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Yaw Agawu-Kakraba  
*The Pennsylvania State University-Altoona College*

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## Symptoms of Spanish Fantasies: Africa as the Sign of the Other in Angel Ganivet's *Idearium español* and *La conquista del reino de Maya*

### Abstract

Angel Ganivet's *La conquista del reino de Maya* (1897, *The Conquest of the Realm of Maya*) elucidates the aggressive impulse embedded within modern self-consciousness, one that precipitates the need for journeys—linguistic and artistic, as well as authentically colonial—to either the "dark continent" or to the "heart of darkness" to find the irrational Other of the rational modern man. This impulse, however, is not only at the service of individual subjective experience, elevating the ego in relation to a declining awareness of objective or synchronous outside reality. That modernity also precipitated the creation of modern nations, often in conjunction with imperial enterprises, which mark the individual as a particularly national subject. Thus, in order to understand more fully the irony of Ganivet's strategies in his novel, I first explore how he articulates the self and the nation's identity within the parameters of a modernist discourse in his *Idearium español* (1897, *Ideas of Spain*), since he locates that self within the contrasting view of the Other in *La conquista*. The embedded contradiction lies in a rhetoric that seeks to defend territorial integrity and, at the same time, subjugate the African subject outside that territory.

### Keywords

Angel Ganivet, *La conquista del reino en Maya*, the conquest of the realm of the Maya, self-consciousness, journey, colonialism, other, rational, irrational, reality, *la conquista*, Africa, African, territory, *idearium español*

Symptoms of Spanish Fantasies: Africa as the Sign of  
the Other in Ángel Ganivet's *Idearium español* and *La  
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Yaw Agawu-Kakraba

*The Pennsylvania State University-Altoona College*

The purpose of the collection of essays in this volume is to conceptualize the trans-oceanic in relation to Spain by drawing from critical race, post-colonial, and post-national theories, and by engaging with issues connected to globalization, including immigration, technology, neo-imperialism, and sexuality. Such a focus allows us to reconsider the work of canonical writers and bring to the surface their attempts to create an imaginary homogeneous Spain. These writers erased the internal “Otherness” of Basques, Galicians, and Catalonians and cast people from other geographical locations, such as Africa, as a sign of the “Other.” Through this prism, I will examine the work of Ángel Ganivet, a prominent forerunner of the so-called Generation of 1898, and reposition it in the context of the more general literary, social and spiritual crises of Europe at the end of the nineteenth century.

Although traditional literary studies of Spain mark the year 1898 as a key moment of “uniqueness”—the point at which that country’s status as a defunct empire began to define its national identity—recent scholars have noted that the economic and social problems Spain faced in the early twentieth century echoed those of other European countries, rather than being markers of Spanish “uniqueness.”<sup>1</sup> As Iris Zavala has observed, “[t]he modern cannot simply be equated with any specific method or country, though one must agree that it was inseparable from progress, and (at the end of the eighteenth century) from industrialization” (28). We may, then,

take a cue from scholars of European modernity and modernism, who have noted that modernism arose as a critique of modernity and the modern subject; hence it revolved in part around the question of identity, at the juncture where the prodigious narrative of subjectivity intersects with the chronicles of history, nationalism, aesthetics and culture, and, as Paul Gilroy has convincingly argued, with race.

Within this broader context, I wish to recontextualize Ganivet's work in this essay, for, like primitivist artists, Ganivet attempted to situate an African Other as an object that must be contemplated and mastered in order to construct a western subject. His 1897 novel, *La conquista del reino de Maya*, elucidates the aggressive impulse embedded within modern self-consciousness that precipitates the need for journeys—linguistic and artistic, as well as authentically colonial—to either the “dark continent” or to the “heart of darkness” to find the irrational Other of the rational modern man.<sup>2</sup> This impulse, however, is not only at the service of individual or subjective experience, elevating the ego in relation to a declining awareness of objective or synchronous outside reality. That modernity also precipitated the creation of modern nations, often in conjunction with imperial enterprises, which mark the individual as a particularly *national* subject.<sup>3</sup> Thus, in order to understand more fully the irony of Ganivet's strategies in his novel, I first explore first how he articulates the self's and the nation's identity within the parameters of a modernist discourse in his *Idearium español* (1897), since he locates that self within the contrasting view of the Other in *La conquista*. The embedded contradiction lies in a rhetoric that seeks to defend territorial integrity and, at the same time, subjugate the African subject outside that territory.

The two contending schools of thought that framed the discursive field of Spanish modernity from 1896 and beyond included the pessimists who sought to reconstitute and regenerate tradition through a consolidation of an authoritarian government, and the optimists who favored a democratization of technology and progress and fought against the predominant hegemonic signifier of Spanish national identity.<sup>4</sup> A close analysis of *Idearium español* reveals a conflict between these two competing spirits in Spain, especially when Ganivet talks about the constitutive traits of the Spanish charac-

ter—stoicism and the territorial spirit of independence—because the former is a euphemism in his text for a crusading fervor and expansionism, whereas the latter seeks withdrawal within national boundaries.<sup>5</sup> Ganivet thus appears to favor both a greater openness and a greater insularity, a return to and a retreat from imperialism.

Ganivet's concerns in *Idearium español* are centered on the malady that confronts Spain at the end of the nineteenth century, which coincides with the end of its empire: the country's power and influence in the past, its indisputable decadence in the present, and a more positivist concern for rebirth in the future. In order to confront the stark realities of Spain's problems, Ganivet casts his gaze onto the past, in a gesture reminiscent of Paul de Man's description of modernist discourse in *Blindness and Insight*: "[a]s soon as modernism becomes conscious of its own strategies—and it cannot fail to do so if it is justified . . . in the name of a concern for the future—it discovers itself to be a generative power that not only engenders history, but is part of a generative scheme that extends far back into the past" (150). Thus, although Ganivet's *Idearium español* is concerned with Spain's present, it traces the spiritual and moral crisis to the error of conquistorial expansionism under the Hapsburgs:

Spain as a nation has not been able to create as yet a common regulating environment because its greatest and best energies have been wasted on heroic enterprises. Hardly had our nation been constituted than our national spirit left its foundation and spread all over the world in search of vain external glories, converting the nation into a barracks, a hospital of invalids, a breeding ground of beggars. (72, all translations of Ganivet's works are my own)

Elsewhere, he states: "Hence, the most important thing is to destroy national illusions; and destroying them is not the work of the desperate: it is the work of noble and legitimate ambition through which we can begin to establish our greatness" (84). Given this critique of Spain's imperial past, it is ironic that Ganivet's remedy for the present political, economical, and social crisis is not an investment of energy in the task of reconstituting the nation through introspection, but rather, through another expansion, this time into the African continent. He makes this argument by means of yet another appeal to Spain's historical past, to the moment when he

claims the two fundamental traits of Spanish character—stoicism and territorial independence—were established.<sup>6</sup> He notes: “when one examines Spain’s conceptual nature, one finds that the most profound moral and, to some extent, religious element that holds the nation together is stoicism” (9). A close analysis of the text suggests, however, that it is not stoicism itself that emerges as the cardinal partner to the spirit of territorial independence but, rather, the crusading appetite of Christianity, whose source Ganivet locates incorrectly in the Arabic influence on stoicism during the more than seven centuries that the Iberian peninsula was occupied by invaders from across the Strait of Gibraltar. Clearly, Ganivet’s diagnosis and cure for the ills plaguing Spain represent a contradiction in terms, simultaneously advocating withdrawal and expansion, so that the peninsular spirit of independence and isolation paradoxically contains the seeds of imperialism.

Aside from the imperialist mind frame that underpins this idea, a peculiar construction of the African Other stands out: “The African races are not comparable to the American nor the Asiatic ones: they are at an inferior level of evolution and cannot resist European culture. The most reasonable thing to do would have been to spread across all the rivers and banks of Africa trading posts and missions that would serve as a catalyst to ferment the qualities natural to Africans” (121). Ganivet’s notion of the African conforms to the ideological and anthropological beliefs that framed the Western world’s view of Africa in the late nineteenth-century. As Sally Falk Moore remarks, “[i]n the nineteenth century the dominant theoretical prism through which all non-European peoples were perceived was evolutionary. Non-European societies were seen as locked in ancient traditions, as living archeological specimens, surviving relics of the dim past of the then ‘modern’ world” (3). Moreover, Patrick Brantlinger has shown that “as rationalization for the domination of ‘inferior’ peoples, imperialist discourse is inevitably racist; it treats class and race terminology as covertly interchangeable or at least analogous” (200-01).

It is not surprising, then, that Ganivet employed the racist discourse of “civilization” as a ground for his imperialist solution for Spain’s malaise: “Today, we have a palpable example of what I am referring to in the colonization of Africa. Can anything be bet-

ter than civilizing savages, conquering and converting new people to our religion, laws and language?" (108). He even proposes that Spain could have avoided its conflicts with the rest of Europe and its decline in the nineteenth century if it had dedicated its energies to conquering Africa instead of Latin America: "I understand that our policy toward Africa was the most natural after the end of the Reconquest, and if we had dedicated all our national efforts to it, we would have founded an indestructible political power because not only would it have evolved logically from our medieval history, but also because it would not have clashed with European interests" (122). This observation conveniently ignores the role that African slave labor played in producing wealth for the Spanish empire in its Latin American colonies, and the considerable power that Spain enjoyed as a result in the centuries following the conquest.<sup>7</sup> Instead, Ganivet looks to the strategy employed by the rest of Europe in the nineteenth century, the conquest of Africa: "If Spain had all the vigor to work in Africa, I, a nobody, would have committed myself to inventing half a dozen new theories for us to hold on legally to whatever we felt like" (*El porvenir de España*; I, 165-66). He clearly expresses nostalgia here for lost authority and for a tractable, completely subservient class of workers, in this case, the Africans, one of the central fantasies of imperialism.

Ganivet seeks to disguise his economic, nationalistic, and military objectives under the cloak of a missionary enterprise with the lofty goal of culturally and spiritually elevating a degraded people. He argues that a renunciation of Spain's material conquest as a result of the nation's calamitous military and economic plight suggests that Spain has taken the banner of leadership in what he sees as an historical evolution: "Although we are inferior in regards to political influence, we are superior, more advanced, when it comes to our natural evolution by virtue of having lost all its dominating vigor—and all nations must some day lose them—our nation has entered a new phase of its historical life, and it is obliged to reflect on what direction its present interests and its traditions destined it for" (127). Here Ganivet employs the scientific language of Darwinism to justify colonialism, an ironic tactic given his critiques of the brutality of Belgian colonizers of the Congo, who also saw Africans as a less evolved life form. It is an interesting move in the context

of Spanish imperialism, however, which putatively aimed to save the souls of the conquered indigenous peoples—its goal was not to civilize, but to Christianize, as Walter Mignolo has explained. In fact, Ganivet argues that Spaniards betrayed their isolated, independent peninsular character by conquering the Americas because of the overwhelming importance of the Christianizing mission. Still, as Bartolomé de las Casas pointed out centuries ago, the expansion of European progress through the subjugation of Amerindian, African, and Asian people—whether we call the process “civilization” or religious salvation—is no more than a form of unwarranted, ethically indefensible violence based on greed and without any legal basis:

The common way mainly employed by the Spaniards who call themselves Christian and who have gone there to extirpate those pitiful nations and wipe them off the earth is by unjustly waging cruel and bloody wars. . . . Their reason for killing and destroying such an infinite number of souls is that the Christians have an ultimate aim, which is to acquire gold, and to sell themselves with riches in a very brief time and thus rise to a high estate disproportionate to their merits. It should be kept in mind that their insatiable greed and ambition, the greatest ever seen in the world, is the cause of their villainies. (de las Casas 31)

Indeed, given Spain’s colonialist history in Amerindia, one wonders what moral justification Ganivet has to criticize the Belgians, the Dutch, and the English for engaging in similar practices.

What becomes evident in Ganivet’s idea of Spain’s new banner of leadership under the framework of an historical evolution is the fact that in his attempt to come to terms with Spain’s own identity and sociopolitical crisis, he uses the African continent and its people as a comparative referent point *vis-à-vis* Spain’s status as a nation. In other words, Ganivet’s figurations of the African as barbarian, as Other, manifest the urgency to establish a concrete Spanish national identification in a period when Spain’s lack of political, economic, and military clout precipitated the production of a national identity culturally, economically, and politically distinct from others. For the Spanish intellectual, Africa, to use Edward Said’s words, represents Spain’s “deepest and most recurring images of the Other” (1) precisely because the origins of the Spanish nation coincide with



the centuries of conflict and coexistence with people from Northern Africa and the Middle East in what is called the Reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula. Whereas Said is aware of the tendency on the part of most Western scholars of modernism to elide the violence spawned by modernity, especially with regard to colonialism and the construction of the Other, some Hispanists still cling to the notion of a benign confrontation between Spain and the Other, as we see in Julia Kushigian's assertion that "Hispanic Orientalism seeks to approach the Orient, the Other, not in the spirit of confrontation, but rather in what may appear to be a need to preserve one's own identity" (12). Spanish writers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, however, theoretically did confront Africa, the Other, "in the spirit of confrontation" with the aim of "dominating, restructuring, and having authority over [Africa]" (Said 3).

Spain's use of Africa as a foil, as a tool to define itself, differs from that of other European nations. Spain, by its ideological position, lies under the umbrella of western hegemony, so that the nation can lay claim to some of the technological and cultural practices that the west has advanced to establish the binary oppositions of civilization/savagery and putative superiority/presumed inferiority. Spain then can find consolation in belonging to the "civilized" world, thus undermining the adage attributed to Charles Talleyrand that "Europe ends at the Pyrenees."<sup>8</sup> Spain's relative barbarism, indeed, was commonplace in European letters from the Enlightenment forward. Even for twentieth-century Spanish writers such as Luis Martín-Santos and Francisco Umbral, intent on demythifying Spanish history and culture, the comparison to Africa represents the most violent act possible against a nation that was once at the forefront of European imperialism and civilization. In other words, instead of upholding the desire, as Chinua Achebe puts it, "in Western psychology to set Africa up as a foil to Europe, a place of negotiations at once remote and vaguely familiar in comparison with which Europe's own state of spiritual grace will be manifest" (2), Spanish writers such as Ganivet equate the nation with the Other, Africa, in order to draw attention to Spain's shortcomings in comparison with other European countries. The irony and, of course, the complexity of Ganivet's civilizing mission is that, while he attempts to locate Spain within the framework of a European modernity, by virtue of

the country's socio-historical and political condition *vis-à-vis* the more "civilized" countries (France, Britain, and Germany), especially in the area of what Walter Mignolo calls "cultures of scholarship," he simultaneously underlines the exclusion of Spain from the hegemonic discourse in which Europe figured itself as the essence of the civilized and civilizing entity.

Jean Franco notes that Ganivet's intention in *La conquista del reino de Maya* might be to satirize Spain and the western world, especially in regard to the doctrine of progress. In reference to the grotesque, as presented in Ganivet's novel, Nil Santiañez-Tiό also notes that "the grotesque acts as a subversive force of the very basis of rational occidental axiology. Through contact with the grotesque, western moral, sexual, and religious codes are automatically questioned" (128). While both critics are right in their assertions, it must be mentioned, however, that it is precisely in Ganivet's bid to satirize Spain's identity crisis that Africa is used as a foil. But it is not an innocent comparative analysis in which Spain and the exotic, the Other, are put on the same pedestal. To the extent that Ganivet declares in his *Idearium español* that Africans are an inferior race that need European culture, the text evokes the spectacle of colonization and civilization.

In his study, "Beyond Eurocentrism: The World-System and the Limits of Modernity," Enrique Dussel asserts that the question of modernity is framed within the context of two contrasting paradigms: the "Eurocentric and the planetary" (3). Citing philosophers such as Weber and Hegel, Dussel notes that the phenomenon of modernity has been formulated as exclusively European: "Europe had exceptional *internal* characteristics that allowed it to supersede, through its rationality, all other cultures" (3). He also asserts that from a planetary perspective, modernity has been conceptualized as the culture of the center of the "world system" in which, by default, a periphery emerges. Dussel places Spain, as an imperial power in "modernity," within the realm of the center and notes a "simultaneous constitution of Spain with reference to its periphery," a periphery that includes the Caribbean, Mexico, Peru, among others (4). To a large extent, Ganivet's *La conquista del reino de Maya*, also constitutes Spain as center, although for this center to hold and

which the periphery, in this case Africa, is simultaneously projected as ideal and “natural” only to be later deconstructed in order to be presented as what Ganivet really thinks it is: a geographic space occupied by an inferior race of people who, as he puts it, “cannot resist European culture” (152).

*La conquista* is the adventure story of Pío Cid,<sup>9</sup> a Spanish trader in Africa. In one of his explorations into an unknown territory in Central Africa, Pío Cid is captured by an imaginary ethnic group called the Mayas.<sup>10</sup> From then on, coupled with some inexplicable confusion, Pío Cid finds himself transformed into the Igana Iguru, or the chief priest of the Mayas. What strikes Pío Cid first as he encounters the Mayas is their perfect judicial system, which he believes could be the envy of even the most modern European countries:

Among a people that I thought were semi-savage, I unexpectedly discovered that for the convenience of its subjects, there was a big, strong, wise, and roving judicial system. I discovered the presence of admirable judicial principles that could be the envy of the most sophisticated criminologists in Europe—the equality of all before the law and popular jury in accordance with the sound principles of the purest form of democracy. (*La conquista* 22)

An interesting rhetorical pose emerges here. Embedded in this statement is Ganivet’s intention to critique and to satirize western traditional bourgeois institutions by invoking the superior qualities of the primitive African. It is clear at this juncture in the narrative that the spirit that circumscribed the Spanish modernist paradigm, based upon the hegemony of culture, language, and religion during the colonization of the New World, is being subjected to scrutiny. In its place is an apparently more pristine and yet advanced system that the narrator describes in a seemingly dispassionate and objective way. On a superficial level, Ganivet’s strategy confirms the inherent negation and affirmation that inveighs modernity, a dualism that underpins some critical approaches to modernity, in which modernity is perceived as destabilizing and opposing the cultural and ethical convention of traditional bourgeois society.

However, as the narrator seduces his readers in the initial stages of his narrative to believe that he is impartial in his rendition of events and appears to give the comparative advantage to the Afri-

can, he soon begins a systematic subversion of the Mayan by equating him to an animal. Several descriptive passages portray the African as different, barbaric, and uncivilized, distinguished by a whole series of values and practices that diverge from European norms. The Mayas' daily practices include rituals, violence, assassinations, adultery, orgy, the animalization of man, and polygamy—sinful indulgences that allow Pío to justify and rationalize the colonization of these people. Here we encounter Ganivet's latent colonial spirit, albeit presented on an intellectual and spiritual level: "Lover of humanity, I have always been pleased by the idea that those discoveries of new lands and new peoples are not futile, since they carried, by virtue of the humanitarian character of our species, the desire to improve the lot of our brothers, to colonize their countries, civilizing them with greater or less gentleness, depending on the temperament of the colonizing nation" (57). The very act of verbalizing the idea of colonization as a humanitarian act implies an *a priori* belief in the superiority of the Spaniard over the Mayan, the African. Consequently, Pío Cid wastes no time in establishing a hierarchical dichotomy between the rational Spaniard and the primitive African.

The comparative advantage that Pío Cid holds, manifests itself at the level of speech and discourse, as he is fluent, not only in Spanish, but also in Arabic and Kiswahili, and he has some rudimentary knowledge of an unspecified Bantu language (6). The linguistic appropriation implicit in the narrator's discourse conforms to Said's theory of discourse as strategies of power and subjection, which "is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power, shaped to a degree by the exchange with power political" (12). In fact, Pío Cid is able to establish a political base by virtue of his mastery of discourse, as well as of the Ancu-Myera people, who confuse him with Arimi, their former Igana Iguru, or paramount chief.<sup>11</sup> An "uneven exchange with various kinds of power" manifests itself as Pío Cid, the new Igana Iguru, assumes the ultimate position of supreme judge with the power to condemn people to death. The protagonist's control over discourse sets the stage for Pío Cid to use for his own gain, the prevalent cultural anthropological beliefs that view the evolution of culture as analogous to the evolution of species. His European heritage thus

gives him superiority over the Mayans by virtue of Europe's/Spain's biological and cultural achievements. The positional advantage of Pío Cid as Spaniard locates him in a whole sequence of potential relationships with the Mayan (the African) in which he maintains at all times the upper hand. And truly, there is no reason why this should not be the case, since historical and scientific evidence from the Renaissance through the partition of Africa to the present day world order still stacks the deck against the African.

What Ganivet's narrator sets out to do, then, is to construct the African's identity within the framework of an ethnocentric European subject. But such a construction implies violence, since colonization, in whatever form it manifests itself, is not only designed to neutralize the Other but also to enforce the hegemonic celebration of the colonizer. Ganivet's rhetoric of benign and sympathetic colonization, which he dubs as "authentic" colonization, has the embedded agency of hegemony. In *Idearium*, he observes that, "the true colony must cost the metropolis something, since to colonize is not to go into business but to civilize communities and to impart ideas" (147). Ganivet's idea of "authentic" colonization is designed as a critique of Belgian colonial policy in the Congo as well as British and Dutch interests in Africa, which had as their basis the economic exploitation of African people under the guise of a philanthropic civilizing enterprise. In a letter to Navarro Ledesma, of May 10, 1893, Ganivet discusses what he calls cynically the Belgians' "civilizing work" of colonialism: "Whoever thinks, not with his underpants but with his head, understands that the issue is not the happiness of the black race, nor progress, nor anything of that sort; it is a question of business on a grand scale in which the good Leopold has invested millions that will yield excellent results" (*Epistolario* 46-47). Ganivet's conception of "true colony" in which the colonization of a territory must include the exportation of the ideas and culture of the colonizing nation is intended to elevate the colonized subject from the realm of ignorance to the domain of European culture. In this regard, the peripheral world of the Mayans, and by extension others not connected to Europe, must be passive spectators because, in Dussel's words, such a man "is a 'barbarian,' a 'premodern' or, simply, still in need of being 'modernized'" (17). Within this context Pío Cid introduces several scientific production methods to the Ma-

yas. Among them is the tunic: “All city and state carpenters learned how to handle the can pick, to make wide cloths and to sew tunics that were in style. *However, in regard to dyes, very few knew how to prepare them, mostly because of the inherent difficulty in making them and also because of the natural stupidity of these people in handling chemicals . . .*” (103; emphasis added). There is a further collapsing of the Mayan culture and its intellectual capabilities when Pío Cid talks about the Mayans’ lack of intellectual ability to analyze critically scientific knowledge and to understand complex issues at the level of abstraction:

Poor memory is the most profound shortcoming of the Maya rulers. They live only the moment because, lacking the tools for abstraction, they have no foresight and cannot comprehend the series of historical events in order to understand where they are in history and which direction is the most secure. Their memory is exclusively emotional: an offence against them is remembered with tenacity for twenty generations whereas teaching makes as little impression on them as the raucous refrain of a lute that one hardly hears. (54)

Most instructive of all are some of the novel’s chapter titles that, in of themselves, summarize the narrator’s hegemonic forays: the launching of paper money and the overhauling of the economic system (chapter XI), the introduction of hygienic conditions by way of soap, public baths, and the construction of canals (chapter XII), the initiation of a new political system through centralization, agrarian reforms, and the introduction, production, and monopoly of alcohol (chapters XIII-XVII).

Several trends emerge from the above. First, one finds justifications that exonerate Ganivet’s colonial fantasies: the Africans are barbarians with dull minds. Indeed, Pío Cid’s observation of the Mayas resonate Richard F. Burton’s reflections on the African: “He is inferior to the active-minded and objective . . . Europeans, and to the . . . subjective and reflective Oriental types—stagnation of mind, indolence of body, moral deficiency, superstition, and childish passion (2:326). This portrayal of the Mayas as intellectually inept, depraved, and barbaric reminds us of A.R. JanMohammed’s assertion that colonialist texts that highlight the natives’ vices are designed to “justify imperial occupation and exploitation. . . . If such litera-

ture can demonstrate that the barbarism of the native is irrevocable, or at least very deeply ingrained, then the European can persist in enjoying a position of moral superiority” (81). What is more, the scientific, technological, political, and economic revolution that Pío Cid initiates as Chief Priest of the Mayas reflects the genesis of modernity, seen exclusively from the viewpoint of a European paradigm. Put differently, Pío Cid’s modern stance resonates Said’s belief that Europe collapsed an infinite number of cultures into its Orientalist discourse in order to envisage its world hegemony. But given Spain’s ambiguous position vis-à-vis Europe at the junction of European modernity and Spain’s apparent political decline, it is useful to explore how Ganivet’s language of colonization and hegemony play themselves out first within the *La conquista* and secondly, within the larger framework of Spanish modernity.

Pío Cid occupies an important position in Ganivet’s ideological universe. In *La conquista*, Pío Cid represents two contradictory attitudes: he is the *persona* through which Ganivet is assailing his audiences,<sup>12</sup> yet the absurdities with which he imposes his spokesman-victim are those of which his contemporary audience is culpable.<sup>13</sup> Put differently, Ganivet’s readers themselves are the target of satiric attack. Pío Cid’s intention is to civilize, to bring about a revolution that will transform the savage Mayas. His presentation of Maya socio-political and cultural life suggests that the Maya people desperately need help.<sup>14</sup> The turbulent political situation, human sacrifices, prostitution, revolutions and counterrevolutions, petty thievery, courtly intrigues, war with other states, all of which configure the way of life of the Mayas, are at odds with European standards, or so he claims. Pío Cid’s narrative objectives clearly reflect what for JanMohamed characterizes colonialist literature:

Colonialist literature is an exploration and a representation of a world at the boundaries of ‘civilization’ a world that has not (yet) been domesticated by European signification or codified in detail by its ideology. That world is therefore perceived as uncontrollable, chaotic, unattainable, and ultimately evil. Motivated by his desire to conquer and dominate, the imperialist configures the colonial realm as a confrontation based on differences in race, language, social customs, cultural values, and modes of production. (83)

One observes, however, several levels of irony and contradiction in Pío Cid's desire "to conquer and dominate" the Mayas. Most of the supposedly progressive ideas that Pío Cid attempts to implement correspond to his creator's belief in producing a catalyst that will revolutionize inferior people's way of thinking. In this respect, the reformation of the judicial system and the attempt to establish an egalitarian experiment conform to some of the ideals Ganivet would have liked to impart to the colonized. At the same time, however, Ganivet seems to undermine his protagonist as he systematically reveals the absurdities of some of Pío Cid's initiatives in the Maya kingdom. For instance, the introduction of monetary economics in the form of "skin money" only ends up bringing out the greed of those in power. By the same token, the opening of commerce along European lines initiates a chain reaction that demolishes the old subsistence-and-barter economy. The result is wage-slavery in which individuals lose their dignity and freedom in order to amass material wealth. Neither do the political reforms, the introduction of soap, alcohol, and gunpowder bring about the so-called progress that Pío Cid envisages. Jean Franco has suggested that Ganivet uses his technique of "plastic satire" to "show that nineteenth-century economic and industrial progress stimulates material needs which thereby increase and demand larger scale industry and organization to satisfy them" (43). In fact, all those European ideals the protagonist seeks to implement go awry either because Pío Cid fails to respect the "territorial integrity" of the Mayas or, as he believes to be the case, the savage Africans lack the intellectual wherewithal to grasp simple concepts.

A few conclusions can be drawn from the above. First, there is no doubt that at the end, Pío's narrative still echoes some of the theoretical writings of *Idearium español*. For instance, superior blood runs through the half-Spaniard, Yosimiré, who is now at the helm of Mayan affairs. By the same token, the fact that Cortés reveals that Maya has embraced the status quo with Yosemite as the hereditary monarch with a council of uagangas and a formal court, suggests not only that the Mayas have chosen their own "territorial spirit of independence," but also that Pío Cid's civilizing quest has ended in a colossal failure. What emerges here is that, although the discourse of colonization, as Patrick McGee puts it, "has always been subject to



strategies of appropriation, reversal, and displacement by colonized subjects,” there is also the idea that “hegemony is never a one-way street” (125). Put differently, the writing or, yet still, the ideological practice embedded in a colonizing discourse from within the ethnocentric enclosure of European culture is almost always open to resistance by the colonized subject. Amílcar Cabral observes that:

History teaches us that, in certain circumstances, it is very easy for the foreigner to impose his domination of a people. But it also teaches us that, whatever may be the material aspects of this domination, it can be maintained only by the permanent, organized repression of the cultural life of the people concerned. Implantation of foreign domination can be assured definitively only by physical liquidation of a significant part of the dominated population. (53)

If the attempt to “civilize” the savage Mayas failed to achieve the desired effects, it may be that after all, the Maya culture is a resilient one even in the face of a hegemonic cultural assault. One can also argue that Pío Cid’s pathetic failure to institute and implement some of the core elements of European modernity and, for that matter, its irrelevance as a foreign element to be incorporated into the Mayan mindset and way of life is predicated precisely on Spain’s not belonging to the axis of intellectual power that served as the powerhouse of cultures of scholarship during the period of 1850 to 1914, as Mignolo asserts. Most important, however, in his quest for the Other, Ganivet inadvertently evokes an idea articulated by his fellow Spaniard, Ortega y Gasset: that of the classical path from *ego* to *alter ego* in which one witnesses a reversal because the ego displays an *alter tú* in which uncertainty surfaces about the idea of a cogito that goes out of itself, and having encountered the adventures of otherness, returns to itself. The problem here, of course, is that an attempt to define the Other is invariably fraught with danger because, aside from the impossibility of containing that Other, one only ends up highlighting that very self that one is loathe to confront. In this context, whereas Ganivet identifies the Mayan, the African, as the savage Other of the Spaniard, he also equates him with the prehistory of “culture” and the unconscious of the European subject. While it can be contended that Ganivet does, indeed, critique Pío Cid’s rhetoric of the Other, at the same time, Ganivet’s protagonist embodies a

well entrenched colonial and imperialist discourse and ideology in which the African becomes a foil through which Europe's/Spain's cultural hegemony is celebrated.

### Notes

1 For a more detailed discussion of the label "modernismo" and modernism as well as the various controversies that have surrounded its critical use and definition, see Matei Calinescu's *Five Faces of Modernity*, Ned Davidson's *The Concept of Modernism in Hispanic Criticism*, Ricardo Gullón's *Direcciones del modernismo*, Federico de Onís's *Antología de la poesía española e hispanoamericana*, and my study, "Reading Modernism Through Postmodernism: Antonio Orejudo Utrilla's *Fabulosas narraciones por historias*."

2 Writing in "Europe, Modernity, and Eurocentrism," Enrique Dussel notes that European modernity can be "read as the justification of an irrational praxis of violence" (472). Such violence, Dussel suggests, is not only predicated on the notion of a "civilizing" character designed to cast and to confirm modern European civilization as "superior" but also to justify the use of violence in order to make the "improvement of the most barbaric, primitive, coarse people a moral obligation." He continues: "insofar as barbaric people oppose the civilizing mission, modern praxis must exercise violence only as a last resort, in order to destroy the obstacles impeding modernization (from the 'colonial just war' to the Gulf War)" (472).

3 Although an earlier version of this essay was published as "Recasting Spanish Colonisation and Imperialism: Angel Ganivet's *Idearium español* and *La conquista del reino de Maya*," the conclusions drawn from that study depart very much from the ones drawn here.

4 The modern conflict in Spain was not between modernity as an aesthetic concept and modernity as a historical evolution in western civilization when scientific and technological progress, industrial revolution, and the radical economic and social transformation brought about by capitalism swept through Europe. Rather, the conflict lay within the confines of a bourgeois idea of modernity in which, according to Calinescu, the idea of progress, the certainty in the rewarding promises of science and technology, coupled with "the ideal of freedom defined within the framework of an abstract humanism" engendered the move toward a pragmatic cult of action and triumph (Calinescu 44).

5 By virtue of what can be characterized as Ganivet's organic ideology, it is no surprise that both the Spanish right and left would appropriate his name in the 1930s. The left considered Ganivet as champion of authoritarianism. For Francisco Elías de Tejada, Ganivet was, without knowing it, a Carlist. He notes: "the Spanish soul that he [Ganivet] encompasses leads him to propose fatal and irremediable ideals of Spain, which corresponded with those who represented the essence of what is Spanish in the 19th century: a militant and pugnacious Carlism" (179-80). De Tejada is aware of the conflicting views that surround Ganivet and opts to join the camp that considered him a defender of Spanish tradition. For him, Ganivet "is under the banners of the tradition of the two Spains . . . [and] their forms of government" (185). Lain Entralgo's study "Visión y revisión del *Idearium español* de Ángel Ganivet" presents a leftist point of view that considers Ganivet as the generative source for the National-Syndicalist movement. Referring to Ganivet's insistence that Spanish essence is based on Seneca's humanist dignity, Lain Entralgo argues that Ganivet offers a solution to the danger of modern man's enslavement to technology. But Nationalist-Syndicalist youth, he affirms, must not scorn technology as Ganivet did. "Catholic faith and the nation," he suggests, "demand a strategy that borders on missionary work: propaganda . . ." (73). For the leftists, therefore, Ganivet embodied the very essence of a social and aesthetic utopia free from the hegemonic constraints of the status quo. While both factions used Ganivet's name for their ideological purposes and refused to adhere to the voices of moderation that suggested that Ganivet's patriotism was neither left nor right, a close look at *Idearium español* reveals the following. Ganivet's apparent ambivalence and contradiction with respect to the duality of territorial independence and crusading zest is designed to generate precisely the kind of response articulated by both the Spanish left and right: the treatise makes it possible for his readers to defend their predilections concerning the nation's future by adopting either one of the poles they find more appealing.

6 Stoicism for Ganivet entails a fundamental Spanish essence. For him, it is Spain's ideal constitution that explains the nation's virtuous and religious evolution before the advent of Christianity: "and it is so Spanish that Seneca did not have to invent it because it was already invented" (92). Ganivet links Spain's stoic spirit to Seneca, the embodiment of the authentic Spain and suggests that Seneca inherited stoicism by virtue of his race and not by virtue of the milieu in which he found himself.

7 It is important to keep in mind that Spain is not the only nation that had imperialist fantasies. As is evident in *Idearium*, Ganivet addresses the different conquistatorial patterns of other European nations. As I will point out

later, he chastizes King Leopold of Belgium for his exploitative instincts in the Belgian Congo. What is significant in Ganivet's imperialist fantasy discourse, however, is his tendency to tie these fantasies to geography as one of the determinants of national character. It is interesting and relevant that he only talks about European nations and the U.S., thus setting up a racist division between civilization and barbarism that mimics many other such structures used to justify western imperialism.

8 It is interesting to note the apparent historical ambivalence derived from the colonization of the Peninsula by Arabs that has remained muted in Ganivet's discourse. That is, Spain was, indeed, part of "Africa," with the difference that the Arab cultures were far more intellectually advanced than the Europeans at that time.

9 One cannot help but notice the play on Mío Cid and Pío Cid. As is the case of the crusading Spanish medieval mercenary who plied his trade fighting on the side of Christians and sometimes on that of the Moors during the Reconquest, Ganivet's hero is also imbued with similar mercenary mercantile, religious, and political zeal in his colonization quest.

10 Ganivet's conversion of Central Africa into Central America (Mayas) is rather ironic, especially in light of de las Casas's observations about Spanish abuse of Amerindians.

11 The similarity between this encounter and the conquest of the Americas is telling.

12 Critics including Jean Franco, Santiáñez-Tió, Laura Rivkin, Donald Shaw, and Olmedo Moreno believe that satire is the basic underpinning of *La conquista*. These critics contend that Ganivet is not concerned so much with Africa as with the degeneration of Spain's moral, political, economic, and social attributes. *La conquista's* difficulty is to reconcile what, on the one hand, is supposed to be a parody of European/Spanish beliefs and, on the other hand, is the vehicle that Ganivet uses to attain his satiric goals. Because of the African's negative portrait in *Idearium* and *El porvenir de España*, one is led to conclude that *La conquista* is double-edged. The author simultaneously parodies prevalent European ideas and on an intellectual level implements a supposedly benign form of colonization of the *raza inferior*—the Africans. Even if one were to accept that Ganivet uses his protagonist as a medium of satire to articulate his criticism of European colonialism, the parallel between his fiction and non-fiction is so intricately intertwined that one cannot but think of E.W. Rosenheim's assertion regarding satire: when the satirist's method is distortion, his reader's

method is 'restoration,' of grasping the literal meaning which is, as it were, the inception of the satiric procedure" (22).

13 Most Spaniards would probably recognize Barataria and Sancho Panza here, and, indeed, he is talking about materialism as opposed to spirituality.

14 The kind of help needed is predicated on the concept of civilization that other, more mercantile, Europeans used to justify colonialism. By advocating this idea, Ganivet ironically justifies Spanish colonialism, with its supposedly more pious goal of conversion, an argument he makes about Latin America in *Idearium*. The embedded object of satire here is certainly the Spanish public as well as other European colonial powers such as the Dutch and Belgians.

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