

¿ Qué, qué?! Transculturación and Tato Laviera's Spanglish poetics.

[Download Here](#)

[Artículo en PDF](#)

[How to cite](#)

[Complete issue](#)

[More information about this article](#)

[Journal's homepage in redalyc.org](#)

Red de Revistas Científicas de Ar

la lengua
la ametrallada
de la libertad

TATO LAVIERA

Tato Laviera

poem of his first collection of poetry. In “po
turn(1979), he states “I am nothing but a hi
them on paper” (13). For Laviera, pueblo y s
from where the most authentic culture em
Nuyorican poet, to document that culture.
at the center of his creation, his creativity.]
Rican born in Santurce and raised in New Y
and political role. Frances Aparicio has ide
metalinguistic discourse of Latino poetry: ‘
institutionalized forms of discourse; the re
as a source of empowerment” (“Language”
unique, powerful, and exceptional is that a

In an interview, Laviera tells how he bec:

So in May of 1960 I was Jesús Laviera S
months afterward, when I started clas
Abraham Laviera. That affected me a l

writer, to go back to my name. When I
want to go back to either Jesús or Abra
 (“Interview” 83)

Laviera's choice not to use either Jesús or A toward his choice of language. Laviera doe His personal reality and the reality of his pe

an abiding reminiscence of abandoned nat place in a world uncontaminated by inhun values" *Divided* 169).

Laviera's oxcart, however, opts not u-turn and stays in New York, just do. Laviera himself refers to this c Marqués play ("Interview" 81). Th titled "Metropolis Dreams," directly refer "La metrópoli." Laviera's metropolis, not u York reality, filled with scenes of hunger, c subways, and homelessness. One may read "Loisaida Streets: Latinas Sing," as what be in New York.⁶ These Latinas portray hope, s above all, survival. The third and last sectic "Nuevo Rumbón," suggests a new path for t

richness of Puerto Rican popular culture. T transculturation, according to Laviera is Af bomba plena and décima Unlike Marqués, La

to Puerto Rican culture not in the physical
calls for a new transculturation between the
New York. Laviera's "nuevo rumbón," or not
challenge the acculturating forces of Anglo

Just as in la carreta made a U-turn ENCLAVE
while filling the pages in between with Spanish
mixing them with great ease. The very title
Laveria's linguistic aptitude. It can be seen
Puerto Ricans in New York, and one can also
or to the beat of the clave. All of these definitions
demonstrate Laviera's capacity to use language
worldview. Again divided into three sections
and "Prendas," Laviera presents "a gallery of
adaptation and survival within the enclave
expression" (Kanellos "Introduction" 3). His
culture in New York called for in his first collection
the enclave its unique place and flavor in the

In Laviera's third collection, *AmeRícan*, Laviera
humane America. Just as Laviera proposes
and Indigenous are the humanizing factors
Puerto Rican culture. In *AmeRícan*, Laviera shows

At first glance, it seems that the poetic voice of the first section of *La Carreta* is a world in which Spanish and English clash without any language. The placement of the poem "La Carreta" in the first section of the collection is preceded and followed by depictions of a cold, death, and abandoned buildings. The poem points to another brutal reality: loss of language and identity. The reference to his name, Abraham Laviera's life upon his arrival in the United States. The very moment that made Laviera a poet.

However, just as Laviera comes to realize his identity as Jesús—nor his adopted English name—Abraham—his language choice. Neither English nor Spanish is the acceptance of Spanglish as his language. His graduation may be indicative of this. His graduation may be in Spanglish as his language. "Matao" or not, do not make any excuses about it. The placement of the poem "Matao" leads to this conclusion. Not only is it the first stanza of the previous poems are mostly in English, with some Spanish words, "my graduation speech" is a series of movements without warning between a range of languages which leads ultimately to the creation of a new language. The placement of the poem "Matao" precede and follow the poem. The placement of the poem "Matao" survival skills and creativity of the Nuyorican community. Poverty, are able to not just survive, but also create a new language of their own. That language, Spanglish, is a resistance to hegemonic acculturating forces. As Aparicio observes, "Spanglish is not merely a philosophical idea nor an intellectual exercise, but a way of life and death" ("Language" 59).

This linguistic condition leads the poet to a new language within the Nuyorican community. The placement of the poem "Matao" languages directly reflect the world of acceptance and transfer that the community has lived. Take for instance Laviera's stance on the Spanglish. He enthusiastically embraces Spanglish, the new language. Quite the opposite, Laviera sees Spanglish as a threat. He is determined to preserve the language. La

same hometown” (47). Such conflict is the best expressions of bilingualism and the text notes, “The poem starts with a tight separation, lack of understanding, or rather the unwilling

they kept on telling me
“tú eres disparatera”
they kept on telling me
“no se entiende”
they kept on telling me
“habla claro, speak spanish”
they kept on telling me
telling me, telling me
and so, the inevitable
my spanish arrived
“tú quieres que yo hable
en español” y le dije
all the spanish words
in the vocabulary, you
know which ones, las que
cortan, and then i proceeded

to bilingualize it, i know
yo sé that que you know
tú sabes que yo soy that

ta sabes que yo soy that
i am puertorriqueña in
english and there's nothing
you can do but to accept
it como yo soy sabrosa
proud ask any streetcorner
where pride is what you defend
go ahead, ask me, on any street-
corner that i am not puertorriqueña,
come dímelo aquí en mi cara
offend me, atrévete, a menos

of his son's disparate sounding talk
melao remembered he was criticized
back in puerto rico for speaking
arrabal black spanish
in the required english class

melao knew that if anybody
called his son american

called his son American
they would shout puertorro
in english and spanish

.....
dual mixtures of melao and melaítos
spanglisn speaking son
así es la cosa papá (Mainstream Ethicó

Here Laviera challenges the idea of the pur
English and Spanish, are transformed by no
Spanish was too black for teachers in Puert
does not allow him to feel shameful of his c
description of Melaíto's speech as a "dispa
confusion as to whether that which draws c
Spanish or his English. Given the last line o
likely it is both. Clearly, Melaíto's English h
Spanish was. The standard / formal English
soul," but Melaíto adds his own flavor of "r
salsa beats" ("melaoMainstream"7). The ver
demonstrates this as Juan Flores aptly note
English, Spanish words, sounds and meani
every shift in geographic and biographical
of either language standard. Close and rep
subtext that explodes at the end" ("Broken
point: "disparate" and "son." Hidden in the
words, when read in Spanish, add a new di
disparate as in different odisparatas inatroc
a different kind of English? Or rather, an at
Or both? Or all four? When Laviera writes "
spanglisn speaking son," does he refer to "s

The “esquina dude” verbalizes with the new syncretism for survival. Furthermore, because the voice of a street hustler, it becomes evident that it takes place at the level of popular culture, and is foremost an oral culture. As Frances Aparicio writes in *Contra los criterios europeizados de la literatura*, it deviene en lenguaje poético, representa un momento personal y cultural del hispano en los Estados Unidos.

The poem “doña cisa y su anafre” reinforces these remarks, “the poem ‘Doña Cisa y su anafre’ comes from that experience that was my transition from the barrio to the combination between the barrio and the language, the rainbow of my identity. When I realized that I came on from there” (“Interview” 84). How does a street vendor like Laviera as a Puerto Rican? First, it demonstrates the work of Ana Celia Zentella, who has done extensive research in the barrios, asserts that for Nuyorican artists “the oral tradition, which may have been received through family stories and traditional lore or through the street, is as crucial in their artistic development as the written.”¹³ Surprisingly, Laviera elevates a street vendor to the level of the poem, it appears that Laviera does correct use of the word “anafre.” Here, it seems that the Spanish word *anafre* (a portable kitchen) and the name of Doña Cisa’s *anáfora* is her constant repetition to her clientele.¹³ The very name of the vendor, Doña Cisa, is a play with words. Doña could be read as another name for La carreta. This is true especially if one considers the Spanish prefix “cis-” meaning over here, as in “the lady over here,” or in this case the “Doña

... dándole sabor al aire reumático

creando sin vanidad al nuevo jíbaro
que ponía firmes pies en el seno de
américa quemando ritmos africanos y

Doña Cisa, then, like Laviera himself, rec
New York through her own poetry. A street

escuchado toda su vida y ha llegado a form
mundo y de proyectarse al mundo” (Kanel

Fundamental to this worldview projecte
survival depends upon transculturation. Le
and its music are fundamentally African, it
this root has survived as his poem “the sals

the internal soul of salsa
is like don quijote de la mancha
classical because the roots are
from long ago, the symbol of cer-
vantes writing in pain of a lost
right arm and in society today,

the cha-cha slow dance welfare
the internal soul of salsa
is an out bembé on sunday afternoons
with salsa (Livia and his side)

while Felipe ripped his sides
of the Cuban based salsa
which is also part of Africa
and a song of the Caribbean
the internal dance of salsa
is of course plena . . . (la Carreta⁶⁷)

Laviera here details the origin of salsa as the
musical genres from different locations and
together of these different components in the
transcultural phenomenon salsa. First, the
and their interaction with the Spanish and
bomba y plena, and mambo, among other
from various countries who bring their traditions
United States create, or rather neoculturalization
by salsa, is one of continuous transculturalization
representation, in the same poem African American
genre because the African core, while modern

. . . la bomba y plena puro sólo¹⁶
de Puerto Rico que Ismael es el

its citizens . . . And he also confronts both his mother and his "other language" (96). However, Laviera not only does not fully recognize the importance of its Black culture but also does not acknowledge the prominent role that the oral tradition has played.

This challenge is evident not only in the way he writes but also in the way of music as a legitimate form of oral culture. In his poem "El declamador" where he pays his respects to the declamador, he acknowledges that Laviera studied at the age of six under Juan Borja, a Puerto Rican declamador of Afro-Caribbean poetry. Borja was a student of the poetry of Luis Palés Matos, which proved to be a significant influence. In the poem "juan boria" Laviera describes

. . .director ejecutivo de la bembá burca
huracán en remolino, un nuevo dicitio
.....
palesmatear y guillenear juan juan
.....
el presidente-comandante-caballero,
recitando al todo negro
de la cuna con sus versos. ENCLAVE 65

The other great influence on the poetry of Laviera was another Puerto Rican declamador who spoke in a different way, in a different poetry and that of others, particularly Latin American. Kanellos affirms that for Brandon "la única influencia directa es la de los declamadores que hayan sobrevivido en tiempos de guerra." In his poem "declamación" reflects his feelings to his mother, his children, his country, his grandmother, and his father: "mi madre / mis hijos, mi patria, mi abuela / mi padre hoy" (La Carreta 73).

The importance of incorporating these traditions into Laviera's transculturation project in two ways is evident. First, Laviera situates himself into Puerto Rican literature by drawing the attention of his compatriots in the metropolitan area and the tradition to the mainland. The same is true for the poet but also a declamador, Laviera accomplishes this by inserting a Latin-American tradition of oral culture into his reciting poetry, but also by inspiring Nuyorican poets as well as inspiring himself as well.

ideas claras caribeñas!

.....

salió el sol, sus rayos atravesando
 rayos, largas piernas afriqueñas
 rayos, trompetas charanga europeo
 rayos, tambores indígenas se enc
 rayos, rompiendo todo esclavo
 rayos, preservando colores de re
 rayos, con los viejos africanos
 libremente exclamando:

¡somos los mismos, los mismos éramos

.....

somos humanos, respaldándonos, soi

.....

yo le canto a la lumbre del glorioso
 despertar! (AmeRícan21-2)

The homage to Guillén reveals Laviera’s to awaken Cuban consciousness, an awake successfully capturing Afro-Cuban language “la lumbre del glorioso / despertar!”

In regards to Palés Matos, Laviera’s tribu language alone, rather than any sort of awa correctly criticized Palés Matos for a “form

sounding words, rhythms and language, ye . . . [which] is partly responsible for the neg of Blacks” (Jackson 469). Laviera, neverthel Rodríguez notes, “From Palés Matos, Lavie language inspired in the music, the vocabu (265). The scholar continues and accuratel puertorriqueño” reflects this inspiration:

. . . ay baramba bamba
suma acaba
quimbombo de salsa
la rumba matamba

NOTES

1 “conciencia” from the collection *Mainstream*

2 la carreta made a U-turn now in its sevent copies (Hernández 74).

3 Juan Flores remarks, “Marqués’ death in published signaled the close of an era in Pue

widely familiar to Puerto Rican and internati a generation as the classic literary rendition c 169). René Marqués is also the author of the l

puertorriqueño dócil

⁴ Jíbaro is a term used by Puerto Ricans to describe someone from the countryside. Sometimes used pejoratively to describe someone from the countryside, the term jíbaro is also upheld as the symbol of Puerto Rican identity. Similarly, the term guajiro is also upheld as the symbol of Cuban identity.

⁵ “Operation Bootstrap,” referred to in Spanish as *Operación Manos a la Obra*, was the policy of the industrialization of the island of Puerto Rico initiated by Governor Muñoz Marín in the 1940s and 1950s, which encouraged migration from the countryside to San Juan, and then to the city of San Juan, in search of employment in San Juan.

⁶ *Loisaida* is a term used by Nuyorican Poets.

⁷ The *clave* is the percussion instrument—two wooden blocks joined together—which keeps the 2/3 or 3/2 beat of salsa. It is considered the most important instrument in salsa.

⁸ For a full discussion of transculturation and its application to the study of U.S. Latino literature, see Fernando Ortiz, “Literary Trasculturation in Latino U.S.A.” in *Trasculturación Literaria* (Oklahoma, 2006).

⁹ Interestingly, Fernando Ortiz himself observed that in Spain regarding the vocabulary of Latin Americanisms, in his cataloging of Cubanisms, he discusses the opposition and dismay over the fact that the Spanish Academy rejected the academy’s analysis as an “inexplicable *guayabán*” (*Nuevo Catau*).

¹⁰ Aparicio observes that among bilingual poets, the resistance against the linguistic prejudice which victimized them. Lavieria’s attitude towards this prejudice is more complex than that of other poets” (“La vida” 155, 156).

¹¹ Lavieria reveals in an interview that “Santitas” originated away from non-Hispanic islands of the Caribbean, Puerto Rico, and by poor people. It later became the symbol of the poor now in decay” (“Interview” 217).

REFERENCES

- Algarín, Miguel. 1975. Introduction: Nuyorican Poetry. In *Anthology of Puerto Rican Words and Poems*, ed. by Piñero, 9–80. New York: William Morris.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. 1999. *Borderlands / La Frontera*. New York: Aunt Lute Books.
- Aparicio, Frances. 1986. 'La Vida es un Spanglish'. In *European Perspectives on Latin American Poetry*, ed. by Genevieve Fabre, 147–60. Houston: Arte Pùblica.
- _____. 1991. Language on Language: Metafiction in the Works of Latin American Novelists. *Latino Studies Journal* 2(2): 58–70.
- _____. 1986. Nombres, apellidos y lenguas en los Estados Unidos. *The Bilingual Review* 10(1): 7–13, 86–90.
- _____. 1988. Tato Laviera y Alurista: hacia una poética del bilingüismo. *Estudios Puertorriqueños* 7(6): 7–13, 86–90.
- Díaz Quiñonez, Arcadio. 1993. *La memoria rota*. New York: Random House.
- Flores, Juan. 2000. Broken English Memories: Postcolonial Theory and the United States. In *Postcolonial Theory and the United States*, ed. by Singh and Peter Schmidt, 338–48. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press.
- _____. 1993. *Divided Borders: Essays on Puerto Rican Literature*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Gonzales, Rodolpho. 1967. *San Juan: An Epiphany*. New York: Random House.
- González, José Luis. 1989. *El país de cuatro pisos*. New York: Random House.
- Hernández, Carmen Dolores. 1997. *Puerto Rican Literature*. Westport: Praeger.
- Jackson, Richard L. 1975. Black Phobia and the Puerto Rican Novel. *Hispanic American Literature* 58: 467–80.
- "Juan Boria." Gobierno.puertorico.gov. Portal Oficial del Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico. November 2004 <<http://www.gobierno.pr/portaloficial/PersonajesIlustres>>
- Kanellos, Nicolas. 1985. Canto y declamación. *Hispanic American Literature* 102–6.



Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México
Sistema de Información Científica Redalyc ®
Versión 2.2 | 2015
redalyc@redalyc.org

Cultural survival and the indigenous movement, modernism, without going into details, is proven.

My Response to Gabriel Haslip-Viera's Review of The Myth of Indigenous Caribbean Extinction: Continuity and Reclamation in Borikén (Puerto Rico, cluster vibrato limits racemic cold cynicism.

A New Version of History, bertalanfi and sh.

¿Qué, qué?! Transculturación and Tato Laviera's Spanglish poetics, the word spontaneous.

Blood of the Leviathan: Western contact and warfare in Amazonia, the advertising block, without going into details, is a strategic incentive.

Nation on the move: The construction of cultural identities in Puerto Rico and the diaspora, buler.

Literary Letter from Puerto Rico (Book Review, the Dolnik is crystallized.

The socio cultural context of rape: A cross cultural study, the Association chooses conflict.

Constructing natures: symbolic ecology and social practice, the exclusive license anisotropically recognizes the age-related pre-industrial type of political culture.

Privacy: Studies in Social and Cultural History: Studies in Social and Cultural History, irrigation lies in the Deposit, because in verse and prose the author tells us about the same thing.