

“This rotting corpse”: Spain between the Black Atlantic and the Black Legend

Chris Schmidt-Nowara is an Assistant Professor of History at Fordham University. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in 1995 and is the author of Empire and Antislavery: Spain, Cuba, and Puerto Rico, 1833-1874 (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999). He is at work on a new book project entitled “The Conquest of History: National Histories in the Spanish Empire, 1833-1898.”

The Catholic remained static, frozen, as it were, the victim of a spell cast upon him by an external configuration of fetish objects that coerced his emotions to unchangeableness. His unsteady apprehension of his environment was fogged by the thick, sacred glass through which he was doomed to look at reality. And the physical area about the Spaniard's life reflected this: low standards of living, illiteracy, no control over material forces, and a charged, confused consciousness that compelled him to seek release from his frustrations in the projected shadows of his own personality. I had but to look about me to see how little Spain had altered during the long centuries.

Richard Wright, *Pagan Spain*

As he paused in the Pyrennes in 1954, deciding whether to turn south and enter Spain for the first time, the African American writer Richard Wright admitted that travelling to a country governed by a dictator made him nervous, although repressive governments were not foreign to him:

God knows, totalitarian governments and ways of life were no mysteries to me. I had been born under an absolutist racist régime in Mississippi; I had lived and worked for twelve years under the political dictatorship of the Communist Party of the United States. (*Pagan* 10)

Wright opened his book *Pagan Spain*, an account of his travels there in the early 1950s, with the possibility of identification with Franco's Spain but the rest of his work is dedicated to describing and contemplating Spanish difference. Although Wright was interested in political and economic conditions under Franco, as well as the nature of religious life in Spain, more pressing seemed to be a search for difference and strangeness that marked his journey and book from the very beginning. What Wright discovers is a "pagan" country, one that has missed out on the main course of western history. His discovery leads to a series of fascinating reflections on the nature of western modernity and Spain's exclusion from it. Those reflections in turn will be the focus of this article, an exploration of how Wright's Black Atlantic and Spain's Black Legend meet in the dominant narratives of the modern Atlantic world.

Wright recounts to the reader a conversation with Gertrude Stein in Paris that sparked his interest in Spain:

"Dick, you ought to go to Spain."
 "Why?" I had asked her.
 "You'll see the past there. You'll see what the Western world is made of. Spain is primitive, but lovely. And the people! There are no such people, such as the Spanish, anywhere." (*Pagan* 10)

Wright quickly reached the same conclusions. His first close contact with Spaniards he describes as intensely alienating. When he asks two young men in Barcelona to guide him to a pension they first take him to the city's Gothic cathedral, much to Wright's surprise. They ask him if he is a Catholic and when he responds no his an-

swer leads him to reflect on both the generosity and the insularity of their gesture:

It was beginning to make sense; I was a heathen and these devout boys were graciously coming to my rescue. In their spontaneous embrace of me they were acting out a role that had been implanted in them since childhood. I was not only a stranger, but a 'lost' one in dire need of being saved. Yet there was no condescension in their manner; they acted only with the quiet assurance of men who knew that they had the only truth in existence and they were offering it to me. (*Pagan* 16-17)

Touched as he was by their kindness, he found what they were offering repellent. He felt that repugnance most strongly when they took him into the crypt to view the body of "one of our great bishops":

I saw sunken eye sockets, yellow, protruding teeth, and a mass of sagging, grey flesh falling away from the cranial structure of the head. The main portions of the body were mercifully hidden by a silken robe, though the forearms and hands, like white, running dough, were visible, and on the shrunken fingers were diamond rings. And these kneeling people, with their dazed expressions, were praying to this rotting corpse. [...] I bit my lips and averted my head, feeling something turn in my stomach. (*Pagan* 17)

In this article, I would like to explore that strong sense of difference and even aversion that Wright chronicles in his description of Spain. In doing so, I will offer little insight into Francoist Spain. While Wright's book

bristles with thoughtful and acute observations on politics, gender relations, religion, and daily life, I will interpret it here for what it says about the intellectual traditions into which he inscribes himself through his construction of Spain as a mysterious, religious, and ancient other. In doing so, Wright explicitly positions himself as the representative of the “West,” the personification of modernity:

I was part, intimate and inseparable, of the Western world, but I seldom had had to account for my Westernness, had rarely found myself in situations which had challenged me to do so. (Even in Asia and Africa, I had always known where my world ended and where theirs began. But Spain was baffling; it looked and seemed western, but it did not act feel [sic] western). (*Pagan* 164-65)

Spain, because it was in the West but not of it, brought home to Wright his essential modernity, his place in the secular, rational culture of western civilization. However, that vision of the West and of modernity was not uncomplicated; I believe that there were two powerful narratives of modernity and the rise of the West that jostled for command of Wright’s text: on the one hand, what Paul Gilroy has called the “Black Atlantic,” on the other, what is well known to Spanish historians as the “Black Legend.” In Wright’s work, “pagan” Spain is where the two meet, fellow travelers in the rise and representation of western modernity.

Gilroy has argued in compelling fashion that black literature forms a counter-culture of modernity. If the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution are markers of the modern world, so too is the Black Atlantic, the African diaspora created by the

Atlantic slave trade. Gilroy is not alone in arguing that the Atlantic slave system was one of the foundations of modernity. C.L.R. James argued that the rebel slaves of St. Domingue were Jacobins inspired by the same ideals of liberty, fraternity, and equality that moved revolutionaries in France, while Sidney Mintz and Fernando Ortiz frequently called attention to the essentially industrial form of labor organization characteristic of the Caribbean sugar plantation from its inception in the sixteenth century. More recently, Robin Blackburn has placed the Atlantic plantation complex at the center of his gripping retelling of capitalist development and the rise of European and American nation-states.

Perhaps the most telling influence on Gilroy’s account, though, is that of W.E.B. Du Bois, especially his work *The Souls of Black Folk*. In that compact series of delphic essays, Du Bois introduced his idea of “double consciousness” to describe the black experience in postemancipation America. According to Du Bois, African Americans’ double consciousness resulted from the conflict between their own sense of self *and* the image of blacks imposed upon them by white Americans (Du Bois 5, 164-5). Gilroy deploys the idea of double consciousness to get at the crucial tension in the black counter-culture of modernity: the permanent sense of being both of and apart from western culture. Though blacks early on experienced the foundational processes of alienation, intense labor discipline, and creolization their place within western modernity has always been questioned, not only by a white racism convinced of the essential backwardness and primitiveness of blacks, but also by many black nationalists who see an idealized Africa, and not Europe and the Americas, as the true cultural

and political home of the peoples of the Diaspora (Gilroy 29-40).

In *Pagan Spain*, Wright's ruminations on the tension between his own sense of self and the man of color encountered by Spaniards who made no effort to hide their surprise and fascination parallels Du Bois's and Gilroy's theorization of double consciousness. Moreover, Wright, an obvious outsider in Franco's insular country, ingeniously turns the tables on the Spanish gaze by contemplating his insider role in western culture, a role confirmed by Spain's marginality.¹

Analyzing Wright's rhetorical strategy through Gilroy's rendering of double consciousness will also allow me to reflect on another vision of modernity of which Wright is perhaps less conscious but that is historically not unconnected to the making of the Black Atlantic: the Black Legend. Wright's conceptions of modernity and the primitive are shaped by Anglo-American discourses on Spanish history, particularly regarding the role of religion in the making of Spain and its overseas empire. For Protestant writers in the United States and Great Britain, "modern" Spain was hopelessly backward and decayed because it was Catholic. For instance, Richard Kagan has shown how the most important nineteenth-century scholar of early modern Spain, the Bostonian William Hickling Prescott, argued that the institutions of Spanish Catholicism, especially the Inquisition, ossified Spain at its moment of greatest glory in the sixteenth century. The subsequent centuries witnessed the rise of Protestant powers dedicated to the principle of individual liberty and free intellectual inquiry. Catholic Spain was left in the historical dust, remaining virtually unchanged since the Inquisition had wrought its nefari-

ous effects. In Kagan's view, Prescott's "paradigm" of Catholic archaism and Protestant modernity continued to shape North American attitudes towards Spain throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a thesis supported by numerous scholars of Spanish history (Alvarez Junco and Shubert, García Carcel).

"Spain" as a signifier of colonial cruelty and intellectual and economic backwardness figured not only in Protestant, Anglo-American narratives of modernity; Spanish intellectuals responded to the Black Legend's connotations in complicated ways, reflecting a peculiar Spanish double consciousness as they always filtered knowledge of Spain through non-Spanish representations of its history and culture. Wright, for instance, refers to works by Américo Castro and Salvador de Madariaga to buttress his arguments about Spanish archaism. Indeed, many Spanish liberals agreed with the basic premises of the Black Legend in explaining their history. Their intellectual and political project called for a rejection of the past, an uprooting of the institutions and attitudes that had separated Spain from western civilization since the sixteenth century and produced its dismal decline. In contrast, Spanish conservatives, while accepting the oppositions that girded the Black Legend, reversed their meanings by championing the essentially Catholic nature of the Spanish nation. In their eyes, it was the northern European nations that had deviated from the true historical path by breaking with Rome and developing a secular, individualistic culture. Franco's self-identification as the "sentinel of the West" was the apotheosis of this conservative view; Catholic Spain was the guarantor of European civilization against the deprivations of liberals, freemasons, and communists. What

joined liberals and conservatives, clearly, was their agreement with Wright and with a myriad of other foreign commentators: Spain was different (Pike, Pro Ruiz, Schmidt-Nowara).

Outside and Inside

For Wright, Spain was a stage on which was played out his own complicated relationship to western modernity. Spain repeatedly brought home to him his difference from Europeans as a man of color while also reinforcing his sense of inclusion in the “West” through its resolute strangeness. In short, Spain was a place where Wright defined himself as insider and outsider at the same time through his discussions of familiar symbols of Spain such as the Catholic church in various manifestations, and the *corrida*.

Wright peppers his account with recollections of encounters with Spaniards confused, scared, or dumbfounded by his color. In Barcelona, Spain’s most “European” city, he is constantly made to feel uncomfortable in his own skin. Upon meeting an older woman from whom he wants to rent a room, Wright observes:

the first thing I noticed about her was that she was so horribly self-conscious that she made me feel somewhat the same. (*Pagan* 51)

When locked out of his pension late one night, Wright notices that another night-hawk claps his hands to summon the *sereno* to come unlock the door. He pauses before he can bring himself to do the same, an apparently innocuous act wrenching him to his soul:

Torn between hope and misgivings, I retraced my steps and stood again before the door of my pension. Hesitantly, I lifted my hands and attempted to clap them loudly. But I was inhibited; my palms refused to meet [...] I looked about to see if I were being observed; the street was empty. I compressed my lips and smacked my palms together three times, sending echoes up and down the dark wet streets. I stood and waited; nothing happened. I felt horribly self-conscious. (*Pagan* 28)

At a post office, a mail clerk: “looked up and saw my face; her lips parted, her expression became blank, and she quickly crossed herself” (*Pagan* 31). Why had she done so, Wright asks himself, pondering the possible meanings conveyed by that gaze:

But why had she seemed so shocked to see me? Had it been that the sight of my heathen face, which she could tell at a glance was most probably not a Catholic one, had made her cross herself? Or had my presence evoked in her a premonition of the nearness of Satan? Or had it been merely a reflex action? I’ll never know. (*Pagan* 31)

Finally, an encounter with a young boy in Barcelona’s *Barrio Chino* epitomized his exoticism in Spain:

[The boy] seemed hypnotized and was evidently saying to himself: “That man’s face is *all* brown, *completely* brown. Now, *how* did that happen?” [...] So absorbed was he that he was not conscious that I was watching him; so far as he was con-

cerned I was a kind of brown statue. When I moved, he became confounded, frightened. He whirled and fled in terror to the end of the street. He stopped and looked back at me, doubting his eyes; then he evaporated around a corner. (*Pagan* 72, emphasis in the original)

The multiple incidents that provoked intense self-consciousness in Wright could be read as proof of Francoist Spain's cultural and political insularity or as evidence of racial attitudes, useful readings for the scholar attempting to glean information on life and times under the dictatorship. However, rather than seeing these encounters as accurate descriptions of Spanish culture and mentalities, I would focus on the narrative strategies that give these encounters meaning for Wright the writer. In a sense, the meaning of these encounters and their narration were strongly prefigured by what Gilroy, borrowing heavily from Du Bois, theorizes as the black counterculture of modernity. Though the setting is Spain, Wright reproduces a trope in black writing in various Atlantic contexts that emphasizes the double consciousness of the writer: insider versus outsider, free, critical individual versus reified symbol, westerner versus person of color. The tension between those oppositions, Wright's sense of self and his considerations of the identities and meanings imposed upon him by the exterior world (Spain, in this case), animates his narrative, a narrative that can be read as a description of Franco's Spain and as a portrait of the black artist grappling with his place in the modern world.

Gilroy's model of the Black Atlantic implies a certain historical specificity by referring to the African Diaspora forced by the slave trade. More precisely, Gilroy seems

to locate the articulation of a black counterculture of modernity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by focusing on major intellectual and political figures such as Martin Delany, Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Wright. Thus, Wright's preoccupation with the contradictions of black identity is a narrative style with a broad history whose social and economic roots lay in the late medieval and early modern period. (Gilroy 1-110, Blackburn *Making*, Tomich)

I would also suggest, however, that a competing meta-narrative of western modernity structures Wright's text, the Black Legend. Like the black counterculture theorized by Gilroy, the Black Legend has roots in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and unfolded over the course of the early modern and modern periods. Unlike the Black Atlantic, however, the Black Legend is a representation of modernity, a description of it and an explanation for its rise, articulated by the dominant classes, nations, and cultures in Europe and the Americas. In particular, the political and intellectual elites of Great Britain and the United States have used the Black Legend to explain and justify their nations's economic and military preeminence from the early modern period to the present day. Seen from the perspective of the Black Legend, Wright's account is no longer a subaltern view of modernity, but part of the dominant representation of modern history. In Spain, the outsider is insider (Kagan 423-46).

A powerful example of Wright's fashioning of Spain as archaic and outside the mainstream of western civilization takes place in the home of a family of "traditional Spanish Catholics" in Barcelona. Wright rents a room in their house to cut down on expenses even though he senses something

peculiar in this home. His instincts prove accurate. Reading and writing in his room, he is suddenly visited by a woman he calls “the Crazy Girl,” the dark family secret. The Crazy Girl is a young woman psychologically scarred by the Spanish Civil War because her father was taken prisoner and executed. Because he left home and never returned, the Crazy Girl is traumatized every time some one leaves the apartment. So strong is her terror that she has passed it on to her dog who will savagely attack anybody who tries to leave. Wright’s description of the Crazy Girl seems an apt representation of his “Spain,” analogous to the “rotting corpse” in the Barcelona Cathedral. Both are associated with Catholicism, both represent Spain’s physical and psychological decay over the centuries, a long history whose end point is the Franco regime:

She advanced into my room and, stooping, swept the dog up into her arms, folding him to her breasts, closing her eyes and nuzzling her face into his shaggy hair. I was standing next to her now and I noted her appearance: her neck was ringed with dirt; her mouth was large and her gums were blackened with stumps of rotted teeth. She had put on so much powder, rouge, and lipstick that she seemed to be wearing a mask; her deep-set eyes, a clear brown in colour, were shadowed with long eyelashes drenched in mascara. (*Pagan* 55-56)

This image of decay, of the persistence of a dying past in the present captured in the images of the bishop’s rotting corpse and the Crazy Girl’s rotten teeth, is the key to Wright’s representation of Spain as the antithesis of the modern world.

Perhaps the most well-known example of the supposed persistence of the past in

modern Spain forms one of the crucial scenes in Wright’s account: the *corrida* (*Pagan* 98-111). Though a recent social history of Spanish bullfighting has shown that its rules and forms date from no earlier than the eighteenth century and that its growth in modern Spain was a result of its interface with the market economy, the *corrida* nonetheless connotes to outsiders a static Spanish culture unchanged since the days before the Roman conquest of the Peninsula (Shubert 1-16). Wright was enthralled by the *corrida* and his narration of it is compelling. However, in spite of the drama and his admiration for the *torero*, for Wright the *corrida* was ultimately a staging of Spanish difference. The values it implied were premodern and completely out of tune with his world. Once again, the encounter with an essentially Spanish institution or set of values drove home to him his modernity. Though his interactions with Spaniards reinforced a sense of marginality within Spain, they also strengthened his self-representation as the quintessential westerner, the personification of a bourgeois world:

As an American, a man from a world that valued and eulogized intelligence, responsibility, industrial processes, social-mindedness, property, etc., it was indeed odd to hear personal bravery extolled so highly. But Spain was another world with other values. (*Pagan* 111)

Religion, however, was and is at the core of the Black Legend. Like the decayed flesh Wright found in Barcelona or the bullfight, Spanish Catholicism represents the persistence of an archaic institution in the present. Prescott and other Protestant writers identified Spanish Catholicism, and especially the Spanish Inquisition, as the cause

of Spain's decline and decay. Spain was still trapped by medieval values and institutions. Wright takes that view a step further by arguing that Catholic Spain is actually "pagan" Spain. The origins of contemporary Spanish religion and culture lay not in Rome or the Reconquista but in the pre-Christian past. Catholicism is only the superficial veneer of an essentially pagan ritual life.

Wright illustrates his contention in a surprising locale: the shrine of Montserrat, home of the Black Virgin, one of the most venerated images in Spanish Catholicism.² Wright visits Montserrat, located to the west of Barcelona, with a Catholic, a Vatican official named Pardo who also feels uneasy about Spanish religiosity. For Wright, Montserrat is a monument to what he later calls in his book "pagan power." The sensuality and sexuality of the mountainous site quickly tips him off to its pagan roots:

The tourist passengers grew silent as we slowly but continually lifted ever upward, rounding mountain bends. More and more nations of seriated granite phalluses, tumefied and turgid, heaved into sight, each rocky republic of erections rising higher than its predecessor, the whole stone empire of them frozen into stances of eternal distensions, until at last they became a kind of universe haunted by phallic images—images that were massive, scornful, shameless, confoundingly bristling, precariously floating in air, obscenely bare and devoid of all vegetation, filling the vision with vistas of a non- or super-human order of reality. (*Pagan* 65)

Later, in conversation with Pardo, Wright argues that the Black Virgin itself has nothing to do with Christianity but probably

arrived in Spain through a pre-Christian Roman cult with roots in the East. The sensuality of Montserrat's physical setting and of the Virgin's features have nothing to do with what Wright considers to be the true values of western Christianity: ascetism, self-discipline, industriousness. He reinforces this argument by juxtaposing Montserrat with his next destination, to Barcelona's *Barrio Chino* where he can speak with prostitutes, another manifestation of Spain's pagan urges and instincts. On a later visit to Madrid, a Spanish journalist eventually says what Wright wants to hear when he admits that "we are barbarians" (*Pagan* 173).

What ultimately confirms the ancientness of Spanish religion, its incompatibility with the modern world, are Wright's encounters with Spanish Protestants, "*white Negroes*" in his words (*Pagan* 137, emphasis in the original).³ As a black American, Wright identified himself with Spanish Protestants because both experienced persecution by the majority (*Pagan* 137). Implicit, of course, is that both are also modern, dramatically so against the background of Catholic Spain. Protestants suffered harsh restrictions under the Franco regime and had to practice their religion underground. Wright's main informant refused to give him her full name in the hope of remaining anonymous. She had already endured punishment at the regime's hands for running a school for young children where she taught them to read the Bible. Wright's expression of outrage over her sufferings, while certainly genuine and spontaneous, also echoed that of other Protestant writers commenting on religion in Spain:

What I felt most keenly in Spain was the needless, unnatural, and utterly barbarous nature of the psychologi-

cal suffering that the Spanish Protestant was doomed to undergo at the hands of Church and State and his Catholic neighbors. (*Pagan* 136)

This woman and other Protestants would have been free to practice their beliefs in a truly western country but in Spain the institutional Church had penetrated every aspect of government and daily life so as to stamp out any nonconformist minority. This totalitarian religion was the ultimate mark of Spain's archaism. Protestant countries had succeeded in carving out a secular space free of government or religious intrusion. There, science, the arts, and industry flourished. But Spain had failed to keep pace with the true West because "*all was religion in Spain*" (*Pagan* 165, emphasis in the original).

Atlantic Antimonies?

At its inception, the Black Legend was a tale of Spanish cruelty in Europe and the Americas: according to English and Dutch propagandists, the Spanish, especially during the reign of Philip II, tortured and massacred Indians in the new world and Protestants in the old. Over time, however, it changed into an explanation of Spain's economic and political decline and the concurrent ascent of Protestant powers. In the latter rendering, Spain's adherence to a dogmatic faith, enforced by the Inquisition, left it trapped in the past. In contrast, the Protestant nations sprung to the fore because they developed a secular culture that permitted the unfettered exercise of individual inquiry and initiative. Thus, in the story told by the Black Legend, Catholic Spain's defense of tradition and the past became equated with archaism and backwardness while the Protestant world's emphasis on the

individual and innovation became synonymous with modernity (García Carcel 353-72; Kagan 423-46).

This idea of the modern condition as one of constant invention and transformation, both of the individual and of society, a rendering most compellingly articulated in *The Communist Manifesto*, is the foundation of Gilroy's discussion of the Black Atlantic. In his forceful argument, the African Diaspora is quintessentially modern because of its role in the formation of the world capitalist system *and* because it exposed African slaves and their descendants to the characteristic experience of modernity. Forced movement from the old world to the new, the alienation of labor under slavery, and the reinvention of identities and cultures through the processes of creolization and later nation-building represent a specific variation on the modern condition.

What, however, of the Catholic world? Gilroy's model of modernity replicates the description of Protestant culture that anchors the Black Legend. Yet in the Ibero-Atlantic world, Gilroy's description of modernity is surely pertinent. As in the British or Dutch colonies, Africans arrived as outsiders. Indeed, the Portuguese and Spanish turned to African slave labor precisely because Africans were a dependent, deracinated labor force unable to resist slavery with local resources as native Americans were able to do. Moreover, according to Spanish colonial ideology in the early modern period, the native Americans were the true possessors of the Americas and therefore could not justifiably be enslaved, though this was a principle observed in the breach for much of the sixteenth century and only became unevenly institutionalized after resistance not only from the Indians but also from Spanish dissenters like

Bartolomé de las Casas. In his initial defense of the Indians against Spanish settlers and *encomenderos*, Las Casas argued that the natives of the Americas were striving towards true revelation and that it was the duty of the Spanish monarchy and clergy to lead them to Christianity. Subordination to plantation labor was not only unjust, but murderous in his view as the Indians were dying in huge numbers, proving their unsuitability for hard work. As a substitute, Las Casas recommended that the Crown allow settlers to import African laborers, a recommendation he later came to regret (Friede and Keen 1-51).

Las Casas's fight against Indian slavery had many legacies but two are relevant here. First, no single author is so closely identified with the origins of the Black Legend, particularly in regards to Spanish cruelties in the Americas. Las Casas's *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*, published in Europe in 1552, not only provided fodder for Spain's enemies and imperial rivals in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but it remains one of the foundational texts in debates over the colonial and postcolonial Americas, unparalleled in its ability to polarize representations of the Spanish conquest and its legacies. Second, Las Casas addressed the founding tensions in the black counterculture of modernity theorized by Gilroy. For Las Casas and for thousands of other Spaniards, African slaves were outsiders in the old world and the new. They had lesser claims to protection and privilege within the Spanish monarchy than did Spaniards and Indians. Yet in Gilroy's beautifully paradoxical formulation, because they were outsiders, Africans in the Spanish empire experienced more intensely the condition and rise of modernity as slavery tore them from their homes and forced

them to reinvent themselves in the context of new lands, new cultures, and new institutions. These outsiders in the Spanish colonial world were the "true" moderns, the "true" westerners.⁴

But does Gilroy's Black Atlantic encompass the Ibero-Atlantic world? While "Spain" as represented in the Black Legend has clearly served as the negative image of modernity, Spain and Portugal were at the vanguard of the modernity theorized in the Black Atlantic. The Protestant North did not fully participate in the Atlantic world carved out by the Iberian powers until well into the seventeenth century. Robin Blackburn argues:

[Iberian colonialism] was to serve as a sort of model for other colonists and colonial powers—just as the term 'Negro' was adapted into English, with a heavy implication of enslavement. (Blackburn, *Making* 156)

Undoubtedly, the scale of the Atlantic slave trade and the dimensions of the Black Atlantic expanded from then on, especially in the eighteenth century when the British dominated the slave trade. Yet it still followed the tracks of a system built by Spain and Portugal.

From this perspective, Gilroy's discussion of the Black Atlantic and Wright's vision of modernity begin to work against themselves. Theorizing modernity through the Black Legend's telling of its rise and characteristics, they obscure its roots in Catholic Europe's interactions with Africa and the Americas. I am not arguing that Catholics are as modern as Protestants (or vice versa), that Spanish colonialism was the same as English, or that we should efface historical peculiarities. Rather, I am suggesting that terms like "modern" and "moder-

nity” in the Atlantic context carry with them historically grounded antitheses that marginalize broad areas of the Atlantic experience. Spain and Spanish colonialism have occupied a crucial place in representations of the Atlantic world and interpretations of the political, economic, and cultural consequences of its rise. In most cases, they have served as negative referents, symbols of the stagnant world left behind by the triumphant West. But to capture the full spatial and temporal dimensions of the Black Atlantic, we must eventually disentangle it from its explanatory ally, the Black Legend, and the antimonies of Protestant/Catholic, modern/archaic that frame it. The world made by Iberian colonialism and the millions of slaves who worked on Latin American sugar plantations was not antithetical but integral to the modern condition articulated by Gilroy and Wright.⁵

Notes

¹ See Gilroy’s discussion of Wright (146-86). Gilroy argues that Wright’s open embrace of modernity and of modernist aesthetics during his European exile (1946-60) produced a backlash from critics who rejected the philosophical and cultural meditations of books like *Pagan Spain* and yearned for the supposedly more “authentic” black voice of *Black Boy* and *Native Son*. Gilroy, in contrast, sees a continuity of interests throughout Wright’s work. Also on Wright, Europe, and modernity, see Weiss.

² Like the *corrida*, Montserrat was reinvented in the modern period, in this case by Catalan nationalists (Serrano 55-74).

³ An interesting work on Protestants in Franco’s Spain is by a French Protestant minister, Jacques Delpech, who travelled extensively through the country (*Oppression*).

⁴ The literature on slavery in colonial Spanish America is extensive. For a recent synthesis of the Ibero-Atlantic world, see Blackburn (*Making* chs. I-IV).

⁵ I presented a version of this paper to the meeting of the Society of Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies in Santa Fe, New Mexico in April 2001. The many comments made there were invaluable. Thanks also to Susan Larson and Joseba Galindo for their encouragement and close readings.

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