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TEXT: *Autonosuya* (1886)

AUTHOR: Francisco Fontanilles y Quintanilla

EDITOR: Jorge Camacho

PART 1: CONTEXT & CRITICAL ANALYSIS

(Based on the Introduction by Jorge Camacho and critical studies of colonial literature)

1. POLITICAL CONTEXT AND CONSERVATIVE RHETORIC:

Cuban Liberal Party:

The novel is set against the backdrop of late 19th-century Cuban politics, marked by the rise of the Liberal Party (autonomists) advocating for reforms and the abolition of slavery.

Conservative Response:

Francisco Fontanilles y Quintanilla, a Catalan-Cuban author and editor of pro-integrationist newspapers, represents the conservative opposition who feared independence or autonomy for Cuba. *Autonosuya* is his direct literary intervention in this political debate.

2. "FEAR OF THE BLACK MAN" AND DYSTOPIAN VISION:

"Miedo al Negro" (Fear of the Black Man):

The novel is a prime example of how the "fear of the Black man" was used as a rhetorical weapon against Cuban independence and autonomy. It projects a dystopian future where self-governance leads to chaos and "African demagoguery."

The Sabicú Brothers:

The narrative depicts a future Cuba under the brutal rule of mulatto dictators, the Sabicú brothers, who exemplify racialized fears of non-white leadership, echoing anxieties reminiscent of the Haitian Revolution.

Narrative Function:

Autonosuya's primary goal is didactic and utilitarian: to deter readers from supporting any move away from Spanish colonial rule by illustrating the catastrophic consequences of such actions, culminating in a U.S. takeover and the establishment of "Cuban State" ruled by "negros sureños."

3. PROPAGANDA, RACIALIZED IMAGERY, AND HISTORICAL PARALLELS:

Racial Othering:

Fontanilles constructs the "other" (separatists, Afro-Cubans) as "barbarians" driven by instinct and hatred, incapable of self-governance, echoing Sarmiento's rhetoric in *Facundo*. This justification for colonial power relies on dehumanizing imagery, portraying non-white leaders as "ape-men" or "cannibals."

Critique of Autonomists:

The novel ironically criticizes the autonomists, suggesting their reforms inadvertently paved the way for the "semi-savage" mulattoes to seize power. This perspective



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reinforces the idea that any deviation from Spanish rule would lead to racial conflict and societal collapse.

Intertextuality with Dictator Novels:

The text draws parallels with other Latin American "dictator novels" (e.g., Echeverría's *El Matadero*, Márquez's *Amalia*), using real-life figures like Santa Anna and Juan Manuel de Rosas to solidify its cautionary tale.

PART 2: TOPICS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

Propaganda and Political Literature:

Analyze *Autonomosuya* as a work of political propaganda. How does it use narrative, characterization, and plot to advance a specific political agenda (pro-Spanish integrationism)?

"Miedo al Negro" (Fear of the Black Man):

Discuss the concept of "miedo al negro" as a rhetorical device. How does Fontanilles exploit racial fears to argue against Cuban independence and autonomy? Provide specific examples from the text.

Dystopian Vision:

How does the novel construct its dystopian vision of an autonomous Cuba? Compare it to other dystopian literature you might be familiar with. What are the key elements of this "nightmare" scenario?

The Sábicú Brothers as Symbols:

Analyze the characters of Sábicú I and Sábicú II. What do they symbolize in the context of colonial anxieties and racial stereotypes?

Critique of Autonomists and Separatists:

How does Fontanilles criticize both the autonomists and separatists? What are the implications of his argument that both paths lead to disaster for Cuba?

Colonialism and Identity:

Discuss how *Autonomosuya* attempts to forge a "us" (colonial-European) versus "them" (native-mestizo-African) consciousness. What are the lasting effects of such rhetoric on national identity?

PART 3: SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Fontanilles y Quintanilla, Francisco. *Autonomosuya*. Stockcero.

Camacho, Jorge. "El miedo al negro en *Autonomosuya*, curiosa novela político-burlesca (1886) de Francisco Fontanilles y Quintanilla." (Introduction to this edition).

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Martí, José. *Nuestra América*. (For a contrasting perspective on race and nation).



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Sarmiento, Domingo Faustino. *Facundo: Civilización y Barbarie.* (For comparison on "civilization vs. barbarism").

PART 4: QUIZ BANK (Multiple Choice)

1. Who is the author of Autonomosuya?

- A) Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda
- B) Francisco Calcagno
- C) Francisco Fontanilles y Quintanilla
- D) César Nicolás Penson

Correct Answer: C

2. What political stance does Fontanilles y Quintanilla primarily represent in the novel?

- A) Cuban separatist
- B) Cuban autonomist
- C) Spanish integrationist (loyal to the Crown)
- D) U.S. annexationist

Correct Answer: C

3. What rhetorical device is most prominently used in Autonomosuya to argue against Cuban independence?

- A) Economic analysis
- B) "Miedo al Negro" (Fear of the Black man)
- C) Romantic love stories
- D) Historical chronicles

Correct Answer: B

4. The novel portrays a dystopian future for Cuba under the rule of:

- A) Spanish colonial authorities
- B) Autonomist reformers
- C) Mulatto dictators (the Sáricú brothers)
- D) U.S. imperialists

Correct Answer: C

5. What is the implied didactic function of Autonomosuya?

- A) To promote racial harmony in Cuba
- B) To encourage a peaceful transition to independence
- C) To warn against autonomy/independence by showing chaotic outcomes
- D) To celebrate the cultural diversity of the Caribbean

Correct Answer: C



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Explore the “Afro-Hispanic & Caribbean Literature” Collection: This book is part of our comprehensive collection on the rich heritage of the African diaspora in the Hispanic world: Sab (Gómez de Avellaneda); Autonosuya (Fontanilles); Aponte (Calcagno); Cosas Añejas (Penson); and Montalván, la negra (Cáceres).

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