

The Construction of National Identity in Donato Ndongo-Bidyogo's *Las tinieblas de tu memoria negra*

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In the article “*What is a Nation?*” (1882) Ernest Renan argues that a nation is based on two principles, neither of which includes race, language, religion or geography.¹ Renan explains, “[I]et me sum it up, Gentlemen. Man is a slave neither of his race nor his language, nor of his religion, nor of the course of rivers nor of the direction taken by mountain chains” (20). For Renan, nationhood is based instead upon what he loosely defines as “a rich legacy of memories” and “present-day consent” (19).² However, the “legacy of memories” described by Renan, though he postulates otherwise, is most certainly influenced by factors such as race, religion, language and geography. Both Renan and Homi K. Bhabha rightly suggest the ambiguity of the term nation given that it applies to so many distinct historical situations.³ However, Bhabha, unlike Renan, proposes a way to understand the ambiguity of the term nation through what he defines as pedagogy, performance and supplement. Working with Renan’s and Bhabha’s definitions of a nation, this essay explores the emergence of a hybrid nation in *Las tinieblas de tu memoria negra*. In addition, the essay redefines the concept of memory and present-day consent presented by Renan to demonstrate how the marginalized Fang culture influences and decenters Spanish constructions of national identity in Equatorial Guinea.

What are memories of nationhood based on if not upon a combination of these factors? In the case of Spain, writers such as José Ortega y Gasset (1883-1955) and Miguel de Unamuno (1864-1936) argue that Spanish identity is related to the geography of the Castilian meseta.⁴ Rarely is there such a thing as “present-day consent,” especially in recently colonized countries where nationhood is imposed by force. Nationhood is often achieved by forcing both religious and linguistic conversion on the colonized population, acts that promote a shared identity and carve the foundations for a legacy of memories. Even in a diverse nation like Spain, it is arguable that nationhood is not based on “present-day consent” because regions like the Basque Country and Catalonia⁵ have a long history of demonstrating their desire for independence – whether it be through peaceful protests or violent activities planned by the terrorist group ETA.⁶ During the dictatorship of Franco from 1939-1975, Spain was held together by the myth of a national shared memory that was, as is argued by David. K Herzberger in *Narrating the Past: Fiction and Historiography in Postwar Spain* (1995), invented and disseminated by the Francoist regime. Although Renan is correct to say that a nation

cannot be defined by one simple attribute like language or race, his adamancy that they play an insignificant role in the process is misplaced.

The Spanish colonization of Equatorial Guinea, which began in the 1850s and reached its height in the 1920s, provides an example of an emerging nation that does not fit the definition provided by Renan. The country gained independence from Spain in 1968, but it is debatable that the years of colonization ever involved consent on the part of the majority of Equatorial Guineans. The construction of nationhood in Equatorial Guinea is described in Donato Ndongo-Bidyogo's *Las tinieblas de tu memoria negra* (1987), a novel that played an important role in the creation of a national literature.⁷ *Las tinieblas de tu memoria negra* begins with chapter zero as the protagonist-narrator discusses his present situation.⁸ The ten non-chronological chapters of this *bildungsroman* recount his journey from childhood to adulthood (ages 6-18), and from innocence to understanding. He tells how his Fang tribe and the colonizers from Francoist Spain influenced his upbringing. The double life that the protagonist lives as he tries to navigate two cultures is evident in the structure of the narrative: the protagonist alternates between the use of I and You when discussing his own life. The chapters are structured so that memories of the two cultures are juxtaposed. For example, after a chapter describing the rite of initiation into the Fang tribe, the protagonist describes his first communion. Chapter zero marks the beginning of the new hybrid nation, and is the moment in which the protagonist reaches adulthood and fully understands the two cultures which have influenced his personal and intellectual growth. The protagonist remains nameless throughout the novel because, as the author explained in a 2006 interview with Odattey-Wellington, “[p]recisamente es que yo quería hacer un personaje

en el que pudiera reconocerse cualquier guineano de esa generación” (167). The protagonist has assimilated the teachings of both the Fang and the Spanish colonizers and serves as a representation of a new hybrid nation.

The title of the book, as Baltasar Fra-Molinero details, is an ironic word-play based on the Spanish translation of the book *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad, which was translated in Spanish as *El corazón de las tinieblas*. Fra-Molinero clarifies: “[l]a novela de Ndongo-Bidyogo va a explorar una tiniebla diferente, dándole la vuelta al significado del término. La tiniebla será en cierto modo el mundo misterioso de los blancos, los españoles, España, el seminario, el Padre Ortiz, los signos de identidad que el protagonista ha ido aprendiendo a identificar con el Poder y que quiere hacer suyos” (163). In order to ensure the survival of his tribe, the protagonist must travel into the heart of darkness – in this case, and in contrast to Conrad's novel, he must learn the customs and beliefs promoted by the colonizers, who are simply referred to as “blancos” in the novel.

The protagonist's construction of national identity is shaped principally by language and religion. A combination of these influences forms the shared memory that connects the young protagonist, who has never been to Spain, to the Iberian Peninsula. Chapter one provides the first example of the role that these issues play in the construction of the Guinean nation. Renan posits that this type of memories “can be understood in spite of differences of race and language” (19). However, in the novel, the protagonist's memories are also informed by issues of language and religion. Here, the protagonist introduces us to his father who “había decidido en un momento impreciso de su vida pactar con el colonizador blanco” (21). The white colonizers make it clear that only Equatorial Guineans

who assimilate to the dominant culture, including adopting its language, traditions, and religion, will be able to participate in making decisions about the future of the country. The protagonist explains, “[m]i padre había abandonado, a la vista de todos pero imperceptiblemente, a la tradición para insertarse en la civilización. Por eso mi padre es un negro que lo hace todo a lo grande, como los blancos, y por eso se le respeta y hasta se le mira con temor [...]” (21). In order to participate as a citizen in the Spanish colony, the protagonist is required to abandon the history and traditions that define his race, in order to make himself “white.” The first chapter presents a situation in which the Spaniards form the powerful center that governs and guides the population of Equatorial Guinea, forcing local populations to assimilate or risk extinction. However, the protagonist, as he grows up, learns how to decenter Spanish influence and ensure the future of his tribe.

The protagonist’s knowledge of tribal traditions and his understanding of white Spanish culture and history are united, to form what Homi Bhabha calls a “supplementary movement” (305). Bhabha states that “The nation’s totality is confronted with, and crossed by, a supplementary movement of writing” (305). This supplementary movement develops in a liminal, ambiguous space, the space of fissure where a dominant and a marginal culture come into contact. The protagonist grows to adulthood in this “supplementary space of cultural signification” (305) and his actions and experiences insert themselves into the colonial discourse. Bhabha discusses the supplementary movement in relation to the concepts of performance and pedagogy. Pedagogy, in the form of history and traditions, informs people of who they are while performance is the creation and transformation that takes place while living in the present mo-

ment. Bhabha describes the pedagogical as “*a priori* historical presence” and performance as an “enunciatory ‘present’ marked in the repetition and pulsation of the national sign” (299). In the novel the pedagogical is the tribe and their rich history and traditions, while the performative present is being transformed by the presence of the Spaniards. However, there is also a strong pedagogical element to the Spanish presence in Africa. For example, the school is one of the principal sites where the protagonist is inducted into the “*a priori* historical presence” represented by certain fascist doctrines of what it means to be a Spanish subject (Bhabha 299).

In order to reconcile the pedagogical and the performative, the protagonist begins to metaphorically write the supplement that holds them together. The protagonist does this at first unconsciously, honoring both the traditions of the colonizers and of his tribe. However, as he grows he becomes aware of his role, and actively attempts to help his tribe survive using the knowledge of the whites to help them adapt. Saenz-Roby explains that “Él es el sujeto colonial que ha sufrido más la transculturación, pero que todavía lucha por encontrar su identidad en la frontera de esas dos culturas tan diferentes. Se podría decir que es el nuevo guineano” (2). In chapter zero the protagonist takes control of his own destiny when he decides not to be a priest. He tells the rector of the seminary “No me siento llamado por Dios para esta misión” (18). The reader is left to imagine his future, and to analyze his memories of the past.

The uniting of the pedagogical and performative creates stress as the two cultures make demands on the protagonist. His resulting hybridity is first experienced as a kind of a doubling of the self more than a fusion of the Spanish and Fang cultures. For most of the novel the protagonist’s hybridity ensures the survival of his

tribe, but requires that he live a double life, one which often tears him in opposing directions. As the protagonist describes, “me encontraba en medio de la lucha sin poder tomar un partido; estaba contemplando el último esplendor de un mundo que se alejaba para siempre y veía llegar otro muy distinto sin poder abrazarme a ninguno” (99). The protagonist’s colonial education under don Ramón, the pedagogical aspect of the Spanish presence, ensures that a national and nationalist Spanish memory is inserted into his consciousness. Herzberger describes how Francoist Spain manipulated history to shape a past for its own nation-building purposes:

The weight of coercion is especially pertinent to the writing of history, since it created and sustained what the historian Henry Steele Commager describes as necessary to the sustenance of any political state: a usable past. For the Franco regime, this means that the State used the past both to underpin its existence as the fulfillment of Spain’s historical destiny and to give moral legitimacy to its claim of authority in the present. (16)

The Equatorial Guineans in the novel are first taught to devalue their own culture and history, and then are forced to memorize the Falangist version of Spanish history. Don Ramón, the protagonist’s teacher, provides a perfect example of this dichotomy. Fra-Molinero describes Don Ramón as, “[u]n maestro que hace cantar a sus niños himnos falangistas. Claramente, es el franquismo lo que resulta una tiniebla, por no decir una entelequia” (163). Don Ramón believes in the inferiority of his own people, and for this reason, beats his students until they bleed to help them learn. The protagonist describes that Don Ramón believes that “la letra sólo puede entrar con sangre, porque los negros tenemos la

cabeza muy dura” (24). Although older generations like the protagonist’s Uncle Abeso and his father have memories of life before colonization, the protagonist and his generation of children are educated to feel a sense of shared suffering with Spain due to the fact that they are taught that its history and language is also their own.

The protagonist embraces Falangist history with the enthusiasm of someone too young to fully understand the complications of the colonial presence in Equatorial Guinea. For example, he sits in school looking up at a picture of Franco who he refers to as “Ese Hombre que nos había traído la Verdadera Libertad” (27).⁹ He learns and accepts information and customs that he doesn’t comprehend. In this aspect, Don Ramón is very similar, for, as Carlos Nsue Otongo points out, he is “el ejemplo típico del producto colonial de su época: muchas veces repite a sus alumnos cosas que él mismo no tiene muy claras (63). The protagonist remembers how he and the other children in his class were “deseosos de saber por qué éramos falangistas y qué era ser falangistas hasta morir o vencer y por qué estábamos al servicio de España con placer” (25). Franco and his regime attempt to control history and make it unquestionable, static, and impervious to change. Herzberger discusses how, “[b]y resorting to myth, Francoist historiographers imprison both time and discourse and thereby cut at the very heart of discovery and change that impel history to begin with” (36). A model student, the protagonist does not question what he is taught, but simply soaks it up like a sponge. His intellect, enthusiasm and adaptability allow him to succeed at learning the history and customs of two cultures. However, as he grows older he begins to question what he has been taught about Spain, and to make choices about what information he will accept as true.

The teaching of history in the novel is close-

ly tied to Catholicism and themes of religious conversion. Teaching history in relationship to Catholicism, which is presented as the one true religion, leaves little room for dissent or questions. Herzberger asserts that “Spanish historiography overtly assumes a doctrinaire view that advances truth through the unifying tradition of Catholicism” (18). As the protagonist and his classmates practice the Falangist salute at school, the protagonist recounts that “terminábamos prometiéndole no sé que al cielo y hasta las estrellas que encendían nuestra fe por las rutas imperiales que conducían hacia Dios” (25). The first step to education is conversion, because, until that point colonizers like Father Ortiz consider the natives to be uncivilized. For example, Father Ortiz, when faced with Uncle Abeso’s resistance to conversion, calls him blasphemous and tells him he is going to hell (93). The protagonist’s father, on the other hand, converts to Catholicism, and is treated with more respect by the colonizers. Renan believes that, “[r]eligion cannot supply an adequate basis for the constitution of a modern nationality either” (17). However, in the novel it is a powerful tool used to shape the concept of nation. The protagonist, who grows up attending mass and spending time with Father Ortiz, wants to be a priest. As a young child his discussions of Spain are often connected to his religious sentiments, as if he were incapable of separating the two. However, the religious teachings represent the protagonist’s capacity to memorize rather than true understanding.

In chapter one the protagonist remembers that “[a]prendí a recitar la misa en latín sin saber latín” (23). Later he reiterates “seguía recitando los latinajos sin saber exactamente lo que decía” (67). He wants to be a priest, while at the same time leaving clues that he doesn’t fully understand Catholicism. As he reaches adulthood, he

begins to evaluate the teachings he received as a child, and he decides that he will not become a priest. For him, religion has become what Renan describes as “an individual matter; it concerns the conscience of each person” (18). Although the protagonist decides not to be a priest, he, like his father, will use what he has learned to guide his tribe. The protagonist uses his knowledge of Spanish language and religion to subvert traditional power structures. Saenz-Roby posits that “[e]l protagonista va a subvertir la retórica del colonizador, a pesar de ser el traductor y la mano derecha del padre Ortiz y de querer ser un sacerdote como él. Con mucha inocencia y frescura se replantea muchas situaciones, mostrando así su vínculo a una cultura ancestral” (2).

The protagonist is born into cultural conflict, and is educated by his tribe and by Spanish colonizers. His memory is a site of conflict, because he has been educated by Don Ramón and Father Ortiz to believe in the superiority of the Spanish and to think of his tribe’s culture as backwards. For example, the protagonist remembers: “A través de las exiguas e ingenuas explicaciones de don Ramón, aceptabas con la fatuidad de lo inextricable el inexorable revivir de los siglos: los españoles os habían venido a salvar de la anarquía, porque vuestros antepasados eran in fieles y bárbaros y caníbales e idólatras y conservaban cadáveres en sus casas, vestigios de salvajismo que censurabas junto con el padre Ortiz [...]” (31). At the same time, he is educated by his tribe and initiated among them as a leader. The child remembers how his Uncle Abeso “Había invocado la bendición de los antepasados sobre ti como se invocaba para todos los varones de la tribu, y los antepasados le habían contestado que tú no eras un descendiente cualquiera, eras uno de ellos reencarnado para devolver a la tribu su esplendor” (46). Memory is one of the most important sites of fissure in

the book: the child has memories of a Spanish colonial past which he speaks of as “mi madre España” and these memories conflict directly with what he is taught about the history and traditions of his tribe (25). According to Bhabha “The language of culture and community is poised on the fissures of the present becoming the rhetorical figures of a national past” (294). The child manages to live a double life in which he recites Falangist rhetoric and prepares to be a priest, while at the same time participating in traditional tribal ceremonies and rites.

Bhabha describes how “[t]he problematic boundaries of modernity are enacted in these ambivalent temporalities of the nation-space” (294). In the double life of the protagonist one can see how his allegiance shifts from one culture to the other in the process of his maturation. The protagonist remembers himself as a child and describes, “Fuiste un cristiano sincero, sí; un patriota sincero, sí, predestinado a ser uno de ellos” (33). His initial reaction is to embrace the customs of the dominant culture, to form a part of the nation the Spanish colonizers envision. However, upon his initiation into the tribe “la sabiduría milenaria del ancestro te comunicó que el gran acontecimiento se había realizado ya, el misterio había sido revelado a la tribu, habías sido ungido con el misterioso y mágico poder” (45). As he matures, he becomes aware that he can use skills learned from the whites to help the Fang tribe survive. At this time he also becomes aware of the role of his father. The protagonist describes the revelation as follows:

[y] mi padre me miraba también amoroso, y yo comprendí entonces su papel, mi padre jamás había pactado con ellos, era el enlace de la tribu con los ocupantes, alguien debe negociar, alguien debe charlar con ellos para saber cómo deben ser tratados, qué comida les gusta y qué cosas les irritan, cómo for-

nican y cuántos cigarrillos fuman cada día, alguien debe estar con ellos para vigilarlos de cerca, la tribu necesita almacenar información sobre sus movimientos y sus ideas, y lo entendí aquella mañana sin que nadie me lo dijera. (134)

The protagonist’s father gains certain advantages by adopting white customs. Regular interactions with whites like Father Ortiz put the protagonist in the position to learn from him and from the colonizing culture. Saenz-Roby explains of the protagonist’s father “[s]u actitud lo lleva a conseguir su emancipación plena, negociar sus productos y darle lo mejor a su familia—ventajas que los ponen en una situación puntera para la futura liberación de su pueblo” (11). As a young child the protagonist embraces colonizing culture genuinely, and it is only later, as he matures that he recognizes the importance of his own culture. Unlike his father, the protagonist is both fully Spanish and Equatorial Guinean.

Renan discusses the importance of a memory of shared suffering and sacrifice in the formation of a nation, but does not clarify what the feeling of sacrifice entails. He states, “A nation is therefore a large-scale solidarity, constituted by the feeling of the sacrifices that one has made in the past and of those that one is prepared to make in the future” (19). The protagonist learns about Spanish history at school, and genuinely believes that Franco brought liberty to Spain (Ndongo-Bidyogo 27). He is taught that Spain made a sacrifice to come to his country and free his people from their uncivilized ways (27). Language and translation play a key role in transmitting the Falangist message and sense of shared history and suffering. The protagonist learns Spanish from his father, and throughout the novel he often uses parenthesis to emphasize when people are speaking Spanish. He describes how his father

speaks “(en su castellano)” (72-73) making this observation repeatedly throughout the novel. The child’s double education by both his tribe and the colonizers ensures that he relates to both cultures, but as he grows from a child to an adult he begins to process and evaluate these teachings. As a child he accepts colonial teachings without question, and begins to view his tribe through the eyes of the colonizer. He identifies himself as Spanish, as is evident when he tells himself that: “Te gustaban las nociones (así las llamaban) de historia de España, y cuando don Ramón os preguntaba qué sois, tu voccecita se destacaba nítida de entre el ¡todos a una, somos españoles por la gracias de Dios!” (31). His enthusiasm and sense of shared history is based on language and religion. Don Ramón teaches him that Spain’s history, achievements and sacrifices are his own. At school, he is taught to feel that Spain has suffered for his country to such a degree that he and other students in his class repeat that they will be Falangist until death and serve Spain with pleasure (25).

Renan negates the idea that language plays a role in the formation of a nation. He asserts that, “[l]anguage invites people to unite, but it does not force them to do so” (16). However, in the novel language is a key to the formation of the hybrid nation, and functions more forcefully than an invitation to unite. The protagonist recognizes that “A una edad inusual hablabas con corrección el castellano y leías con fluidez. Ahora que todo pasa por tu memoria como una película vista muchas veces mucho tiempo antes reconoce que nunca hubieras sido nada sin ese regalito providencial” (30). He is the first member of the hybrid nation because of his knowledge of the two cultures, especially their languages. He serves as a translator both of language, and of culture. For example, he is a translator for his Uncle Abeso and Father Ortiz. The

protagonist describes, “[y]o traducía mientras el padre hablaba de la verdadera religión, de la muerte y resurrección de Cristo para la redención de todos los hombres, y el tío le miraba con un orgullo que solo demostraba ante los blancos” (93). His job as translator allows him to witness the strength of his Uncle Abeso in the face of the powerful Father Ortiz. Not even the threat of hell can convince Uncle Abeso to give up his six wives. In chapter zero, the rector of the seminary also emphasizes the important role of translation and language when he tries to convince the protagonist to become a priest. He asserts that, “[l]a Iglesia Africana anda escasa de sacerdotes autóctonos, que hablen el lenguaje del lugar” (17). However, the protagonist points out that his country also needs native doctors, engineers and lawyers. Bhabha also highlights the importance of translation. He states that “[t] here must also be a tribe of interpreters of such metaphors – the translators of the dissemination of texts [...]” (Bhabha 293). The protagonist as a translator first disseminates the colonial text, and then as he grows older, appropriates it to help his tribe. As a young child he memorizes perfectly the rhetoric of the Falangists, and repeats what he has been told to members of his community. However, as he comes of age, the protagonist internalizes what he has learned, and uses it to fight against the cultural and linguistic marginalization of his community.

The child’s father and Uncle Abeso have memories of life before Spanish colonization, and these memories form a historical presence that Bhabha defines as “a pedagogical object” (299). In other words, Uncle Abeso and the protagonist’s father have first-hand experience and knowledge of the tribe’s history. This is opposed to the synthesized experience and history that is presented to the protagonist as his heritage by the colonizers. The boy’s father and his

uncle Abeso react to Spanish colonization differently – the former adopts Spanish traditions and becomes friends with the Spanish, while the latter pursues a traditional lifestyle, maintains six wives and refuses to convert to Christianity. In the following quote Bhabha defines the pedagogical: “The pedagogical founds its narrative authority in a tradition of the people, described by Poulantzas as a movement of becoming designated by *itself*, encapsulated in a succession of historical movements that represents and eternity produced by self-generation” (299). In the end, the history and traditions of the tribe prove more powerful than the protagonist’s calling to be a priest. This is foreshadowed in chapter one when the child realizes that the Christ figure adorning the wall in his classroom is hollow. He relates “el Cristo estaba hueco, no era un verdadero hombre” (28). Upon reaching maturity, the protagonist discovers that the universal power of Catholicism is just an illusion. Fra-Molinero describes, “[s]u crisis se desata cuando su nacionalismo se enfrenta con la realidad de que la Iglesia Católica no es la todopoderosa institución que le había parecido cuando niño [...]” (164). The protagonist recognizes that there is power that lies outside of the realm of the Catholic church – the power of the secular man.

As the protagonist matures, the teachings of the marginalized Fang culture gain greater importance in his life, and displace the influence of the dominant culture. However, the interesting aspect about this novel is that displacement does not equal a reversal in the role of dominance. The protagonist values equally what he has learned from his tribe and what he has learned from the colonizers, because knowledge from both cultures allows him to emerge as a future leader. As Fra-Molinero emphasizes, “[e]l protagonista-narrador relata su lucha por permanecer fiel a dos mundos, crear una síntesis que contradiga el

modelo separador que está en la base de todas las construcciones culturales europeas desde el siglo XVIII” (162). In chapter zero the rector pleads with the protagonist to become a priest, and argues that the country needs native priests. The protagonist responds, “[r]everencia, Africa no necesita únicamente sacerdotes. En mi país – continúe medroso, humilde – apenas hay médicos, ingenieros, abogados, qué sé yo [...], nativos. También eso es primordial, padre, para alcanzar nuestra estabilidad, para nuestro progreso, para construirnos una nación” (17). To create equality in the new nation, the protagonist understands the necessity of having educated natives in positions of power – the doctors, engineers and lawyers that he mentioned.

To insert himself in the nationalist discourse, the protagonist appropriates the culture of the colonizers. For example, he takes the education he has received from the priests, but decides not to become one. The protagonist learns that “[e]l poder está en los ingenieros, los arquitectos, los maestros, los abogados. Quiere ser abogado” (Fra-Molinero 168). He implies that he will use his education to become a doctor or a lawyer, professions which he sees as more useful to his country. Herzberger explains how Falangist history, “[a]lthough it seeks to impose a univocal understanding of Spanish history and to construct an institutional understructure hardened by myth, its authority over time is dramatically fractured by a counterdiscourse whose project disrupts, reshapes, and broadens the conception of the Spanish past” (37). The Francoist rhetoric that the protagonist memorized and repeated as a child, but never understood, serves as an example of how a myth can fracture over time. As a child, the protagonist repeats the rhetoric enthusiastically, but as an adult he discovers that, like the Christ figure on the wall at school, it is hollow.

The nameless protagonist functions as a symbol of a new nation and a new generation of citizens: “más que un individuo concreto, particular, representa la conciencia de toda una sociedad en todos los actos de su vida” (Nsue Otong 60). Although he is born into the marginalized Fang population, his intelligence allows him learn the customs of two cultures. As he matures, he is able to evaluate what he has been taught, and to use both his knowledge of the language and religion of the colonizers to work for the equality of the Fang. Contrary to what Renan proposes, language and religion are key to shaping his vision of nationhood. The protagonist is the hybrid symbol of a new nation precisely because he feels connected to the language and religion of the two cultures that birthed him. Fra-Moliner clarifies, “[e]l protagonista es un nacionalista de la era post-colonial. Nada va a ser como antes. El poder se va a generar de una forma nueva, y el éxito va a estar en combinar el poder de los antepasados – la profunda fidelidad y amor a los suyos – con las formas del poder de los blancos, que han dejado ya una huella indeleble” (Fra-Moliner 168). Chapter zero, both the beginning and ending of the novel, presents the protagonist as a symbol of hope of a nationalist future that incorporates both the colonizer and the colonized, taking the best of both worlds to forge an independent future.

Notes

¹I would like to thank the Department of Hispanic Studies at the University of Kentucky for their support. In addition, I would like to thank Dr. Susan Larson and my colleague Jeffrey Zamostny for their editorial advice.

²For Renan, “A nation is a soul, a spiritual principal. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is the present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form” (19).

³Bhabha explains, “[t]he discourse of nationalism is not my main concern. In some ways it is the historical certainty and settled nature of the term against which I am attempting to write of the Western nation as an obscure and ubiquitous form of living the locality of culture. This locality is more around temporality than about historicity: a form of living that is more complex than ‘community’; more symbolic than ‘society’; more connotative than ‘country’; less patriotic than *patrie*; more rhetorical than the reason of state, more mythological than ideology; less homogenous than hegemony; less centered than the citizen; more collective than ‘the subject’; more psychic than civility; more hybrid in the articulation of cultural differences and identification -- gender, race or class – than can be represented in any hierarchical or binary structuring of social antagonism” (292).

⁴José Ortega y Gasset discusses the importance of the geography of Castilla to national identity in *España invertibrada*, and Miguel de Unamuno discusses the issue in *En torno al casticismo*.

⁵Daniel Conversi comments, “[a] final transposition from regionalism into a fully-fledged nationalism was the work of Enric Prat de la Riba (1870-1917). Already in his ‘Cathecism’ of 1894, we find a clear separation between the two concepts of state and nation: Catalonia is the fatherland of the Catalans, while Spain is merely a state” (30)

⁶ETA, which stands for Euzkadi’ta Askatasuna was founded in the Basque region in 1959 (Conversi 89).

⁷In an interview with Ndongo-Bidyogo, Odartey-Wellington describes “A Donato Ndongo-Bidyogo se le puede adscribir el mérito de haber desempeñado un papel importantísimo en la creación de una literatura nacional de Guinea Ecuatorial. De hecho, él mismo no lo negó cuando en una entrevista se le sugirió que la literatura guineoecuatoriana era una invención suya” (159).

⁸Fra-Moliner explains why Donato-Ndongo begins the novel with chapter zero: “[I]a idea de recrear el tiempo anterior a la independencia, poner la Guinea de Macías como el tiempo futuro de la novela, es una toma de posición ligada a cómo se ve el joven protagonista en el momento en que escribe, cuando decide abandonar el seminario. El futuro que el protagonista anuncia al Padre Ortiz está fuera de la novela, pero en la mente del lector[...].” (168).

⁹The non-normative use of capital letters is a technique that was employed in Falangist discourse.

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