

Argentina as Europe, Spain as Africa: shaking off black markers in Hispanic national mythographies

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Argentina, a country whose national historiography is clearly marked by a cultural and political obsession in becoming the “Europe” of Latin America, was responsible —mainly through the policies, mythology and discourse of the *Generación del '80*— of projecting a monolithic, white and eurocentric national prototype, designed to silence the African presence in Argentina and the role of afro-argentinians in the construction of the modern nation-state.

Nowadays, an academic endeavour set to study and index a 19th. Century prolific corpus of black periodical literature and romantic poetry written by liberated slaves and first-generation afro-descendants (Lewis 1996, Cirio 2009, Geler 2010) coexists with a black-history thematic transfer in white contemporary literature, in the form of a “white neo-slave narrative”. Writers such as Miguel Rosenzvit (*Fiebre Negra*, 2009), Ernesto Mallo (*El Relicario*, 2010) or Mirta Fachini (*Susurros Negros*, 2010) have taken on black voices and protagonists to re-write/write-back a historical black fiction in a previous Paris-like Buenos Aires with no available space for the presence and agency of afro-descendants. In contrast to their Latin American neighbours, Argentina is timidly bringing forth an academic and aesthetic reflection on the role of afro-argentinians in Argentine political/cultural/gastronomic/musical/lexic history, while fighting off a solid mythology which insists in their disappearance.

Similarly, Spain —traditionally the Africa of Europe— has never quite taken responsibility (or consciousness) of its role in colonial history in Sub Saharan Africa, and few people in Spain are aware Spanish is the official language in a small African country called Equatorial Guinea. Even less known is the fact that this Spanish ex-colony is producing a rich African literature in Spanish, and so are other countries with no historic colonial ties to Spain, such as Cameroon, for example. The current Spanish literary establishment only admits “Hispanoamérica” and as such, Hispanic textual dialogues are only occurring between Latin America and its old metropolis. Equatorial Guinea’s literary production is systematically excluded.

In what way is the afro-argentine reality another form of national “*materia reservada*”? How does Spain’s rejection of her role as the “Africa” of Europe, relate to an Argentina seeking to become the “Europe” of Latin America? In which specific ways could we establish a comparative perspective to study the systematic denial of black historical elements which countries such as Argentina or Spain have effortlessly buried? Why does Africa re-emerge nowadays in both countries?

This paper is part of my contribution to the research project "African Literatures in Spanish. Literary Mediation and Poetic Hospitality since the '90s", National Research Plan of the Science and

Innovation Ministry of Spain (FFI2010-21439)