be tolerable with those who were not our peers” (Armengol y Cornet 1878, 101). His conclusion is that, in its penal colonies, the English government “has not been but a vast scale white slave merchant” (Armengol y Cornet 1878, 110). To avoid this traffic, he proposes the creation of penal agricultural colonies in the Peninsula or in the less cultivated areas of Cuba (Armengol y Cornet 1878, 106).

Likewise, the reformer Concepción Arenal, who had researched about the state of the Gulf of Guinea possessions and had read Miguel Martínez y Sanz, Joaquín J. Navarro and José Muñoz y Gaviria, in 1895 published a booklet entitled *Las colonias penales de Australia y la pena de deportación*. There she states that “the government which established a penal colony in Fernando Poo would be doing a ruinous enterprise from an economic point of view, not very exemplary under moral conditions, and as far as humanity and justice are concerned, could be labelled by what Mery said: ‘When the legal system deports convicts, it does not send them to earthly paradises. It chooses the worst places on the map, and its clemency is worse than its cruelty. The executioner kills with a blow; the weather is not as quick: it needs a year to do the same work’” (Arenal 1895, 144-145). When thinking about those who would like to see free colonists settle in penal colonies, people who would voluntarily go to revive and heal their moral atmosphere, she asks: “Who would go to Fernando Poo when its name inspires such a terror? Who would go to the Marianas, so isolated, and where the frequency of earthquakes will discourage those not already discouraged by distance? Who goes today to colonize one or the other ultramarine possession? Would they be more attractive if they were a criminal depot?” (Arenal 1895, 149-150).

Texts and authors

In any case, it is a fact that the Spanish government sent a large number of deportees to Fernando Poo, a fact documented in many sources, including the diary of British subject John Holt, which was not published until 1948. Holt describes the arrival of Cubans on May 22, 1869 on board the *San Francisco de Borja*,

sent to exile by Cuba general governor’s order (without previous judgement). Domingo Dulce, after trying to implement conciliatory measures for the insurgents, re-enacted censure, deportations and death sentences, which led him to be doubly unpopular: for independentists, he had been a despot; for unionists, a softie.

Holt describes the deportees as poor wretches in search for lodging and food during the early days of their stay on the island, men he was forced to help because “just after they had got ashore, they appeared ravenously hungry” (Holt 1948, 138). He describes how some of them fled the island and, in the end, he concludes that seeing their disorganization and their character, it would be impossible for them to achieve the independence of their country:

The Cubans we had here appeared to me too slothful, inactive and effeminate ever to gain the independence of their country. If they were a fair specimen of the Cuban race, I have great doubts as to the success of their present efforts on behalf of their national independence. They might have taken this Island from the Spaniards had they pluckily made the attempt after the departure of the *Borja*—a guard of two soldiers placed in front of the quartel, and altogether there was not more than one hundred Spaniards to one hundred and fifty or two hundred and fifty Cubans. If they had had any organization, they might have taken the gunboat and quartel simultaneously any given night. But there was no organization amongst them, and so little prudence did they show that it was unsafe to let more than one or two know of any proposed plan of escape, lest it should be revealed to everybody (Holt 1948, 147).

Some Cuban deportees, once out of the island, wrote and published their memoirs about the days passed there, with the aim of denouncing the painful conditions of life and defending the cause of independence. The list of authors and texts is relatively small, but significant:

- Balmaseda, Francisco Javier. *Los confinados a Fernando Poo e impresiones de un viaje a Guinea*, pub-

lished in New York in 1869. A second edition was published in Havana in 1899.

- *Revolución cubana. Deportación a Fernando Poo. Relación que hace uno de los deportados*, a text attributed by Cuban bibliographer Carlos Manuel de Trelles to Miguel Bravo Senties¹, published in New York in 1869.
- Saluvet, Juan. *Los deportados a Fernando Poo en 1869: memoria escrita por Juan B. Saluvet, una de las víctimas*, published in Havana in 1892.
- Sifredo y Llopiz, Hipólito. *Los mártires cubanos en 1869. La más exacta narración de las penalidades y martirios de los 250 deportados políticos a Fernando Poo, primeras víctimas propiciatorias de la insurrección de Cuba en la Habana*, published in Havana in 1893.
- Valdés Ynfante, Emilio. *Cubanos en Fernando Poo: horrores de la dominación española en 1897 a 1898*, published in Havana in 1898.
- Miranda, Manuel María. *Memorias de un deportado*, published in Havana in 1903.

It is not a homogeneous group at all, neither for their social class nor for their ideas or for the reasons that led them to write their texts. In addition, they were deported at different times and their vision of Africa and African countries, conditioned by their origin and political ideology, also differs. Balmaseda was a journalist and a writer; Bravo was a physician while Valdés was an electrician and Sifredo and Miranda were workers at tobacco factories. The first deportees belonged to Cuban intellectual elite and bourgeoisie. Sundiata talks about bankers, landowners, doctors and writers (Sundiata 199).

Deportation increased in 1896 as part of the policy developed in Cuba by Valeriano Weyler², Cuba's governor general, who had orders from Antonio Cánovas del Castillo, Spanish Prime Minister, to fight

independence attempts. On October 26, following the publication in the *Diario de la Marina* of an article entitled 'Los neutros', persecution augmented in the cities, new regiments of unionist volunteers were formed while those already existing were mobilized to reinforce regular troops. Havana's civil governor, José Porrúa, summoned Barrera, the chief of police, and detectives Pratts, Manzano (father and son), Cuevas, Sabatés, Castillo and others and persecution began. Unionist informers, known as 'chotas', reported so many people that it was necessary to create demarcations for the gathering of prisoners. Under the pretext that they were 'ñáñigos', members of the Abakuá secret society, a good number of black people were imprisoned just for having tattoos on their bodies. Tobacco workers were also persecuted; in one day all the brokers of Cuban tobacco were arrested for the crime of competing with Spaniards on the same trade.

In all the tobacco factories, committees were created which, by appealing to terror, demanded money from workers to fund the Spanish Navy. In the factory Don Quijote de La Mancha, for example, some workers opposed the subscription and were betrayed; that was the case of Manuel Fojaco Menéndez, known as 'Piquea', and Manuel Miranda. The number of deportees increased appreciably and their suffering became history (Barcia 2003, 11-12). Unlike what would happen to the deportees of 1896, who rarely managed to escape, those from 1869 organized two massive escapes, one on June 21 and another on August 4; a smaller action happened on June 6. 12.4% of deportees managed to escape. Most of the individuals involved in these escapes had enough financial resources to buy the guardians' complicity, as well as to pay for the boats which took them out of Fernando Poo (Barcia 2003, 2), which was not the case among later deportees, less wealthy.

Francisco Javier Balmaseda (1823-1907), a Cuban writer, author of *Fábulas morales*, republished more than nineteen times before the end of the 19th century, wrote poems, novels, *zarzuelas*, comedies, textbooks and agronomy books. Because of his sympathy for independence and of engaging in that political movement, he was detained in the La Cabaña fortress and

1. This attribution seems credible, since the name Bravo Senties appears on the list of escapees that the anonymous author provides, where is included, as he indicates, "the author of this booklet" (Bravo Senties 1889, 82). Apart from this fact, there are many medical references in the work that fit Miguel Bravo's career.

2. After retiring from Cuba in 1897, he was Catalonia's Captain General, where he repressed the local uprising during the 1909 Setmana Tràgica, when working class men refused to be sent to Northern Africa to fight the colonial war.

was later deported to Fernando Poo, from where he escaped via Liverpool to reach New York. Then he went on to Colombia, he adopted Colombian citizenship and represented the country as a diplomat in Madrid. He lived between that country and Cuba, returned to the island in 1878, returned to Colombia in 1894 and in 1898 returned definitively to his homeland (cf. Silveira Prado, Lleonart i Muniz).

His text, an anglophile allegation in favor of Cuban independence, speaks little about the island of Fernando Poo and a lot about Spanish politics in the Caribbean. In fact, he considers that, because it does not enjoy the vicinity of the United States, a nation “which makes it rich and spills on its inhabitants the light of Enlightenment, leaving them to see the wonders and the splendid rays of freedom” (Balmaseda, *Los confinados a Fernando Poo e impresiones de un viaje a Guinea* 1869, 17), Fernando Poo does not develop because it only has two negative influences: Spain and Africa. He compares the good behavior of Cuban deportees to that of the Spanish volunteers who had taken them to Africa: drunkards, bullies, abusers of men and women (Balmaseda, *Los confinados a Fernando Poo e impresiones de un viaje a Guinea* 1869, 30); he also criticizes that the effects of the 1868 revolution did not arrive in Cuba, where the Spanish government had supported the Elizabethan policy of captain Francisco Lersundi Hormaechea, which gives an idea “of the complete state of disorder of the Spanish government, of the ineptness of its statemen and the infamous and foolish manner with which it has been abused of our [Cubans’] patience” (Balmaseda, *Los confinados a Fernando Poo e impresiones de un viaje a Guinea* 1869, 35).

He criticizes the lack of culture of Spaniards, already ridiculed by Cervantes (Balmaseda, *Los confinados a Fernando Poo e impresiones de un viaje a Guinea* 1869, 60), the search for an official position in Cuba which would keep them away from the Peninsular fields (Balmaseda, *Los confinados a Fernando Poo e impresiones de un viaje a Guinea* 1869, 73, 75), the political authoritarianism and the little Spanish positive influence on the Caribbean island. Thus, for example, he speaks of a Junta de Fomento, formed

by Cuban patricians, who in the 1830s proposed the construction of a railroad line. The Havana-Güines line was inaugurated in 1837, eleven years before the first peninsular railway line, which joined Barcelona and Mataró, promoted by Catalan Miquel Biada³.

He includes gory details to show the cruelty of the Spanish soldiers in Cuba: “heads were rolling on the streets and skulls with skin and blond hair still attached to the bone served as glasses to drink champagne and cognac among scary toasts” (Balmaseda, *Los confinados a Fernando Poo e impresiones de un viaje a Guinea* 1869, 122). He is very harsh when it comes to describe Spain’s role in the international scene:

Spain is, because of its quixotic spirit, a danger to world peace; nothing is more convenient to Christianity than its disappearance as a nation from the map. In that case, extending the territorial limits of Portugal and France, and magnified some other power, Catalonia will seize the opportunity to become an independent republic and other nationalities will emerge (Balmaseda, *Los confinados a Fernando Poo e impresiones de un viaje a Guinea* 1869, 244);

the mistake of European nations is to consider Spain a civilized nation (Balmaseda, *Los confinados a Fernando Poo e impresiones de un viaje a Guinea* 1869, 276).

He does not speak a lot about Africans, because he escaped very soon in the company of two other deportees, but he does not doubt the benefits of European colonization and does not grant Africans the right to self-rule that he claims for his own country. Thus, “it makes one rejoice to see black people, formerly unhappy and even cannibal, living in a society subject to wise laws, like any other civilized man” (Balmaseda, *Los confinados a Fernando Poo e impresiones de un*

3. Biada, a resident of Cuba at the time, was part of a company created to carry out the project. Finally, it was Havana’s Junta de Comercio, i.e. public administration, who put it into practice, but Biada returned to his hometown, Mataró, with the intention of building a railway (Vallés y Pérez 2007).

viage a Guinea 1869, 132). The native of the island, the Bubi, “is of meek condition, susceptible to learn as much as he is taught, candide, helpful, enduring, obliging and hospitable”, as long as he lives in the forest; “those who live in the city, with some exceptions, have been debased by the Spanish government” (Balmaseda, *Los confinados a Fernando Poo e impresiones de un viage a Guinea* 1869, 144). In order to carry out this ‘civilizing work’, he proposes a policy of peaceful attraction with the help of Protestant missionaries:

I think that military expeditions, the power of the sabre, is not what is called for in this this philanthropic work; Protestant missionaries’ sweet words are what can be easily insinuated and can present the lovely picture of civil life to the savage’s imagination (Balmaseda, *Los confinados a Fernando Poo e impresiones de un viage a Guinea* 1869, 177).

This policy, together with the love for work, the demarcation of territorial property and the establishment of the use of the currency to favour trade are, according to Balmaseda, “the keys of the ark of civilization” (Balmaseda, *Los confinados a Fernando Poo e impresiones de un viage a Guinea* 1869, 205), unlike alcohol, causing so many problems because of its sale to autochthonous populations (Balmaseda, *Los confinados a Fernando Poo e impresiones de un viage a Guinea* 1869, 184), a fact that is going to be a constant of Spanish colonization and that can be considered one of the elements that favoured and allowed it (cf. Pelasia i Botey).

The writer compares English colonization, which, according to him, were destined to create independent nations in the long run, to Spanish colonization, based on the cross and the sword, despotic and militarist:

Wherever England, for example, forms a colony, it lays the foundation for a free and happy nation: there are juries, habeas corpus, right of asylum, freedom of the press, etc. Wherever Spain forms a colony, it aspires to perpetual domination, whose impossibility history proves, establishes despotism, there is a Catholic church and barracks, men become machines, the State replaces the individual and milita-

rism dictates the laws (Balmaseda, *Los confinados a Fernando Poo e impresiones de un viage a Guinea* 1869, 241).

His text concludes with fine irony. He narrates the journey of some deportees returned to the Peninsula by the Spanish army in 1870. After passing through Mahón, where “they were treated with the greatest kindness, people from Mahón say they are not Spanish” (Balmaseda, *Los confinados a Fernando Poo e impresiones de un viage a Guinea* 1869, 252), they were forbidden to return to Cuba. Many went to Barcelona to go from there to other destinations. On the Ramblas they witnessed the funeral procession of a soldier, accompanied only by authorities, soldiers and several children of an asylum:

Who was the soldier in that coffin? Who was that person who had not even a friend to follow him until leaving him in the august mansion of Truth, so that his funeral courtship was formed only by authorities and soldiers? [...] Who was, then, that man, rather, who had been in the world that man who went to join God binding the memory of his burial with the arrival in Barcelona of those martyrs? It was Mr. Domingo Dulce, who pretended to be Cuban and Spanish, a liberal and a despot, abolitionist and proslavery; a man who had decreed in Cuba press freedom in order to find and persecute men of advanced ideas; a man who had run into the arms of anarchy and who had been caught under its wheel; a man who wanted to oppose the splendid destination of the Cuban nation and could not manage it... Stop, general Dulce, be careful so that horses do not slip with blood...! (Balmaseda, *Los confinados a Fernando Poo e impresiones de un viage a Guinea* 1869, 252-253).

Revolución cubana. Deportación a Fernando Poo. Relación que hace uno de los deportados is a text attributed to Cuban doctor Miguel Bravo (1833-1881), deported for preparing a similar uprising to Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, who arrived in Fernando Poo in 1869 aboard the *San Francisco de Borja*, like Balmaseda. In fact, he speaks about Balmaseda, Broderman and Lamar’s escape and of his own, a few days later,

along with seventeen other deportees, aided by the English steamer *Biafra*, who picked them up at Old Calabar (Akwa Akpa or Duke Town, a city-state in current southeastern Nigeria). Via London he arrived to New York and from there he returned to Cuba in 1871, where he helped to found the Partido Liberal Autonomista, representing the remains of the old Cuban sugar oligarchy in disintegration, and small landowners. It would include intellectuals, rich peasants, and elements of the small bourgeoisie (cf. Ferrer Lozano and Morejón Trofimova).

Before deportation he had already published a scientific text, *Investigaciones generales sobre las enfermedades de las razas que no padecen la fiebre amarilla y estudio particular sobre la enfermedad de los ingenios de azúcar, o hinchazón de los negros y chinos*, in 1865, and his work is less militant than Balmaseda's, perhaps because he was for autonomy and not independence. He criticizes Spain's policy in Cuba, since "only a liberal regime opposed to the colonial system always employed by Spain could have avoided innumerable evils, irremediable today; it would have managed to maintain the island of Cuba within the Spanish nationality, today lost for her *de facto* and soon *de iure*" (Bravo Senties 1889, 7).

Like Balmaseda, he criticizes Spanish management of its colonies, "as if the footprint of Spain in America would always have to be bloody. Sad fate of the Spanish nation! [...] The lessons of history have been futile: Spanish policies in America are always the same; blood and fire" (Bravo Senties 1889, 12); "public demonstrations are a right and rights are not to be restricted with the pretext of expediency, without committing an act of tyranny" (Bravo Senties 1889, 14). He describes Fernando Poo as a Dantesque hell (Bravo Senties 1889, 63), an unhealthy island, where the majority of the deportees were victims of fevers and where "the state of marasmus and of great weakness they felt, with legs swollen and without energy, made it impossible for them to take the slightest step, any movement that would demand vigour and agility" (Bravo Senties 1889, 80). Nevertheless, he managed to escape.

His short stay in Fernando Poo did not allow him to explore too much or to delve into local life, so that his references to the indigenous inhabitants are scarce and are based on the white vision of Africa and the Africans: "The capital is called Santa Isabel; we could say it is the only town, since the others are inhabited by black Bubis, who are the indigenous people; they are nomads, their dwellings participate of this character; Bubis are savages, their religion is the most rude fetish" (Bravo Senties 1889, 78). As far as the role of Catholic missionaries in Spanish colonization, so criticized by Balmaseda, great defender of the English missions, Bravo indicates that "there are some Catholics, few in number despite the efforts employed by the Jesuit mission established for many years in Santa Isabel, which has managed to get next to nothing" (Bravo Senties 1889, 79).

Juan Saluvet, a Cuban citizen born in Barcelona, was deported to Africa from 1869 until he was able to return to Havana after the peace of Zanjón, the capitulation of the Cuban liberating army, which ended the Ten Years War (1868-1878). His text, written in 1880 and published in 1882, is very similar to Sifredo's and talks a lot about the deportees and very little about the Africans he may have met in Fernando Poo. His vision of the deportees is quite idyllic, since he states that all distinctions among deportees (ethnicity, social class, age), were erased and they all felt like brothers to each other (Saluvet 1892, 110); as we have seen, money and social class were tokens of distinction which could mean better food, better living conditions, the possibility of escaping and the difference between life and death. Nevertheless, it must be said that his memoirs are the least racist of all; even if he qualifies the local population as "savages", he has a positive approach to the dances organized by black Cubans:

In order to forget the sadness that all deportees felt, the medical assistant from the island's hospital organized some dances that reminded us of the African 'cabildos' of Cuba with their drums, their rattles and drumsticks. Some deportees of color found a real solace in those parties (Saluvet 1892, 154).

Hipólito Sifredo y Llopiz, a Cuban tobacco worker, autonomist like Bravo Senties, publishes in 1893 in Havana *Los mártires cubanos en 1869. La más exacta narración de las penalidades y martirios de los 250 deportados políticos a Fernando Poo, primeras víctimas propiciatorias de la insurrección de Cuba en la Habana*, which includes a list of 250 deported aboard the *San Francisco de Borja*. His text is similar to the previous ones and includes the description of his detention, the boat trip, the living conditions on the island, a list of dead and escaped deportees and the history of his return to Cuba eight years after he left Havana.

About Fernando Poo he says that it is a colony which the Spaniards “abandoned because it was unhealthy and difficult to cultivate; first because of its almost conical shape and second because those inaccessible mountains are populated by black savages impossible to civilize and bend” (Sifredo Llopiz 1893, 19). Those black savages he describes are “nomads [who live] on the mountains, inaccessible to civilization and already called by the name of Bubis” (Sifredo Llopiz 1893, 21). He was the first to describe their dances (he had spent some more time on the island and perhaps he had had the opportunity to attend one), although in a very brief way: “grotesque dance which they called the balele” (Sifredo Llopiz 1893, 21).

Despite not being overly critical of the Spanish authorities—in fact, he praises the attitude of some of the soldiers who guarded deportees (Sifredo Llopiz 1893, 28)—, he quotes the words that governor Joaquín Souza Gallardo dedicated to them when they landed on May 28, 1869: “You have come here not as men but as things; you are bales, then, that I have received; this island is declared under a state of siege; you know that. The one in charge here is me; there are no court martials for lack of officers and I hit a lot, I hit very hard!, so keep that in mind” (Sifredo Llopiz 1893, 22). Souza had little time to impose his rule since in 1869 he was replaced by Antonio Maymó, who died in Fernando Poo that same year.

Like some peninsular settlers who came to the island and were so horrified by it that they asked to return to Spain on the same ship that had brought

them there, Sifredo was able to leave Fernando Poo on October 4, 1869. After a boat trip in which “the food they gave us was fatal, a kind of glue, made of rotten beans full of countless bugs” (Sifredo Llopiz 1893, 35), he arrived in Puerto Rico on January 11, 1870, where the deportees were greeted by the Navy’s chief, Mister Topete, with words very different from governor Souza’s: “You can count on our consideration: misfortune is very respectable and you are our children” (Sifredo Llopiz 1893, 39). After the Caribbean, they were sent to Santa Cruz de Tenerife and Mahón, where they arrived on June 29, 1870 (a fact already described by Balmaseda). He was there for five years (they were forbidden to return to Cuba) and later went through Valencia and Barcelona before returning to Cuba on July 2, 1877. With regard to Catalonia, he is less passionate than Balmaseda, but he still highlights the link between Catalonia and Cuba⁴:

How beautiful, noble and cultured is the city of Barcelona, capital of Catalonia!

How the children of the island of Cuba are distinguished, appreciated and considered by Catalans! How cultured is Barcelona! I have engraved in my chest the delicate kindness I spontaneously received there, while they praised Havana (Sifredo Llopiz 1893, 49).

Before that, during a stop in Cádiz, he had the opportunity to contemplate a burial in a scene which reminds of the description of Domingo Dulce’s burial written by Balmaseda. Sifredo is less scathing, his speech is more religious than that of Balmaseda, but he still describes the fact, the death of Manuel Ardines, administrator of the hospital in Fernando Poo, who had killed one of the deportees:

While we were anchored in Cádiz, we saw a corpse being taken to bury accompanied by boys in great state of filth and we, who were very close to the shore, said: “Who can be the poor man who is carried there, with such a miserable burial?”, to what we were told: “The dead man is that Ardines from

4. See Costa.

Poo Hospital". Oh, divine justice! Oh, inscrutable designs of Providence...! (Sifredo Llopiz 1893, 45).



Picture 1. Picture by Emilio Valdés Ynfante. Cubanos en Fernando Poo. Horrores de la dominación española en 1897 a 1898. Group of deportees, page 38.

Cuba was not Fernando Poo and its vicinity to the United States made it receive soon novelties that had not even reached the Peninsula. Thus, in 1897 there was already in Havana a vitascope, a film projector exhibited for the first time in 1895 at the Cotton States exposition in Atlanta, Georgia. Emilio Valdés Ynfante was working with it when he was arrested on 22 February. Then he was embarked, not knowing under what sentence he was estranged from the country (Valdés Ynfante 1898, 10); along with him there were some Filipino deportees who joined the Cubans in the Canary Islands. Apart from them, in the *Larache* there were some missionaries; Valdés does not indicate to which congregation they belonged to but it is clear that they were Claretians, to whom the evangelization of the island was commissioned in 1883. Among them, the Catalan Ermengol Coll i Armengol, the third Apostolic Prefect of the island, from 1890, which became the first bishop of the new diocese of

Fernando Poo (1906). The Claretian historian Eduard Canals includes in his biography of Coll the list of those embarked (Canals 1993, 224), members of the Congregation of Missionaries, Sons of the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary, but Valdés' description is way juicier.

Although the deportees did not see the missionaries more than three times during the seventeen days of the journey⁵, at a certain moment, "undoubtedly moved by the greatness of the day –Maundy Thursday– the Apostolic Prefect got excited, he was the only missionary who would lecture us" (Valdés Ynfante 1898, 24). It seems that father Coll was not very successful that day, "either because he exhausted the matter that he was discussing [...] either because his memory failed him in those instants", and he ended up talking about

"the good ones, those who have opted for prayer, penance and so on, even if in this world they had an imperfect body, for lack of a leg to walk, an arm to see (verbatim), no, no, I am mistaken, of one eye to see, their souls would reach eternity complete, and as chosen at the right hand of God Almighty, they will have a chair prepared for them in the company of this enjoyment of the ineffable bliss of the glory, which I wish you all" (Valdés Ynfante 1898, 25).

Actions speak louder than words; Valdés was disappointed, believing "to hear the sacred word with something that would encourage my heart to face adversity and I was flicked" (Valdés Ynfante 1898, 26)." At the end of the day, Claretians were agents of Spanish colonization and they probably did not like Cuban independentists. So disappointed was Valdés that he did not save criticisms about Claretians and father Coll:

There are some exterior details in people who make one understand how can a person be and this is the case of the hero of the day, the preacher, who

5. In fact, the presence of Cuban deportees, probably Catholic, does not appear at all in the memory on the Fernando Poo missions published by Coll in 1899.

in all the voyage, as we found out, only changed twice his shirt and whose habit had the colour of a cockroach wing so much it was used. This did not indicate much cleanness. Another detail: his teeth were very black, which showed that he smoked a lot, also implying that in that mouth never entered a brush or anything like that. When one comes to think about this, the truth is that we believers are sad to think that by such a conduit –to say the least–, as often their ministry compels them to, passes the sacred form of unleavened bread and wine offered in the Sacrifice of the Mass, converted into Body and Blood of the Savior.

Cleanness, my dear priests, cleanness of soul and body. If you do not possess the first of those qualities, in nothing you resemble your divine Master, and you can be called exploiters of your religion; and if you lack the second, you will become repulsive to your peers (Valdés Ynfante 1898, 26).

Later on, after summarizing the history of the island and describing the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, including father Joaquim Juanola, who does not cause him too good an impression either, Valdés concludes that “with such staff continually enclosed in town, it is certain that the nation will go nowhere and that its progress on that soil will remain null and void for centuries to come, as far as farming, trade, industry and religion are concerned” (Valdés Ynfante 1898, 29). Regarding the presence of nuns on the island, he also tells an interesting anecdote, “just to make it known that even the clergy relax their customs, even if they should be their keepers in all its purity, since that is their role in society” (Valdés Ynfante 1898, 41).

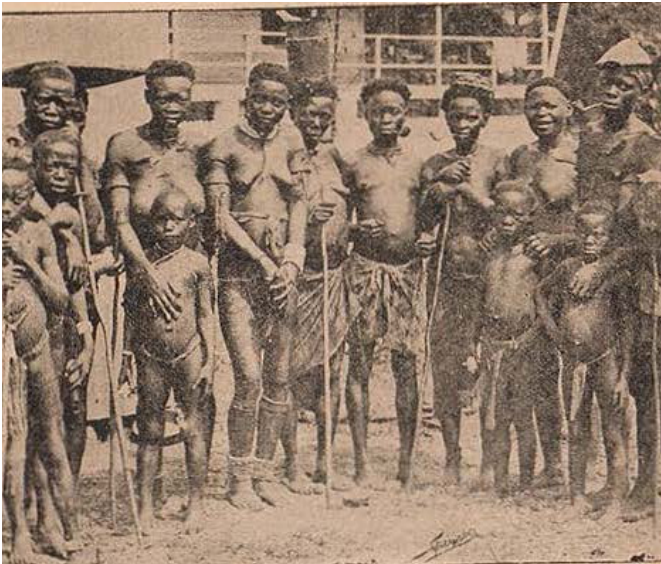
Apparently, there were in the capital, Santa Isabel, four secularized nuns who lived in community in a wooden house next to the church. Valdés does not know to which congregation they belonged, but they had to be missionaries of the Immaculate Conception, arrived from Barcelona in 1885 to join the Claretians in the colonization task, dedicated to the teaching of girls. As the adage says, ‘even monks and nuns need locks on their doors’, and, according to Valdés, there were none, “one of the nuns was a bit careless with her licentious behaviour with one padre, which meant the

boarding of the delinquent –in a delicate state– while everyone was convinced that it was not her fault but his” (Valdés Ynfante 1898, 41).

Valdés does not speak very well of the clergy, but he does not like much the natives of the island. He speaks of the Bubis as a “peaceful and submissive race, the scarcity of whose needs and their natural tendency to idleness makes them unfit for work”. He does not understand why the English-speaking Fernandinos “do not like the patriotic language of Spain” and he describes Krumen as vigorous, intelligent, active and very hardworking (Valdés Ynfante 1898, 61). In general, he mocks the appearance of the Bubis, “naked with head bowlers and a parasol” or “full of bells”, always dressed with “the suit used by our forefathers in Paradise”; he considers them “a degraded race, refractory to civilization but not clumsy in the midst of their primitive rudeness” (Valdés Ynfante 1898, 61). He also speaks about their tribal structure, about “their amusement there in the jungle[which] consist of quite lustful dances following a tambour and a rude guitar, accompanied by a monotonous chant” (Valdés Ynfante 1898, 64). He also discusses a custom that will eventually become a trope of the tropical colonial narrative: “excesses are very rare and the only act of barbarism they perform, that we know of, is amputating the arm of any wife apprehended in adultery” (Valdés Ynfante 1898, 64). This punishment will become the central axis of narratives of the early 20th century such as ‘La espuria’ by José Mas –published in the travel narrative *En el país de los bubis*– or ‘Accidentado paseo a Moka’ by Roberto Arlt.

After being pardoned in July 1898, the deportees returned to Cuba via Cádiz and Puerto Rico, but Valdés seizes the occasion to denounce the corruption reigning in the colony, where officials work little and are dedicated to extortion. He finally includes a list of deportees and dead, and some press articles and reflections on the colonization of the island. In general, his discourse is as racist as that of his companions of misfortune, but his interest in technology made him include some engravings, “taken from nature by the author in terrible conditions as can be supposed there where everything is missing”, (Valdés Ynfante 1898,

62) which are very interesting as documents of the deportation. Apart from that, he also shows his views about racial categorization. Racial affiliation only affects deportees of colour, who are described as “tawny” and “black” (see illustration 1). White people, of course, need no description whatsoever; they are the norm, the unmarked mark of others’ differentness (Frankenberg 1993, 198).



Picture 2. Picture by Emilio Valdés Ynfante. *Cubanos en Fernando Poo. Horrores de la dominación española en 1897 a 1989*. Peaceful Bubees, page 72.

The last of the deportees who published his memoirs was Manuel María Miranda, an anarchist tobacco worker employed at the Don Quijote de La Mancha factory in Havana. In 1896, after finding out that colonial authorities sought to send tobacco factories workers to fight against Cuban independentists, he and others protested because they felt that Cubans could not be forced to be Spanish, something that the Spanish Crown could not accept. Hence his deportation to Fernando Poo (García 2016, 201).

At first glance, his ideology could have inspired him a more open attitude towards his peers, but that is not the case. In fact, his is possibly the most racist and homophobic of all the memoirs. Deported along with Puerto Ricans and Filipinos, he does not lose his sense of humour: “Surely the governor of that colony deported them to make them love Spanish domina-

tion and to make them forget the example given by Cubans”(Miranda 1903, 14). However, even before reaching Fernando Poo he shows his racism (classism?) towards his fellow deportees: “The *non sancta* people, who were a majority, as soon as they could, met in groups and began to sing in *ñáñigo* the rhythm of a tango, also *ñáñigo*, played with spoons, jugs and plates, and imitating with their mouths the wild noise that they make in Havana blowing an empty jar” (Miranda 1903, 15); a meeting that he qualifies as a “coven of demons” (Miranda 1903, 16).

Among those who sang and danced there was a pair of mulattos, one of them called Catalina, “the reader will guess why when I tell him that he always spoke of himself with effeminate voice and swaggering his body, as if he belonged to the fair sex” (Miranda 1903, 16). He does not mention him again, but it can be supposed that Catalina suffered the misfortunes of those who, lacking any resources, suffered the abuses of the Spaniards, during transport and on the island, without being able to pay for the transfer to another part of the boat or for a dignified accommodation in Fernando Poo.

As alcohol was served along with the food (Miranda 1903, 28), there were fights between Cubans and Filipinos, repressed with bayonets and revolvers by both crew and passengers (including a Catalan priest, also armed), and the groups were separated (Miranda 1903, 24). It must have been father Coll, who had studied at the seminar in Solsona, home of the Junta Superior Gubernativa de Catalunya during the First Carlist War: what we have here is a real *cura trabucaire*, a fundamentalist warrior priest, quite common in Northern Catalonia at the time.

When he arrived to the island, Miranda met Tomàs Capmany, a Catalan who had been there for eight years, treated Cubans with kindness (Miranda 1903, 38) and had a book collection which he made available to the deportee. Miranda quotes the *Historia universal* by Italian Cesare Cantù (1881), *Nerón* by Emilio Castelar (1891), *El genio del cristianismo* by François René de Chateaubriand (1802) and the *Historia de España* by Modesto Lafuente (1850-1867),

official paradigm of the Spanish historiography of the 19th century, which created the notion of Spain as a unitary nation since time immemorial.

He also met Santiago Tejera, public school teacher at Fernando Poo, whom he defends in front of the ignorance taught in the missionary schools: "In the friars' school they do not teach the Bubi niggers who are brought from the forest but to sing Hail Mary and to work for the Catholic mission". Miranda finds this teaching uninteresting at least: "I saw a friar on a board leading a chorus of blacks of both sexes, half-naked and semi-wild. The friar sang with mellifluous voice: 'Maria virginaaa... Maria reginaaa... Maria florentinaaa... Maria celestinaaa...' and other such nonsense that blacks answered in chorus" (Miranda 1903, 46).

His opinion on the natives of the island is paternalistic and he considers them basically as small children: "The Bubis in the forest, in their wild state, while they do not have contact with friars, traders, mandarins, bureaucrats and other civilized Europeans, are the sweetest, more truthful, more sober and more altruistic people than I have ever met" (Miranda 1903, 50). He considers them to be much better than Spaniards, almost anarchists in their way of life: "the Spanish government, because of its cruelty, causes horror to the Bubis, who neither enslave people, nor kill them; there are no poor or rich among them and with little work they satisfy all their natural necessities" (Miranda 1903, 51).

His captivity did not finish until January 1899, after the signing of the Treaty of Paris, on December 10, 1898, which ended the Spanish-American War and by which Spain abandoned its demands on Cuba, which declared its independence. After passing through Tenerife, Cádiz and Puerto Rico, he returned to Havana and finished his text in November 1899. When he returned to Cuba, he continued his struggle, denouncing the penetration of American capitalism and the fact that American workers got better salaries than Cubans or Spaniards in companies established by the United States (Shaffer 2011, 17).

Epilogue. Deportation in the 20th century

As we have seen, the narratives of Cuban deportees to Fernando Poo are basically memoirs with political touches and scarce literary fortune. They cannot be compared, therefore, to Franz Kafka's *In der Strafkolonie*; their characters are not *bagnards* literary like Victor Hugo's Jean Valjean nor have the liveliness of Henri Charrière's *Papillon* or Jean Genet's *Miracle de la rose*. Nevertheless, they show the viewpoint that on Fernando Poo and its inhabitants had at that time not only the Spanish peninsular population but also those subject to Spanish colonial domination, who did not grant the African colony the rights that they demanded for themselves.

Once the independences of practically all the Spanish ultramarine territories were declared, only the north of Africa and the Gulf of Guinea were left and the Spanish authorities would dedicate all their colonizing efforts to them. Although there was already a certain colonial mass established on the islands of the Gulf of Guinea and in the territory of Río Muni, the island of Fernando Poo was going to remain a destination for deportees because of their political ideas, deportations carried out in an almost Improvised way.

In January 1932, the failure of 'els fets de Fígols', a proletarian revolution that implanted libertarian communism in Northern Catalonia for five days, involved the arrest of many anarchists in the transatlantic *Buenos Aires*, anchored in Barcelona. Among them, Ramón Gausachs, who published the chronicle of the facts in the magazine *Mundo gráfico* in 1932, and José Buenaventura Durruti, later to become a mythical figure during Spanish Civil War. After finding out that they were to be deported, Gausachs describes the ignorance of detainees about the situation of their final destination:

- Where will they take us?
- They say to Bata.
- Where is Bata?
- In Spanish Guinea.
- And where is that?
- In Fernando Poo.

(After that we found out that Fernando Poo is an island and that Guinea a piece of the African continent) (Gausachs 1932, 27).

They expected to find “a land arid like a desert, with four palm trees and very few people” and saw instead “an island surrounded by splendid vegetation and a pier and many white people coming and going”; therefore, “that could not be as bad as we had been told”(Gausachs 1932, 10). As only those who were sick were allowed to disembark (who later told wonders about the city of Santa Isabel and how they got many gifts from the colonial population), there was an attempted mutiny, suffocated by the soldiers who guarded them. Then they were sent to Rio de Oro, a territory whose location they also ignored, and they finally landed in Las Palmas, from where Gausachs returned to Barcelona, disillusioned with his companions, who “spoke of human fraternity but who were an unapproachable island, every single one of them” (Gausachs 1932, 23).

Since he did not step on African soil, he does not speak about it at all; he just reports what little news he got about Santa Isabel. At least, he does fall into the racist clichés that filled the narrations of his time and which will reappear, curiously, in a Cuban text written a hundred years later, in 1983.

Ignacio Gutiérrez Díaz (1929-2007) was a Cuban playwright and theatre manager who wrote a multitude of plays, including two on African themes, after staying in Angola: *Kunene* (1978) and *Fernando Poo. Mayo de 1869* (1983). The latter is interesting for the issue discussed here, as it revisits the 1869 deportation and has as main characters, among others, Francisco Balmaseda or Cayetano de Sousa (evident *alter ego* of governor Souza Gallardo). The story tells what we already know: deportation, stay on the island and escape attempts. However, it includes some elements that are worthy of interest. The first one, the racism of the characters, who, while planning their runaway by swimming, ponder the problems that may entail the presence of sharks: “What do you want, boy, sharks to eat me?”(Gutiérrez 1983, 22), but also the possibility of getting lost and end up in the belly of an Afri-

can: “Look at this fool... easy, boy, easy, black people will eat us fried” (Gutiérrez 1983, 23). The second element, an anglophilia that we had already seen in Balmaseda: “Wherever I have needed the help of an Englishman in my path of misfortune, I have found it” (Gutiérrez 1983, 37). Finally, a revolt of deportees who rise up against their jailers.

The Spanish brigadier finds out about the rising attempt and intends to shoot everyone, even if a Portuguese merchant, a resident of the island, indicates him that perhaps he is overreaching:

ADELAIDE: Shoot them, Cayetano...? Don't you think it's too much? They are not just any blacks... [...] Even if yesterday they got a pardon signed by general Serrano?

BRIGADIER: Yes, Adelaide, you speak well, even if..

ADELAIDE: But that's not legal!

BRIGADIER: In Santa Isabel, fortunately or unfortunately, my dear friend, I am the law, do not forget that (Gutiérrez 1983, 107).

Although he does not shoot anyone, he gets some information thanks to the arrest and murder of Regla, a black slave, and thanks to the collaboration of Rafael Picard, a ‘sugar tycoon’, who manages to flee the island with his mistress, the merchant Adelaide Gonzálves. The author's intent is clear: landowners are the enemy, traitors who sell to their compatriots for whatever reason. Finally, the deportees, angry at the treachery –“I shit on your mother's pussy!” (Gutiérrez 1983, 120)– help Balmaseda to flee and prepare to fight: “Let us show these Spanish slavers how we can die fighting for our freedom!” (Gutiérrez 1983, 128).

Again, big words and great deeds that hide the reality of Africans, silent witnesses of everything that happened around them. Cuban independentist in times of turmoil defined themselves by what they were not: blacks and slaves, and this definition allowed them to resist Spanish oppression but also to look down on Africans, whose colonial oppression they applauded.

Something similar had happened to Irish immigrants arriving to the United States, who were considered 'savage', 'lazy', 'wild' and 'simian'; shared oppressions did not generate any solidarity. Irishmen turned to whiteness to distance themselves from black people, projecting their longing on a despised race. Instead of seeing their struggle as bound up with colonized and coloured people around the world, they came to see their struggles as against such people (Roediger 1991). The same move can be seen in Cuban deportees in Africa. They did not see Africans as fellow victims of Spanish colonialism. While they denounced Spanish oppression in the Caribbean and claimed for independence, they also praised Spanish actions in Africa. Their whiteness blinded them.

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