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FROM *BOZAL* TO *MULATA*: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE BLACK AFRICAN FEMALE SLAVE IN EARLY MODERN SPANISH THEATER

Abstract:
In the sixteenth century, slave trade became one of the mainstays upon which the Spanish imperial economy was built. Although some Spanish cities already had sizable slave populations, it was not until this century that authors started to include representations of black Africans and Mulattoes in their literary creations. This essay explores the linguistic development of the black African female slave in the course of the sixteenth century through a comparative diachronic analysis of her identity figuration, based on specific linguistic characterizations. Theatrical plays by Rodrigo de Reinosa (1520s), Diego Sánchez de Badajoz (1550s), Lope de Rueda (mid-sixteenth century) and Lope de Vega (early seventeenth century) will be used as case studies to show how a predetermined set of sociolinguistic features shape the behavioral figure of these women who, analyzed as a group, constitute a complex emblem of the growth of the Afro-Hispanic population, as well as a changing notion of ethnicity and linguistic legitimacy in early modern Europe.

Keywords:
Early modern European theater ◆ sociolinguistics ◆ Afro-Hispanic studies ◆ early modern slavery

The explosion of the African slave trade in the fifteenth century had as its fundamental actors Portugal and Spain. The system of slavery, developed over the preceding centuries, was radically modified when the Portuguese, in expeditions sponsored by Prince Henry the Navigator, became the first Europeans to reach the Senegal River, Cape Verde, and finally

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Guinea. As the Portuguese circumvented the Muslim land-based trade routes across the Sahara Desert, slaves, ivory, and gold began to arrive throughout the Iberian Peninsula. Portugal's neighbors would also benefit from the growth of this market shortly thereafter, especially upon the arrival to the New World in 1492 and the large-scale transportation of black slaves in the early sixteenth century.[1] The slave trade became one of the mainstays for the upholding of the Spanish imperial economy, a development that would progressively become part of theater, poetry, and narrative. Although cities such as Barcelona, Valencia, and Seville already incorporated a large community of sub-Saharans before the booming of this market, Spanish literature did not include black African characters with definite identities and proper names until well into the sixteenth century.[2] In contrast to the scarcity of black characters in medieval Spanish literature, in the sixteenth century the literary representation of African slaves will expand in tandem with the solidification of the black slave trade in Spain and the Americas and with an ever stronger African presence in the streets of the most populous Iberian cities. A significant number of these authors had strong bonds with Seville or located their black characters in the urban context of the Andalusian capital, due to the high number of sub-Saharans in this city and its monopolist status in the transatlantic trade with the major American ports.[3]

This article focuses on theatrical representations of the situation of the black African woman in early modern Spain. The depiction of dramatic characters of African origin in literary sources throughout the sixteenth century will be used to reconstruct the socio-linguistic development of the Afro-Hispanic female community. Early sixteenth-century Spanish literature ridicules the black African way of speaking, known as "habla de negros" or "black speech," so much so that even those Africans whose ancestors had lived in Spain already for centuries were condemned as not being able to assimilate the Castilian language and speak it without committing the same mistakes from generation to generation. Afro-Iberian language first arose along the West African coast, and the origins of this stereotypical characterization can be found in some previous Portuguese models. The oldest lyric featuring a black African speaking an Iberian language is Fernão da Silveira's *mourisca ratorta,* composed on the occasion of the engagement of Princess Joana of Portugal to King Henry IV of Castile in 1455. Peter Russell considers this poem to be "the first surviving example we have of the use of literature as a vehicle of propaganda for European imperialism in Black Africa" (1973: 225). In this lyric, the King of Sierra Leone pays his respects to Dona Joana and dances for her: "Nam saber quy balhar terra vossa / balhar que saber como nossa terra" (Do not know here what dance land yours / Dance what know like our land).[4] His way of speaking

Portuguese, with all verbs in the infinitive form, and his buffoonish and servile behavioral characterization are evident throughout the composition, despite his having been presented in it as a king. This poem was included in the *Cancioneiro geral* by Garcia de Resende, a collection published in 1516, which comprised poems written at the Portuguese court during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. It was composed by imitating pidgin Portuguese—that is, the language that most African slaves arriving in Portugal at the time would use to speak with other slaves as well as with native speakers of Portuguese.

The sixteenth-century black character is constituted through characteristics of a *bozal*, a literary type that, like that of the Gypsy or the Morisco, was always presented with clearly defined and continuously repeated features, whose dramatic purpose was to make the audiences laugh and allow everyone to easily distinguish and categorize the specific characters on stage. A *bozal* was a person of sub-Saharan origin who had been brought to the Peninsula as a slave and could hardly speak Spanish. The term "bozal," as defined by Sebastián de Covarrubias in his *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española* (*Treasury of Castilian or Spanish language*) published in 1611, meant "el negro que no tiene otra lengua que la suya" ("the Black who knows no language but his own") as well as "el adorno que suelen poner a los caballos sobre el boço con campanillas de plata, o de otro metal. También es boçal cierto género de frenillo que ponen a los perros, y a los demás animales para que no puedan morder…" (143r) ("the ornament which is usually put on the horse's mouth, with a small metal bell, commonly made out of silver. A bozal is also a type of muzzle used with dogs and other animals so that they cannot bite…"). The application of the word emphasizes the importance that linguistic communication, or the absence thereof, held in the popular definition of the black African. Covarrubias traces an etymology of *bozal*, "la lengua o lenguaje se llama labio y los labios bezos: de boca, boza, y de alli boçal" ("the tongue or language is called lip and their lips are thick: from mouth [*boca*] we have *boza* and from there *boçal"*), that connects poor language skills with animal features and a particular physical trait that were commonly used to construct a whole image of that dark "other."

The use of the term spread along with the growth of the African slave trade in the early sixteenth century and would come to express the animalization that Spanish society tended to invoke in relation to those with whom various difficulties of comprehension arose.. *Bozal* also became a legal term used in deeds of sale to describe the slave and became a category as important as age and gender. The word's expanding usage is especially significant for the current argument, because it indexed the language barrier that existed between recently arrived black Africans and native speakers of Spanish of European descent, accentuating

differences and categorizing Iberian races through linguistic components. An important part of the image that was chosen to portray the black African subject in literature is constructed precisely around the use of definite metaphors built and founded around sociolinguistic perspectives. The linguistic difference between Africans and non-Africans facilitated the general definition of a particular image of the Black as a figure who lacks "white" qualities. Spanish authors, all of them male, white and native speakers of Spanish, were clearly aware of language production as a mechanism for the creation of stereotypes and developed specific characteristics to be applied to their characters of African origin. Such representation, as I will explain here, is based on conventionally defined markers of linguistic marginality that early- and mid-sixteenth-century authors drafted and whose shape will be completed in the early seventeenth-century works by Lope de Vega and other writers after him.[5]

Poetry and theater are the only available sources for uncovering the characteristics of the usage of Portuguese and Spanish pidgin in the sixteenth century. The literary imitation of this ethnolect will emerge always accompanied by a conventional spelling, morphology and syntax, thus contributing to the establishment of a number of comic features that will be part of a stereotypical characterization of sub-Saharans in early modern theater. Certainly, as noted by Anthony Naro in relation to the use of Portuguese pidgin in literature, "artistic and aesthetic success, rather than faithful portrayal of the ordinary, was the authors' goal" (320). Baltasar Fra Molinero (1995) analyzes the image of black Africans in early modern Spanish theater and considers the ways in which white playwrights, in a search for a black "essence," adopted certain literary techniques in order to provide a consistent image for making reference to the social situation of the slave. *Bozal* Spanish is the most salient of these techniques and was used not only as a signifier for black characters, but also as the vehicle for a specific point of view.[6] John Beusterien, in his book *An Eye on Race* (2006), has investigated the narrativized and denarrativized visions that Whites maintained regarding Blacks throughout sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain, aiming to understand how theater, from the White's perspectives, depicted blackness as a corruption of skin color making possible racism against Africans. Beusterien theorizes that "the Spanish language in the imperial age made Afro-Iberians foreign to its vocabulary and so they, like their language, entered its imaginary as a neologism, essentializing whiteness and sexual purity onto the language and body of the imperial Spaniard" (108). It is very difficult to separate the stereotype from any presumed accurate representation of contemporaneous black African speech in Iberia, especially given how all of these black female characters were created by white male authors. Indeed, this article seeks neither to provide a descriptive analysis of actual speech during a specific period

of history, a task undertaken in great detail by John Lipski (1986a and b, 1988, 2005, 2014), nor to explore the general literary representation of blackness by white Spanish playwrights. The goal of this study is rather to present and analyze the consequences that Spanish pidgin had on the characterization of black African women in their first century of appearance in Spain's theatrical production and how linguistic legitimacy played a pivotal role in the establishment of distinctions between these racialized women and the Spanish idea of whiteness.

The first writer who paid attention to the black Afro-Hispanic as a literary character was Rodrigo de Reinosa, who wrote a series of *coplas* (four-line stanzas, theater-based poems) with black characters. Reinosa was not from Seville, but he chose this city as the urban setting for his *coplas* in the first quarter of the sixteenth century. Although we do not know for certain, Reinosa may have visited this city and familiarized himself with the Spanish spoken by black Africans. However, José María Cabrales considers it likely that Reinosa never visited Seville and simply used the shared knowledge about the city as a place with a fast-growing black community who spoke Spanish with a strong Portuguese accent because many of them had come through Lisbon.[7] In a poem entitled "Comienzan unas coplas a los negros y negras y de como se motejavan en Sevilla un negro de gelofe mandinga contra una negra de Guinea" ("These coplas tell a story that happened in Seville about how a black Wolof Mandinka man and a black woman from Guinea insulted each other", circa 1524), the poetic structure is developed like a theatrical conversation. The two characters are called Jorge and Comba, black Africans from different parts of the continent who argue about their places of origin and emphasize their masters' wealth as if it were their own, in order to place themselves in a position of superiority over the respective other character. In this poem, Jorge says that he will be a *liberto* or freed slave soon: "tener yo alhoría con que me dé porte" (114) ("I will be a gentleman once I am manumitted.")[8] This "alhorría" or "ahorría" [manumission] affected many members of the Afro-Hispanic community after several years of service. When slaves had been loyal, good Christians and had provided good service to their masters, it was common to have them freed after the death of the owner. The most important condition that the slave was obliged to fulfill was that of being a Catholic.[9] Alfonso Franco Silva indicates that most if not all *libertos* or freed slaves were Christians, since all slaves had to be baptized if they wanted to be freed and consequently needed to change their name (1979: 185).[10] The onomastic differentiation of both African characters is also important: Jorge, the soon-to-be *liberto*, has a Christian name possibly because he had been a slave in Seville over the course of several years, while Comba holds a name with African resonance that could indicate her

recent arrival to the city.[11] However, they speak Spanish with the same phonological and syntactic patterns because they both are black.

Rodrigo de Reinosa's *copla* features the first literary conversation in Spanish between two black characters. Previously, black Africans had only been represented singing or talking to their masters. In the interaction, Jorge tries to seduce Comba, and she answers by using a series of degrading insults centering around Jorge's specific African origins. The female slave uses a series of derogatory epithets to attack the man, deriding his animal character and the low-quality eating habits attributed to those of his geographical origin, "[y] allá en Gelofe, do tu terra fea / comer con gran hambra carabaju vejo, / cabeza de can, lagartu vermejo, / por do tu andar muy muito fambrento" (111) ("There in Wolof, your ugly land / to eat old cockroaches with great hunger / dog heads, red lizards, / and for that you to be very hungry"), common tropes that will be repeated later by the members of the dominant class to ridicule the figure of the literary black African in other works. Reinosa seems to grant the female slave an implicit superiority over the black male, for it is she who starts the talk, initiates the insults and holds the power to reject his insinuations. The black character in the Portuguese *ratorta* prides himself on his ability to dance, "balhar que saber como nossa terra," ("to dance as we know in our land") an allusion to national origins and customs rehearsed by Jorge in the *copla*, defending himself from Comba's accusations with the same verbs in the infinitive form: "a mi saber bailar bien el guineo" (112). Jorge belongs to a bishop, while Comba is the slave of a *corregidor* (a local official appointed by the King). This *copla*, although it lacks the depth that will be reached in early seventeenth-century theater, introduces features of a grotesquely characterized social condition and linguistic repertoire from which later playwrights will develop their characterization of the black slave. These features, however, constituted a set of stereotypes that white Spanish society had constructed in order to categorize the black African and, as Aurelia Martín Casares asserts about Reinosa's poem, the audience would laugh at the sexual references and the exchange of insults about the places and customs in Jorge and Comba's native countries, the characterizations of which were based of course on the prejudices of Spaniards than on the realities of sub-Saharan Africa (2010: 181). If we pay attention to the title and the geographical information provided in the poem, we see that Reinosa knew, at least by name, the majority African groups in Seville, since these had tended to come from Guinea as well as from the countries with a high population of Wolof and Mandinka peoples, as indicated in the studies on slavery in fifteenth and sixteenth century Spain by Franco Silva (1979: 66–70).

In Reinosa's poem, Comba is from Guinea and Jorge is from a Wolof country, but both use a range of Portuguese words. According to Frida Weber de Kurlat, the abundance of Portuguese words can be interpreted as a conjunction of empirical observation (the Blacks who were arriving in Seville knew Portuguese words because they had stayed a while in Lisbon before being transported to Seville) and the literary Portuguese tradition Reinosa took as the starting point for his work (388). Many black African slaves arrived in Seville and other Spanish cities from Portugal, especially from Lisbon and Evora, and some of them had been born in that country (Franco Silva 1979: 68–69). Weber de Kurlat did not consider the case of those Blacks born in Portugal, whose native language was Portuguese even if the literary representations of Black Africans did not appear to master the language. The same phenomenon will emerge in the Spanish texts, as we will see throughout this article. I will show that Reinosa followed the Portuguese patterns as a linguistic model for his compositions and, although in some examples the direct imitation of lexical terms produced by Portuguese *bozales* is evident, we should not analyze these representations according to criteria of authenticity or inauthenticity. Reinosa uses basic, common words that already appear throughout Portuguese poems or plays, such as a Silveira's ratorta or Gil Vicente's plays with African voices and characters, which were popular in Spain as well. The word *taybo*/*taibo*, for example, appears in Silveira's *ratorta* and in Reinosa's *copla*, and not in other contemporaneous Iberian pieces where black African characters talk. This rare coincidence is an example of the influence that Portuguese literature exerted upon the Spanish author, when he was trying to imitate and establish the *habla de negros* in Spanish literature.

Considering that Seville already hosted a large community of black Africans long before the beginning of the exploration of the sub-Saharan African coast, and that most sixteenth-century slaves had been born in Africa, including Jorge and Comba, it is hard to associate Reinosa's characters with any true Portuguese linguistic reality.[12] As we will see later, black African slaves continued arriving from Portugal throughout the sixteenth century, even more so after 1580 with the dynastic union between the Spanish and Portuguese crowns, but literary characterization will avoid the use of Portuguese terms in favor of an unspecified foreigner-talk mixed with an exaggerated Africanized pronunciation. Some of the Portuguese terms that Reinosa uses are "branco" [white], "muyto" [a lot], "muyta," "fambrento" [hungry], "falar" [to talk] or "fazer" [to do].[13] Reinosa's characters also make use of words that have not undergone the process of diphthongization and that can be found in Silveira's poem, such as "terra" for "tierra" [land], "pimenta" for "pimienta" [pepper], or "vostro" instead of "vuestro" [yours]. These examples are, in my view, used by the author to imitate archaic uses of Spanish

in order to emphasize the differential features that were being assigned by playwrights to the stereotypical *habla de negros*. A similar change occurs in the characterization of Moriscos in sixteenth century theater, where diphthongs are undone even if, as Menéndez Pidal asserts, "no aparece en la escritura aljamiada la confusión *e* por *i* que traen algunos de los que remedan el habla morisca" ("the confusion *e* for *i* does not appear in the aljamiado texts that imitate the morisco speech"). Consolación Baranda Leturio wagers that vowel alterations in black Africans might be attributable to the same logic and, consequently, the absence of diphthongization would not have corresponded with any real black African speech in Iberia.[14]

The characteristics featured in this *copla*, such as an assimilated Catholic identity, the animalization of the slave, the use of music and dance, sexual promiscuity, the use of love relations to deepen the literary interaction or allusions to specific African origins, among many other linguistic phenomena, will be repeated consistently in the portrayal of black community members throughout the sixteenth century. The attribution of these parameters contributed to the creation of a literary convention that was the consequence of a more prominent social presence of black Africans that needed to be satisfied on the stage, although not neccesarily based on a direct reflection of the realities in the major urban centers. The founding of the *Hermandad de los Negros* (Brotherhood of the Blacks) in Seville in the 1390s emblematized not only the eagerness of the authorities to bring black Africans closer to Christianity but also the use of religion as an instrument to keep the members of said community within a discrete group and away from potential trouble-makers. From the late fourteenth century to the seventeenth century, the city of Seville took a profound interest in the evangelization of sub-Saharans. In 1614, Archbishop Pedro de Castro y Quiñones wrote the "Instrucción para remediar y assegurar…que ninguno de los negros que vienen de Guinea, Angola y otras provincias de aquella costa de África, caresca del sagrado baptismo" ("Instructions for Remedying and Assuring…that None of the Blacks Who Come from Guinea, Angola and other Provinces from that African Coast is Lacking in Sacred Baptism"), a program launched to verify that the black slaves arriving in the city had been previously baptized, since he had noticed that many *bozales* were not baptized or had been baptized invalidly.

The Archbishop asked his priests to take a census of all the black men and women in their parishes and he wanted the census to indicate if the slave was a *bozal* or a *ladino* (those who could speak standard Spanish) since *ladinos* could be used as interpreters for *bozales*. In the same fashion, the Jesuit Alonso de Sandoval published *De instauranda Aethiopum salute* in Seville in 1627, including the letter by Castro y Quiñones,[15] and concluded that "no les piden

consentimiento para si quieren ser Christianos, ni les instruyen en la Fe, ni les dan a entender lo que es el santo baptismo, ni les ponen intérpretes que sepan sus lenguas, para que estos tales se declaren, antes a ciegas, y sin saber lo que reciben, les dan el baptismo...[otros] contestan en que después de aver baptizado los dichos negros de las armazones, se suelen cobrar y comprar negros, y estos se meten entre los otros en el navío, y después no se conocen cuáles son baptizados, y cuáles no" (386–87) ("Slaves are not asked their consent, nor are they instructed in the faith, nor do they understand what holy baptism is, nor are interpreters there that know their languages. They receive baptism blind and utterly ignorant to its meaning…[others] said that after some of the slaves are baptized, the traders continue buying and selling them so that everyone is mixed together on the ships and no one knows who is baptized and who is not baptized").[16] Both clerics underlined the importance of the language and its connection with the diffusion of Catholicism among black Africans and compared the lack of religious instruction with their difficulties understanding standard Spanish. Sandoval's main goal is introduced in the first chapter of Book III, where he suggests that "el confessar, el convertir, el enseñar, el baptizar, el adiestrar, y encaminar al cielo estos pobres negros bozales: y assi la tengo por obra mas meritoria, de mayor gloria del Señor, y de mas provecho y utilidad propria nuestra" (365) ("I believe that confessing, converting, teaching, baptizing, and guiding these poor black *bozales* and putting them on the road to heaven is the most meritorious work, of the greatest glory to the Lord, and the most advantageous and useful for us").

Reinosa's poem ends with Comba's statement about her own importance as a slave: "Y estar criada del carrajador, / con mi ama en misa me assento" (79–80) ("I am a maid of the Corregidor, and I go to church with my (female) owner"). In 1554, Diego Sánchez de Badajoz published in Seville his *Recopilación en metro,* which included a collection of farces. In the "Farsa theologal" ("Theological farce") there is a dialogue between a shepherd and a theologian on the sacrifice that Jesus Christ had to make in order to save mankind. While the men are discussing, a black woman called "Negra" appears singing a *villancico* [popular song frequently associated with rustic themes] and playing music on a drinking glass. Negra's song heralds the birth of baby Jesus and the popular eruption of happiness due to the celebration of Christmas. Sánchez de Badajoz introduces the figure of a priest, named Cura [Priest], who asks Negra if she has been baptized. All of the characters in the farce are named after their individual profession except the African woman, whose name is directly associated with her skin color and whose personality traits are developed from her interest in music, dance and religion—as had been the case of Comba.[17] The stereotyped features that identify her as a literary figure, especially linguistic distortion, depend on a color which functions as a signifier

within the theatrical world. The theologian expresses his happiness that Catholicism, "el Sacro Verbo Divino" (769) ("the divine and sacred Word") reaches "a los negros bozales" (771). The commentary alludes to the Christianization that black Africans had to undergo in the Iberian Peninsula. Negra's master is Soldado (Soldier), "a moro con bautismo / y ella no sé si lo tiene (1019–20) ("a Moor with baptism, / and I don't know if she has it"), who takes the stage defining his slave in condemnatory terms: "esta negra es del Diablo" (803) ("this Black belongs to the Devil"). The master speaks to his slave with offensive terminology reminiscent of Jorge and Comba's in the *copla*, terminology that would become a common feature for defining slaves no matter how low the master's social status. When the priest asks the slave directly if she was baptized, "¿[t]ú vístete rociar / del lavatorio divino? (1033–34) ("Were you sprinkled with the divine washing?"), he is using very specialized expressions that are obviously incomprehensible to her: "Nunca me raba con bino, / ma con agua, sí rabar" (1035–36) ("I never wash with wine but, with water, I to wash"). Although in the sixteenth century there was a moral obligation to baptize slaves, not all owners took this to heart.[18] The scene symbolizes the concerns that the ecclesiastical authorities had regarding the christening of black Africans so as to eliminate the "lepra original" (1065) ("original leprosy"). As Castro y Quiñones and Sandoval decried, black African slaves were often not aware if they had been baptized because their Spanish skills were extremely limited and they could not understand the complicated religious terminology due to the absence of interpreters.

The lack of religious instruction in black Africans is also mocked by Sánchez de Badajoz in this same farce when Pastor, the shepherd, tests Negra's knowledge of the Lord's Prayer in Latin: "Ora pues, di por provar: / Pater Noster" (1208–09) ("Let's try now then: / Pater Noster"). Negra, however, repeats the first line as "Patro nostro" (1210) and annoys Pastor, who insults her strongly: "[d]oy al diabro el tu rostro" (1211) ("I give your face to the devil"), and laments her incapacity to express herself in Spanish "no me entiende cuanto habro / ni yo la puedo entender" (1387–88) ("She doesn't understand me when I speak, and I don't understand her either"). The shepherd, just like the African slave, pronounces the <l> as <r>, "rabar" for "lavar [to wash], "diabro" for "diablo" [devil] or "habro" instead of "hablo" [I speak], in what was considered a rustic example of rhotacism shared with the literary *habla de negros*.[19] Sánchez de Badajoz makes fun of him and the ironic and pointless scenario in which an uneducated person who cannot speak standard Spanish is trying to teach a text in Latin to another person who cannot even understand Spanish. Franco Silva notes that fewer than half of the baptized black Africans in the late fifteenth- and early sixteenth centuries appear to have been *bozales* recently arrived from Guinea (1979: 237). The playwright thus makes use

of a latent sociological situation that was part of a larger theological debate at his time and adapts it, as commonly occurred with the entire configuration of black African literary characters, to construct a comic situation from a problematic issue that was not officially addressed until the seventeenth century. Just as it happens with the linguistic characterization of sub-Saharans, the familiarity of the audience with these specific situations was necessary in order to produce a funny and engaging piece of entertainment on stage.

In the seventh scene of *Eufemia* (1567) by Lope de Rueda (a playwright born in Seville),[20] also performed separately under the title "La novia negra," Eulalla, a black domestic slave, wants to bleach her hair blonde in order to look like "la otro" (f. XXVIIIv) [the others] as a means of legitimating her feminine beauty. Eulalla mixes the genders of article and noun when she means "las otras"—that is, the other women—understanding women as white women with real or dyed blonde hair. From a phonological point of view, Eulalla deletes the phoneme /s/ in plural noun phrases (word-final context), a process that we know was characteristic of Andalusian Spanish already. Rueda thus introduces a feature that is not inspired from the previous models in order to characterize the phonological representation of his slave. The loss of final /s/ is not common in *bozal* Portuguese—neither in the sixteenth century nor in later centuries—and it is a process that occurs sporadically in Portugal and in (non-creole) African Portuguese (Lipski 1984: 32–33). If literary black Africans deleted final –s in Spanish but not in Portuguese, it could mean that this was more a transfer from the literary representation of Andalusian lower classes, many members of which owned slaves as did the shepherd in *Farsa theologal*, than an inherent transformation produced by Afro-Hispanics. Other phonological features of black African Spanish that we find in sixteenth-century literary texts are also typical of Andalusian Spanish, such as the shift from /l/ to /r/ or the *yeísmo* (loss of traditional phoneme /ʎ/ (written ⟨ll⟩) and substitution for /j/ (written ⟨y⟩)), which appears in examples throughout this essay. Given that these changes had already taken place in different dialects of Andalusian Spanish by the sixteenth century and that most of these African slaves happen to be in Southern Spain, it is plausible to suppose that they assimilated these sounds from their owners after serving as domestic laborers.[21] In any case, and bearing in mind that these phonological transformations are commonly attributed to white lower classes (we never find Andalusian nobles speaking non-standard Castilian in early modern theater), literary Spanish pidgin would have accrued some of these features as part of the arbitrariness with which playwrights attributed certain rustic and/or archaic sounds and changes to the subjectively established literary *habla de negros*.

The characterization of the black African female slave in the work of Lope de Rueda represents the image of an individual with a need to become part of the collective identity. The assimilation of a new identity entailed the imitation of a set of parameters that were linked to the ideal Renaissance woman. The African woman in Renaissance Spain was clearly identified, as Kate Lowe notes in regards to the perception of black Africans in general, "in opposition to the particularly Renaissance vision of white, European culture and civilisation" (19). Rueda plays with this opposition to create a comic effect when the black woman desires to follow a standard of beauty that is obviously impossible for her to attain. Instead of desiring freedom or a better life like the one white women had, Eulalla's imitation consists of a futile action that will not improve her current situation at all. In the conversation Eulalla has with Polo, the white servant of Valiano (one of the play's protagonists), we understand that she is also searching for a husband with money enough to buy her a parrot, so she can teach it how to speak Spanish, as well as a female monkey that would become the guardian of her stable: "La papagayos para qu'enseña a fablar en jaula, y la mona para que la tengas yo a mi puertas como dueña d'estabro" (f. XXIXv).[22] Her desire to teach Spanish to a parrot indicates the strong literary foundation of the stereotypical *habla de negros* and its perpetuation in Spanish theater through the linguistic characterization of subjects of African origin. Again, instead of learning Spanish herself, she pursues a task that would be evaluated by the audience as useless and, consequently, laughter-provoking. The animalization of the domestic slave is also manifested through her need for a monkey, an animal typically associated to black Africans in sixteenth-century theater, as white ladies had a housekeeper. The same type of situation is created when she wishes to own a "ventayos" [fan] to cover her face, "porque si mira algún conoscida no me la conoscas" ("because if an acquaintance sees me she will not recognize me"). The slave is being mocked here by the author since it is made emphatic here that, whether covered or uncovered, she will always be recognized as a black African due to her distinctive way of speaking Spanish. Covarrubias appears to allude to the impossibility that a black woman would be able to hide herself from white women, when he makes mention of the proverb "callar como negra en baño" ("to stay silent as a black in bathroom"), which he glosses as follows:

> El que disimula y calla sin responder a las palabras ocasionadas para enojarse, y nació de que en las tierras calurosas donde se usan los baños…el cual está oscuro y sin luz, entrando alguna negra aunque las demás mujeres le digan alguna cosa o la pregunten, no dice palabra ni responde porque siendo conocida no la echen afrentosamente y le digan palabras pesadas o hagan burla de ella, como decirle para qué va la negra al baño si blanca no puede ser. (83r)

> The person who feigns or stays silent without answering the annoying words. It was created in the warm lands where the bathrooms are used…since bathrooms are dark and unlit, when a black woman enters and the other women tell her or ask her something she doesn't say a word because if she were recognized she would be kicked out and asked why she goes to the bathroom if she cannot be white.

The strategy popularly assigned to black women who did not want to be recognized ("siendo conocida" for Covarrubias) by her acquaintances ("algún conoscida" for Rueda's character), was to stay silent. However, Eulalla's hiding strategy consists of imitating what white women from the upper classes, her binary opposite, used to do. Linguistic communication, then, was understood by authors and audience as a sign that defined the individual and distinguished the Spanish self from the Afro-Hispanic self.

The use of "fablar" instead of "hablar" is another example of an archaic usage, shown earlier in the previous examples, typically voiced by literary black Africans, since by the sixteenth century the latin *f* had become a silent *h* in word-initial position. The African slave produces a phonological feature that opposes the loss of final /s/, that is, the hypercorrection of the plural /s/ in singular noun phrases as in "la papagayos / un papagayos" or "mi puertas," or when she admits to having prayed for five days to "Nicolás de Tramentinos" (San Nicolás de Tolentino) in hopes of transforming her hair color. She also adds a final –s to the conjugation of the present subjunctive of "tener": "tengas yo" instead of "tenga." Her attempt to use the appropriate form accompanies her wish to transform her identity into that of a noblewoman creating, in consequence, a ridiculous situation fed not only by this phonetic overcorrection, but also by the impossible individual desire of a black slave for human transformation. However, the comic effect produced for the audience distorts the sad reality of black female slave subjectivity, since Polo's plan is to marry Eulalla so he can sell her afterwards as a slave: "¡Pese a tal con la galga! Yo la pienso vender en el primer lugar diciendo que es mi esclava, y ella póneseme en señoríos… A ser más blanca, no valías nada. Adiós, que así te quiero para hacer reales." (ff. XXXr-XXXv) ("Damn dog, I plan to sell her right away saying she is my slave and she pretends to be a lady…if you were whiter, you would be worth nothing. Goodbye that I want you to make money"). Rueda creates a character of a slave who is aware of her social position, which she is seeking to modify by way of a grotesque strategy to look like white women, emphasizing her pathetic situation and reinforcing an enclosed and immutable situation. This combination of feelings evoked by the playwright reflects the position of the black Afro-Hispanic community and its social definition as human beings through strictly economic and material terms.

Lope de Rueda goes one step further with the character of Guiomar in his most famous play, *Los engañados* (*The deceived,* 1556), in which an African domestic slave is placed, for the first time in Spanish theater, in a position of mediation between white upper class members. When Gerardo wants to talk to his daughter Clavela, he asks Guiomar for help. However, the slave's mediation fails due to her poor linguistic skills and she is unable to convey Gerardo's message to his daughter clearly:

> Gerardo: Le digáis que en casa de Milán Muñoz, el tendero, me hallará. ("I want you to tell her that she can find me in the house of Milán Muñoz, the storekeeper.")
>
> Guiomar: ¿No dize en casa malaños terar Dios entero?
>
> Gerardo: Esos sean para ti perra. ("For you, dog", 25)

Again, humor is produced through Guiomar's mispronunciation of the name Milán Muñoz as "malaños" [bad years] and the profession of this man, "el tendero" becomes "terar Dios entero," which might mean something close to "even God would be buried." However, it is important to note that Guiomar understands what her master tells her; however, she cannot repeat the Spanish words in the same standardized way. This laughter-provoking situation parallels the story of Eulalla and the parrot: the sad truth here is that Guiomar assumes the role of the parrot and is unable to repeat the words her master tells her, just as it happened with Negra in the *Farsa theologal*. The situation that explains her inability to repeat Spanish words arises when she talks to her owner about her son in a different scene:

> Guiomar: Por esso primer fijo que me nacer en Potugal le yamar Diguito, como siñor su *saragüelo*. ("My first son was born in Portugal and I called him Diguito, like his grandfather.")[23]
> Clavela: Su *agüelo* dirás. ("You mean his grandfather.")
>
> Guiomar: Sí, siñora, su *sabuelo*. ("Yes, madam, his grandfather", 29)

These misunderstandings and failed attempts of repetition are typically followed by a series of insults from the white characters on stage, in which the slaves are compared to different animals, especially dogs, as well as a comparison of the black color with different objects, such as coal, gunpowder, pepper or red wine, expressing the value of the slave in material terms: "Calla doña negra, que agora ha mandado su alteza que a todos los negros y negras hagan pólvora" (30) ("Shut up, black lady! His highness has now ordered to make gunpowder out of all black men and women"), says Julieta, Clavela's white maid. Color always plays an important role in the spatial and symbolic definition of the sub-Saharan theatrical character

and interconnects the language with a dehumanizing construction perpetuated by the members of the dominant classes who react violently to the impossible prospect of holding a normal conversation with their own domestic slaves.

The last example of a *negra bozal* I will discuss here is that of Dominga in "Los negros" (1602) by Simón de Aguado. The Seville interlude presents the story of a black slave called Gaspar who falls in love with Dominga and asks his owner for more time to go out with her. Dominga's complaint to Gaspar's master is that "¿en qué libro habemus leiro que una pobre negra, aunque sea crava de Poncio Poliato, no se pora enamorar? ¿Hay alguna prematica que diga que negro con negra no poramo hacer negriyo cuando acabamo de acosar a nuesamo?" (232) ("In what book have we read that a poor black woman, even if she is Pontius Pilate's slave, cannot fall in love? Is there any law that prohibits that a black man and a black woman can have little Blacks after putting our masters in bed?"), in what is a declaration of principles of the black African community of slaves. The statement, although full of phonological features associated with literary *habla de negros* (yeísmo and loss of final /s/ in "negriyo" instead of "negrillos"; shift of /l/ to /r/ in "crava" for "esclava" and from /d/ to /r/ in "poramo" instead of "podamos") that would certainly inspire laughter in the audience, contains one of the first class-actions of a community claiming what was legally attributed to them. Dominga created a certain impact in the audience, many of them slave owners, since they were invited to participate and judge the situation of black Africans within Spanish society. Despite their inferior status, the baptized slave had the right to marry freely, although obviously there were many owners who would not allow them to do so and would force the slave to seek justice to oblige the master to sell the slave in what was the only hierarchical conflict that a slave could legally win.[24] Dominga, seeking to be taken seriously, claims her total adaptation to Spanish traditions: "Dominga me yamo, Manicongo nacimo, Sevilla batizamolo, juraro mi señalo fue lo padronos, y tenemos en la memoria la mandamenta y la gartículos" (232) ("My name is Dominga, I was born in ManiKongo, I was baptized in Seville, my owner was my godfather, and we have in our memory the commandments and articles"). Apart from her distorted use of standard Spanish, what Comba, Dominga, Guiomar and Eulalla all have in common is a desire for transculturation. Although the first step for transculturation is the assimilation of the language of the new culture, these domestic slaves express their complete willingness to participate in all of the structures that shaped early modern Spanish society.

The depiction of the African female slave will change by the early seventeenth century, when a new type of character appears for the first time in Spanish literature: the mulatto woman, or *mulata*. After Lope de Rueda, Spanish theater produced only a few minor plays with black

African characters, but the early seventeenth century brought a major swell in the dramatic imitation of a community which, by then, had reached its highest proportions in the history of Spain.[25] In Spain, many mulattoes were the result of generational "race-mixing" between white Europeans and black Africans. Rueda's character of Guiomar refers to the "terra de Manicongo" as her place of origin in Africa. ManiKongo was the title of the rulers of the six provinces of the kingdom of Kongo in the fifteenth century and one of the principal providers of slaves in the sixteenth century. The continuous ethnic references to different places in Africa in early modern Spanish theater tell us that the audience was expected to know the origins of black slaves at least by name.[26] Guiomar remembers her son and cousin, who remained in Congo, when she was bought and brought into Spain: "tenemo un prima mía contrita na religiona monja priora nabadessa ayá en mi terra de Manicongo muy honradas…Aquella mochacho, aquella mi fijo, metemelo a prinsipio de carta diziendo: "Lutrissima madre mía Guiomar, la carta que yo te cribo no e para besamano, sino que sa bono. Bendito sea rios, loado sea rios, amén." (24) ("I have a cousin who is an honest nun in my land of ManiKongo…That boy, my son, sent me a letter saying: «Her grace mother Guiomar, the letter that I am writing you is not to kiss your hands but to hope that everything is good. Blessed be God, Amen"). Later Guiomar explains that her son was eventually sold and now lives in Puerto Rico, an event that she remembers with great pain: "¡Ay, siñora! No me lo mientas, que me faze lágrima yorar. Téngolo, siñora, la India le San Joan de Punto Rico" (29) ("Oh, madam! Don't talk to me about him or I'll cry. I have him in the Indies of San Juan de Puerto Rico"). Lope de Rueda accounts for the presence of black Africans in Puerto Rico and, as a consequence, in other places in Latin America with an important population of black slaves as Cuba or the Dominican Republic. Until then, literary black Africans had only been located in Spain. However, he and other authors did not include any mulatto characters in their plays, despite the evidence that there was a considerable number of mulattoes in the Spanish cities.[27]

In Lope de Vega, the first Spanish playwright to use mulatto characters, we find the character of Elvira in *Servir a señor discreto* (1610–12) introduced as a "mulata indiana," the daughter of a Native American and a sub-Saharan, who is a slave in Seville. It is important to note that she takes up the role of "uniter" who joins different worlds together, Africa, America and Europe, to represent the idea of *mestizaje* or miscegenation. With this kind of characters, who will appear in several plays by Lope de Vega set in Seville, the city that connected the Old World with the New World, such as *La vitoria de la honra*, *El Arenal de Sevilla* or *Amar, servir y esperar* among many others, the author creates a system by which the domestic slave

takes on the role of mediator—a successful one unlike Lope de Rueda's slave—and will be in charge of distributing love between young nobles of the seventeenth century. Fra Molinero defines the character of Elvira, in a way that could be extended to other *mulatas* in seventeenth-century Spanish theater, as that of an idealized slave since she can read, knows about poetry and understands clearly the position she occupies in the field of erotic attractions (33). The role of Elvira and other *mulatas* gradually mitigate the notion of inferiority and mediocrity with which the characterization of women of sub-Saharan origin had begun and developed throughout the sixteenth century and will be fundamental in the success of love relations by helping the noblewoman to have different types of contact, including physical assignations, with the person she really wants as a husband.[28]

The domestic slave now speaks Spanish at a native level, as do the other *mulatas* in Lope de Vega's works, so that language acquisition becomes the most salient sign of development and assimilation that the African community had undergone throughout the previous century. The Afro-Hispanic woman assumes the metaphorical function of an entrance door, housing intelligence and the good qualities of both sides of the world: "que del libro del duelo / tiene ya su borla y grado" (244–45) ("She already has her tassel and degree from the book of the duel"), as summarized by a white character. The slave, unlike in her previous homogenous characterization, discusses with her owners and acquaintances complex topics that have to do with the current situation of Spain and its imperial enterprise. At the end of the play, Elvira sings and dances a song that establishes a comparison between the Americas and Spain and whose lyrics attack the European adoration for gold while she specifies that the language in which the song is performed is "guineo enjerto en indio, que allá todas estas mezclas veo" (2775–76) ("Guinean mixed with Indian, that I see all of these mixings there"). By performing this act in front of noblemen, she is defending the need to respect and note the existence of the phenomenon of *mestizaje* and defends its place in Hispanic society just as when she reveals the different origins of her parents: "En Biafara nació mi madre / y mi padre en Lima" (1360–61). Her song and dance also reanimate the progression from the king's dance in Silveira's *ratorta*, portrayed as a sign of the servility of African values before European culture, to an assertion of Afro-Hispanic identity. Marcella Trambaioli also claims— in regard to the inclusion of African dances in Lope de Vega's works, as opposed to sixteenth century plays—that such inclusion is not only for the sake of the show, but that there are profound connections with the plot and its symbolic values (1783). With the *mulatas*, the nostalgic defense of the origins of individuals of African origin will no longer be related to a unitary location and ethnicity but to a combination of places, traditions and cultures. *Mestizaje*

will be effectively performed when, at the end of *Servir a señor discreto*, the mulatto slave will marry Pedro, the white servant of a nobleman.[29]

The various *aprobaciones*, or endorsements, that come before the text of Sandoval's *De instauranda* in its first edition reaffirm the emphasis that the Catholic hierarchy placed on the incorporation of black Africans into the church. One of these *aprobaciones* was that of Father Vicente Imperial, a Jesuit preacher who introduced the figure of a demon who tries to avoid the conversion of Africans. Imperial considers Sandoval a person with the key to open a door that has been closed, due to the demonic effects over the pagan African population in Seville. For him, Sandoval makes possible the realization of an achievement considered impossible in the Bible: "Si mutare potest Aethiops pellem suam" ("Can the Ethiopian change his skin?", Jeremiah 13:23). Imperial created a division according to which all of the negative and devilish qualities are attributed to black color, while white color represents Christian virtue. Sandoval's goal was, according to Imperial, "blanquear tantas almas, y librarlas de la fea negrura del pecado" (52) ("to whiten so many souls and free them from the ugly blackness of sin"). Lope de Vega will update the figure of the Afro-Hispanic slave by simply reflecting a social reality—that these slaves were present and could speak Spanish as native speakers—, and will transform such figures into an essential component with which slave owners sought to accomplish their goals. The seventeenth-century audience expected mulatas to speak standard Spanish just as their ladies did, and their comic features are based on the content of their interactions with other characters, mostly white, and not in their way of speaking—more on *what* they say than on *how* they say it. *Mulatas* will adopt standard Spanish, or white Spanish, and speech will no longer determine these characters' development. Lope de Vega was the main contributor in early modern European literature to the literary adaptation of a slave phenomenon that was expanding and uses the city of Seville to portray it as a force of attraction for different racial groups. It is clear that the majority of black African residents spoke Spanish as did white Spanish people, especially considering that black Africans had been living in Spain for several centuries. Theater audiences, however, expected the appearance of a determined set of linguistic stereotypes and authors did nothing but satisfy the literary categorization of Blacks on the stage. Theater-goers would recognize the differences between the speech of the *mulatas* and that of the *negras bozales*, an opposition explained by the fact that there are no seventeenth-century Spanish plays in which *mulatas* do not use standard Spanish. Beyond just a social indicator, literature was an instrument used to propagate a compact image of a community considered fragile and easily assimilable, and which had to be classified within a series of clearly defined parameters, forms, and

conventions.[30] Although the *negra bozal*'s way of speaking will continue to be parodied in the new seventeenth century, the discourse of the *mulata* will change all of the parameters acquired throughout the sixteenth century, moving Afro-Hispanic characteristics away from a stereotyped use of language to a more complex characterization.[31] Playwrights will change these parameters only when the skin color of the black African speaker becomes whiter, both physically and socially, just like those literary black slaves desired in sixteenth-century theater.

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[1] The first large shipment of slaves from Spain to America took place in 1510 with more than 150 black Africans bought by Seville traders in Portugal, following orders from King Ferdinand II of Aragon, the Catholic.

[2] One of the first black African characters is one named "Negro" ("Black") in *El Conde Lucanor* (c.1330-1335), who is in charge of taking care of the king's horses in the novella "De lo que aconteció a un rey con tres hombres burladores.."

[3] The foundation of the Brotherhood of the Blacks (Hermandad de los Negros) in Seville in the late fourteenth century gives evidence of the ample number of members of this community. This type of confraternities did not appear in Barcelona or Valencia until late in the fifteenth century.

[4] Resende, I. 44. The translations of Portuguese and Spanish quotations are mine, except for Alonso de Sandoval's text. See notes 15 and 16.

[5] Lipski states that "[i]t is well-known that Africans who learned Spanish in adolescence or adulthood spoke with the characteristics of second-language learners, at times exhibiting real characteristics of specific African language families, and in other cases replicating errors found among L2 speakers of Spanish worldwide" (2007, 359).

[6] See Fra Molinero 19–53.

[7] See Cabrales Arteaga 25–27.

[8] All of the Reinosa quotations are taken from edition by Cabrales Arteaga.

[9] Slaves could also buy their own freedom through cash payments. On manumission in Seville in the early sixteenth century, see Franco Silva 1979: 240–259; in Spain generally, see Cortés López 141–151.

[10] See Franco Silva 1978: 78–79.

[11] Jorge, according to Franco Silva, was a common name for black Africans due to the devotion that people in Seville had towards Saint George (1979: 186). Comba or Coba was also a common name for women from Guinea who had not christianized their name yet (Franco Silva 1979: 188). The reference to Comba as a popular name among Black African slaves appear in Francisco Delicado's *La lozana andaluza*.

[12] See Franco Silva 1979: 69.

[13] In the case of "branco," it could be due to the rhotacism of <l> that also appears in many later examples by other authors in which the <l> is substituted by <r> in nearly all positions.

[14] Baranda Leturio 323. Menéndez Pidal's quotation has been taken from Baranda Leturio 323, note 41.

[15] Quotations by Castro y Quiñones are taken from Sandoval's book.

[16] English quotations from Sandoval's book are taken from *Treatise on Slavery*.

[17] See note 2.

[18] See Franco Silva 1979: 231–242.

[19] Lucas Fernández published *Farsas y églogas al modo y estilo pastoral y castellano* in 1514, which included many examples of rhotacism in shepherds and villagers, such as "diabro" and "habro."

[20] *Eufemia* was first presented in 1544 but was not published until 1567.

[21] The slave owners belonged to all social classes, not just the upper classes. See Cires Ordoñez & García Ballesteros 497–498.

[22] Many female slaves were in charge of the stable. In this particular case, Eulalla is considering the stable her own house and, because of that, she needs a *dueña* just as upper-class white women used to have one in their houses to take care of everything.

[23] "Yamar" instead of "llamar" is a clear example of *yeísmo*.

[24] For conflicts between slave owners and slaves who sought to marry, see Martín Casares 182–187.

[25] There are no official statistics for the population in Spain in the early 1600s, however the 1565 census taken by church officials indicated that there were 6,327 slaves, one slave for every fourteen inhabitants. As Ruth Pike notes, "this account does not tell us what proportion of slaves were Negroes, Moors, or Moriscos, [but] other sources lead us to believe that Negroes outnumbered the other two groups, especially in the second half of the century. The majority of slaves in Seville, therefore, would appear to have been Negroes" (345).

[26] See Lipski (2005, 39–42) for a more detailed linguistic analysis of slaving regions in Africa.

[27] The Hermandad de los Mulatos [Brotherhood of the Mulattoes] was founded in Seville in 1571. See Camacho Martínez, Ignacio. *La Hermandad de Los Mulatos de Sevilla*. Sevilla: Ayuntamiento de Sevilla, 1998. Franco Silva states that, in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the most frequent type of race-mixing in Seville was that between a white man and a black woman. The cohabitation, daily contact and sensibility of that time would favor this type of unions between the owner or his sons and his black slaves (1979, 139).

[28] It is important to remember that in early modern Spanish theater and society it was mostly the father of the noblewoman who would decide the suitors and prospective husbands.

[29] Cires Ordóñez & García Ballesteros have proven that, unlike the Morisco minority, more than half of Seville mulattoes were married to people who were neither black nor mulatto. (497)

[30] The literary habla de negros became so conventionalized that the well-known author Francisco de Quevedo gave authors some instructions for imitating it perfectly: "Sabras guineo en volviendo las "rr" "ll," y al contrario: como Francisco, Flancico, primo, plimo" (318) ("You will speak Guinean by changing "r" into "l," vice versa: such as…").

[31] Some of the plays that still contained the *negra bozal*'s way of speaking in the seventeenth century are *La victoria de la honra* (1609–15) and *El santo negro Rosambuco* (early 1600s) by Lope de Vega,

El negro del Serafín (1643) by Luis Vélez de Guevara and Antonio Mira de Amescua's *El negro del mejor amo* (mid-17th century).