Hedrick, Tace:
AML 6027 Race and Gender in Comparative American Modernisms

AML 6027
Race and Gender In Comparative American Modernisms

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Course Description:
(Although there is no prerequisite for this course, it is designed as part of what we hope may become a series of courses on critical and theoretical readings of modernism, modernity, and literature in the Americas; in this regard, it should work well as a companion course, for example, to Professor Hegeman's AML 6027: American Modernisms.)

In this course we will looking at period connections (around 1890-1930) between certain U.S. modernists and their counterparts (in translation) in Latin America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean. Within this framework we will be addressing a couple of key questions: first, the theoretical question of what constitutes "modernism" for artists concerned with a sharper understanding of what it meant to be "American"; second, the question of the relationship between esthetic modernism, period discussions of race and gender, and a temporal sense of the "modern."

Recent scholars have focused attention on the fact that early 20th century United States and Latin American modernist writers, artists, and intellectuals were deeply and consciously concerned with issues of race and gender, often in the context of what Benedict Anderson and others have referred to as the work of "imagining" nationhood. In Latin America and Hispanophone Caribbean, the coincidence of modernization with discourses of "hybridity," eugenics, Indo-Hispanic race mixing (mestizaje), indigenism and negritude (mulatez) provided many artists with a range of ways to map the concerns of a modern sense of nationality onto white, mulata, mestiza, black and indigenous women's bodies as well as (less often) onto black and indigenous men's bodies. For the artists we will be looking at, such mappings served various and often contradictory formal, personal, political and ideological purposes.

Since I am assuming that students will not come to this course with a knowledge of Latin American (mostly Cuban and Mexican) discourses of race and gender, I am assigning a fair bit of background reading in your Course Pack, all of which is required (see schedule of classes and readings below). I also will have some theoretical reading on modernism on reserve at Library West; although strictly speaking, this reading is not required, I will assume it as part of what students bring to this class as background knowledge.

Course Requirements:
1. Students must have completed all assigned readings for the course meeting and participate actively in discussion. This means bringing notes, comments, and questions with you to class, and using them in class.
2. One very brief (10-15 minutes timed, eight double-spaced pages) presentation on the author we are reading that week. This presentation will give the class a bit of background for the author as well as suggesting connections between the work of the author and our developing sense of the term “modernism” in an American context. We will decide on the order and schedule of these presentations when we first meet.
3. One annotated bibliography (five books, five articles) and one 250-word abstract of semester paper.
4. One 20-25 page paper at the end of the semester. This paper must be substantially connected to the course material, but if students can find a way to connect it to their larger Master's or Ph.D. project, I will be gratified.

Other Due Dates:
January 16 Students begin giving 10-15 minute presentations at the beginning of each class period.
April 10 Final papers due. I strongly discourage Incompletes; NO INCOMPLETE WILL RECEIVE AN A.
April 24 Students who turn final papers in after this date will not receive an A for the class.

Required Books/Course Pack: Goerings’ Bookstore (Books and Bagels)
Pauline Hopkins, Magazine Novels of Pauline Hopkins
José Martí, José Martí Reader
Clorinda Matto de Turner, Torn From the Nest
William Carlos Williams, In the American Grain
Nella Larsen, Passing/ Quicksand
Alain Locke, ed. The New Negro
José Vasconcelos, The Cosmic Race/ La raza cósmica
Jean Toomer, Cane
Nicolás Guillén, The Daily Daily/ El diario que a diario (COURSE PACK ADDENDUM)

COURSE PACK
Literature Readings

Background Readings
Martínez Echazábal, Lourdes. "Mestizaje and the Discourse of National/Cultural Identity in Latin
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America: 1845-1959.


Critical Essays


COURSE PACK ADDENDUM

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Schedule of Classes and Readings

WEEK 1

INTRODUCTION: What do the terms "modernism," "modernization," and "modernity" mean to us, and how are they related? How are these concepts related to ideas of "race" and "gender"?

WEEK 2

RESERVE:

WEEK 3

COURSE PACK:

WEEK 4

José Martí, José Martí Reader
COURSE PACK:

WEEK 5

Clorinda Matto de Turner, Torn From the Nest
WEEK 6
Pauline Hopkins, Magazine Novels of Pauline Hopkins

COURSE PACK:

WEEK 7
Alain Locke, ed. The New Negro

WEEK 8
William Carlos Williams, In the American Grain

COURSE PACK:

WEEK 9
TBA

WEEK 10 (13)
José Vasconcelos, The Cosmic Race

DUE: Annotated bibliography (five books, five articles) and 250-word abstract of semester paper

COURSE PACK:

WEEK 11
Nella Larsen, Passing/ Quicksand

WEEK 12
Jean Toomer, Cane

WEEK 13
COURSE PACK:

WEEK 14
COURSE PACK:
Guillén, Nicolás. The Daily Daily (Addendum)
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WEEK 15 Discussion: Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera

WEEK 16 FINAL PAPERS DUE FINAL MEETING

Books on Reserve/Library West (Note: these books may not all be available the first week of classes. Check back periodically at the circulation desk)

Selected Quotes for Discussion

Those born in America....are ashamed, because she wears an Indian cloth, of the mother who raised them, and they abhor, the loafers! their sick mother, and leave her alone in her sickbed! So, who's the man? He who stays with his mother, curing her of her sickness, or he who puts her to work where no one can see her....in what lands can men take more pride than in our long-suffering American republics, raised up from among the silent Indian masses by the bleeding arms of a hundred apostles?...Natural men have conquered learned and artificial men. The native mestizo has conquered the exotic Creole.  
José Martí, "Our America" (1891)

Say what one may, the red men, the illustrious Atlanteans from which Indians derive, went to sleep millions of years ago, never to awaken. There is no going back in History, for it is all transformation and novelty. No race returns....The days of the pure whites, the victors of today, are as numbered as were the days of their predecessors. Having fulfilled their destiny of mechanizing the world, they themselves have set...the basis for a new period: The period of the fusion and mixing of all peoples. The Indian has no other door to the future but the door of modern culture....The white man, as well, will have to depose his pride and look for progress and ulterior redemption in the souls of his brothers from other castes.  
José Vasconcelos, The Cosmic Race (1924)

It is this to be moral: to be positive, to be peculiar, to be sure, generous, brave--TO MARRY, to touch--to give because one HAS, not because one has nothing. And to give to him who HAS, who will join, who will make, who will fertlize, who will be like you yourself: to create, to hybridize, to crosspollenize....In Rasles one feels THE INDIAN emerging from within the pod of his isolation from eastern understanding, he is released AN INDIAN.  
....Do you realize the fascination the story of the white woman who had twin nigger babies has for us? They accused the woman of having had intercourse with the apartment's colored elevator boy. Her husaband abandoned her at once, of course--charming man. But you know Mendel's law; they discovered there had been a darky in his family six generations before! There's the dénouement for every good American. Be careful whom you marry! Be careful for you can NEVER know. Watch, wait, study.  
William Carlos Williams, In the American Grain (1925)

Blood mixing encompasses various aspects of pure tragedy; perhaps only in the arts does it present an advantage and provide the security of enrichment....when a mestizo opens a dam, a torrent of originality is set free. Our imitation of [North] America is painful; the journey back to being ourselves is a joyous undertaking.  
Gabriela Mistral, "A Message about Pablo Neruda" (1936)
Dale a la popa, mulata, Shake that butt, mulata, proyecta en la eternidad project into eternity ese rumbo de caderas that beat of your hips que es ráfaga de huracán, y menéalo, the hurricane's gale, and shake it, de aquí payá, de ayá pacá, from here to there, from there to here, menéalo, menéalo, shake it, shake it, ¡para que rabie el Tío Sam! to piss Uncle Sam off!

Luis Palés Matos, "Plena de menéalo" ("Shakin' It Plena") 1936
African Dancer
Your beauty is profound and comforting
like the rum of Jamaica, your beauty
has the unrevealed strength
of basalt, tar, and diamond.

Your dance is like a burning poison
from nature's philtres
and desire lights in your head
your red and detonating pyrotechnics.

Oh dark and barbarous negra! Your breast
hides the salomonic venom.
And you unloose terrible spirals,
when around the resisting male
you revolve, porous and absorbent,
like the sand of your quicksand.

In the white meat
the black teeth--ñam-ñam.
The scissors of the mouths
on the muscles--ñam-ñam.
Come and go the jawbones
with a dark rhythm--ñam-ñam.
The fierce night swallows
forests and jungles--ñam-ñam.

Ñam-Ñam. Africa chews
in the silence--ñam-ñam.
its dinner of explorers
and missionaries--ñam-ñam.
Who penetrates to Tangañica
for the first time--ñam-ñam.
who arrives at Tembandumba
the great matriarch--ñam-ñam.

Ñam-Ñam. The fetishes open
their black mouths--ñam-ñam.
In the pupils of the witch
just one brilliance--ñam-ñam.
the blood of the sacrifice
intoxicates the totem--ñam-ñam,
And Nigricia is all teeth
in the mist--ñam-ñam.

Asia dreams its nirvana.
America dances jazz.
Europe plays and theorizes.
Africa grumbles: ñam-ñam. (1932)

In you now, mulata,
I take refuge to the warm sea of the Antilles.
Sensual water and molasses-sticky,
sugar-door and warm bay,
with your light in repose
gilding the clean wave,
and the somnolent buzz of the beehive
that curdles the commotion of the shore.

In you now, mulata,
I cruise the island's sea.
Electric cyclone kittens
Stretch out and curl up in your curves
while over my boat the night of your eyes
falls, pensive.

In you now, mulata....
Oh to gloriously awake in the Antilles!
brave color that the do of the chest reaches,
music to the living red of joy,
and hot cantarides of aroma
--lime, tobacco, pineapple--
buzzing the senses
their intoxicating voices of delicia.
You are, mulata,
all the sea and the land of my islands.
Fruital symphony whose scales
furiously break in your catinga
I have here in your green dress the gunabana
with its fine and blandas pantaletas
of muslin; I have here the caimito
with its infant milk: I have here the pineapple
with its soprano crown...all
the fruits oh mulata! you offer me,
in the clear bay of your body
by the soles of the brunida of the tropics.

From *Tuntún de pasa y grifería* (1937), Luis Palés Matos
Gabriela Mistral

Canción Quechua (1924) from Ternura (Tenderness), pub. 1924

Donde fué Tihuantisuyo, nacían los indios.  Where Tihuantisuyo went,* the Indians were born.  
Llegábamos a la puna con danzas, con himnos.  We came to the puna with dances, with hymns.  
Silbaban quenas, ardían dos mil fuegos vivos.  Quenas whistled, two thousand living fires burned.  
Cantaban Coyas de oro y Amautas benditos.  Queens of gold sang and blessed wise men.  
Bajaste ciego de soles, volando dormido, para hallar viudos los aires de llama y de indio.  You descended blinded by suns, flying asleep, to discover widowed the airs of the llama and the indian.  
Y donde eran maizales ver subir el trigo y en lugar de las vicuñas topar los novillos.  And where there used to be corn fields see the wheat rise and in place of the vicuña young bulls butt.  
¡Regresa a tu Pachacamac, En-Vano-Venido, Indio loco, Indio que nace, pájaro perdido!  Go back to your Pachacamac, Come-In-Vain, crazy Indian, Indian born a lost bird!  

Nota--El fondo de esta canción, su esencia, corresponde a otra....un texto oral de mujer quechua, en una edición de..."Geografías" que consulté en nueva York hace años.  
(Note--The basis for this song, its essence, corresponds to another one....an oral "text" of the quechua woman, in an edition of "Geographies" which I consulted in New York years ago.)  
*Tahuantinsuya was what the Incas called their country ("Land of the Four Quarters").  
**Pachacamac was not in fact an Incan city; it was a rival imperial city to those of the Incas, home of a famous oracle with a widespread following, the most revered city of the Andes.
La Cajita de Olinalá (1923) from *Ternura*, pub. 1924

Cajita mía
de Olinalá,
palo-rosa,
jacandará.

Cuando la obro
de golpe da
su olor de Reina
de Sabá.

¡Ay, bocanada
tropical:
clavo, caoba
y el copal!

La pongo aquí
la dejó allá;
por corredores
viene y va.

Hierve de grecas
como un país:
nopal, venado,
codorniz,

Los volcanes
de gran cerviz
y el indio aéreo
como el maíz.

Así la pintan,
así, así,
dedo de indio
o colibrí;

My little box
of Olinalá,
rosewood,
jacaranda.*

When I open it
Suddenly it gives
its Queen of Sheba
fragrance.

Oh, tropical
gust:
cloves, mahogany
and incense!

I put it here
I left it there;
through corridors
it comes and goes.

It boils up from greek frets
like a country:
prickly pear, deer,
quail,

The great-cervixed**
volcanoes
and the Indian
airy like corn.

They paint it like this,
like this, like this,
Indian finger
or hummingbird;
así la hace They make it like this,  
de cabal perfectly  
mano azteca, Aztec hand,  
mano quetzal. Quetzal hand.

II  
Cuando la noche When the night  
va a llegar, is coming,  
porque me guarde to guard me  
de su mal, from its evil,

Me la pongo I put it  
de cabezal on a pillow  
donde otros ponen where others put  
su metal. their treasure.

Lindos sueños Beautiful dreams  
hace soñar; it causes to dream;  
hace reír, it makes laughter  
hace llorar... it makes tears....

Mano a mano hand to hand  
se pasa el mar, the sea passes,  
sierras mellizas sierras cheek-to-cheek  
campos de arar. plowed fields.

Se ve el Anáhuac You see the Anáhuac  
rebrillar shining again  
la bestia-Ajusco the beast-Ajusco  
que va a saltar, that's going to leap,

Y por el rumbo And by the path  
que lleva al mar that goes to the sea  
A Quetzalcoatl Quezalcoatl  
se va a alcanzar. will be attained.

Ella es mi hálito She is my gentle breath  
yo su andar, I her walk,  
ella saber, she knowing,  
yo desvariar. I raving.
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Y paramos
como el maná
donde el camino
se sobra ya,

And we stop
like manna
where the road
already exceeds itself,

Donde nos grita
un ¡halala!
el mujerío
de Olinalá.

Where they shout to us
a halala!
the womanry***
of Olinalá.

*Mistral may be punning here: jácara also means "merry ballad" as well as "braggart."
**In using cerviz here, Mistral is again obviously punning by making the "mouth" of the volcano a "female" mouth.
***Mujerío is apparently a Mistral neologism; it has the sense of a large and combined group, like "citizenry."