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Hispanic Influences in the Work of Flora Aurima Devatine

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Although there have been a number of studies of Flora Aurima Devatine's work, exploring the originality and richness of her identity, expressed with finesse and sensitivity, to date no one has explored the Hispanic influences that have inspired and nourished her writing. While Aurima Devatine is of course Polynesian and her work celebrates her island home, her academic background is that of a teacher of Spanish. Herself inspired by a teacher of that language, she taught it in turn for over twenty years at the Pomare IV high school in Tahiti, before going on to teach Tahitian there as well.

When I arrived in French Polynesia in August 2018, I had read just a few of this author's texts. As a Hispanist myself, I sensed that Spanish and Latin American literatures had left their mark on her work, and it was at a book-signing session in a Pape'ete bookshop that I took the opportunity to ask Flora Aurima Devatine about this. Since she was kind enough to encourage me to develop this idea, I undertook to follow my intuition with regard to particular influences that I sensed. Ontological echoes of the Spanish Golden Age, inspiration drawn from a certain Modernist movement linked to the generation of '98, including Antonio Machado, Nicola Guillén's focus on *negrismo* and the writings of Pablo Neruda struck me as being detectable in Aurima Devatine's work. It seems to me that the author draws on her academic knowledge and on the cultural knowledge she has developed for herself, following her personal preferences in choosing authors and texts, movements and rhythms sourced from the Spanish-speaking world in order to construct, with a great deal of originality, the form of expression that best suits her, that corresponds to the identity she wishes to lay claim and to express. The kaleidoscopic chant – this synesthetic term is deliberately chosen – of the Polynesian soul found in Flora Aurima Devatine's work is a fabric made from multi-coloured cultural threads, a polyphonic tīfaifai.

In “Je n'invente rien” (I don't invent anything) the poet confirms with considerable humility that she is inventing nothing in the poetic domain:

I don't invent anything,
I don't make that claim,
I re-use
What already exists.

And if sometimes I thought
I was reinventing words,
Bringing new life to sounds,
And if sometimes I thought
I was reinventing love,
Bringing new life to actions,

That's because just like children
 Living their first love,
 I was innocent

Well then,
 Too bad
 And
 So much the better,

Too bad, if what I do
 Is like what's already been done,
 Too bad, if I've nothing
 New to give.

Too bad
 And
 So much the better

So much the better, because
 I'm like everyone else.
 After all,
 I'm not trying
 To stand out,
 But to be myself.¹

I argue that this desire to be herself requires the creation of a personal form of expression. The writer writes what she is, which is to say, a personality of considerable richness. She is Polynesian, wife of a Pied-noir from southern Algeria (Oran), a person imbued with her culture and a speaker of her language. She received a French education but is also trained in Hispanic studies, covering the richness and complexities of the European and American continents. It is her steeping in all these elements that gives Aurima Devatine's writing its originality. Contrary to what she claims with such modesty, and even if, like every writer, she uses a part of what already exists, she has invented a new form of expression that is in fact the product of the alchemy that happens in the heart of the cultural melting-pot described above.

Before dealing with the poems that have been included in *Maruao, the Wings of Infinity*, and with chronology in mind, I would like to begin by highlighting what I see as echoes of Spanish Golden Age literature in the reflections raised by Aurima Devatine in two articles in particular,

¹ "Je n'invente rien, / Je n'ai pas cette prétention. / Je réemploie / Ce qui existe déjà / Et si parfois j'ai cru / Réinventer les mots / Redonner vie aux sons / Et si parfois j'ai cru / Réinventer l'amour / Redonner vie aux gestes / C'est que tels ces enfants / Qui découvrent l'amour, / J'étais innocente [...] Tant mieux, puisque je suis / Comme les autres / Après tout / Je ne cherche pas à me distinguer / Mais à être moi-même." See #2 in this *H-France Salon*, Vol 14 Issue 21, #2, p. 29.

NOTE: Unless otherwise specified, translations of quotations in the body of the article are by Jean Anderson.

“Te Tino? *The Body?*”² and “The Time-Space Continuum.”³ In these two articles, the author develops her concept of the body as it is inscribed in time. The body is that which “invades, reflects and at the same time eats away at the spirit”⁴, as if it were a question of something weighty that reminds us of the mortality of the being that is made up of both the body and the spirit, seen as oppositional, as she puts it in the following line: “Close combat between the body and the spirit that inhabits it, between the body and the spirit that it refutes.”⁵

Within Tahitian culture, as is the case within the Judeo-Christian culture that invaded it, the body is considered to be different from the soul and the mind:

Tino, tinopapa, the body as material and earthly foundation of humankind,
In opposition to *varua*, spirit, soul,
Varua, the creative breath, of the wind, of life, immaterial air of the Creator,
In opposition to *tino*, the body,
Within a divided vision of life, embodied, earthly, ethereal,
Spiritual, divine.⁶

The body is seen as the container of the mind and the soul:

The body is an envelope in which and within which a structure gradually forms: the human being!
The body as foundation, as canoe, as framework, as fleshly cockpit,
The home of the spirit!⁷

And just as Spanish Golden Age literature pointed out many times, this dismal enclosure of the spirit and the soul within the fleshly body constantly reminds us of our finite nature, our limits, probably to incite us to feel more humble, and to reflect more:

While my body source of decay of my emotions
is made breathless by my words,
Because my ageing body is given over to suffering!⁸

² Flora Devatine, “Te Tino? *The Body?*” in *De l’écriture au corps* [“On Embodied Writing”] *Bulletin du LARSH*, 1: 2002, pp. 11-22.

³ Flora Devatine, “The Time-Space Continuum” in *L’Espace-temps* [“The Space-Time Continuum”] *Bulletin du LARSH*, 2: 2005, pp. 13-36.

⁴ “qui envahit, qui reflète et en même temps ronge l’esprit”, Flora Devatine, “Te Tino? *The Body?*”, p. 13.

⁵ “Corps à corps du corps avec l’esprit qui y siège, du corps qui réfute l’esprit”, *Ibid.*

⁶ “*Tino, tinopapa*, corps de fondation matérielle, terrestre de l’homme, / Opposé à *varua*, esprit, âme, / *Vārua*, souffle créateur, du vent, de vie, air immatériel, du Créateur, / Opposé à *tino*, corps, / Dans une vision de vie divisée, corporelle, terrestre, éthérée, / Spirituelle, divine”, *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁷ “Le corps est une enveloppe dans laquelle et à l’intérieur de laquelle s’édifie peu à peu une structure, l’homme ! / Le corps base, pirogue, ossature, habitacle de chair, / Maison de l’esprit !”, *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁸ “Pendant que mon corps souche de pourrissement de mes émotions s’essouffle à mes dits, / Car mon corps vieillissant est de douleur !”, *Ibid.*, p. 21.

Life's brevity and the mortal nature of the body are sources of inspiration and arguably allow a certain catharsis. The body is merely clay into which the Creator has breathed life, that earthly life full of turbulence that probably leads to a desire for the tranquillity of another world:

My body is full of woes that inhabit the words of my exchanges [...] ⁹

[...] yet long is the path to the sea of tranquillity! ¹⁰

I note here those lines of Aurima Devatine's that struck me most forcefully, in the article in which she reflects on time and space, as unequivocally comparable to those of Jorge Manrique and Francisco de Quevedo, Spanish authors of the 15th and 17th centuries respectively, and which I cite here:

Life? A fleeting journey!

Man? A momentary occupation of a space! ¹¹

But the canoe is moving over the water, because of the current,
Becoming "time", *tau-tai* [...] ¹²

All is movement, dynamic,

And nothing is given in definitive terms.

That is what makes humanity fragile in the nowness of life.

And mankind, in the space of just a morning *po'i po'i*, has not the time to leave a trace, for life is too short. ¹³

These statements, apparently imprinted with a Judeo-Christian perspective, reflect a concept that is linguistically profoundly Tahitian, with the moment of birth and death, *po'i*, as well as a neo-Platonic perspective, similar to what is expressed by Jorge Manrique in his *Coplas a la muerte de mi padre*: ¹⁴

⁹ "Mon corps est plein de maux qui habitent les mots de mes échanges [...]", *Ibid.*

¹⁰ "[...] long est encore le chemin vers la mer de la tranquillité !", *Ibid.*, p. 22

¹¹ "La vie ? Un très bref passage !/ L'homme ? Un instant de vie dans l'espace !", Flora Devatine. "The Time-Space Continuum", *op.cit.*, p. 18.

¹² "Mais la pirogue sur l'eau se déplaçant, du fait du courant,/ Devient « le temps », « tau-tai » [...]", *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹³ "Tout est en mouvement, dynamique, / Et rien n'est acquis de façon définitive. / C'est ce qui fait la fragilité de l'homme dans l'instantanéité de la vie. / Et l'homme, l'espace d'un matin « po'i-po'i », n'a pas le temps de laisser des traces, parce que sa vie est trop brève", *Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹⁴ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's translation (from *The Complete Poetical Works*, 1893) of Jorge Manrique, *Coplas a la muerte de mi padre* [c. 1476?].

I) Recuerde el alma dormida / Avive el seso y despierte / Contemplando / Cómo se pasa la vida, / Cómo se viene la muerte / Tan callando; / Cuán presto se va el placer; / Cómo después de acordado / Da dolor; / Cómo a nuestro parecer / Cualquiera tiempo pasado / Fue mejor.

II) Pues si vemos lo presente cómo en un punto se es ido / Y acabado, / Si juzgamos sabiamente, / Daremos lo no venido / Por pasado. / No se engañe nadie, no, / Pensando que ha de durar / Lo que espera / Más que duró lo que vio, / Pues que todo ha de pasar / Por tal manera.

Oh let the soul slumbers break,
Let thought be quickened, and awake;
Awake to see
How soon this life is past and gone,
And death comes softly on,
How silently!

Swiftly our pleasures glide away,
Our hearts recall the distant day
With many sighs;
The moments that are speeding fast
We heed not, but the past,—the past,
More highly prize.

Onward its course the present keeps,
Onward the constant current sweeps,
Till life is done;
And, did we judge of time aright,
The past and future in their flight
Would be as one.

Let no on fondly dream again,
That Hope and all her shadowy train
Will not decay;
Fleeting as were the dreams of old,
Remembered like a tale that's told,
They pass away.

Our lives are rivers, gliding free
To that unfathomed, boundless sea,
The silent grave!
Thither all earthly pomp and boast
Roll, to be swallowed up and lost
In one dark wave.

Thither the might torrents stray,
Thither the brook pursues its way,
And tinkling rill.
There all are equal; side by side
The poor man and the son of pride
Lie calm and still.¹⁵

These reflections on the ephemeral nature of life, and the extended maritime metaphor that makes a boat of the human body, and a river of life's journey leading inexorably to death are

III) Nuestras vidas son los ríos / Que van a dar en la mar, / Que es el morir: / Allí van los señoríos, / Derechos a se acabar / Y consumir.

¹⁵ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, <https://www.bartleby.com/356/478.html>.

leitmotifs of the Golden Age. Among many other examples, one sonnet by Francisco de Quevedo,¹⁶ is representative of the preoccupations of the era:

To live is to walk a short day's journey
And our life, Lico, is a living death
which dawned yesterday on a fragile body
and is buried each moment in the body.

A nothing, a little existence, that will be nothing
Again in a short while, forgetting through ambition
Wrongly persuaded through vanity
It longs to endure, this enlivened dust.

Carried away by deceptive thoughts
And blind and mocking hope
It will fall into the same memorial

Like one who sailing the seas is diverted
And without steering is carried away on the wind
And before realising it reaches journey's end.

The brevity of life is represented by the metaphor of the pathway travelled in just one day: the body that is buried so soon after being born reminds us of the sufferings it brings and of the meaninglessness of the importance given to the material. The metaphor of the boat that lets itself be carried off by the current, unaware of forgetful of the permanent state of movement that is implied by the waves and the passing of life, is the same as the one used by Aurima Devatine to compare the body to the canoe that makes its way over the water, driven by the wind, like Rumia on the ocean, the floating egg that contained Ta'aroa, the Creator God. These concepts are shared by other authors of the Baroque period, for example in France.

Before making a huge leap forward in time to the modernist movement that began in France but crossed the Atlantic to appear with some modifications in the contexts of the various countries where it provided inspiration, including to Aurima Devatine, I would like to consider the movement known in Spain as the "Generation of '98". I examine this "Generation" because it reflects the desire of certain Spanish authors to find new preoccupations and a new way of writing after the national drama that arose from the loss of Spain's last colonies. Faced with something that they considered to be a decline, these authors were fiercely critical of the policies who had brought about these catastrophes and felt the need to attach themselves to

¹⁶ "Vivir es caminar breve jornada, /y muerte viva es, Lico, nuestra vida, / ayer al frágil cuerpo amanecida, / cada instante en el cuerpo sepultada. / Nada, que siendo, es poco, y será nada / en poco tiempo, que ambiciosa olvida; / pues de la vanidad mal persuadida, / anhela duración, tierra animada./ Llevada de engañoso pensamiento, / y de esperanza burladora y ciega, / tropezará en el mismo monumento./ Como el que divertido el mar navega, / y sin moverse vuela con el viento, / y antes que piense en acercarse, llega." Francisco de Quevedo, *Vivir es caminar breve jornada*. <http://artgitato.com/vivir-es-caminar-breve-jornada-de-quevedo-texte-et-traduction/>.

what they referred to as “the very backbone” of their Spanish Identity: “attachment to the old villages and landscapes of Castile, [...] commitment to social reality, renewal of archaic concepts and expressions, curiosity for new ideas and an awareness of the disastrous war of '98” as central to the discussion.¹⁷ Although Aurima Devatine does not seem to me to be fully attached to this movement, we may consider that she has been inspired by what resembles a need to go back to the source, to the essential (the land, the people who live on it, the celebration of Nature, perhaps neglected for too long, in favour of nobler or more intellectual concerns), and to language. The political content¹⁸ of her work is not as central as it is in the writings of this generation (such as Unamuno, Machado and Azarín), but it is clearly present, particularly in expressing the need to protect the land, to be united, and not to forget the language. Aurima Devatine writes about her land, her roots, her people as they are intrinsically, and without resorting to ostentatious flourishes. While some critics have highlighted the incompatibility of the Generation of '98 and modernism, Dorde Cuvardic Garcia on the other hand points out the links between the two movements, particularly where the writings of certain Latin-American authors are concerned. It is a question of criticising:

stereotyped attitudes and precious clichés, [of affirming] one’s repugnance for falsely refined language, one’s reluctance to adopt the kind of symbolism suited to an antique store, the quest for the quintessentially poetic. [...] Spanish modernism initially emerged as part of the Hispano-American postmodernist reaction to the literary language of the first Modernists. In a second phase, this coincidence was resolved by a return to Spanish poetic tradition: songs, romances, ballads (*copla*). The Spanish thereby confirmed the Romantic nature of Modernism, but at the same time they closed themselves off from the poetry of modern life.¹⁹

How might we consider the links between the work of Aurima Devatine and its possible influences from Latin-American modernism?

To try to respond to this question, I will now examine authors such as José Martí, Nicolás Guillén and Pablo Neruda. José Martí was in fact considered to be a “pre-Modernist”, the father of the Cuban nation, both a politician and a poet. Nicolás Guillén has been considered the herald

¹⁷ Dorde Cuvardic Garcia, “El debate modernismo-generación del 98”, *Revista Reflexiones* 88: 2, 2009, 101-112: “amor por los viejos pueblos y el paisaje de Castilla, [...], acercamiento a la realidad social; recuperación de arcaísmos; curiosidad por las ideas extranjeras y conciencia del Desastre de la Guerra del 98 como espacio de debate”, p. 102.

¹⁸ By “political content” I mean the political reflections contained in Aurima Devatine’s texts, as in those by Unamuno, Machado and Azarín. It is clearly not a question of comparing political opinions, since Aurima Devatine is criticising colonisation whereas the Spanish authors are mourning the loss of their colonies.

¹⁹ “[...] crítica de las actitudes estereotipadas y de los clisés preciosistas, repugnancia ante el lenguaje falsamente refinado, reticencia ante un simbolismo de tienda de antigüedades, búsqueda de una poesía esencial. [...] El modernismo español coincide, inicialmente, con la reacción postmodernista hispanoamericana frente al lenguaje literario del primer modernismo; en un segundo momento esa coincidencia se resuelve en una vuelta hacia la tradición poética española; la canción, el romance, la copla. Los españoles confirman así el carácter romántico del modernismo, pero, al mismo tiempo, se cierran ante la poesía de la vida moderna”, Octavio Paz, “Romanticismo, modernismo, postmodernismo”, *Historia y crítica de la literatura española*, vol. VI Modernismo y 98, ed. José Carlos Mainer, Catedra: Madrid, 1980, 65-69, p. 69. Cited by Dorde Cuvardic García, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

of *negrismo*, which borrows from Modernism both its freedom of form and its Americanist claims. And finally, Pablo Neruda borrowed aspects of some of Modernism's ideas, in particular poetic renewal, the rejection of academic "purity", and the claim to difference.

Flora Aurima Devatine's poetry allows us to make a giant leap across the Atlantic, in the direction of Cuba. Strongly marked by their insularity, authors from this island are determined to claim their plural identity, constructed between slavery and Spanish colonisation. Before discussing Nicolas Guillén's remarkable "El son entero" [The Whole *Son*], to which Aurima Devatine kindly directed me, I would like to highlight the innovation that Latin-American Modernism implies. One of the great figures of this pre-Modernism is José Martí, whom we may consider a precursor of this movement. Revolutionary in his ideas and in his expression, some critics have baptised him the "apostle" of the young Cuban revolution. As Sandra Monet-Descombey Hernández has put it: "José Martí calls for the establishment of an esthetics of renewal, based on a sensory and spiritual perception of the world able to bring about a redemptive metamorphosis."²⁰ It is in effect a matter of "a dialectic confrontation between opposites in order to recreate the osmosis of the human in Nature into the universe".²¹ This is also arguably what Aurima Devatine wishes to create in her poems brimming with humanity and with calls for the essential efforts required to preserve this osmosis between human and nature. The author indicates that the word "nature", if we disregard its translation as the reductive "natura", has no equivalent in Tahitian and was translated by the more explicit "arutaimareva", "forest-sea-air."²² According to Monet-Descombey Hernández, "[...] Latin-American modernists envisage a privileged relationship with nature, a fusion that opens the way to ontological or mystical transcendence. The body, in support of the soul, is considered to be the ideal departure point for a successful quest for moral and spiritual elevation."²³ Is this not the same thing that Aurima Devatine is reaching for when she writes about the natural surroundings, their beauty and her longing for human unity around this beauty? "Martí's voice expresses his desire to place his art in service to not only a given esthetic (the aspiration to spiritual elevation that is common to the Modernists), but also to an ethos, a philosophy of Life that privileges Goodness and human perfection":²⁴ is this not also the message that Aurima Devatine wishes to deliver when she seems to be exhorting one and all, within the context of Polynesian history, to live together harmoniously, drawing on the wisdom of past experience, rather than encouraging resentment?

²⁰ "José Martí prône l'avènement d'une esthétique rénovatrice, fondée sur une perception sensorielle et spirituelle du monde afin d'aboutir à une métamorphose rédemptrice", Sandra Monet-Descombey Hernández, "Corps fragmenté et pouvoir rédempteur du poétique chez José Martí", *Hispanical* 12: Autumn 2017, 233-249, p. 233.

²¹ "une confrontation dialectique des contraires pour recréer l'osmose de l'humain dans la nature avec l'univers", Monet-Descombey Hernández, *op.cit.*, p. 233.

²² Email, Flora Aurima Devatine to Estelle Castro-Kouchy, 19 August 2019.

²³ "[...] les modernistes latino-américains envisagent un rapport privilégié avec la nature, une fusion tellurique qui favorise l'accès à la transcendence ontologique ou mystique. Le corps, support de l'âme, est considéré comme point de départ idéal pour faire aboutir la quête d'élévation morale et spirituelle", Monet-Descombey Hernández, *op.cit.*, p. 237.

²⁴ "la voix martinienne exprime sa volonté de mettre son art, non seulement au service d'une esthétique assumée (aspiration à l'élévation spirituelle commune aux Modernistes), mais surtout d'un ethos, d'une philosophie de vie qui tend vers le Bien et la perfection humaine", *ibid.*, p. 245.

Martí's hymn to nature, mingled for the most part in his poems with a call for political independence, is written in a language that follows no particular academic form. Instead of the fixed poetic forms anchored in tradition, the author uses a poetic form that must be ever evolving, depending on the writer's inspiration. Martí therefore uses unexpected phrasing and highly original word order. The later works of Nicolas Guillén, is inspired by these valued innovations. He is the leading poet of Cuban identity politics. In an article titled "Nicolas Guillén and Black American Poetry. Forty Years of Anthologies", Norberto Codina Boeras writes: "In his works, Guillén represents the territory of his language, and hybridity, taking it to the peak of Latin-American writing":²⁵ does not Aurima Devatine also represent the territory of her language, and the hybridity of her poetic language taken to the fullest extent of Polynesian expression? Does not the language that she lays claim to, deeply marked by orality, sometimes mixing Tahitian and French, express her original creation, the original representation of her culture and its expression? Codina Boeras highlights the richness of Guillén's creativity through the question of transculturality:

Hybridity is the cornerstone of the transcultural, which may also, through a more political reading, be called Latin-American or Caribbean integration, but which, in the subterranean history of peoples, carries the force of religious syncretism, arising from tribal magic and traversing the santería of the shanty towns and Maroon culture to reach the Christianity practised by the dominant classes in its catholic and protestant variations.²⁶

Is not Aurima Devatine's writing also hybrid writing from a Polynesian woman? Between the syntax of written French and spoken and written reo tahiti, between academic structures and oral rhythms, between French and Polynesian cultures, between Polynesian, French, Spanish and Latin-American inspirations, between "embodied writing"²⁷ and writing on paper, between nature and appropriated, metamorphosed cultural integration?

In a short article titled "Poetry and *négritude* in Cuba" Monet-Descombey Hernández gives her definition of *negritismo*:

²⁵ "Guillén refleja en sus obras el territorio del idioma, el mestizaje hasta alcanzar la plenitud de la expresión latinoamericana", Norberto Codina Boeras, "Nicolas Guillén y la poesía negra de América. Cuarenta años de antología (II)", <http://www.uneac.org/columnas/norberto-codina-boeras/nicolas-guillen-y-la-poesia-negra-de-america-cuarenta-anos-de-una-0>, 31 May 2016, 1. Accessed 31 July 2019.

²⁶ "El mestizaje es la piedra angular de esa transculturación que se ha dado también en llamar, en lectura más política, integración latinoamericana y caribeña, pero que en la historia subterránea de los pueblos tiene fuerza como el sincretismo religioso, que viene desde la magia tribal, pasando por la santería del baracón y el cimarronaje, hasta el cristianismo oficial de las clases dominantes, en sus variantes católicas o protestantes", *ibid.*, p. 3.

²⁷ This expression [écriture au corps] is in reference to *De l'écriture au corps*, *Bulletin du LARSH*, 1: 2002, in which Aurima Devatine published an article titled "Te tino? Le corps?" (pp. 13-22). The author discusses the body as a theme and a support for her writing. The expression "écriture au corps" is, I think, clarified by Bertrand-F. Gérard: "What is confirmed by this collection of texts and the intertextuality it proposes is that the body is language and is involved as a reality in the linking of the imaginary with the symbolic, as imaginary (image of the body) and in the linking of the real with the symbolic and as a symbolic element (gestures, attitudes, diseases, etc.) in the linking of the real and the imaginary", *ibid.*, p. 10.

Negrismo is a part of this enterprise [of avant-garde liberation, as much in the socio-political domain as in the cultural and esthetic] through an external approach to the culture known as Afro-Cuban, seen as too picturesque and exotic for the majority of young white authors, although some well-known writers like Alejo Carpentier have claimed they have absorbed or understood it. The many poets who have practised this genre over a number of years were inspired by linguistic strategies already featured in the songs and plays of last century to reproduce the variants of popular spoken language and expressions of African origin, the rhythms of chants and traditional dances (son, rumba, congas and carnival troupe performances).²⁸

Monet-Descombey Hernández focuses more particularly in this article on Nicolas Guillén, stating of his contribution to literature that: “This great poet, drawing on a range of inspirations, was able to renew the Hispanic writing tradition in an original and authentic way, thanks among other factors to the incorporation of Cuban influences in the form of typically Cuban ‘*sones*’, chants, music and dance, in which we find Spanish poetic compositions, African choruses and rhythms.”²⁹ Guillén’s work shows a very close association between the Cuban and the surrounding nature, as is demonstrated in the poem “The Palm Tree”, written to a regular rhythm that is evocative of the inexorable character of the solitude that seems to be the inevitable fate of humanity:

The palm tree on the patio
Was born alone;
It grew without my noticing,
It grew alone;
Beneath the moon and the sun,
It lives alone.

With its long still body,
The palm tree alone;
Alone on the closed-in patio,
Ever alone,
Guardian of the dusk,
It dreams alone.

The palm tree dreaming alone,
Palm tree alone,
Free in the wind,
Free and alone,
Freed from roots and the earth,
Freed and alone, chasing the clouds,
Palm tree alone,
Palm tree alone,
Palm tree.³⁰

²⁸ Sandra Monet-Descombey Hernández, “Poésie et négritude à Cuba,” *Africultures* 17: 1999, 1. <http://africultures.com/poesie-et-negritude-a-cuba-776/>. Accessed 31 July 2019.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ “La palma que está en el patio / nació sola; / creció sin que yo la viera, / creció sola; / bajo la luna y el sol, / vive sola. // Con su largo cuerpo fijo, / palma sola; / sola en el patio sellado, /

This poem is reminiscent of Aurima Devatine's "Abattage et abattement" (When a Tree Falls...) which recounts the felling of a palm tree, a life-giver to several generations. Nature on her island is a founding element of her identity, just as Cuba's natural environment is for Guillén: here it appears as intrinsically linked to the humanity developing within it:

The coconut oil palm's stump in the earth
 Still grows high and strong and for a time
 Shows the power and all the majesty, the wisdom
 Of a full life and of others lived in its shadow.
 A just reminder of the respect due, of the memory of the ancestor,
 The father who is no more, the mother who is no more.
 And as I write, the mother-in-law, the father-in-law [...] ³¹

The two poems share the idea of unity between nature and humanity, as well as the recurring theme of memory, necessary to mankind and to a sense of identity. Memory is also, and perhaps essentially, transmitted through the land, through natural elements, indispensable to humans who can only exist through them.

Guillén's poem "Los dos abuelos" [The Two Grandfathers], a poem reconciling dominant and dominated, slaves and slave-owners, an elegy to Guillén's two grandfathers, one black and one white, reminds us of the tone Flora Aurima Devatine often uses in her poems which tend to commend more strongly the pursuance of a shared pathway than the nursing of eternal resentment. I cite here only the closing lines of Guillén's poem:

Federico!
 Facundo! The two of them embrace,
 The two of them sigh. The two of them
 Their strong heads lifting;
 The two of them the same stature,
 Beneath the high stars;
 The two of them the same stature,
 Black longing and white longing,
 The two of them the same stature,
 Shouting, dreaming, weeping, singing,
 They dream, they weep, they sing,
 They weep, they sing,

siempre sola,/ guardián del atardecer, / sueña sola. // La palma sola soñando, / palma sola, / que va libre por el viento, / libre y sola, / suelta de raíz y tierra, / que va libre por el viento, / libre y sola, / suelta de raíz y tierra, / suelta y sola, / cazadora de las nubes, / palma sola, / palma sola, / palma." <https://www.poemas-del-alma.com/nicolas-guillen-palma-sola.htm>

³¹ "Quant au palmier à huile, un moignon de tronc en terre / Porte encore haut et fort et pour un temps / La puissance et toute la majesté et la sagesse / D'une vie pleine et de plusieurs autres passées sous son ombre. / Juste rappel au respect, à la mémoire de l'aïeul, / Du père disparu, de la mère, disparue. / Et au moment où j'écris, de la belle-mère, du beau-père [...] *Maruao*, H-France Salon, Vol 14 Issue 21 #2, p. 74.

They sing!³²

and the closing lines of Aurima Devatine's poem "Adresse":

We keep and carry away in our baggage some kind of essence, namely:

On our shared pathways,

What wisp of conscience each of us brings,
 What trace of reflection, of humanity,
 So we may begin to tell together,
 With our words, our sonorities, our internal musics,

That thing to be transmitted,
 The spirit of rightful remembering:

To cut, to add, rejoin, renew,
 To smooth, to spread and weave anew the cloth of humankind.³³

Perhaps Gerardo Farías Rangel's remarks about Guillén's poetry sum up here and clarify the intentions of the two authors:

[...] the lyrical voice of these poems is constantly seeking to integrate interior and exterior, to unite poles, aspects, spaces and elements, something that is truly evident in the uniting of black and white races. And yet, this poetic discourse goes beyond a social reconciliation; it seeks a much deeper communion, ontological in nature, which has considerable implications for ways of poeticising the human body and, more generally, all that is material.

The collection of poems begins with "Palabras en el Trópico" [Words in the Tropics]: in this title we see linked together two fundamental elements of the Caribbean author's poetics: the word as the essential material of poetry and the tropics as source of identity; each of these is conceived of as a space in which to create a new vision of the world. As an opening act, this poem is a kind of *Ars poetica*, a place where there begins an evocation of what a new Man on this earth might be, one who creates himself, at the same time as he creates his God, the Tropics. That creation is begun by what I call here, the Tropics-God.³⁴

³² "Los dos se abrazan. / Los dos suspiran. Los dos / las fuertes cabezas alzan; / los dos del mismo tamaño, / bajo las estrellas altas; / los dos del mismo tamaño, / ansia negra y ansia blanca, / los dos del mismo tamaño, / gritan, sueñan, lloran, cantan, / Sueñan, lloran, cantan, / ¡Cantan!" <https://www.babelio.com/auteur/Nicolas-Guillen/246203/citations>

³³ "Nous gardons et emporterons dans nos bagages quelque essence qui est : / Sur nos chemins de partage, / L'apport par chacun de son brin de conscience, / De réflexion, d'humanité, / Pour commencer à dire ensemble, / Avec nos mots, nos sonorités, nos musiques intérieures, / La chose à transmettre, / L'esprit de juste mémoire : / Tailler, ajouter, renouer, rénover, / Aplanir, étendre et retresser la natte humaine". *Maruao, H-France Salon*, Vol 14, Issue 21, #2, p. 65.

³⁴ Gerardo Farías Rangel, "Cuerpo, trópico y tiempo: elementos de creación identitaria en la poesía de Nicolás Guillén" [Body, tropics and time: three elements of identity creation in

Let me cite here the final verse of Nicolás Guillén's "Palabras en el trópico":

I owe you my dusky body,
 the nimbleness of these thighs, the kink of this hair,
 my love of unalloyed woman,
 and this delirious blood.
 I owe to you limitless days
 on whose blue tents are pasted
 fat, jocular suns;
 I owe to you moist lips,
 jaguar's tail and snake-spit;
 I owe you the jungle pool where the hesitant wild beasts drink.
 Tropics, to you I owe
 this child-like desire
 to follow forever the curve
 of your golden zone brimming over with yellow roses,
 laughing aloud on the clouds and the topless mountains
 while an ocean of sky
 breaks in unending waves of stars at my feet.³⁵

Where Guillén speaks of the body, a body moulded by the landscape that gives him life, Aurima Devatine speaks of what constitutes her viscerally: her writing, her embodied writing, the creation of the island landscape, which is both similar and different, in the poem "Quand m'en

Nicolás Guillén's poetry], in *Valenciana*, vol. 5, no. 10, July-December 2012, pp. 155-182; pp. 161-162: "[...] la voz lírica de estos poemas está en constante búsqueda de una intergración entre lo exterior y lo interior, union de polos, de aspectos, espacios, elementos, lo cual es muy obvio en la unión de las razas negra y blanca. Sin embargo, este discurso poético va más allá de una conciliación social, busca una comunión mucho más profunda, de carácter ontológico, la cual tiene una gran repercusión en la forma de poetizar el cuerpo humano y, en general, todo lo material. La colección de poemas inicia con "Palabras en el Trópico", en cuyo título se hermanan dos elementos fundamentales en la poética del autor antillano: *la palabra* como material primordial de la poesía y *el trópico* que representa un lugar identitario; ambos concebidos como *espacios* para crear una nueva visión de mundo. Como acto inaugural, este poema representa una suerte de *Arte Poética*, donde precisamente se inicia una evocación de lo que es un nuevo hombre sobre esta tierra, que se crea a sí mismo, al mismo tiempo que crea a su dios, el Trópico. La creación la inicia, lo que llamo aquí, el Dios-Trópico."

³⁵ "Words in the Tropics", trans. Robert Brittain, *Poetry*, vol. 73, no. 1, (Oct., 1948), pp. 12-14, pp. 13-14.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/20590610>.

"Te debo el cuerpo oscuro, / las piernas ágiles y la cabeza crespa, / mi amor hacia las hembras elementales, / y esta sangre imborrable. / Te debo los días altos, / en cuya tela azul están pegados / soles redondos y risueños; / te debo los labios húmedos, / la cola del jaguar y la saliva de las culebras; / te debo el charco donde beben las fieras sedientas; / te debo, Trópico, / este entusiasmo niño / de correr en la pista / de tu profundo cinturón lleno de rosas amarillas / riendo sobre las montañas y las nubes, / mientras un cielo marítimo / se destroza en interminables olas de estrellas a mis pies". <https://www.poesi.as/ng3401.htm>.

tiendrai-je à mes mots? Quand scanderai-je mes mots poèmes?" [When shall I be satisfied with my words? When shall I beat out my poem words?]:

She writes with:

Words sculpted from its character
Buried in the mud, beneath the stream's gravel bed!

And with:

Words flying birds cooing wings beating
Existence words, life words crying out
Beneath the stones, beneath the leaves!
Words piercing calls of the blackbirds
Not in the least keen swimmers!
Words in the name of the father on the mother earth.
Memory words, mat-woven name, origin and history
[...]
Root words of the cordylines
[...]
Palm words [...]³⁶

And finally, in the closing part of this text, I should like to refer briefly to the poetry of Pablo Neruda, who seems to me to be one of the sources of inspiration for Flora Devatine Aurima's work, in addition to those I have already mentioned.

Félix Guattari, writing about Neruda's work, highlighted the fact that "it's about inhabiting, not the being, but singularity, in particular alterity, in all its elements, even the negative, non-assimilable ones, in order to be able to create another ontological horizon."³⁷ It seems to me that Aurima Devatine's writing corresponds to this definition of poetry, and or writing more broadly, since the author, descended from a people that was colonised, appears to have decided to adopt whatever the colonisers brought that she finds good or at least acceptable: their language, particularly, the Others' written language, in order to bear witness, to bear witness to what she is in relation to the Other, to what that Other is in relation to her. When she reminds us in the poem "Écrire" [Writing] that this written form belongs to the Other: "To write, "you have to be" an ace"! You have to be "popa'ā" [European]! French! To know how to write!...

³⁶ "Elle écrit avec : / *Des mots sculptures de sa trempe / Enfouis dans la vase, sous les gravillons du ruisseau!* / Elle écrit avec: / *Des mots à vols d'oiseaux roucoulant à tire d'aile / Des mots existences, mots de vie vagissant / Sous les pierres, sous les feuilles! / Des mots cris perçants des merles / Pas nageurs pour deux sous! / Des mots au nom du père sur la terre-mère. / Des mots mémoire, nattes du nom, origine et histoire / [...] / Des mots racines de cordylines / [...] / Des mots palmes [...]."* Maruao, *H-France Salon* Vol 14 Issue 21 #2, p. 89.

³⁷ Félix Guattari, in Sergio Holas, "La impureza: sus implicaciones en la poesía y las colecciones de Pablo Neruda" (Impurity and its effects on Pablo Neruda's poetry and collections), *Revista Signos*, vol. 38, no. 57, 2005, pp. 91-100. "La cuestión es habitar, no el ser, sino la singularidad, especialmente la alteridad en sus elementos en ella incluidos negativos, inasimilables, para poder refundar otro horizonte ontológico," p. 92.

What's more, it's got nothing to do with... "With the housework waiting...",³⁸ she appropriates whatever seems useful to her. She stresses this:

Writing,
'It's terrifying!'

Writing,
"It's an action outside yourself!
Foreign to yourself,

An imported product!"

Writing,
"It makes you someone else!
It means you're not yourself!"³⁹

Aurima Devatine highlights writing as a form of expression that was imposed on an oral society by the colonisers. But she has chosen to adopt that mode of expression in the Other's language in order to voice her visceral belonging to her culture. Through this choice, which may appear paradoxical, but is in fact nothing of the kind, she claims her means of expression and of thinking in the Other's language, so as to be better understood by that Other. Is this act of appropriation accompanied by some transformation, some adaptation, by some metamorphosis of the means of expression?

Neruda writes: "You learn poetry, moving step by step among things and beings, never isolating, but rather containing them all within a blind expansion of love."⁴⁰ Could there be a finer ode to the acceptance of otherness? And is that not what Aurima Devatine is expressing, in the text titled "Confessions", when she endorses attentiveness, and even more, love for the Other even when that Other might be a beneficiary of invasion:

And through the exchange, the gifting and the speaking, being attentive to the source of knotty misunderstandings that arise from lack of knowledge and simplicity, from not listening, not accepting, simply and happily, what the Other is, what they contribute! To protect yourself from the Other, be appreciative! Simply! "Speaking", "Listening", these are like "Giving", "Receiving", "Listen!, Receive!, Welcome!, Accept!" Simply! "Speaking" and "Listening", are the fundamental acts around which relationships, communication, sharing and exchanging develop. In the end, in short, what an opening, what hope, what wondrous possibilities, for Humanity, for Life!⁴¹

³⁸ Flora Devatine, *Tergiversations et Réveries de l'Écriture Orale, Te Pahu a Hono'ura*, Papeete, Au vent des îles, 1998, pp. 32-33.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

⁴⁰ Pablo Neruda, in Sergio Holas, *op. cit.*, p. 92: "Se aprende la poesía paso a paso entre las cosas y los seres, sin apartarlos sino agregándos a todos en una ciega extensión del amor."

⁴¹ "Et pendant l'échange, don et prise de la parole, être attentif au pourvoyeur de nœuds de malentendus, qu'est le manque de savoir et de simplicité, à ne pas écouter, comme à ne pas accepter, simplement et avec bonheur, ce que l'Autre est, ce qu'il donne ! Pour s'en préserver,

An ode to love, an ode to acceptance and to choosing life and optimism instead of the reverse. Aurima Devatine here gives voice to the hope that every encounter can give rise to beauty and love, something that is profoundly good if we accept it in its deeply human and imperfect essence. And is not the inspiration for what she expresses here in "Confessions" traceable back to Neruda's text "La palabra"?⁴²

What a great language I have, it's a fine language we inherited from the fierce conquistadors . . . They strode over the giant cordilleras, over the rugged Americas, hunting for potatoes, sausages, beans, black tobacco, gold, corn, fried eggs, with a voracious appetite not found in the world since then . . . They swallowed up everything, religions, pyramids, tribes, idolatries just like the ones they brought along in their huge sacks . . . Wherever they went, they razed the land . . . But words fell like pebbles out of the boots of the barbarians, out of their beards, their helmets, their horseshoes, luminous words that were left glittering here . . . our language. We came up losers ... We came up winners . . . They carried off the gold and left us the gold . . . They carried everything off and left us everything . . . They left us the words.⁴³

These are the same words used by Aurima Devatine... words which she appropriates to create a new language, a written language inflected by orality. Just as Pablo Neruda writes in the opening of the prologue we have just cited, that words are what sings, what rises and falls, depending on pronunciation, adaptation, accent, and even emotion, Aurima Devatine writes in the same vein: "[...] woven again...! How shall I put it? Enriched by indigeneity! And like tapa cloth, with the addition of fibres of orality!⁴⁴ [...] And I write as I speak / As I speak as I think / As I think as it comes to me / And it is written!"⁴⁵

apprécier l'Autre ! Simplement ! « Parler », « Ecouter » C'est comme « Donner », « Recevoir », « Ecoute ! Reçois ! Accueille ! Accepte ! » Simplement ! « Parler ! », « Ecouter ! », actes fondateurs autour desquels se tissent la relation, la communication, le partage, l'échange ! En fin de compte et de propos, quelle ouverture, quelle espérance, que de projets fantastiques, pour l'Homme, pour la Vie !" Flora Devatine, *Postface*, in *Lieux-dits d'un malentendu culturel*, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

⁴² Pablo Neruda, "La palabra" in *Confieso que he vivido*, Barcelona, Seix Barral 2017, p. 72: "Qué buen idioma el mío, qué buena lengua heredamos de los conquistadores torvos... Estos andaban a zancadas por las tremendas cordilleras, por las Américas encrespadas, buscando patatas, butifarras, frijolitos, tabaco negro, oro, maíz, huevos fritos, con aquel apetito voraz que nunca más se ha visto en el mundo... Todo se lo tragaban, con religiones, pirámides, tribus, idolatrías iguales a las que ellos traían en sus grandes bolsas... Por donde pasaban quedaba arrasada la tierra... Pero a los bárbaros se les caían de la tierra de las barbas, de las herraduras, como piedrecitas, las palabras luminosas que se quedaron aquí resplandecientes... el idioma. Salimos perdiendo... Salimos ganando... Se llevaron el oro y nos dejaron el oro... Se lo llevaron todo y nos dejaron todo... Nos dejaron las palabras."

⁴³ Pablo Neruda, *Memoirs*, trans. Hardie Saint Martin, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992, p. 55.

⁴⁴ Which must make us think of the quipu used by the Incas.

⁴⁵ "[...] encore tissée...! Que dis-je? Etoffée à l'indigène! Et comme le « tapa », frappée de fibres d'oralité! [...] Et j'écris comme je parle / Comme je parle comme je pense / Comme je pense comme ça vient / Et que ça s'écrit!". Aurima Devatine, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-46.

The writings of Aurima Devatine and Neruda are similar, then, in their love of nature, their conception of a simple form of poetic writing in which expressing the senses is most important. One of Neruda's poems which seems to resonate most deeply with Aurima Devatine's work is probably the "Ode to Laziness". This poem evokes creation and the volatility of inspiration. Although the poetic voice refers to its creative difficulties, as if thought in the form of a plant refuses to allow a new shoot to develop, simply observing nature, the beach, plants, minerals and animals, is a poem. The words that Neruda elevates to divine status, thereby creating a new pantheism, remind us of Aurima Devatine's writing, for example when in the poem "Te-fa'a-to'eto'e-tane", "He who chills men", she describes her island world. The words chosen and the long anaphora of their juxtaposed sonorities, are the world. "Everything is sky / Everything is sea / Everything is land / Everything is full", "Flowering words / Fruiting words / Leafing words / Branching words", "Marae words / Museum words / Cathedral words / Adze words / Tō'ere words / 'Āiha words / Azure words".⁴⁶ Aurima Devatine plays with words and 'cooks up' simple lines that cluster into chants celebrating life and nature. In this poem she indulges greedily in words, as if wanting to cite them all, like Neruda:

I prostrate myself before them... I love them, I press myself up against them, I pursue them, I bite into them, I make them melt... I love words so much... the unexpected ones... the ones you wait for greedily, that you listen out for until suddenly they fall... Beloved syllables... They glitter like coloured stones, leap like silvery fish, they are foam, thread, metal, dew... I chase after certain words... They are so beautiful that I want to put them all into my poem... I snatch them in mid-flight, as they buzz by, I catch them, clean them, peel them and ready myself before the dish, I can feel them, crystalline, vibrating, alabaster, vegetable, oily, like fruit, like algae, like agate, like olives... Then I stir them up, I shake them, I drink them down, I swallow them whole, I knead them, I dress them up, I set them free... I leave them like stalactites in my poem, like slivers of polished wood, like coals, like shipwreck flotsam, like gifts washed ashore... The word contains everything.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Flora Devatine, "And I Who am Still a Woman Woven", trans. Jean Anderson, in Jeffrey Carroll, Brandy Nālani McDougall, Georganne Nordstrom, eds. *Huihui: Navigating Art and Literature in the Pacific*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015, pp. 17-23; pp. 20, 21, 23.

"Tout est ciel / Tout est mer / Tout est terre / Tout est plein", "Des mots fleuris / Des mots fruités / Des mots feuillus / Des mots branchus", "De mots 'marae' / De mots musée / De mots cathédrale / De mots herminette / De mots 'Tō'ere' / De mots 'Āiha' / De mots azur", Aurima Devatine, *Maruao*, *H-France Salon* Vol 14 Issue 21 #2, pp. 56-57.

⁴⁷ Me prosterno ante ellas... Las amo, las adhiero, las persigo, las muerdo, las derrito... Amo tanto las palabras... Las inesperadas... Las que glotonamente se esperan, se escuchan, hasta que de pronto caen... Vocablos amados... Brillan como piedras de colores, saltan como platinados peces, son espuma, hilo, metal, rocío... Persigo algunas palabras... Son tan hermosas que las quiero poner todas en mi poema... Las agarro al vuelo, cuando van zumbando, y las atrapo, las limpio, las pelo, me preparo frente al plato, las siento cristalinas, vibrantes, ebúrneas, vegetales, aceitosas, como frutas, como algas, como ágatas, como aceitunas... Y entonces las revuelvo, las agito, me las bebo, me las zampo, las trituro, las emperejilo, las liberto... Las dejo como estalactitas en mi poema, como pedacitos de madera bruñida, como carbón, como restos de naufragio, regalos de la ola... Todo está en la palabra... <https://genius.com/Pablo-neruda-la-palabra-annotated>

Writing that aims for simplicity in order to highlight the word "pure" and avoid forcing it into some preconceived structure, and the freedom allowed to the word in a poetry that is paradoxically labelled "impure" because it doesn't correspond to the rigid norms of academic poetic writing, seem to be quite clearly a goal of Aurima Devatine in the text just referred to, "He who chills men": it ends with a dedication to "Alberto the Argentinian", most likely Alberto Cortez, whose poem "En verso libre" speaks of his love for poetry that springs from the heart and that probably best expresses his inclination towards Latin-American modernism:

In Free Verse

You will see, my love, today I do not want
 To submit to the boredom of the sonnet
 And to its strict rules.
 Its way of always insisting on being worked
 And the ritual rhyming that lacks the courage
 To skip over the rules
 And on top of that
 Makes you put rose with froze
 And never with moon,
 And heartbeat, with heartbeat,
 Or is it coincidence that nothing
 Rhymes with that?
 Choose whatever rhyme you like,
 Are you not mistress
 Of all that I have, of my life?

Maybe passionate?
 Maybe resonate?
 Or simply tenderness
 Unless it sounds too similar.⁴⁸

With regard to this "impurity", Sergio Holas, in his article "La impureza: sus implicaciones en la poesía y las colecciones de Pablo Neruda", states that poetry's impurity arises from the effect of closeness between subject and object, their proximity, in effect. It is clearly essential to go beyond the academic idea of poetry. Holas hypothesises that in Neruda's writing:

the problem of going beyond, through exploring lines of flight or possibility, fossilised forms that due to repetition and their referencing of canonical models in order to legitimise themselves, create a cumulative effect and lose the potential for renewal of poetic language, actually give rise to a blockage of uniqueness, where new zones of intensity and new affects might be captured and mapped; these make it possible to

⁴⁸ Alberto Cortez, "En verso libre": "*Verás amor, hoy no quisiera / someterme al agobio del soneto, / y su estricta disciplina. / Su forma de exigir siempre su forma / y la rima ritual que no se anima / a saltarse las reglas / y que encima / e obliga a disponer / rosa con cosa, / ninguna con luna, / y corazón, corazón, / ¿o es que acaso / corazón no tiene rima? / Elige la que quieras, / ¿o no eres tú la dueña / del mío y de mi vida? / ¿Quizás pasión? / ¿tal vez razón? / ¿o simplemente / ternura / aunque asonante sea?*"

<http://www.albertocortez.com/poemas/home.asp?Id=56>

establish other modes of articulation, in other words to multiply the processes of the production of the subjective.⁴⁹

The literary canon, then, takes on the appearance in Neruda's work of an obstacle to creation, since the author's subjectivity is closed off in a form that corresponds to the essential criteria for academic respectability. Neruda wants quite rightly to break away from these rules of established forms that are said to be "pure". As Holas puts it, he must then make a case for a form of "impurity":

The exploration of new zones of poetic intensity in Neruda's work is like a new angle on poetry, opening it up to the impure, that is to say, what for Joan Ramón Jiménez was waste or rubbish bins unworthy of the pure act of writing poetry, it was extending the poetic work out towards the world's materiality, with very few elements excluded from this work. But what do we bring into the arena when we use the word "impure"? [...] What is pure would then emphasise the lack of mixing and thus of contact between two differing elements. According to this logic, the impure would be the result of contacts with any "matter that in essence, degrades one or several of its qualities (RAE, 1992: 149)". And from these definitions it would emerge that whatever is pure is confined within certain limits that are clearly established to safeguard this purity.⁵⁰

The key idea here is Neruda's opposition to this definition of purity, according to which a pure poetic language would be one that is untouched by the quotidian, by the material. But it is precisely the material aspects of the universe that Neruda wishes to celebrate, and it seems to me that Aurima Devatine also wishes to adopt this perspective: material things are also marked by solemnity and warrant being exalted, put into verse, even, and especially, free verse. Poets, and the subjects they decide to write about, are of the world, in the middle of the world, which is in part material. Poetry must not be distanced from the world, it draws nourishment from that world, in its completeness, and is capable of transforming that world, thereby developing its performative character. Neruda and Aurima Devatine highlight the porous nature of the boundaries that, in any case, they wish to do away with, between the poet and the world, between poetry and the material, between purity and impurity, because according to them,

⁴⁹ Holas, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-93: "[...] el problema de la superación, a través de la exploración de líneas de escape o devenir, de las formas anquilosadas que de tanto repetirse y remitirse para su legitimación al modelo canónico, producen un efecto de molarización y hacen perder el carácter renovador del lenguaje poético, generando un efecto de bloqueo de la singularidad, de tal manera de poder recuperar y cartografiar nuevas zonas de intensidad y de nuevos afectos, que hagan posible establecer otro(s) "agenciamiento(s) de enunciación", es decir, de multiplicar los procesos de producción de la subjetividad [...]."

⁵⁰ Holas, *op. cit.*, p. 93: "La exploración de nuevas zonas de intensidad poética, en Neruda, se correspondería con una renovada mirada del quehacer poético abriéndolo hacia lo impuro, es decir, aquello que constituía, en Juan Ramón Jiménez, desecho o basura indigna del pulcro acto de poetizar, ampliando el quehacer poético hacia la materialidad del mundo sin que prácticamente nada quede fuera de su quehacer. Pero, ¿qué hacemos emerger cuando utilizamos la palabra impuro? [...] Lo puro enfatizaría, entonces, la ausencia de mezcla, por tanto de contacto entre dos diferentes cosas. De acuerdo con esta lógica lo impuro sería resultante de roces con alguna « materia que, en una sustancia, deteriora alguna o algunas de sus cualidades » (Real Academia Española, 1992: 149). Se desprende de estas definiciones que lo puro estaría acotado dentro de ciertos límites claramente establecidos para salvaguardar esa pureza."

poetry is pure precisely because of its impurity. The poet does not choose to inhabit his or her ivory tower, and moves instead through the world, nourished by it and nourishing it:

[...] The subject is not separated from the external universe, but creates itself in a complex process of interactions with what is outside. The subject is thus a result of the relational nature of its existence, and not of its isolation. [...] The poet knows that the poetic task has a transformational effect on the external world, as well as on the poet.⁵¹

Poetry is thus written with the material world. It is the world's materiality rendered in words by the poet. It is an opening to the world and to others: "A blind gesture, a pure and loving extension of the word, since life is lived without fear of Otherness, of some future reader as yet unborn."⁵²

In conclusion, I would suggest that Flora Aurima Devatine's poetry is like a carefully sewn *tīfai fai*, built up by and designed around all these inspirational pieces. An original creation that highlights the uniqueness of the author. Aurima Devatine's poetry is of this world, this Earth, it is a melting-pot enclosing multiple influences which share deeply ontological concerns, and which mix the quotidian and a love for the world with an ethos that is uniquely the author's own. As Norberto Codina Boeras puts it, commenting on Nicolas Guillén's works:

On this mixture of civilisations that is an antecedent to the literature we know today, are developing precursors to the relationship between what is Cuban and what is American. Cultural forms, in particular dance, music, painting and poetry, have succeeded in crossing boundaries that the political, the economic and the ideological have not yet succeeded in crossing. Language is the living and multiple body of every territory where hybridity has its roots and where its new forms are establishing themselves, arising out of a history of divergent origins. It is the language of everyone, poetry is our shared homeland even though it is different in Brazil, the USA and the Lesser Antilles.⁵³

I believe that Flora Aurima Devatine's poetry fits this definition, taking into account, of course, the geographical context in which the author lives. Her poetry is the fruit of who and what she is, the product of a country with a troubled history. It is Polynesian, French, Spanish, American; it is world poetry because it is of the earth and of humanity. It is a poetry without frontiers, a poetry of unity and love, a poetry of the impure, in the purest sense of the term.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 94: "[...] el sujeto, no está separado del universo externo, sino que se construye en un complejo proceso de interacción acoplado al afuera. El sujeto, en consecuencia, resultaría del carácter relacional de su existir, no de su aislamiento".

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 95: " Gesto ciego de pura extensión amorosa del verbo, ya que la vida se asume sin miedo hacia la alteridad, hacia ese futuro lector/a que aun no nace".

⁵³ Norberto Boeras Cordina, "Nicolas Guillén y la poesía negra de América. Cuarenta años de una antología (I)", p. 2: "Sobre esta mixtura de civilizaciones, que sirve de antecedente a la literatura que hoy nos es familiar, se van gestando antecedentes de la relación de lo cubano y lo americano. La cultura, y en particular el baile, la música, la pintura y la poesía, han logrado atravesar las fronteras que aún lo político, económico o ideológico no han podido cruzar. El idioma es el cuerpo vivo y múltiple de cada territorio donde se funde el mestizaje y establece sus nuevas formas, desde una historia de origen diverso. Es esa lengua de todos, la poesía es una patria común aunque se diferencie en Brasil, Estados Unidos o en las Antillas menores".

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