

Enemigo Suelo: Manzano Rewrites Cuban Romanticism

Este artículo rescata, desde la esclavitud, un contradiscurso del romanticismo. Se enfoca en cómo la poesía de Juan Francisco Manzano, escritor cubano y ex-esclavo, reescribe el afecto típico del romanticismo cubano. Para Manzano, es la esclavitud la que se interpone entre los amantes y la que engendra, lejos de una patria anhelada desde afuera, la fantasía de escaparse de la isla y de los terrores asociados con el terreno cubano. Por ende, este ensayo reflexiona más detenidamente sobre la figura - poética, jurídica y ecológica - del "suelo" en varias obras. En particular, se compara un poema de José María Heredia de 1835 con otro de Manzano, publicado en 1838, en el que éste parece retomar y resignificar unas palabras del primero: la frase de Heredia "Huyamos pues, este suelo delicioso" deviene en Manzano "Huyamos pues, ... nuestro enemigo suelo". Como conclusión, el ensayo destaca las implicaciones de tal reescritura para repensar la ecología y el afecto durante el apogeo de la esclavitud cubana.¹

Nostalgia is a common affect in modern Cuban literature, art, and criticism, yet we would be mistaken to attribute it merely to twentieth-century diasporic discourse or to post-Soviet reflections.² We find it already inscribed in nationalist discourse of the early nineteenth century, when literary celebrations of the *patria* were forged from positions of exile in Spain, the United States and Latin America.³ Cuban romanticism patented the imaginary of the island as the homeland to which the romantic writer was tethered affectively, all the more strongly when exile - often due to anticolonial beliefs - divided land and poet. Poets such as Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda and José María Heredia - the latter of whom, Leonardo Padura has written, "hizo de la nostalgia su emblema" - inaugurated a tradition of sentimental nationalism so enduring that it continues despite repeated *exposés* of how contingent, constructed and limiting the objects of such affect are: national sovereignty; the attribution of amorous sentiments to "soil" or *suelo*; the choice of Spanish as Cuba's *lingua franca*. The earliest Cuban literature, shepherded along in the *tertulia* of reformist Domingo del Monte, sought to realize a properly *national* coherence out of a fundamentally and racially riven society. But little about the society was integrated, synthetic, or might be narrated in a single tongue. A large

percentage of the island's population hailed from West Africa and spoke a number of languages; elites were often willing collaborators with the Spanish Crown, more interested in profits from sugar and coffee than in independence or a Cuban state; and the island, depicted in poetry as an edenic homeland, was for many displaced African or Chinese laborers an unhomely, hellish site that, far from being a lost object pined after from exile, instead was a place *from which* to flee: through suicide, maroonage, inter-Caribbean lines of flight (to places such as Haiti or Trinidad, both at times refuges for slaves seeking freedom) or through imagination.

Not surprisingly, then, the era also produced counter narratives of Cuban literary nationalism. Such narratives make use of, but transvaluate, the very concepts dear to romanticism: thus nostalgia is not for the island, the concept of *patria* is questioned, and soil is a fraught trope and reality. In contrast to the iconic examples of (nostalgic) Cuban romantic lyrics that are Heredia's "Himno del desterrado" and Avellaneda's "Cuba, al partir," the poetry of former slave Juan Francisco Manzano constitutes an archive that registers differently inflected affects.

Robert Richmond Ellis has read Manzano's poem "Un sueño" (1838), for instance, as countering "the racist and masculinist brutality" that the former slave documents in his *Autobiografía*, still the only known slave narrative from Hispanophone Latin America. I, too, find that "Un sueño" constitutes a counter narrative, but of a different sort: I interpret this poem, among others in Manzano's *oeuvre*, as recasting generic conventions and period concepts of *patria* to destabilize the isomorphism between land (here "soil"), identification, and desire. In what follows, I delineate how Manzano realizes this recasting. I first highlight his sustained *détournement* of Cuban romanticism, then examine what I suggest may have been an explicit rewriting by Manzano in "Un sueño" of an earlier poem by Heredia, "Al C. Andrés Quintana Roo" (1835).⁴ Heredia's poem invokes a longed-for Cuba desired from a position of exile; Manzano's, by contrast, imagines a fantastical, desperate flight *away* from what he terms "enemy soil."

In "Al C. Andrés Quintana Roo" Heredia laments having abandoned, almost fifteen years earlier, the island's beautiful nature for freedom in the cold north (Augier 166). Manzano's "Un sueño," by contrast, imagines escape from Cuba to the heavens - one of the only places, perhaps, where, in the 1830s, the former slave could imagine a post-slavery reality, Haiti notwithstanding. Whereas Heredia's poem is largely preoccupied with protesting "Iberian tyrants," Manzano's decries slavery, shifting the metaphorical discourse of colonial bondage to more literal terrain.⁵ In so

doing, Manzano enacts an important revision to genealogies of Cuban romantic poetics and affect.

Circumstantial evidence confirms that Manzano could have come across Heredia's poem in person, since in the years between the writing of Heredia's and Manzano's poems the two poets participated in the same literary circles in Havana. They also shared a hometown of Matanzas, and Heredia visited both cities during his extended visit to Cuba between 1836 and 1837, after years of exile in the US and Mexico (González del Valle, *Cronología*). During this visit Heredia circulated among fellow writers and intellectuals in Havana.⁶ We may never know if on any of these occasions the two poets met or exchanged works; we cannot even be sure for how much of Heredia's visit Manzano was a free man. Yet even if we cannot ever prove conclusively that Manzano read or heard "Al C. Andrés Quintana Roo," the former slave clearly rewrites the common strain of romantic nationalism that the earlier poem exemplifies. At stake is not simply a philological investigation of possible rewriting. The differences between Heredia and Manzano indicate, rather, a rethinking of the enduring affects and vocabularies of exilic nationalism, as well as a reconception of the very substratum of life: a rethinking of soil in the context of the Caribbean slavery employed to produce sugar, coffee, and tobacco.⁷

At the end of this article I compare the poems in detail to draw out the implications of the possible rewriting. First, however, I review period theories concerning the materiality of emotions and affect that influenced literary sensibility and romanticism, to demonstrate how Manzano both drew upon and departed from such positions and styles. In order to understand how he transvalues attachment to, and separation from, "soil," we must first understand how he reworks the dominant sentimental codes of Cuban romanticism.

ECONOMIES OF SYMPATHY AND SLAVERY

At one point in Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda's 1841 anti-slavery novel *Sab* its Cuban-born slave protagonist cries out "no tengo tampoco una patria que defender, porque los esclavos no tienen patria" (219). Although the fictive slave's lament is part of a melodramatic soliloquy, the implied link between *patria* and defense suggests not only the militarism embedded in the idea of homeland, but also the danger - or promise - posed to a colony in which a vast portion of the population could not be expected to bear either affective or conscripted allegiance to the land they worked.⁸ Moreover, since, as Rafael Rojas argues, the first articulation of

patria in Cuba was tied to appropriation of the land, slaves were necessarily deprived of such a relationship (48).

Nor was the literary *criollo* (Cuban-born) slave's mournful lament necessarily an accurate index of the sentiments held by many of the nearly 800,000 Africans eventually brought to the island. Enslaved migrants may or may not have used a discourse of *patria* in remembering their homes, but in court records in which African-born slaves were asked to justify their revolts, many testified - often through translators from Yoruba or Bantu languages - to having been attempting a return to "Guinea," to a "*tierra de negros*," and to other places that, if imprecisely defined, point elsewhere than Cuba (García Rodríguez). Meanwhile, high rates of slave suicide - one estimate suggests that in the mid-nineteenth century twenty percent of African-born slaves committed suicide within a year of arrival in Cuba - were partially explained by religious beliefs that after death a body could traverse the Atlantic to awaken in other homelands (Pérez 39; 35).⁹ These expressions of longing for a home that was not Cuba coincided with *criollo* paeans to the nation.

Like Avellaneda's fictive slave, Manzano was born to Cuban parents. He was manumitted in 1836, when he was probably in his late thirties.¹⁰ Unlike *Sab's* unrooted character, however, Manzano embraced Cuba as his *patria*: in 1835, two years before Ramón de Palma's putative "first Cuban novel" *Matanzas y Yumurí*, Manzano wrote that he imagined himself sitting down to write "una novela propiamente cubana" in some "rincón de mi patria" (Friol 29). But what was the former slave's vision for such a place? The melancholic, bitter Manzano may not have been actually involved in the anti-slavery conspiracy known as *la Escalera*, as he was accused of in 1844, but neither was his vision for the *patria* a mere reiteration of that which the elite *criollos* proposed, as my reading of "Un sueño" below will suggest.¹¹

This corrective vision is important in the face of an enduring narrative within Cuban letters that has often excluded from its genealogies African histories while simultaneously reifying notions of black Cuban culture as the essence of the nation. Roberto González Echeverría, for instance, has drawn attention to Fernando Ortiz's 1939 claim that black Cubans must be quicker to feel "*cubanía*," or Cubanness, than white Cubans since, unlike Spanish immigrants to the island, they had no metropole to which to return.¹² In Ortiz's words:

Los negros debieron sentir, no con más intensidad pero quizás más pronto que los blancos, la emoción y la conciencia de la cubanía. Fueron muy raros los casos de retorno de negros al África. El negro o tuvo que perder muy pronto la esperanza de

volver a sus lares, y en su nostalgia no pudo pensar en una repatriación, como retiro al acabar la vida. El negro criollo jamás pensó en ser sino cubano. (14)

Ortiz suggests that while European-descended Cubans might cling to the idea of a European home - hundreds of thousands of Spaniards emigrated to Cuba in the same years that Ortiz was writing - African-descended Cubans had no imaginary alternative upon which to project (implicitly inevitable) nationalist sentiments, making them feel more "Cuban" by default. Such assertions were part of the 1930s elite (white) Cuban discourse that proclaimed black Cuban culture to be the foundation of the Cuban nation (Ramos 107). While Ortiz imagines whites living in Cuba (European immigrants? All "whites"?) pining for spaces other than Cuba, he imagines blacks living in Cuba eagerly embracing the Cuban republic as their homeland (Ortiz distinguishes between "negros" and "negros criollos," but does not clarify if he includes Africans). Ortiz also seems to slip between the fate of African slaves forcibly transported to the island in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and that of *los negros* in the Cuban republican period (1902-1958), with odd echoes of abolitionist projects to "repatriate" Africans or Afro-Americans to places such as Liberia or Sierra Leone.

Moreover, and in contrast to Ortiz's claims, documents from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries attest to an *añoranza* for other *lares* or homes on the part of Africans forcibly brought to the Americas. In 1797, for instance, the Spanish surgeon Francisco Barrera y Domingo, after living a decade in Havana, penned a medical treatise on those diseases to which Africans were particularly prone in the Spanish Caribbean. Barrera's book *Reflexiones* begins with a singular inquiry into the causes of the "nostalgia de los negros"¹³: "una tristeza melancólica que les acomete repentinamente, sin delirio, furor ni calentura, nacida de una tenaz aversión a quantas cosas puedan substraerlos de su imaginatiba, como no sea la vuelta a su amada *patria*" (69).

The historian Adrián López-Denis, after having published an article exploring the significance of Barrera's theories of nostalgia, has since discovered that the physician's eighteenth-century study consists of wholly reproduced or very slightly altered passages from at least ninety other books that diagnose nostalgia in European populations. Given Barrera's astonishing appropriation of other published works to describe what he claimed to observe and diagnose in Africans, "nostalgia" among forced emigrants to Cuba was by no means singular, and perhaps was not even ever observed by Barrera. Yet his text remains important insofar as Barrera claimed a form of nostalgia felt for other *patrias* among African-

born slaves. Discursively at least, forced migrants to Cuba were described as mourning other homes since at least the 1700s.

The diagnosis that Barrera advances explicitly drew on the work of the Dutch physician Hermann Boerhaave, whose theories of the human organism largely shaped eighteenth-century research into emotions. Boerhaave's theories were a common source for eighteenth-century reflections on "sensibility" among European authors (Alberti; May). Both Boerhaave and Barrera understood emotions materially. Barrera speculated that slaves' nostalgia might derive from "la continua vibración de aquellas fibras medulares de el cerebro a que están pegados, aún los vestigios impresos de las ideas de la patria" (69-70). In other words, Barrera imagined that ideas of a *patria* left a physical trace, an "imprint" on the brain against which fibers vibrated.

This surprising image diverges from more commonly held assumptions at the time that located emotions in the heart (Alberti 5). Indeed Barrera himself elsewhere writes that the heart is both the first of the body's organs and the "intérprete de las pasiones y de los afectos" (89). As interpreter of passions and affects, the heart starred in the era's reigning literature of sensibility and romanticism (Pahl). Eighteenth-century theories of sympathy were often based on claims that again linked organs in the body with exchanges of emotion.¹⁴ Louis de Jaucourt, author of the *Encyclopedie's* entry for sympathy, for instance, defined it as an "affinity of affection and inclination, that intense understanding between two hearts, which is communicated, spread, and felt with unexplainable swiftness" (Vila 89). Jaucourt's definition highlights both the importance of the heart for exchanges of affection, and the leap between two bodies that defines communication.

"Sensibility" emerged in eighteenth-century European literature as a mode of tender-hearted emotiveness. But by the early nineteenth century it was "sympathy" that was cultivated by authors of anti-slavery literature as a dominant strategy for moving readers to action (Carey; M. Ellis; Ahern). For its early theorists David Hume (*Treatise of Human Nature*, 1740) and Adam Smith (*A Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 1759), sympathy hinged upon bringing together - but not fusing - the dissimilar: the difference between the bourgeois reader and the slave or poor debtor, for example. As a number of scholars have recognized, such distance, whether geographical, class-based, "racial" or merely inter-subjective, was at once the *sine qua non* for sympathy's existence, and that which sympathy had to overcome (Boltanski; Festa; Ahern). Enough distance must exist if two beings are to remain two, not one, and hence attracted to one another. Yet there may not be so great a difference that the intersubjective leap of

sympathy is rendered impossible. Sympathy's reliance on difference, moreover, often paved the way for voyeurism: as Stephen Ahern notes, "[t]he greater the social distance between sentimental observer and the object of his gaze, the more ripe a situation can be for a voyeuristic feasting on the affect of others" (8).

Bridging distances between slaves and non-slaves (and between a Cuban setting and Spanish readers) was also crucial to Avellaneda's *Sab*. Sab's plot is simple: Cuban maiden Carlota falls in love with British-Cuban plantation owner Enrique Otway, who only courts her for her presumed riches. When it is discovered that Carlota's father has lost the family fortune, her marriage is imperiled, until the noble *mulato* slave Sab, who has secretly won the lottery and is in love with Carlota, gives up his winning ticket to facilitate her marriage to Otway; Sab then pines away from unrequited love. The mark of valor in the novel corresponds to the strength of the heart: hence Enrique is a man "¡... *sin corazón!*" (137) while Sab boasts "un corazón de hombre" (205).

The repeated linking of *corazón* - the word itself appears more than sixty times in the short novel - to forms of exchange suggests that affect, far from operating in isolation from the financial logic to which it is ostensibly opposed in *Sab*, actually shares in a logic of accumulation, debt, and circulation. The moral valor materialized in Sab's heart is achieved through a literalizing allegory of sympathy's idealist union. For it dawns on Otway that only by *exchanging* his heart for Sab's might he earn Carlota's love: "Acaso la voz secreta de su conciencia le decía en aquel momento que trocando su corazón por el corazón de aquel ser degradado sería más digno del amor entusiasta de Carlota" (157). In *Sab's* economy of affect, to merit love one must not only identify with *but actually become* a suffering slave body through the exchange of body parts. Sympathy must go beyond feeling *for*, and become feeling *through* the organ of emotions.

Avellaneda returned to the idea of sympathy as a material, embodied sentiment some years later in her comedy *Simpatía y Antipatía* (1855), in which two characters muse about sympathy and antipathy:

Euphrasia: Simpatía o antipatía se observan hasta en las plantas.
 Isabel: Tan prodigiosos misterios,
 la misma ciencia proclama.
 Soleis ver por vez primera
 Un semblante, y ya en el alma
 Sentís impulso secreto
 Que os cerca o que os separa. (374)

Avellaneda suggests that sympathetic attachments between people are like invisible and ineluctable forces that turn a plant towards the sun or towards another plant. Sympathy is as “natural” as plant life, or as a presumed physiognomic relation between essence and appearance.

These tropes of separation and union, difference and its eradication are partially indebted to the tradition of medieval courtly love espoused in twelfth-century poet Jaufré Rudel’s concepts of *amor de lonh* and *amors de terra loindana*, love from afar and of a distant land.¹⁵ In courtly love poetry, obstacles intensify feeling. The courtly love tradition was at once highly codified and conventional and, at the same time, the source of enduring ideals that persist in the modern period (Lacan 148).

Courtly love codes manifest in nineteenth-century notions of romance as impossible love from afar, tropes repeated in poems by Avellaneda and Heredia. Avellaneda’s “Al partir,” an ode to Cuba narrated from aboard a ship departing to Spain, and Heredia’s “Himno del desterrado,” written on a ship to Mexico from New York, are classic examples of poems in which love of the *patria* comes into focus as distance intercedes to separate the poet from his or her object of desire. The obstacle, which in medieval poetry is often been the class difference between a Lady and the bard, here is geographical distance or separatist politics.

But what happens when the obstacle is not the Lady’s inaccessibility or codified literary conceits about unrequited love, but the conditions produced by slavery? Avellaneda wrote “Al partir” as her family abandoned Cuba for Spain in part because of her stepfather’s fears that Cuba would emulate revolutionary Haiti. Heredia’s poem, meanwhile, is both an encomium to the island and a critique of slavery and colonialism (he was forced into exile when a Masonic plot for independence in which he was involved was discovered in 1822). His poem contrasts the island’s natural beauty with its colonial bondage and enslavement, agitation against which occasioned his exile:

¿Ya qué importa que al cielo te tiendas,
De verdura perenne vestida
...
Si el clamor del tirano insolente,
Del esclavo el gemir lastimoso,
Y el crujir del azote horroroso
Se oye sólo en tus campos sonar? (116)

“Himno del desterrado” concludes:

Aunque viles traidores le sirvan,
 Del tirano es inútil la saña,
 Que no en vano entre Cuba y España
 Tiende inmenso sus olas el mar. (117)

The physical distance between Spain and Cuba is both the catalyst for longing (for the *verdura perenne*) and justification for the separatist (anti-colonial) argument that there was nothing “natural” about the domain of the empire or the idea that the far-flung colony should be part of the Peninsular state.

In “La esclava ausente” and “Un sueño” Manzano recasts this trope of separation within the context of colonial slavery. Manzano, like Heredia, participated in del Monte’s *tertulias* (del Monte arranged for a collective purchasing of Manzano’s manumission, solicited Manzano’s *Autobiografía* and served as an ambivalent figure of authority for the ex-slave [Molloy 395]). An accomplished poet while still enslaved, Manzano worked within received genres and styles, sometimes neoclassical, sometimes closer to the romanticism of Heredia and Avellaneda.¹⁶ It is not surprising, then, that Manzano’s narrator in the poem “La esclava ausente,” an enslaved woman separated for over a year from her lover by the institution of slavery, sounds much like a character from Avellaneda’s *Simpatía y Antipatía*:

¿Qué vale separar dos almas finas,
 Si la intención de amar consigo llevan?
 La muerte sola dividirlos puede
 Porque más aman, cuanto más se alejan,
 Y más se inflaman cuanto más se hostigan. (Manzano 170)

As in Avellaneda’s romantic drama, two souls are joined in a strong affinity that is intensified by distance, here separable only by death. In “La esclava ausente,” the obstacle between the subject and object of the courtly love scheme are the laws upholding slavery:

Tal en mi corazón, de amor el fuego
 Su ardor difunde, y toda me penetra
 ¿Quién extinguir querrá tan noble llama?
 Un hombre *con su ley*; la mano acerba (Manzano 173, emphasis added)

It is slave law that intervenes to break apart this love. The law at once quickens the ardor by forcing separation and, at the same time, disfiguring

the natural course of love. In the face of this forced separation “la esclava ausente” wishes to unite her body parts with those of her lover:

Esta mano, este pecho, este mi todo
 Es de mi bien: mi boca la confiesa.
 Déjame unir a él, que así lo exigen
 Religión, amor, naturaleza. (Manzano 173)

The coherent totality (*todo*) of the subject is broken into two with the separation from her lover. The narrator is part of something larger: the pair. “*Este mi todo*,” “This my all,” splits into the parts “is of” or “*es de mi bien*,” separating the “all” of “*este*” into the two words signifying “out of,” or from: “*es de*.” But the slave’s cries fall on deaf ears as distance separates her even from God. Though she begins to address “Señor mío,” she interrupts herself, “Pero ¿a quién hablo? ¿a quién mis quejas doy?/ si la distancia ahoga mis querellas” (Manzano 173). “La esclava ausente,” like other poems of the period, thus uses distance to reinforce true love in the courtly love tradition. But it also appeals to an intended audience that might, via the work of literary sympathy, overcome *its* emotional distance from the fictive slave in order to work to abolish the extra-textual “unnatural” institution of slavery that separated families and lovers in the first place.

If “La esclava ausente” reveals slave law, and not literary codes, to create the distance intervening between lovers, “Un sueño” continues the revision of romanticism from within by negating the figure of the island as the object of courtly love that it was in Avellaneda and Heredia. “Un sueño” was published in Havana’s *El Álbum* in November 1838. In the poem, distance and exile appear not as painful experiences but as the longed-for *antidotes* to a nightmarish reality of sugar mills and death for its narrator, who attempts to fly away.¹⁷ “Un sueño” begins with its narrator paradoxically finding freedom through his imprisonment to a dream:

cerráronse mis ojos
 a un dulce y grato sueño,
 quedando así rendido
 entre sus lazos preso;
 más entre poco rato
 sobre mi espalda siento
 de muy grandiosas plumas
 dos alas que contemplo (Luis 145)

While the narrators of the two white *criollos'* exile poems wrote from departing ships, the former slave's lyric "I" must find transport in dreams.¹⁸ As the narrator flies over Cuba he looks down on the bones of his forefathers.

desciendo con tino
de Matanzas al seno,
...
donde yertos reposan
los miserables restos,
de aquellos nuestros padres
que el primer ser nos dieron.

Su vista me horroriza,
vacilo, me estremezco
recordando la causa
de nuestros males fieros. (Luis 146-7)

Manzano then swoops down to embrace his brother, still earthbound between the "Palenque soberbio" (home of runaway slaves) and the "Molino/ con sus vastos terrenos," a reference not only to a sugar mill (*molino*) but specifically to the name of the family farm, *El Molino*, of the Jústiz family in Matanzas, Manzano's first owners. "Huyamos pues," the narrator then proposes to his brother, to whom the poem is dedicated,

de este recinto horrendo
más terrible a mi vista
que la del horco mismo:
huyamos, caro hermano,
partamos por el viento,
por siempre abandonemos
nuestro enemigo suelo'. (Luis 148)

The soil is quite literally enemy territory for the slaves forced to cut cane and work tobacco farms. This expression echoes scenes from the *Autobiografía* that Susan Willis has read as evincing the fact that on the plantation what appeared to be mere nature was, in fact, capital in a "nature factory" (211).

Critique of the plantation economy/ecology is a familiar trope in black Atlantic literatures. Lance Newman has examined both nineteenth-century African-American anti-pastoralism, for instance, and a countervailing

discourse in which nature is a site of freedom and maroonage; both are present in Manzano (13). Soil in particular becomes a complex symbol for both sustenance and enslavement, freedom and bondage, and territorialized attachments to a *patria*. As we saw above, the question of how patriotic discourse may have resonated for a Cuban-born slave is vexing. Roberto Friol, writing in the 1970s, reads Manzano's letter to del Monte, in which the former expresses his wish to write a Cuban novel, as a striking sign of Manzano's patriotic sentiment against all odds. It is, indeed, entirely possible that Manzano embraced the idea of *patria* and, as an avid reader, imagined himself writing a romantic novel of Cuban customs.¹⁹

Yet we also must be alive to Manzano's self-positioning before del Monte, as Friol himself was elsewhere in his pioneering study of the poet. After all, Manzano owed the fundraising for his purchase out of slavery to the wealthy patron and whose father-in-law was Domingo Aldama, one of the biggest slavers in the first decades of the nineteenth century.²⁰ Manzano, then, was appealing not only to a leading literary nationalist and reformer, but to someone entrenched in the slaving elite, hardly a situation in which Manzano could be frank about his hopes and fears. Marilyn Miller has noted about even Manzano's investments in literature: "it is difficult to separate his delight in del Monte's efforts to publish his works from his absolute dependence on his mentor for exposure to a wider circle beyond the limitations of the Havana or Matanzas salons" ("Reading" 167).

Even if we assume that Manzano did genuinely wish to write about his *patria*, we must heed the specific ways in which "Un sueño"'s dream of fleeing Cuba and the slavery also rewrites reigning notions of what *patria* meant as both ideal and place. Rex Hauser has offered a compelling reading of "Un sueño" as a rewriting, though not necessarily a deliberate one, of Sor Juana's "El sueño." Miller has argued in a separate essay that Manzano deliberately rewrote an earlier, eponymous play as his own *Zafira* ("Imitation"). Was "Un sueño" perhaps a deliberate rewriting of Heredia's "Al C. Andrés Quintana Roo"?

ENEMIGO SUELO

As best I can establish, Heredia's 1835 poem was published posthumously in 1869 in a Mexican newspaper (García Garófalo Mesa 569). Yet it is possible that Heredia had the poem with him in Cuba when, in 1837, he returned to the island from Mexico and lived with his family for two months in Matanzas. In 1836, one year after Heredia wrote the poem, but before he arrived in Havana, Domingo del Monte's salon in Havana became the central meeting place for *letrados* (del Monte was Heredia's close friend until del Monte judged the long-exiled poet sycophantic towards the

hated Captain General, from whom Heredia requested reentry to the island). A January 10, 1837 letter to del Monte from Heredia, who was still in Havana but about to return to Mexico, indicates that the poet left his old friend with a number of unpublished poems.²¹

Let us compare the sections of the two poems in question. Heredia's poem is an apostrophe to his friend, the Mexican statesman Andrés Quintana Roo. It begins: "¿Por qué despiertas, caro Andrés, ahora/ La voz del canto en mi abatido pecho?" Heredia had stopped writing poetry in his exile in North America; his poem thus begins as a lament for his lost capacities as a poet, which, he writes, remain buried "en los campos bellísimos de Cuba,/ Entre sus cocoteros y sus palmas," now resuscitated by Quintana Roo's request that he write again (Heredia 161). Heredia lays the blame for his poetic silence on the tyranny of Spanish rule. The poem becomes a lengthy explanation of the reasons for the loss of the poet's abilities (Spanish colonialism; depression about Mexico's descent into post-colonial violence).²²

"Un Sueño" is also apostrophic, directed towards an absent brother, and begins

Tú, Florencio, que sabes
las penas que padezco,
cuán justas y fundadas
martirizan mi pecho; (Luis 144)

Rather than frame itself as a justification for the poet's pain, as did "Al C...," "Un Sueño" establishes from the outset and through a common bond of slavery with his brother that the poet's suffering is warranted. Both poems end their first couplet or strophe, respectively, with "pecho," or breast, the site of feelings and of the poet's breath. Heredia writes "Mas tú lo quieres, y aunque torpe, frío,/ Mi labio cantaré; que en lazo puro/ Ligónos amistad inalterable." Manzano writes:

si, tú que en otros días
colinabas mis tormentos,
o juntas con las mías
tus lágrimas corrieron
¡ay! ya que tristemente
separados nos vemos,
cada cual por su rumbo,
nuevo mundo corriendo;
que mis versos te lleven

los colores de un sueño
 cuyo principio tomo:
 oye y estame atento. (Luis 144)

Heredia affirms his bond to Quintana Roo; Manzano confirms his bond, despite separation, to his brother. Both use their poems to affirm their respective links of friendship and brotherhood. With these initial laments registered, the poets proceed to narrate their respective tales.

For several stanzas the poems then diverge sharply. Heredia's bitterly recalls betrayals, trials, ongoing empire, dictators, and post-colonial disillusion in Mexico, to end with a dream of fleeing to the United States. Manzano's poem is more imaginative and narrative. It begins with the poet fleeing to Matanzas:

hacia el vecino monte
 que de Quintana el cerro
 dominan y ameniza
 los lugares internos (Luis 144-145)

(Quintana is just coincidentally a place name in Matanzas, not a reference to the Mexican statesman). The poetic subjectivity is that of a *cimarrón* or runaway, in spirit if not in absolute practice, for the narrator evokes periodic retreats to the forest (and later invokes a *palenque*):

aproximeme a un bosque
 albergue donde suelo,
 conmigo querellando,
 lamentarme en secreto. (Friol 125-6)

Asleep in the woods, he feels wing sprout, and he attempts to fly:

pruebo al volar, y al punto
 Las alas rebatiendo,
 Del suelo me levanto
 Cual pájaro lijero. (Friol 126)

The wings contrast with the ground, their height and lightness with the heaviness, darkness and entrapment of the *suelo* (with the play on the daily labours it demanded, inasmuch as the poet/slave "is used to" [*suelo*] lament his enslavement.)²³ Wings also appear in Heredia's poem, which ends:

Y en el vecino septentrión helado, [The United States],
 Cubren, fecundan a felices pueblos
 De Libertad las alas protectoras.
 Allí volar anhelo: las orillas
 Del Delaware, del Hudson o el Patapsco
 Asilo me darán, seguro puerto
 Do lejos de tiranos y facciosos,
 Bajo el imperio de las leyes, viva
 Feliz, tranquilo, ni señor, ni esclavo. (166)²⁴

If we take the use of wings in the two poems to have parallel but divergent implications, we find Manzano turning what for Heredia are Liberty's (metaphorical) protective wings into actual (if oneiric) feathery wings enabling flight. But since the 1830s United States, an independent republic, nonetheless very much had *señores* and *esclavos*, it cannot for Manzano's narrator be the destination associated with liberty that it is for Heredia. Instead the flight in "Un sueño" has no end or location, unless it be the heavens, or the very center of the earth, now "tierra," not "suelo":

Visto tanto en el aire
 buscaba con anhelo
 el centro de la tierra
 para posar mi vuelo. (Luis 146)

Manzano's flight furthermore implies leaving behind the Americas altogether:

feliz, atravesaba
 poblados y desiertos:
 sobre los anchos mares
 soberbio me recreo,
 al ver bajo mi vista
 tantos puntos diversos:
 ya *libre*; por el aire
 me sublime y excelso,
 me trasmonto y me juzgo
 Gran señor de los vientos,
 yéndome atrás dejando
 de América los pueblos. (Luis 48-9)

Both the perspective and flight of the narrator are telling of what freedom looked like in imaginative verse, and of what might have informed Manzano's views.

Manzano gazes down on his hometown and surrounding lands, spots his brother and swoops down to kiss him. Fusing in his narrator Daedalus and his son Icarus, whose wings melted as they approached the sun ("No fue mayor el gozo/ del corazón de Dédalo/ ... / llevándose consigo/ también a Icaro bello" [149]), Manzano describes the brothers' perspective as a joyful, sublime one. (Adriana Lewis Galanes has documented the apparent censure that edited out this reference to Daedalus and his son in the version of the poem published in *El album* in 1838, possibly due, she argues, to the poem's message of "cimarronería transinsular") (30-31).

The aerial perspective may have something to do, too, with views of the world made popular by balloonist Eugene Robertson, who launched a balloon flight from Havana in 1828, and whose book about such expeditions Heredia translated into Spanish in 1835. It is, of course, unknown whether Manzano knew of Heredia's translation. In any case, however, Heredia's was but one of a number of reports of the flights: when Robertson realized his Havana flight "Por espacio de ocho días, todos los periodicos estuvieron llenos de poesías en elogio del aeronauta" (Roch 68-9).

Robertson cast his Cuban flight with recourse to the imagery of trans-Atlantic explorers and with reference to the "enslavement" of the New World to the Old, as Heredia's translation describes:

Si yo fuese aeronauta, habria [sic] tenido gusto en volar sobre una de las Antillas, colocadas como á la vanguardia del Nuevo-Mundo, para descubrir á lo léjos la primera nave que viniese del oriente . . . Desde la mayor altura á que subiese, volveria [sic] los ojos, con ilusion [sic] pueril pero natural, hácia el continente antiguo, y no pudiendo alcanzar á verlo, aunque mi horizonte se aumentase con toda mi . . . distancia del suelo, viendo por todas partes solo mar ... la independencia de este nuevo hemisferio contrapesando la esclavitud del antiguo, y por último á la Libertad, llamando desde las márgenes del Hudson á las decrepitas naciones europeas. (Roch 64)

This celebration of the New World as site of freedom from Old-World "slavery," at the very height of Cuban slavery, is hardly singular, and only serves to remind us how common was the association of slavery with monarchy in period discourse.²⁵ Manzano also looks down on different peoples, separated by oceans, just as Robertson looked down on the Old World, separated by the Atlantic ocean. But if at first it seems that liberty

lies in Manzano's narrator achieving height, wings, and perspective, it turns out that once there, once *libre*, as the poet emphasizes with italics, the narrator does not fly *to* anywhere. He falls back to Matanzas, a depressing recognition of the period limits of conceiving of a place of true freedom.

Let us now return once more to the passage that most suggests a possible debt to Heredia, in which the narrator finds his brother and argues for a joint escape from the island:

y ¡oh Dios! entre sus brazos
Sentí crecer mi afecto.

'Huyamos, pues, le dije.
de este recinto horrendo
más terrible a mi vista
que la del horco mismo:
huyamos, caro hermano,
partamos por el viento,
por siempre abandonemos
nuestro enemigo suelo'. (Luis 148)

Brimming with affection for his brother, Manzano turns his fantastical flight into a real possibility and suggests that the brothers flee the "horrendous" corner of the world, the "enemy soil." Heredia's similar passage argues for slightly different ends:

Perdona, Andrés, si tétrica mi Musa,
En vez de afectos plácidos, te envía
De nuestros tiempos el horrible cuadro.
Huyamos este suelo delicioso,
Que, de celeste maldición objeto,
Es ¡ay! al genio, a la virtud, infausto. (166)

Whereas Manzano *lives* in a *horrendo recinto*, Heredia conjures for his friend its representation, a horrible *cuadro*. Heredia's poetic muse is melancholic (*tétrica*), yielding a melancholic *afecto* for his Mexican friend. In Manzano, the *afecto* is never defined as melancholic or loving *per se*, and is perhaps both, growing in the embrace between an ex-slave and a slave.

It is in the different treatments of *suelo* that the relative difference between the poems is most revealing. Manzano's use of *suelo* is not *necessarily* a debt to Heredia: as Rex Hauser, Arcadio Díaz-Quñones, and

Abdeslam Azougarh have all noted, Manzano (but also Heredia) was influenced by Fray Luis de León, in whose sixteenth-century poetry century poetry *suelo* and its opposition, *cielo*, were common tropes.²⁶

Yet whatever the source of the word, the two poets employ it differently. For Heredia, the *suelo* had long yielded the iconography of his romantic patriotism. Palm trees and fields stood as an edenic promise violated by slave-holding, monarchic interests in the island. Recall once more that the opening to “Al C. André Quintana Roo” located Heredia’s lost poetic abilities somewhere in “los campos bellísimos de Cuba” (Heredia 161). For Manzano, on the other hand, the beauties of the land are inseparable from forced labor. The *suelo* itself is complicit. By underscoring the inseparability of *suelo* (as *patria*) from *suelo* that bound slaves to the fields, Manzano rewrites the iconography by which the Caribbean land is a paradise ruined by bad politics. In “Un sueño” there is no separating the two meanings of soil. The very use of the possessive *nuestro* to refer to the soil highlights the paradox: it is Manzano’s home, and it is enemy territory.²⁷ By branding the island - or at least the vast terrains of the Molino - as *enemigo suelo*, Manzano inverts the subjectivity of the nostalgic exile.

An additional historical legal development may also bear upon the poem: between the publication of Heredia’s poem and that of Manzano’s the Spanish Crown issued its first “free soil” legislation. The “free soil principle” refers to forms of legislation found throughout the Atlantic world according to which enslaved peoples, by crossing borders into states with different laws of bondage, might become free (Peabody and Grinberg 331). According to Sue Peabody and Keila Grinberg, the earliest “free soil urban charters” may have been established in what is now northern Spain in the ninth and tenth centuries; by the eighteenth century the Spanish Crown “offered freedom to fugitive slaves to entice them to populate its frontier circum-Caribbean colonies” such as Trinidad (Peabody and Grinberg 334). Elsewhere free soil principles were appealed to in order to create anti-slavery legislation in Granville Sharp’s Somerset case of 1772 and, three decades later, in Haiti, when Alexandre Pétion established Haiti as a land of free soil (Peabody and Grinberg 331; 335).

A Spanish Royal Order in 1836 established rather ambiguously a principle of free soil according to which slaves might be freed before being brought to Spain (Martín Casares and García Barranco 462). But the *Leyes de Indias* meant that different laws pertained to the colonies and the metropole. Aurelia Martín Casares and Margarita García Barranco have researched in detail the events surrounding an 1837 legal commission on abolition formed with the mandate to “prepare a general law reinforcing

the dictates of the Royal Order of 1836," noting that the report "was never discussed in the Spanish Parliament, for fear of the reaction of Cuba and Puerto Rico towards such a law" (465). Free soil held for Spain without abolition in the colonies. Thus we find cases such as the 1852 case brought before the courts in Havana by "*la negra Catalina*" protesting that when her owner took her to Spain,

donde no se permite la esclavitud, desde el momento que puso el pie en tierra de hecho quedó libre porque Catalina no podía ofrecer la anomalía de que hubiese en España un individuo reducido a esclavitud de otro, y que si de hecho fue libre y si la libertad es un estado perpetuo, mal pudo volver a ser esclava porque retornase a esta Isla, que fuese a España con licencia de uno de los antecesores de Vuestra excelencia no altera tampoco la cuestión. (García Rodríguez 168)

There is no way to know whether Manzano was apprised of these legal discussions, no way to know whether networks of slaves throughout the Caribbean may have spread the word of the Spanish legislation, although there is clear evidence that slaves from neighboring Caribbean islands knew of and took advantage of Haiti's free soil policies for two decades before Manzano's poem.²⁸ The possibility of Manzano's knowledge of the 1836 *Spanish* legislation, however, seems slimmer when we consider that the 1836 order was conveyed to the Captain General of Puerto Rico, but not to Cuba (Martín Casares and García Barranco 470). Still, the legislation itself reflects a climate in which the relationship between soil, juridical belonging, citizenship and freedom were being thought of together.

"Un sueño" does not end happily, despite being written after Manzano secured his freedom. Rather than narrating a passage out of bondage, the poem underscores its narrator's lingering melancholia. No sooner does the narrator become free (*libre*) than the elements conspire against him. The poem concludes with the darkening of his dream and his fall to earth. The sky erupts into a storm; he sees

tornarse en noche oscura,
Bramar el Noto horrendo,
rugir el mar abajo,
tronar arriba el cielo,
...
relámpagos continuos
en sus choques vertiendo,
y en horrorosa guerra
todos los elementos. (Luis 150)

A lightening bolt and its accompanying thunder awake him.

A “guerra” of celestial elements is a sustained metaphor in Heredia’s poem too, representing the years between the 1822 betrayal of the Cuban independence conspiracy in which Heredia was implicated, and which occasioned his exile in 1823; a second, 1829 conspiracy by the Masonic *Águila Negra* group (organized from Mexico); the ongoing violence of Mexican post-independence politics, and the poem’s present of 1835:

Colmóse aqueste cáliz, y del crimen
 Vengador, aunque lento, inevitable,
 Tronó por fin el indignado cielo.
 El hijo de Mavorte y la fortuna,
 Que en la margen del Pánuco gloriosa
 Al ibero invasor hizo poco antes
 Morder muriendo la salobre arena,
 De libertad el estandarte sacro
 A los aires desplega. Ya vencido,
 Ya vencedor, combate doce lunas,
 Del pueblo capitán. Sangre a torrentes
 Riega de Anáhuac los feraces campos,
 Hasta que de su base desquiciada
 La colosal usurpación impía
 Con fragoroso estrépito descende. (162)

It is from this bellicose world that Heredia wishes to escape: in 1827, 1829 and 1835 he wrote of wishing specifically to move to the United States, “donde reinan las leyes y las libertades”; “Do lejos de tiranos y facciosos,/ Bajo el imperio de las leyes, viva/ Feliz, tranquilo, ni señor, ni esclavo” (Augier xxiii; xxv; Heredia 166). Against Heredia’s triumphant narrative of escape to freedom Manzano ends his poem with a question, underscoring the questionable security of his own freedom:

Y, aunque a mi vista es hoy
 claro el día y sereno:
 en los males pasados
 ¿Dudarás que me veo? (Luis 150)²⁹

If, as was true in Manzano’s own life, there is no alternative space to which to relocate, movement is figured as a dreamed-of flight away from the Americas that, frustrated, falls back to the terrain of the *molino*. Yet if the

flight fails, the transvaluation of “suelo delicioso” into “enemigo suelo” enacts a crucial reversal of affect. Heredia’s construction of a pastoral Cuba from the site of Mexican exile is revised by Manzano so as to render a Cuba of *palenques* and *molinos*, whose very soil is inimical to life.

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NOTES

- 1 My thanks to the anonymous readers who greatly improved the article, and to Arcadio Díaz-Quiñones and Daylet Domínguez for their suggestions on earlier drafts.
- 2 See José Quiroga, *Cuban Palimpsests*; Esther Whitfield, *Cuban Currency*; and Jacqueline Loss’s *Dreaming in Russian: The Cuban Soviet Imaginary*.
- 3 See also Javier Uriarte’s “Forms of Nostalgia and (Mis)Recognition: the Impossibility of Homecoming in the Countess of Merlin’s *La Havana*.” For a genealogy of conceptions of *patria* in Cuban history see Rafael Rojas, *Motivos de Anteo: Patria y nación en la historia intelectual de Cuba*.
- 4 Ángel Augier provides the date of 1835 for Heredia’s poem (xxix).
- 5 In his study of Manzano, Abdeslam Azougarh cites Cintio Vitier’s comparison between the two poets: according to Vitier, while Heredia “‘Superó su clase por el idealismo romántico revolucionario,’” Manzano “‘la asumí como sufrimiento absoluto’” (33).
- 6 Many of these men, however, spurned the poet for what they perceived to be a groveling retraction of separatist thought, as outlined in the letter Heredia wrote to the Captain General Miguel Tacón that enabled the anticolonial poet’s return home (Augier xxx).
- 7 See Reinaldo Funes Monzote, *From Rainforest to Cane Field in Cuba: An Environmental History since 1492*.
- 8 The question of *patria* also called up Roman slave laws. Daylet Domínguez cites the Condesa de Merlín’s pro-slavery arguments that asserted that Cuban slavery was benevolent because it did not strip slaves of belonging to a *patria*, as had been the case in Roman law: “‘La palabra esclavitud ó servidumbre no tiene aquí el mismo sentido que en los códigos romanos, en los cuales esta calificación es igual á la exclusión de todo derecho civil, en que el esclavo era un hombre *sin estado*, es decir, sin patria y sin familia’” (10).
- 9 Louis A. Pérez, Jr. has written that “The larger social meanings of suicide among enslaved Africans are not always readily deciphered. Much had to do with nostalgia, a condition to which many Africans succumbed upon arriving to Cuba. ... In these circumstances, suicide was associated with melancholia

that emanated from loss and longing. Expressed as a diminished desire to live, it was a passive way of dying that conveyed indifference to living, driven by the determination to die” (33).

- 10 Marilyn Miller notes scholarly discrepancies about the date of Manzano’s manumission (whether 1836 or 1837) (“Rebeldía narrativa” 420 n7).
- 11 For an in-depth discussion of *la Escalera* conspiracy, see Robert Paquette’s *Sugar is Made With Blood*. Further evidence of Manzano’s poetic revisiting of dominant narratives about the “Cuban nation” include Robert Richmond Ellis and Susan Willis’s reading of Manzano’s poem “To Cuba” as a “demystification of Cuban history and an insightful critique of the Cuban slave system” (Willis, qtd. in Ellis 431).
- 12 González Echevarría reaffirmed Ortiz’s claim as fact, asserting with paternalistic assurance that black Cubans must have been anxious to be included in the Cuban nation: “La angustia del negro cubano, y su ansia de incorporación a la nacionalidad, la entendió Fernando Ortiz mejor que nadie, cuando explicó, en memorable conferencia de 1939, que los negros estaban forzados a ser cubanos porque no tenían metrópoli que añorar, ni países natales que pudieran acogerlos en un eventual regreso” (1587).
- 13 Barrera refers to *negros*, but describes specifically African immigrants.
- 14 Hume’s *Treatise* defined sympathy as the ability “to receive by communication [others’] inclinations and sentiment,” a definition that extended to medical definitions of sympathy, as that which enables “organs to communicate with each other and to react and suffer together” (qtd. in Todd 2; 27). As Evelyn Forget argues, the medical understandings of the term were easily linked to affective ones (68-9).
- 15 Roland Greene has demonstrated that these traditions were used to figure the conquest of the Americas.
- 16 For a discussion of Manzano’s poetic style, see Sylvia Molloy; Rex Hauser also notes a neoclassical tradition available to Manzano. Adriana Lewis Galanes, for her part, classifies his writing as “neobaroque” (36).
- 17 Throughout this article I will at times refer to the version of “Un sueño” reproduced in Roberto Friol’s study of Manzano, at times to the version included in William Luis’s anthology; each citation will note its respective source.
- 18 See also Ellis’s argument that the poem advances a subjective continuity between the former and still-enslaved men (433).
- 19 In “Imitation and Improvisation in Juan Francisco Manzano’s *Zafira*” Miller traces some of Manzano’s bibliographic influences and argues that he may have had access to many texts in Domingo del Monte’s library.
- 20 See Molloy for a history of the manipulations that Manzano’s *Autobiografía* underwent at the hands of del Monte and others.

- 21 See a letter from José María Heredia to Domingo del Monte, Jan. 10 1837: "Respecto de la nueva edición proyectada de mis poesías, harás lo que te parezca, pues te doy carta blanca. De México te enviaré las alteraciones que me han ocurrido, y tú harás las más que convenga. Creo que Ignacio [Heredia, his uncle] te habrá enseñado las poesías inéditas que le dejé, y que deben incluirse" (74). According to Francisco González del Valle, Heredia "entregó a Echeverría para que publicara, las poesías A la gran pirámide de Egipto y Al océano, que aparecieron por primera vez el año 1837 en *Aguinaldo Habanero*" (*Heredia* 62). "El Océano" appears on page 85 of *El Aguinaldo Habanero*, "A la gran..." on pages 157-158; Manzano's "La cocuyera" appears on 141-143, "Al reloj adelantado" on 177-178, "La música" on 200-204 and "Una hora de tristeza" on 209; his "Treinta años" opens the selections on page 97-98, where José Antonio Echeverría prefaces the poem with the description of its author as "un pardo natural de esta ciudad, quien los compuso siendo esclavo en cuyo triste estado ha permanecido hasta hace poco ... logrará al cabo la corona debida al genio, que después de la de la virtud, es la más espléndida que puede adornar las sienes de los mortales" (97).
- 22 Miller notes, curiously enough, that Manzano too was described as having lost his poetic capabilities - after gaining freedom ("Rebeldía narrativa" 420).
- 23 William Luis's edition of the poem has "*sueño*," not "*suelo*," in this line.
- 24 Augier writes that "La idea de trasladarse a los Estados Unidos la comunica a su hermana Ignacia, en carta de agosto de 1835: 'No dudes de que nos veamos en el Norte, pues lejos de tener así grandes miras políticas que se digna atribuirme el señor Tacón, estoy tan harto de revueltas, que sólo aspiro a salir de aquí y vivir aunque sea pobremente, donde haya quietud y paz'. Repite esta decisión en su conmovedora epístola 'Al C. Andrés Quintana Roo', de mayo del mismo año, donde hace 'de nuestros tiempos el horrible cuadro'" (xxix).
- 25 Hauser suggests that one use of the "New World" in Manzano's poem denotes "difference or distance from insufferable conditions" (7).
- 26 I thank Arcadio Díaz-Quñones for reiterating the importance of Luis de León for these tropes and for his comments on an earlier version of the paper.
- 27 Thanks to Gabriela Nouzeilles for calling this to my attention.
- 28 For a discussion of the importance, awareness and circulation of the knowledge of Pétion's defense of free soil law see Ada Ferrer, "Haiti, Free Soil, and Antislavery in the Revolutionary Atlantic."
- 29 Robert Richmond Ellis rightly perceives that Manzano underscores a link between post-emancipation and slavery rather than a break into freedom (433).

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