AGUSTÍN MILLARES TORRES'S EL ÚLTIMO DE LOS CANARIOS*: A LITERARY CONVERSATION WITH JAMES FENIMORE COOPER ON INDIGENEITY AND* MESTIZAJE *IN THE ATLANTIC WORLD*

LA NOVELA EL ÚLTIMO DE LOS CANARIOS *DE AGUSTÍN MILLARES TORRES: UNA CONVERSACIÓN LITERARIA CON JAMES FENIMORE COOPER SOBRE LA INDIGENEIDAD Y EL MESTIZAJE EN EL MUNDO ATLÁNTICO*

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Abstract: This article analyzes Agustín Millares Torres's 1875 novel *El último de los canarios* in terms of its relation to U.S. author James Fenimore Cooper's 1826 novel *The Last of the Mohicans*. Specifically, the article explains how Millares Torres modeled his protagonists after Cooper's characters in a way that links colonial processes that occurred on opposite sides of the Atlantic, including the extermination and displacement of Indigenous people. Ultimately, while the plot of Cooper's novel narratively prohibits ethnic mixing, I argue that Millares Torres rewrote Cooper's narrative in a Canarian context to tout and celebrate *mestizaje*, presenting an authorial view of the Hispanic Atlantic as markedly distinct from the Anglo-Atlantic based on differing attitudes toward *mestizaje*.

Keywords: Indigeneity, *mestizaje*, Agustín Millares Torres, James Fenimore Cooper.

Resumen: Este artículo analiza la novela *El último de los canarios*, escrita por Agustín Millares Torres y publicada en 1875, en términos de su relación con la novela *El último de los mohicanos*, escrita por James Fenimore Cooper y publicada en 1826. Específicamente, demuestro que Millares Torres creó a sus protagonistas en la novela según el modelo de los personajes de Cooper de una manera que conecta los procesos coloniales que ocurrieron en lados opuestos del mundo atlántico, incluyendo el exterminio y el desplazamiento de gente indígena. Finalmente, mientras la trama de la novela de Cooper prohíbe el mestizaje a través de su narrativa, argumento que Millares Torres reescribió la narrativa de Cooper para el contexto canario con el fin de celebrar el mestizaje, lo que revela una vista autoral del Atlántico Hispánico como marcadamente diferenciado del Anglo-Atlántico, basado en actitudes distintas con respecto al mestizaje.

Palabras clave: Indigeneidad, mestizaje, Agustín Millares Torres, James Fenimore Cooper.

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1. INTRODUCTION

On the evening of October 19, 1873, the Gran Canarian historian and writer Agustín Millares Torres recited a poem of his own composition, «A la libertad», to his colleagues at the Casino Republicano de las Palmas de Gran Canaria. The poem amounts to a condensed history of humanity, from our very beginnings and our nascent curiosity as to the broader universe:

> Desde que el hombre apareció en la tierra,
> Su frente altiva al cielo levantó,
> E interrogando cuánto el mundo encierra,
> ¿Por qué he nacido? audaz se preguntó.

In later stanzas, the poem's ideology reveals itself to be characterized by an Enlightenment inheritance, in its teleological understanding of scientific advancement and societal progress toward an egalitarian utopia based on the exploitation of Earth's resources:

> Del progreso la mágica semilla
> Se ve entonces fecunda germinar,
> La tierra como esclava se le humilla,
> La materia se siente dominar.

For Millares Torres, it seems, agriculture is the first modern science, which allows humanity to take dominion over the earth. This explains the potency of the agricultural metaphor, with progress's start poetically taking the form of a germinating seed.

Like the land, the sea must also come under humanity's dominion, the poem explains, with an indirect allusion to the Columbian era:

> Con los rayos divinos de la ciencia,
> El hombre desafía el porvenir;
> Rey del mundo su vasta inteligencia,
> otros mundos se lanza a descubrir.

As the sea continues to rebel and attempts to drag humanity down and away from the light of progress, liberal humanism will always rise above, the poem suggests. Finally, the verses transition to a more specific call to political action. Concretely, the poem endorses the foundation of the Spanish Republic:

> Del vértigo social, ola por ola,
> En vano brama el proceloso mar,
> Fundemos la República Española,
> Y se hundirá la vieja sociedad……. [sic][1].

Despite its fervor, at the time of the author's reading of this poem in October of 1873, the call to establish the Republic was redundant, as the first Spanish Republic had been formed in February of the same year[2]. Certainly an ardent *republicano*, Millares Torres was also an important figure to Canarian cultural nationalism thanks to his work as a historian, poet, composer, and novelist. In addition to several novels, Millares Torres was also the author and composer of various *zarzuelas*

1 Archivo del Museo Canario, Papeles de Agustín Millares Torres, Caja 3, Poesías. I would like to express my sincere thanks to Christina Lee, Rachel Price, and Timothy Rommen, all of whom read prior versions of this essay and offered kind and helpful feedback. This research was made possible in part by the Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies, the Princeton Department of Spanish and Portuguese, and the Princeton Department of African American Studies (Project ID: 109092).

2 BELAUSTEGI & ARREGI (2017).

Fig. 1. Sign marking the street named for Agustin Millares Torres in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (author photograph, 2023).

and operatic works[3]. Today, a street is named for him in the Gran Canarian capital of Las Palmas, a fact which, according to literary historian Juan Bosch Millares, stands «como homenaje fervoroso de la ciudad a uno de sus hijos más preclaros»[4].

3 SANTANA GIL (1999).

4 BOSCH MILLARES (1959), p. 19.

This article addresses what is perhaps Millares Torres's most well-known novel, *El último de los canarios*. The author published the tale as a short story in 1858, before expanding it to novel length in 1875. The novel tells a story that takes place at the beginning of the sixteenth century, in which an Indigenous Canarian *cimarrón*[5] has successfully built a movement resisting Spanish imperialism from a refuge in the interior of Gran Canaria. His cousin and love interest, the *mestiza* princess Isabel, is promised to be wed to a Canarian conquistador, but declares her love for the *cimarrón* leader instead, and together they escape to the Americas, where the protagonist becomes a wealthy conquistador himself.

Thus far, scholarship has not sufficiently taken into account the novel's relation to the work of another republican author of the nineteenth-century Atlantic: James Fenimore Cooper's 1826 *The Last of the Mohicans*. Though scholars have certainly mentioned this transatlantic connection, studies mainly write it off as cursory or superficial[6]. I address this gap here by arguing that Millares Torres's novel is the result of an authorial decision to cast fictional Indigenous Canarian heroes in the mold of Cooper's characters, and I wish to add Millares Torres's name to the list of authors identified by Doris Sommer as writers who «reread and rewrote» Cooper's novel in the Spanish language[7]. In this sense, I echo the argument of literary scholars Naya Pérez Hernández and Alicia Llarena González, who tell us that Millares Torres's novel should be considered a «foundational fiction» (here using Sommer's framework again), as it constitutes «una auténtica novela de fundación atlántica»[8].

Specifically, I show that Millares Torres wrote the main protagonist, Benartemi, as a parallel to Cooper's Uncas (the titular «last of the Mohicans»), and that he wrote the secondary protagonist, Isabel, the daughter of a Spanish conquistador and an Indigenous noblewoman, in the mold of Afro-Caribbean identity by association with Cooper's mixed-race character Cora, the daughter of an Afro-Caribbean woman and a British soldier (in this sense, Cora and Isabel are both daughters of European conquistadors and African mothers). Benartemi and Isabel (who are romantic partners just as Uncas and Cora are, in a frustrated sense, in Cooper's novel), then, embody both Indigenous and African identity as seen through a «New World lens», to use Eyda Merediz's phrase[9]. Merediz, in her attention to early modern Iberian narratives about the Canaries, has shown that, for many authors, Indigenous Canarians and Indigenous Americans «shared [...]the space of the colonized» in the Atlantic World»[10]. This observation helps us understand the connectedness of these two colonial narratives.

The fates of Millares Torres's protagonists, Benartemi and Isabel, must be considered in contrast to those of Uncas and Cora in *The Last of the Mohicans*. Cooper's characters perish without marrying or having children, «indicating an intertwined history and shared future of banishment from the republican community that Cooper imagines»[11]. Otherwise put, *The Last of the Mohicans* «presents a world in which the mixing of races is morally repugnant and anathema to the American project of nation building»[12]. However, in Millares Torres's novel, his protagonists survive, marry, and finally end up contributing to Spain's colonizing efforts in the Americas. Ultimately, I conclude that Millares Torres's novel, by virtue of the fact that it rewrites Cooper's narrative to promote the legacy of *mestizaje* in the colony instead of narratively prohibiting it as Cooper's novel does, reflects a cultural outlook that perceives a neat demarcation between the Anglo- and Hispanic Atlantic worlds based on distinct authorial and societal attitudes toward racial mixing.

5 The term *cimarrón* refers to a formerly eslaved person who has become a fugitive. ZAYAS (1914).
6 ALFONSO (1876); PERERA SANTANA (2020); PÉREZ HERNÁNDEZ and LLARENA GONZÁLEZ (2023).
7 SOMMER (1991), p. 52.
8 PÉREZ HERNÁNDEZ and LLARENA GONZÁLEZ (2023), p. 126.
9 MEREDIZ (2004).
10 MEREDIZ (2004), p. 82.
11 GENOVA (2015), p. 41.
12 WARDROP (1997), p. 62.

Fig. 2. Birthplace of James Fenimore Cooper in Burlington, New Jersey (author photograph, 2025).

2. MILLARES TORRES AND THE GRAN CANARIAN INTELLECTUAL ELITE

Millares Torres's novel stands as a characteristic example of the elite liberal academic community of Gran Canaria's intellectual and literary production in the second half of the nineteenth century, as well as of Canarian humanistic inquiry generally during this period, in terms of its representations of Canarian Indigeneity. In addition to Millares's literary work, he was directly involved in the formation of an anthropological institution, still in existence today, that prioritized collecting, studying, and safeguarding the archaeological remains and cultural vestiges of Indigenous Canarian culture: *El Museo Canario*. Founded in 1879, by the time of the publication of the first volume of its eponymous journal, the intellectual society had around 150 members[13]. The medical doctor and anthropologist Gregorio Chil y Naranjo (whose father emigrated to Cuba) is most often considered the main figure involved with the foundation of the society, alongside fellow medical doctor Juan Padilla Padilla[14]. In their journal's inaugural volume, Chil y Naranjo wrote:

> [P]arece mentira y sin embargo es un hecho ciertísimo, que todos los ojos y pensamientos de los sabios y antropologistas del mundo estén fijos en estas siete rocas perdidas en la inmensidad del Atlántico, y atentos á los descubrimientos que cada dia se hacen de cu[á]nto nos queda de los Guanches[…]. El deseo de contribuir con todas nuestras fuerzas a resolver ese problema, hasta hoy insoluble, dió nacimiento a la formación de El Museo Canario[…][15].

Thus, he expressed the chief goal of the *Museo*, which was to determine «how much was left» of Indigenous Canarian culture in the late nineteenth century. Alongside the medical-anthropological expertise of Chil y Naranjo and Padilla Padilla, the Museo also relied on the work of ethnologists like Víctor Grau-Bassas, who performed extensive ethnographic work in the interior of Gran Canaria in the 1880s, as well as on the work of authors and historians like Millares Torres[16].

Based on his studies in Canarian history, Millares Torres gathered that the archipelago's modern population was a mixed society with varied ethnic origins. In his *Historia general de las Islas Canarias*, he wrote:

> Desde luego un observador atento e ilustrado distinguirá en la raza que hoy puebla las Canarias el tipo español, más o menos mezclado con la sangre árabe-ibérica; y el indígena, adulterado con frecuencia, como aquel, con la sangre de las diversas razas bereber, judía y negra, que sucesivamente han venido a cruzarse con ella sobre el suelo isleño[17].

Here, Millares Torres problematically suggests that one may determine whether a modern Canarian is of greater Iberian or Indigenous extraction with a simple glance. The author also denigrates non-white groups by referring to their presence in Canarian society as «adulteration». However, in doing so, he also makes the observation, and true assertion, that both Iberia and the Canarian archipelago constitute *mestizo* societies. The protagonist of his novel, Benartemi, will serve as a vehicle for illustrating this historical truth in keeping with the ethnographic and anthropological projects of the author's broader intellectual circle.

As articulated by literary scholar Thomas Genova, despite the fact that many North American critics interpreted Cooper as a «reactionary for the racial exclusivity of his novels», Cooper's nineteenth-century European readers saw the author as «a liberal reformer»[18]. Thus, in this sense I believe that Millares Torres likely viewed Cooper's authorial figure as emblematic of transatlantic republican ideals, and thus sought to cast Canarian history in a framework aligned culturally with his aspirations of founding and preserving the Spanish Republic. In other words, he leveraged a

13 NAVARRO (1880), p. 2.
14 REGUEIRA BENÍTEZ (2017).
15 CHIL Y NARANJO (1880), p. 5.
16 REGUEIRA BENÍTEZ (2017).
17 MILLARES TORRES (1893), p. 116.
18 GENOVA (2015), p. 36.

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history of Indigeneity to liken the Canaries to the Americas, which, by this time, was largely made of republics that were newly independent from the Spanish, British, and French empires, though his narrative differs from that of Cooper's on the point of *mestizaje*. Furthermore, the protagonists become figures of Canarian emigration when they escape from Gran Canaria to Costa Rica, where they build their wealth through the exploitation of local Indigenous American groups. In this way, the novel presents an illustration of the generalized Canarian migratory trajectory as linking one colonial plantation society (the Canaries) to another (the Americas).

3. INDIGENOUS AFRICAN GENEALOGIES

At the novel's opening, Isabel is eighteen years old, the *mestiza* daughter of the conquistador Hernando de Guzmán and the noble Indigenous princess Guayarmina (or Margarita, her Christian name), who was the daughter of Fernando Guanarteme. Isabel's mixed-race identity mirrors that of Cooper's character Cora, who, as explained by her father, Colonel Munro, is of Afro-Caribbean origin (here, I cite a version of the novel translated into Spanish from French by Vicente Pagasartundua and published in Madrid in 1832, the version with which Millares Torres would have likely been familiar):

> [M]i deber me llamó a las islas de las Indias occidentales; allí la casualidad me hizo hacer conocimiento con una dama, que con el tiempo fue mi esposa, y me hizo padre de Cora. Era hija de un hombre bien nacido, cuya muger [sic] había tenido la desgracia…de descender… de esta clase desgraciada que se tiene la barbarie de reducir a la esclavitud[19].

Thus, it bears repeating, Cora and Isabel are both young women of mixed African and European parentage.

Her parents deceased, Isabel falls under the so-called protection of a Spanish noblewoman named doña Úrsula, who decides to compel Isabel to leave her parents' house in La Laguna, Tenerife to come to Gran Canaria and marry Úrsula's brother, the Captain Pedro de Carvajal y Trejo, who is 65 years of age. Throughout the novel, Pedro is aided in his adventures and projects by his slightly younger and loyal friend, Gonzalo de Segovia, both of whom were soldiers in the conquest and are now enjoying their spoils. Millares Torres styles them in a Cervantine fashion. The narrator writes that Pedro «hubiera entonces recordado a don Quijote, si su inmortal autor lo hubiera producido un siglo antes»[20]. Gonzalo is a collector of wines and possesses an insatiable appetite, two facts which liken him to Sancho. The arranged engagement with Isabel is part of a larger tradition of inter-marriage by conquistadors with Indigenous noblewomen to solidify their power post-conquest, which is recognized in the novel. Prior to his *noviazgo* with Isabel, Pedro was already the brother-in-law of Masequera, Guayarmina's cousin and Fernando Guanarteme's niece, who had earlier married Pedro's brother, the conquistador Miguel de Trejo.

Many of these individuals are based on historical or semi-historical figures. Fernando Guanarteme, or Tenesor Semidán (as he was known before the conquest) was indeed an Indigenous leader on Gran Canaria who assisted in the Spanish colonization of the islands and was gifted with a recognition of local autonomy post-conquest[21]. His daughter, called here Guayarmina or Margarita, was also a historical figure. Millares Torres reports in his *Historia general de las Islas Canarias* that the historical Guzmán married Masequera (also known as Arminda or as Catalina), and that it was the historical Trejo who married Guayarmina[22]. In the novel, Masequera, Guayarmina, and Catalina are portrayed as separate characters, and the latter is both Guayarmina's sister and Benartemi's mother, which makes the protagonist Isabel's cousin.

Despite these debates as to the historical veracity of these figures, or indeed their individuality, an important conclusion can still be reached based on this information. Undoubtedly, in historical

19 COOPER (1832), vol. 1, p. 322.
20 MILLARES TORRES (1992), p. 27.
21 LOBO CABRERA (2011); FERNÁNDEZ ARMESTO (1982).
22 MILLARES TORRES (1893).

accounts as well as in Millares Torres's novel, the interchangeability of Indigenous noblewomen points to the programmatic appropriations of their bodies and lives in order to further the conquest and enrich individual conquistadors. Ultimately, what is important to recognize is that the *mestiza* protagonist is a fictional creation by Millares Torres, and one connected to a royal Indigenous bloodline with historical roots according to Canarian lore.

Benartemi comes into the narrative first as a rumor, as expressed in conversation between rank-and-file soldiers under the command of Pedro. One such soldier explains the environment of unease that reigns on Gran Canaria, despite the end of the conquest:

> [C]uando ya todos nos creíamos en paz y seguridad, he aquí que, de repente, aparece una partida de treinta bandidos, capitaneados por ese Benartemi, y con sin igual audacia bajan a los valles, saquean los ingenios, destruyen los sembrados, y roban cuanto encuentran al paso[…][23].

His reputation as a fierce *cimarrón* leader preceding him, and wanting to remain unrecognizable, this figure first enters the novel disguised as a merchant mariner of modest means. He approaches Pedro and Gonzalo in this disguise as they wait at the port of La Isleta, Gran Canaria for the arrival of Isabel and Úrsula. He witnesses Pedro cruelly threatening an enslaved Indigenous man, and offers to purchase the slave from the Spaniard for a price the latter cannot refuse, an act belying the disguised Benartemi's modest appearance. In performing this gesture, Benartemi frees the man from slavery[24].

While at La Isleta, Pedro, Gonzalo, and their soldiers suddenly hear a whistling sound that causes them to fear an attack by Indigenous Canarians: «de repente, un profundo silbido, salido al parecer de un bosquecillo de tarahales,[…]detuvo instantáneamente a los viajeros»[25]. The Spaniards fear this sound because they recognize it from battle with Indigenous Canarians during the conquest. Though no attack comes, the soldiers nonetheless experience great anxiety.

It is important to pause for a moment and consider the environmental elements involved in this scene. Specifically, I am referring to the «bosquecillo de tarahales» from which the soldiers believe emanates the whistling sound used by Canarians to commence a battle. The *tarajal* is a tree with robust root systems, able to survive in saline environments, and which has a special capacity to retain landmass threatened by water erosion[26]. In other words, the *tarajal* tree protects islands, and complements the labor of Canarian *cimarrones* in protecting and caring for the land. Even a small grouping of the plants is enough to protect a stretch of shoreline, whether by providing cover for humans and other animals, or by simply holding their roots fast.

When Isabel finally arrives via boat to Gran Canaria, Pedro contracts Benartemi to guide the group across the tidewaters from La Isleta to the mainland of Gran Canaria, an occasion of which Benartemi takes advantage to slip Isabel a token in the form of a handkerchief. He soon visits Isabel in her new chambers, still disguised as the merchant mariner, and promises to help her, knowing that she will soon be expected to travel with the wedding party to the groom-to-be's home at the fortified Gando peninsula.

4. AN OVERLAND JOURNEY

When it comes time to head for the groom-to-be's castle at Gando, the group sets out overland, escorted by Spanish troops. In this episode, Millares Torres's reader finds representations of the sugar-growing fields of eastern Gran Canaria. The wedding party sets out from Ursula's house in Las Palmas to head to the Castillo de Gando (located on a peninsula that today hosts the Gran Canaria airport and a military base), of which Pedro is lord. As destination and objective, the Castillo de Gando here parallels the role that Fort William Henry (located in rural New York along the frontier

23 MILLARES TORRES (1992), p. 31.
24 MILLARES TORRES (1992), pp. 38-42.
25 MILLARES TORRES (1992), p. 29.
26 DE BAETS and others (2008).

with French-claimed North America) plays in Cooper's novel. In both cases, the overland journey is a dangerous one.

Not long after the wedding party sets out for Castillo de Gando, they fall under attack by Benartemi's *cimarrones*. The ambush is preceded by the same whistling sound that had caused the Spaniards to fear an attack at La Isleta, earlier in the novel: «En ese momento se oyó un prolongado silbido, y como por encanto se iluminó el largo desfiladero con una multitud de antorchas de resinosa tea, conducidas por negras sombras de fantásticas figuras»[27]. The party then finds itself surrounded.

It is important to briefly attend to the geography of this scene and how it relates to the actions of Benartemi's *cimarrones*. Before the attack, the Spanish party had been advancing southward through «las deliciosas vegas de Telde»[28]. However, the valley soon gives way to an unsettled and complex terrain:

> Al salir de Telde, el país cambiaba súbitamente de aspecto; a la vegetación tropical, que cubría los valles de Tafira y Telde, sucedió una llanura, cortada a trechos por pequeños barrancos de seco cauce en aquella estación, en la que sólo se descubrían raquíticos arbustos y espesos zarzales[29].

The dry creek beds that dot this landscape, with their «scraggly bushes and thick brambles», make passage difficult: «El camino…se prolongaba indefinidamente, pues aunque a cada vuelta parecía que se aproximaba a Gando, las continuas sinuosidades del sendero y la dificultad de algunos pasos retardaban siempre la marcha»[30]. Furthermore, they also provide hiding places for would-be ambushers, and they seem to produce sounds similar to attacking *cimarrones*: «la brisa azotaba los arbustos, silbando con furor por entre sus secas ramas»[31]. In other words, it is on the margins of the plantation system that *cimarronaje* becomes possible and, indeed, is facilitated by the land itself.

Benartemi is absent at the moment of attack. Away from his supervision and moral guidance, his men are portrayed as menacing and beastly. They threaten to rape Isabel and Úrsula, as well as burn Gonzalo alive. The party is saved at the last moment possible by the arrival of the mysterious stranger, previously passing as a merchant mariner, who now reveals himself to be the fearsome *cimarrón* commander and Isabel's cousin. Benartemi halts the attack, saving the Spanish party's lives, and also divulges to Isabel that he plans to escape the impending consolidation of Spanish military control on Gran Canaria by fleeing to the Americas. Confronted by this threat of separation, they reveal their feelings for one another, and share a kiss. They devise to escape together, and Benartemi gives Isabel the details of his plan:

> Venid, Isabel, venid conmigo[…]. A una legua de este valle se levanta la montaña de Arinaga[…]. A sus faldas se extiende una playa[…]; allí me espera el buque que visteis fondeado en el puerto de Las Isletas; a su bordo estarán desde esta noche todos mis leales canarios[…]. Llevamos un piloto que nos conducirá hacia esas regiones desconocidas, que ha descubierto el genio de Colón[32].

They separate with great hopes, but Pedro soon decides to pursue Bernartemi. After finding him, Pedro engages Benartemi in a sword fight until the *cimarrón* gets the better of the conquistador, who orders his soldiers to shoot the protagonist. However, Gonzalo repays Benartemi for previously saving his life by interceding and offering to hold him prisoner. Isabel soon strikes a deal with Pedro: she will accept her engagement to the Spaniard in exchange for Benartemi's freedom and banishment from the islands.

27 MILLARES TORRES (1992), p. 86.
28 MILLARES TORRES (1992), p. 81.
29 MILLARES TORRES (1992), p. 82.
30 MILLARES TORRES (1992), p. 82.
31 MILLARES TORRES (1992), p. 82.
32 MILLARES TORRES (1992), p. 102.

Notwithstanding this agreement, Benartemi manages to escape with the help of other *cimarrones*, and Isabel agrees to accompany him. They are pursued by Pedro and his men, who finally corner them on a rocky precipice. Lifting Isabel in his arms, Benartemi performs a virtuosic dive into the sea, and they swim to the vessel that awaits them. However, the immediate impression given by the passage is that Benartemi and Isabel do not survive:

> [E]l canario, como inspirado por una revelación súbdita, trepó con la joven a una roca que, dominando enteramente el precipicio, se avanzaba aislada sobre el mar; detúvose allí un momento, levantóla en alto en sus robustos brazos, y luego, sin vacilar, se lanzó con ella al abismo, desapareciendo en medio del oscuro oleaje, que en incesante vaivén se engolfaba con temeroso ruido por entre unas ocultas y negras cavernas que a lo largo de la costa se abrían[33].

I would like to focus on two images here, both of which are terrestrial features of great significance to the Canarian imaginary as regards Indigenous Canarian culture: the cliff and the caves. In relevant historiography, cliffs and high points have been regarded as places of Indigenous ritual suicide, especially in the context of Indigenous military defeat during the conquest[34]. Understanding suicide as a particular kind of *cimarronaje*, the space of the cliff is, then, automatically a space from which to enact a refusal of colonization. The fact that Pedro believes the couple has committed suicide allows the episode to function as a reference to this narrativized cultural practice prior to the final flash forward, in which Pedro learns of the couple's survival and escape. The «ocultas y negras cavernas» of this scene are also of importance, as caves served as dwellings for Indigenous Canarians, and by the late nineteenth century still served many people as home sites, as they still do today[35]. In the narrator's description of this false suicide, the inclusion of these coastal caves foreshadows the couple's survival, since the lovers plunge from the cliff to the space of the caves, which amount to metaphors of protection and refuge.

5. TRANSATLANTIC MIGRATION, TRANSATLANTIC REPUBLICANISM

The novel ends with a flash forward, from 1506 to 1516, and the action is wrapped up and resolved quickly. All is well in the realm, so to speak: «Reina en toda la isla una tranquilidad inalterable. Los esclavos indígenas, en libertad desde 1511, por orden expresa de los Reyes Católicos, se van confundiendo ya con los conquistadores. Ambas razas se han fundido en una»[36]. Here, the narrative touts a utopian regime of *mestizaje* based on a false, or at least incomplete, declaration of abolition and egalitarianism. The fact that the Indigenous people «se van confundiendo» with conquering Iberians suggests an erasure of Indigenous Canarian people and their culture, amounting to an operation that Australian historian Katherine Ellinghaus calls «biological absorption», wherein «through interracial relationships, indigenous people would biologically disappear»[37]. While certainly applicable to vast settler colonies like Australia or New Spain, this operation has been historically most destructive in small, insular spaces, such as the Canaries or the Caribbean, where the possibilities for long-term *cimarronaje* are limited by geography. However, Benartemi defies those limits of insular geography and escapes with Isabel to the New World, where he takes advantage of the new Spanish infrastructure of conquest to elevate his own position. Fascinatingly, this final episode features the return of Benartemi to Gran Canaria, having obtained the title of *marqués* of Costa Rica. The couple is reconciled with Pedro, and they depart once more for Costa Rica.

Ideologically, the novel contributes extra cement to the edifice of the Hispanic Atlantic. In the introduction, Millares Torres's narrator writes:

33 MILLARES TORRES (1992), p. 124.

34 FERNÁNDEZ ARMESTO (1982); VELASCO-VÁZQUEZ, ALBERTO-BARROSO, DELGADO-DARIAS, and SANTANA-CABRERA (2017).

35 GRAU-BASSAS (1980).

36 MILLARES TORRES (1992), p. 127.

37 ELLINGHAUS (2009), p. 60.

> La católica Isabel llevó a los canarios la luz del Evangelio y la civilización de la vieja Europa. Pero una nube de aventureros cayó, entretanto, sobre la conquistada isla[…]. La raza indígena desapareció bajo esa abrumadora nube, y los vencidos fueron presa segura del vencedor. El archipiélago se consideró, desde entonces, como uno de los más bellos florones de la corona de Castilla[38].

Thus, the narrator suggests that the fault for causing the supposed «disappearance» of the Indigenous Canarians is not with the act of conquest itself, or the monarchy that oversaw it, but with the greedy individuals who happened to be in charge of the conquest on the ground. Further, the comparison between Isabel the *mestiza* Canarian princess and Isabel la Católica is rather obvious. Just as the latter Hispanicizes and brings Christianity to the Canary Islands, the former Hispanicizes Benartemi through marriage, and also makes him a Christian. Thus, Benartemi takes advantage of two institutions brought by Iberian conquest: a new colonial aristocracy, of which he becomes a member by participating in the subjugation of a separate subaltern, Indigenous group in Central America; and Christian marriage, through which he gains access to a Castilian bloodline and the Catholic faith.

It is implied that the descendants of Benartemi and Isabel, established now in Costa Rica, will go on to participate in the formation of the Republic of Central America, which occurred in 1824[39]. Thus, the novel's apologia subtly communicates that republicanism can be the redemptor of the Spanish nation, stained as its history is by violence, conquest, and plantation slavery. It accomplishes this through the author's representations of the protagonist *cimarrones* in the mold of Indigenous American and Afro-Caribbean identity, and his casting of the Canaries as a place linked to the New World both by a violent colonial history and the capacity for democracy, firmly distanced from the «vieja sociedad» of the Spanish metropole and its monarchic cultural heritage.

6. CONCLUSIONS

As discussed throughout this essay, a main distinction between the two novels analyzed herein concerns the fates of two sets of beloveds. In Cooper's novel, the Mohican Uncas and the African American Cora perish before joining in romantic union; however, in *El* último *de los canarios*, Millares Torres's protagonists survive and flourish after fleeing the Canary Islands for the Americas. Furthermore, they return to the archipelago a decade later to find that the Islands have achieved a state of peace through hierarchical *mestizaje*. Thus, Millares Torres rewrites the narrative to tout *mestizaje* as part of a transition to post-colony, whereas Cooper's narrative had forbidden it.

The protagonist's success in taking advantage of Spain's transatlantic imperial enterprises for his own purposes, coupled with the fact of his amnesic friendship with his former enemy and pursuer (Pedro), underscores the novel's function as an apologia for conquest. It is Benartemi's facility with the Spanish language, and familiarity with the customs of Spanish nobility, that allow him to enter, unharmed, into spaces of Spanish cultural and military control and surveillance. Ultimately, the resistant *cimarrón* abandons the fight and throws in his lot with the conquistadors by becoming one himself. Isabel is represented as fully assimilated, as well; she is too «Spanish» to be spared from the violence of her Canarian attackers during the ambush on the road to Gando. Furthermore, with his designs to depart from the Canaries and seek his fortune in the New World, Millares Torres's Benartemi mimetically becomes a figure of Columbus. This plot detail stands out as containing extra significance when one considers that the novel was written in the second half of the nineteenth century, when emigration to the Americas, especially to the Caribbean, spurred by the economic crisis of 1820-1855, had become a point of popular reference[40]. Thus, via the allusion to historical figures of the Columbian era, the reference to transatlantic migration as a sociocultural phenomenon, and, chiefly, its celebration of *mestizaje*, the novel transhistorically reifies the Hispanic Atlantic from the

38 MILLARES TORRES (1992), p. 18.
39 BANCROFT (1887), p. 75.
40 MACÍAS HERNÁNDEZ (1992).

vantage point of the Canarian archipelago, in a way that reveals an authorial understanding of the social formation of the Hispanic Atlantic as starkly differentiated from that of the Anglo-Atlantic world.

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