In the Autumn of 2000, even as Spanish authorities moved to expedite the expulsion of the thousands of African would-be immigrants who routinely arrive on Spain's southern shores, the inhabitants of the Catalan town of Banyoles lamented their inability to retain their own African, the stuffed man known as 'El Negro' who had stood, loincloth-clad and spear in hand, on display in the local natural history museum since 1916. According to El País reporter Jacinto Antón (2000b), it took a team of Spanish anthropologists four days to 'dismantle' and 'disfigure' the work of two nineteenth-century 'Frankensteinian' French taxidermists, four days to 'return El Negro to a state of nature', before returning him to his natural state (presumed to be modern-day Botswana), a handful of bones in a small wooden box.

In this essay I wish to engage in a different sort of unpacking of El Negro by detailing how some Spaniards may have come to consider Africans as at once abject and uniquely 'theirs'. Of course, it is nothing new to note that while 'scientific' racism was marshalled by Europeans and North Americans to justify the possession of African people, sexual obsession with an exoticized other fuelled alternative forms of possession; or that the historical avant-garde's fascination with the 'primitive' fed into a cannibalistic appropriation and transformation of African cultural forms; or that nostalgia for a prelapsarian paradise inspired the exaltation of an Africa fossilized as unchanging in the 'Western' imaginary. Indeed, all of these tendencies have surfaced in the Spanish socio-political and cultural field as well, and I shall discuss some of them here. Yet my principle concern is to illuminate a phenomenon that may, perhaps, be more specific to Spain, a nation whose geographical proximity and historical and cultural connections to the African continent cannot but have impacted significantly upon the multifaceted construction of identity, and upon what Eric Hobsbawm (1983) has called the 'invention of tradition'. I will argue, in fact, that notions of an African inheritance have been utilized in myriad and sometimes contradictory ways in the constitution and maintenance of distinctive Spanish regional identities, and that, furthermore, Spaniards may also draw upon those identities to produce new conceptualizations of Africa's 'essence'.

In order to begin to highlight this process, I will focus on the writings of the late nineteenth-century Basque scientist-explorer, Manuel Iradier, who completed two expeditions to what is now known as Equatorial Guinea, acquiring large tracts of terri-
for the Spanish government through pacts with some hundred tribal leaders. The first volume of *Africa: Viajes y trabajos de la Asociación Española La Exploradora*, published in 1887, contains Iradier's chronological narrative of his two journeys (undertaken from 1875–7, and in 1884), while the second tome is organized into chapters representing major scientific fields of the day, and includes Iradier's observations of, for example, the Guinean climate, physical anthropology, and language. While I will trace some of the resonance of Iradier's project within turn-of-the-century Africanist and Basque Nationalist circles, I will also read his work alongside related current struggles over questions of racism, identity, and the colonialist legacy in Spain, including the controversy surrounding 'El Negro de Banyoles' and reactions to a performance piece by Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Coco Fusco, 'Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit...', staged in Madrid's Plaza Colón [Columbus Plaza] in 1992, as well as several somewhat less spectacular indications of the Spanish obsession with Africa.

One example of the latter, for instance, would be the contemporary essayist Fernando Savater's surprisingly unselfconscious confessions concerning the irresistible attraction of 'the African adventure' in his 1999 essay of the same title. Savater celebrates the male adolescent infatuation with the 'mysterious continent', and locates the origins of that infatuation in the nineteenth century, remarking that '[p]ronto los nombres de los grandes exploradores, de los apóstoles de la jungla, de los cazadores, de los generales que se enfrentaron en Sudán a las hordas de fanáticos derviches, de los sabios que clasificaron las nuevas especies, de los primeros colonos, alcanzaron rango mítico: cada crónica de hazañas africanas de cualquier tipo suscitaba cien, mil nuevas vocaciones de aventureros' [soon the names of the great explorers, of the apostles of the jungle, of the hunters, of the generals who faced hordes of fanatic dervishes in the Sudan, of the wise ones who classified new species, of the first colonizers, reached the realm of the mythic; each chronicle of any kind of African exploit inspired a hundred, a thousand new adventurers' vocations] (20). Though he is not mentioned in the essay, Savater's compatriot Manuel Iradier is a particularly notable case in point, for in 1868, at the age of fourteen, and evidently intoxicated by African chronicles, he founded Vitoria's *Sociedad Viajera* [Travelling Society] (later dubbed *La Exploradora* [The Explorers' Association]). Over the next six years, Iradier and the members of his organization assembled a library of travel narratives, subscribed to scientific and exploration journals, and prepared detailed reports concerning equipment needs and possible African itineraries. Iradier, brimming with youthful hubris, began to formulate a plan to traverse the entire continent, from the Cape of Good Hope to Tripoli, and a memorandum for the excursion was sent off to the 1873 World Expo in Vienna. *La Exploradora* then consulted with the *New York Herald* correspondent Henry Stanley, and the famous explorer, who was in the Basque Country to cover the Carlist Wars, tactfully convinced the group to scale down its initial plans; Iradier was persuaded to undertake a preliminary journey to Spain's possessions along the Guinean coast in order to gain the practical experience and knowledge requisite for more ambitious expeditions.²

Iradier's account of the immediate context of his first departure for Africa is particularly intriguing. With the Carlist Wars raging about them – chillingly, he notes that 'human blood ran' in the countryside – members of *La Exploradora* 'se vieron cercados, acometidos y tirando las cajas lineanas, las mangas, las pinzas, la brújula y el mapa, empuñaron la carabina Remington para defenderse' [saw themselves hemmed in, besieged, and casting aside the Linnean boxes, the wind socks, the pinces, the compass and the map, they brandished Remingtons to defend themselves] (I, 254). Iradier establishes a significant relationship between *La Exploradora's* Africanist calling and the Basque nationalist sentiment so crucial to the Carlist Wars, an issue I will return to later. His vivid description also evokes those moments in which intrepid scientist-explorers lament that their efforts at conducting observations are constantly hindered by the natives and the drama of their daily life, a tendency discussed by Mary Louise Pratt (1986: 41): '[p]aradoxically enough, the conditions of fieldwork are expressed as an impediment to the task of doing fieldwork, rather than as part of what is to be accounted for in fieldwork'. By adopting this rhetorical strategy, typically used 'in the field', to characterize the situation in Northern Spain, Iradier begins to link the space of his homeland with that of Africa. The effect is underlined when Iradier announces his plans to self-finance his first expedition and unfurls a map of Africa, annotated by Stanley himself, upon the natural science museum's central table, 'sobre la que se había desplegado cientos de veces el mapa de la provincia' [upon which the map of the province had been spread out hundreds of times] (I, 253). As we shall see, this superimposition of African and Basque geo-cultural representations will reappear in much more explicit fashion in Iradier's second volume.

In the early pages of his narrative, however, Iradier lodges harsh criticism against another more recently predominant European colonial power. The British, who nearly monopolize shipping routes to the western coast of Africa, transport Iradier (and on the first trip, his wife and her sister) in a vessel which is overrun with cockroaches, and Iradier quips that in his cabin 'dormíamos tres... cientos o cuatro cientos seres vivientes' [slept three... hundreds or four hundred of us live beings] (I, 42–3).³ Redirecting the European obsession with hygiene, deemed essential for survival in Africa (Fabian 2000: 59), Iradier deplors the noxious quality of the British food that is served on board: '[p]ara nosotros los españoles es de un gusto pésimo y hasta repulsivo y antihigiénica' [for us Spaniards it is in wretched taste and even repulsive and unhygienic] (II, 212). Iradier also claims that British ships tend to dock in malaria-infested ports (II, 213). Moreover, unhealthy practices are accompanied by uncivilized manners. The captain on his ship, 'inglés de pura raza' [a pure-blooded Englishman], is incapable of speaking any language other than his own, and since Iradier, though multilingual, does not know English, the captain will simply treat him as an object, on a par with other exotic cargo such as palm oil and caged tropical birds (I, 41–2). For his part, Iradier underlines the captain's lack of civility by animalizing him: 'venía en mangas de camisa con los tirantes colgando por detrás a manera de rabo' [he came up in shirt sleeves with his suspenders dangling behind him like a tail] (I, 41).

Iradier's implicit comparison here of the British with Africans, in which the former are represented as more 'primitive' than the latter, could be viewed as a not-so-subtle contribution to what Kipling termed the 'Great Game'. Étienne Balibar (1991: 43) has commented upon this imperialist superiority contest, and most specifically upon
the propensity of colonialist nations to pride themselves, 'in competition with one another, on their particular humaneness, by projecting the image of racism onto the colonial practices of their rivals. French colonization proclaimed itself "assimilatory," while British colonization saw itself as "respectful of cultures". The other White is also the bad White. Each White nation is spiritually "the whitest" (43). Iberian variations on this theme have come to be known as lusotropicalism or, more appropriately in the case of Iradier, hispanotropicalism. The first term was coined by the anthropologist Gilberto Freyre, whose vindication of the rich racial and cultural fusions of his native Brazil was founded upon the notion that the Portuguese were more likely than other European colonizers to mix with the indigenous and black populations because they were not racist. More recently, the Catalan anthropologist Gustau Nerín has employed the term hispanotropicalism to describe a parallel Spanish discourse. According to Nerín (1998: 17), hispanotropicalism tends to emphasize the peculiarly Catholic mission of Spanish colonialism; Spaniards, unlike their Northern European imperialist counterparts, are not racist because they believe that the souls of blacks and whites are equal before their Creator. And as a result, the Christian bent of Spanish colonialism promotes a more compassionate treatment of natives. Remarkably, these ideas have survived largely intact throughout the colonial and into the post-colonial periods. When the performance artists Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña dressed as 'authentic Guatinaui indians' (in kitschy get-ups as evocative of modern S&M gear as of dime-store 'native costumes') and displayed themselves in a cage in Madrid's Columbus Plaza in 1992, many members of their Spanish audience may have perceived the incisive critical tone of the piece, but hispanotropicalist rhetoric enabled them to mount a defence. As Fusco reports (1994: 162), 'one Spanish businessman waited for me after the performance was over to congratulate me [. . .] and then insisted that I had to agree that the Spaniards had been less brutal with the Indians than the English'. Similarly, with respect to the 'Negro de Banyoles' scandal, Spanish ambassador Eduardo Garrigues's speech at the ceremony marking the 'repatriation' of the African's remains to Botswana failed to include any apology, and Foreign Ministry officials emphasized instead that the men who had originally indulged in grave robbery and preserved the body for display were French: 'no fueron españoles los que recogieron el cuerpo en Africa y la responsabilidad se diluye mucho' [Spaniards weren't the ones who collected the body in Africa and the responsibility is very diluted] (Antón 2000a).

According to Nerín (1998: 14), another significant component of hispanotropicalism depends upon Spaniards' presumed 'African sensibility'. Because of Spain's physical proximity to Africa and the historical legacy of eight centuries of Moorish presence on the Peninsula, Spaniards are deemed to be much more attuned to African culture, and thus ideally suited to colonize Africans. Furthermore, since the nineteenth century, impassioned Africanists had marshalled a curiously 'essentialist' geography — arguing for instance that Spain's 'natural' frontier was the Atlas mountains (Cánovas del Castillo 1949: 77), or that the Moroccan topography perfectly mirrored that of Spain (Costa 1949: 143) — in order to bolster the notion of a shared Hispano-African destiny. While the spatially removed Equatorial Guinea would seem to be exempt from such fanciful musings, Iradier manages to contribute to this form of imperialist justification by describing the island of Elobey Grande as a 'bota de vino a medio llenar' [half-full wine skin] (I, 133), and Corisco as a 'piel chavada' [stretched-out skin] (I, 123), thus evoking the age-old cartographic image of Spain as a 'piel de toro', or stretched-out bull's skin.

Human skin, too, is of fundamental importance here, for the anxious polemic concerning the racial make-up of Spaniards also subvents hispanotropicalism. Of course, hispanotropicalist discourse does not preclude the mobilization of racist invective, but that invective sometimes functions as a sort of rhetorical boomerang: though it may be launched out towards the (in this case) African other, it may return to strike against some groups of Spaniards themselves, who are consequently 'othered' and, potentially, debased in turn. Iradier's text, for example, is replete with stereotypically derogatory characterizations of the Africans he encounters, including the repeated description of natives as, in essence, 'tricksters' (for instance, I, 127, 151, 235). In his second tome Iradier addresses this quality in the chapter dedicated to mental and emotional faculties, and he contrasts the white man's use of intelligence to dominate nature with the African's deception of nature through sagacity and malice (II, 163). Yet at another point in his narrative Iradier would appear to sympathize with a Lberian who insists that it is the white man who has taught the African to do evil (II, 63), and when Iradier asserts that Africans are natural lawyers, politicians and diplomats (II, 162), it is not completely clear which of the counterposed groups is the greater victim of his venom.

Indeed, at first glance Africans are not the only people that Iradier explicitly links to deceit. The diary of his journey includes a preliminary chapter detailing his trip overland through Spain before setting out to Africa by boat. In the port of Cádiz, Iradier notes that although all sailors are similar, 'el tipo andaluz, su locuacidad y su gran imaginación le hacen más hábil para el engaño' [the loquaciousness and great imagination of the Andalusian type make him better suited for deceit] (I, 13). Yet that Andalusian character is, according to Iradier, 'heredado de los invasores de nuestra península, y formado más tarde en un clima templado y bajo un cielo siempre sereno' [inherited from the invaders of our peninsula, and later formed beneath the always serene skies of a temperate climate] (I, 14). Iradier's identification of an African inheritance in Spain is not at all unusual for the time; it can be found among Spanish and non-Spanish writers alike. Although sometimes the association serves to exalt the nobility and virility of Spaniards, more frequently the opposite obtains. The prolific essayist and politician Joaquín Costa was initially one of the most ardent proponents of the theory that Moroccans and Spaniards shared an 'hermandad de sangre' [blood brotherhood], but the blood they had in common, he insisted, was of the Ibero-Berbers, 'una raza de cabellos rubios y ojos azules' [a race of blonde hair and blue eyes] (1949: 144); Costa can only vindicate the African inheritance by whitening it, in rather ludicrous fashion. More customarily, as Iradier's passage would seem to suggest, the African legacy is linked to specific Spanish regional groups — and pointedly disassociated from others — and condemned as a hereditary defect in need of eradication. In this schema, Andalusians are typically considered the most African, while
the Basques, whose territory was never inhabited by the ‘Moors’, are presumed to be racially ‘untainted’ (indeed, historically Basques were the only Spaniards exempt from the requirement to prove ‘limpieza de sangre’ [blood purity] before receiving titles of nobility [Kurlansky 1999: 170–1]). Iradier’s fellow Basque Miguel de Unamuno’s articulation of this idea, infused with imperialist rhetoric, is particularly astounding. In a letter to a friend dated 1900, after declaring himself ‘uno de los hombres más representativos de nuestra raza vasca’ [one of the most representative men of our Basque race] (1944: 58), Unamuno asserts:

Eso del catalanismo, me parece mezquino, pequeño, bajo, de un pueblo de egoístas. ¡Nos salvaremos con España o sin ella! ¡No, no y no! ¡Salvemos a España, quíralo o no! Los vascos debemos decir otra cosa; no que nos dejen gobernarnos, sino que queremos gobernar a los demás, por ser los más capaces de hacerlo [...]. Si, hay que proclamar la inferioridad de los andaluces y análogos, y nuestro deberfraternal de gobernarnos. Málaga debe ser colonia, y hay que barrer el beduínismo. (59)

Although on occasion Iradier appears to support hierarchical binaries similar to Unamuno’s – as well as a curious ‘whitening’ of the African legacy, parallel if not equivalent to Costa’s – his treatment of the connections between Africans, Basques, and other Spanish regional (and centralist) identities, as we shall see, is more nuanced; Iradier’s model tends to allow for a greater fluidity of identity, for much less rigorously patrolled ‘national’ boundaries.

For example, Iradier’s efforts to grapple with the complexity of historical migrations and encounters between different groups of people is evident when he describes his lengthy stopover in the Canary Islands. The mythology concerning the archipelago is particularly rich, and Iradier alludes to some of it in several near-surreal and somewhat inscrutable chapters; one is titled ‘Santa Cruz de Tenerife – Un Sueño’ [A Dream] (I, 17). After implying that the islands were produced out of the catastrophe that plunged Atlantis into the sea, Iradier fantasizes about the connections between that legendary civilization, the Canarians, the inhabitants of North Africa, and the Basques. First, he imagines the arrival of members of a ‘primitive race’, dressed in skins, to an archipelago (Atlante?), where they established their home. Later, as a result of ‘horrible cataclysms’ that submerged the islands, members of this community made their way to the north of a neighbouring continent (Africa?), where they ‘adoptaron las costumbres con que les brindaba una raza superior’ [took up the customs offered to them by a superior race] (the Berbers). But eventually, when ‘new populations’ (the Romans?) began to push westward, the group, as if attached to the remnants of its homeland by a stretched-out rubber band, was propelled back to the now re-formed archipelago; there, they re-established their civilization (I, 25). And one day, the Basques arrived, and ‘[a] ley de la humanidad se cumplió, los invasores absorvieron [sic] a los invadidos: la raza primitiva desapareció de la superficie de la tierra, y solo vi en solitaria gruta algún cadáver apergaminado de asustada madre que después de perder a su esposo en el campo de batalla huyó a salvar a sus hijos en las profundidades de la tierra’ [the law of humanity was upheld, the invaders absorbed the invaded; the primitive race disappeared from the face of the earth, and I only saw, in a solitary cave, the parchment-like cadaver of a frightened mother who, after losing her husband on the battlefield, fled to the depths of the earth to save her children] (I, 26).

Iradier’s visualization of the mother’s body is undoubtedly inspired in a viewing of the Canarian mummies that have traditionally been displayed for tourists. On several occasions, Iradier somewhat anxiously refers to the search for inscriptions that the Atlantans or Canarians might have left behind as proof of their civilization (I, 18, 25) – and he does insist upon the relatively ‘civilized’ status of this ‘primitive race’ – before being conquered by the Basques. Here, his description of the mummy’s parchment-like skin likens her body to a text; but it is a text that refuses inscription. Hers does not represent the Canarian bodies that, in Iradier’s words, were ‘absorbed’ by the Basque race, but rather the resistant body: the body of a woman who embraces death for herself and for her children rather than accept that absorption. And indeed, Canarians attained notoriety for their suicidal acts – customarily flinging themselves from a precipice – to avoid various and sundry forms of incorporation into the European sexual and political economy: concubinage, marriage or slavery. Such spectacular forms of resistance, however, failed to prevent the colonization of the islands. Iradier’s exaltation of the mummified mother, significantly, is interrupted by what he terms the ‘canto triunfal de la civilización’ [triumphant song of civilization]: the musical salute that the Spaniards dedicate to their new Restoration King Alfonso XII, which startles Iradier from his reverie (I, 26). The mummy’s mute testimony to the Canarian cultural legacy is thoroughly drowned out by the heralding of the (now reborn) Spanish monarchy.

At the time of the conquest, that monarchy had in fact sought to illustrate its power through the display of other Canarian bodies. As part of their 1992 performance piece, Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña included a history of the exhibition of indigenous peoples; their chronology begins with the several Arawak Indians Christopher Columbus brought back to Spain, one of whom was shown at the Spanish court for two years, ‘until he die[d] of sadness’ (Fusco 1994: 156). Some fifteen years earlier, though, Canary Island natives had also been placed on display. In detailing the conquest of Gran Canaria, John Mercer (1980: 189) notes that once the nobleman Adargama was captured by the Spaniards, he ‘became just another of the many recorded examples of the exhibition of Canary “savages”, often still in their skins, in South Europe. Preferably they were encouraged to show off their great agility and dexterity or, like Adargama, their famous strength; his name meant “shoulders of rock”’. While another group of captured Gran Canaria noblemen in native garb was also shown publicly in Southern Spain, one of them, Semidan, was baptized in Toledo after being relieved of his skins and adorned in silk and scarlet cloth; he was then enlisted into the Spanish cause (Mercer 1980: 193). Attired in his European finery,
Semidan returned to Gran Canaria, where, perhaps drawing upon the Canarian aptitude for highly theatrical military tactics, he attempted to persuade his countrymen to cooperate with the Spaniards, regaling them with tales of the splendour of the Castilian court and promises of freedom. When his cajoling failed, Semidan led a number of battles against his people in Gran Canaria and then, later, in Palma and Tenerife; all of the campaigns eventually resulted in the surrender of the Canarians.

Canarian bodies on display thus served to figure both the ongoing integrity of an autochthonous, pre-Hispanicized race, as well as the often violent process of assimilation. In Cities of the Dead, performance theorist Joseph Roach has explained how what he terms ‘surrogation’ may preserve an illusion of cultural continuity even as traditions are transformed, sometimes quite radically: when vacancies in personnel and practices occur, surrogation involves the ‘doomed search for originals by continuously auditioning stand-ins’ (3). The surrogate, at once recognizable and unfamiliar, may function as a form of uncanny effigy—living or dead: as Roach observes, even corpses may play this role (36). Roach devotes particular attention to the notion of the multiple ‘bodies’ of the king in various European nations, whereby regardless of the monarch’s real physical status, cultural memory may hold open an ever-shifting space for the insertion of a ‘body politic’ imagined as eternally enduring (38–9). In this sense, Semidan’s baptismal name, Fernando Guanarteme, signals his ‘rebirth’ into the Christian community while also establishing him as a remarkably syncretic surrogate: his given name characterizes him as a sort of ‘stunt double’ for the Catholic King, who backs the conquest of the Canaries at a peninsular remove, while his surname (‘guanarteme’) was reserved for the principle leaders of Gran Canaria—seeks—albeit in this case rather fruitlessly—to preserve his monarchical role before his own people.

In Equatorial Guinea, Spanish expeditions of the mid-nineteenth century had already begun the process of negotiating with local tribal chiefs, who were placed on the governmental payroll in exchange for ceding territorial sovereignty to Spain. Thus, upon his arrival Iradier encountered a number of kingly surrogates who maintained, even as they extended and altered irrevocably, Spanish and African royal power and traditions. One of the more spectacular such figures, once again, was a preserved corpse. Accompanied by his retinue, Iradier reached the capital of Cape San Juan, where he was greeted by Manuel, the younger son of the deceased King Boncoro II, who had ruled as an official delegate of the Spanish government. The following day, the group trekked to the king’s tomb, which was made of meticulously woven reeds and featured a small wooden door with European hinges. The site was marked by an impressive sign, with the king’s name, title, and date of death (23 December 1874) painted in black letters on a white background, and elevated on a post. While it was reported that the king’s body ‘se conserva perfectamente, sin haber dado muestras de descomposición’ [is perfectly preserved, without having given the least sign of decomposition] (thanks, Iradier remarks, not to protective spirits, as the natives claim, but rather to the aromatic plants in which the body had been wrapped), next to the tomb, on a twelve-metre flagpole, Iradier observes that ‘ondean unos trapos hechos girones que por su color parece deducirse han pertenecido a una bandera española, rota y destrozada por los vientos y las lluvias’ [are waving some shredded rags, which from their colour one could deduce used to belong to a Spanish flag, ripped and destroyed by wind and rain] (I, 153). As the traditional symbol of a centralized, homogeneous Spanish body politic falls to pieces, the body of the Afro-Spanish king endures.

The African monarchical surrogate also endures in Boncoro III, the dead king’s elder son. If, as Roach argues (1996: 82), the liminal condition of the effigies of cultural surrogation tends to inspire a mixture of fascination and loathing, the former usually dominates the latter in Iradier’s writings (with the possible exception of his description of cannibalistic practices, to which I will return later). In fact, in his sometimes bemused narrative concerning the Boncoro dynasty, Iradier seems only mildly concerned with preserving a shred or two of traditional notions of royal dignity. When Manuel Boncoro is ashamed to admit that his brother the new king is away fishing, Iradier assures him that in Europe kings also indulge in the practice; later, on an official visit, Iradier finds Boncoro III at home working on a fishing net. Boncoro’s palace-hut has a European-manufactured stained-glass window and a front door marked WC, evidently sacked from a recent British shipwreck; the detritus of European civilization is incorporated into the construction of a creole kingdom in Africa. Upon leaving, Iradier discreetly advises Manuel Boncoro to erase the incriminating and now indecorous letters on the door (I, 160).

Iradier insists that excellent Spaniards can and do emerge from this bricolage. The local king of Elobey, Combenyamango, and his successor Inyene are both described as ‘muy español’ [very Spanish], and Iradier is inspired to creolize his own narrative when he refers to the latter as ‘jegumbe paiiole siempre español’ [always a Spaniard] (II, 352, 353). Iradier closes his section on the history of Equatorial Guinea by exalting ‘este pueblo ran amante de España, bastante más civilizado de lo que se cree y a quien yo aprecio y quiero entrañablemente’ [these people who so love Spain, who are much more civilized than is generally believed, and whom I respect and love deeply] (II, 354). Of crucial importance to Iradier’s argument is his emphasis on the Africans’ capacity for heartfelt religious sentiment. And here the Basque explorer further the hispanotropicalist cause, even as he betrays its racist underpinnings: although he clearly believes that all souls are equal before God, his articulation of that ‘equality’ tends to preserve colour hierarchies. When worthy of salvation, the soul can only be conceived of as white: as Iradier explains, ‘Cuántas almas blancas que entre los blancos civilizados y a los americanos conozco’ [How many white souls I have known among civilized whites] (Márquez Salazar 1993: 128). 

Iradier’s paradigm of black outside/white inside is so essential to his fervent defence of a ‘Spanish’ Africa that in his text African geography itself becomes embodied in this way. Iradier draws upon his own experiences in Equatorial Guinea as well as upon his extensive knowledge of the writings of other explorers to do so. In fact, one detail of Henry Stanley’s account of his journey to central Africa, undertaken at the same time as Iradier’s own first expedition, proved so compelling to Iradier that
he decided to modify his plans for a second trip, in an attempt to confirm his own theories. In *Through the Dark Continent* (first published in 1878), Stanley mentions, almost in passing, that between Usongora and Unyoro (in present-day Western Uganda, in the famed 'Mountains of the Moon' region) live the 'light complexioned, regular-featured people' of Gambaragara, similar in skin tone to 'dark-faced Europeans'; they are mountain dwellers, accustomed to cold and snowy conditions, who raise milch cows (I, 427, 425). Stanley's information was gathered mostly from second-hand sources; although he claims to have met a number of Gambaragaran men and women—who's relatively pale complexion and 'regular features' he confirms—he did not undertake an exploration of the district himself. More than intrigued, Iradier decided to pursue Stanley's lead. In the official plan for his second expedition, dated October 1879, Iradier proclaims that: 'si la expedición llegase en buen estado y en buena época a las orillas del Niansa-Mvutan, tomaría la dirección S.E. penetrando por Ruanda y Ankori en las montañas de Gambaragara y visitando la raza de *hombres blancos* que las habitan' [If the expedition arrives at the banks of the Nyanza-Mvutan in good condition and at a good time, it will take a S.E. direction through Rwanda and Ankole into the Gambaragara mountains and visit the race of white men who inhabit them] (I, 260; italics in original).

In fact, Iradier never made it to Gambaragara. His much-postponed second trip to Africa was heavily promoted by Joaquín Costa, and eventually backed by the newly-formed *Sociedad Española de Africanistas y Colonistas* [Spanish Society of Africanists and Colonialists], only under the condition that it be political and commercial rather than exploratory or scientific in nature. Indeed, by the late summer of 1884, when Iradier and his team finally set off again, the European 'scramble for Africa' was well underway, and Spain had delayed far too long in staking a definitive claim; much of desired neighbouring territory in Cameroon, for example, had already fallen into British and German hands, and the French were positioning themselves to occupy the Guinean interior. And although after some initial hesitation Iradier seemed to adapt well to his new mission—the important connections he had made on his first trip enabled him successfully to convince scores of tribal leaders in the interior, who ruled over 14,000 square kilometres, to ally themselves with the Spanish crown—his terrible bouts of fever eventually compelled him to return home much sooner than expected, leaving behind his fellow explorer Amado Ossorio Zabala to continue his work (with an eventual total annexation of 50,000 square kilometres).10

But his inability to study Gambaragara directly did not prevent Iradier from indulging in speculation concerning the significance of the 'white men' of central Africa. In the middle of his second volume, towards the end of the chapter on language, he shares with his reader 'una confianza científica' [a scientific confidence] (II, 294). Iradier's excitement is palpable. He has obtained permission from his Basque friend, Pedro Oar, to transcribe their conversation about Benga, one of the Bantu-family languages spoken in the area; Oar, who has read Iradier's recently published grammar and vocabulary, notes that he has found Benga to be so remarkably similar to Basque 'que me suena en el oído como si este idioma africano fuera una derivación, con muy pocas alteraciones, del idioma euskaro' [that it sounds to my ear as if this African language were a derivation, with very few alterations, of the Basque language] (II, 291). For his part, Iradier confirms that Benga has always sounded to him like a dialect of Basque, 'o viceversa' [or vice versa] (a crucial addendum), and that furthermore on his excursions through the Basque Country with members of *La Exploradora* after his return from Africa, he repeatedly found himself exclaiming of local place-names, 'Este nombre es africano' [this name is African] (II, 291). If the Basque Country is suffused with African toponyms, Africa also features Basque geographical markers: according to Iradier, in Basque 'gambaragara' refers to the grain that is stored in the highest part of the house, just as their mountain top served as a granary for the Gambaragaran. Moreover, the Basque equivalent of the Gambaragara King Umd-ika's name (Andikua) refers to a man who has a noble origin and titles—appropriate since the king is believed to be the descendant of the first whites who founded the nation (II, 292). Perhaps most remarkably, Iradier suggests that the similarities between Basques and the Africans he has encountered who speak Bantu-family languages extend well beyond the linguistic: 'Y no desciendo a la comparación de ciertos hábitos, costumbres, tendencias de raza y detalles fisiológicos porque no tengo reunidos todavía los datos que me hacen falta, pero usted comprenderá que al trabajar sobre este asunto debo estar convencido que persigo una verdad' [And I won't get down to a comparison of certain habits, customs, racial tendencies and physiological details because I don't yet have all the facts that I need, but you will understand that if I am working on this issue I must be convinced that I am pursuing a truth] (II, 291).

Iradier here offers an intriguing variation on the now-discredited 'Hamitic hypothesis', which posited that 'Negro-Hamitic' pastoralists migrated from the north and/or east into a number of African territories, including the interlacustrine area of east central Africa, a region previously occupied by 'less refined' and 'less intelligent' Negro agriculturalists, with whom they intermarried (Roscoe 1923: 13). Local myth-making concerning the mysterious Bacwezi, a tall and light-skinned people of demi-god status, who were said to have arrived in the region in the fourteenth or fifteenth century only to vanish several generations later, as well as the historical and sometimes horrifically violent conflicts between the Bahima/Bahuma/Batutsi (modern-day descendents of the Bacwezi, according to some oral traditions) and other ethnic groups such as the Bairu/Bahu/Hutu, undoubtedly facilitated the formulation of the Hamitic hypothesis. But it was Anglo-European racism that fuelled the idea that the more elaborate centralized forms of government found in the area must have been imported from elsewhere; indeed, some historians speculated that the Bacwezi came from Ethiopia but were of Greek or Portuguese stock (Anon. n.d.).11 Although he does not quite dismantle the established racial hierarchies, by implying that Basque could form a part of the Bantu language family, Iradier does allow for the possibility that a more 'advanced' civilization (i.e. the Basques) might have originated in the heart of Africa itself, rather than migrating there from the north/east. And in this sense, the African continent reduplicates the African body, as described by Iradier—black on the outside, but white on the inside.

Iradier's tentative but provocative association of Basques with sub-Saharan African geographies and peoples might seem to challenge traditional notions of Basque exclu-
sivity/superiority, which are so often dependent upon a presumed absolute 'limpieza de sangre' [blood purity]. Astonishingly, however, several decades later Iradier's theories, and most particularly his creative toponymic etymologies, will be re-infused with racial distinctions and carried to an even more outrageous extreme by the founder of the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV), Sabino Arana. Infamous for his racist diatribes against all non-Basque Spaniards - whom he terms 'maketos' - Arana would appear to be the least likely candidate to further any idea of a connection between Basques and Africans. Yet within Basque nationalist thought, racial superiority is also often linked to racial primacy - and how better to prove that the Basques comprise one of the oldest and most venerable races on earth than to claim that Africa itself is actually Basque? Arana does just that in a series of articles, titled 'El baskuence en toda el Africa' [Basque in all of Africa], published in 1902 in the Bilbao newspaper La Patria; here he argues that the Basques are 'los verdaderos españoles, como así bien, por ende, los verdaderos africanos' [the true Spaniards, as they are also consequently the true Africans] (1991: 431). In the first article in the series, Arana explains that Noah's grandson Tubal, the legendary founder of the Basque nation, had initially led his people westward to north Africa. Once there, the perspicacious Tubal took in the destiny of the great continent at a single glance: he realized that Africa 'habría de permanecer en los siglos de los siglos en el atraso más deplorable' [would remain in the most deplorable state of backwardness for centuries on end]. Tubal feared that his people, naturally hospitable, 'mucho pronto habrían de admitir a sus hogares a abyectas razas extrañas, blancas y morenas, rojas y negras, incapaces de cultura, las cuales, dominando en todo el territorio, causarían rápidamente la extinción casi absoluta de su cara prole y descendencia' [very quickly would allow into their homes the strange abject races, white and brown, red and black, incapable of culture, who, taking control of all the territory, would quickly cause the almost complete extinction of his beloved progeny and descendents] (Arana 1997: 429). Tubal was thus forced to make a strategic decision. He divided his people into two groups; the darker-complexioned he sent to the south, into the African continent, while he himself led the whiter group northward, into the territory of what is now known as Spain, to which Arana refers insistently as northern Africa (430). By defining Spain as part of Africa, delimited by the Pyrenees mountains, Arana provides another curious rewriting of the 'Hamitic hypothesis': in this version, the superior invaders are most definitely Basques, but they find 'abject' races in the Iberian peninsula as well as in Africa proper. And indeed, Arana's characterization of other regional groups in Spain echoes racist Anglo-European descriptions of indigenous Africans, such as Iradier's own observations concerning the dexterity of the Equatorial Guineans' feet, and the 'monkey-like' hand positions of the elders and posture of the children (II, 159, 157): Arana notes, for instance, that the first inhabitants of Galicia were quadrumanous, and this simian quality serves to explain Galician spinning skills (1999: 440-1, n. 1).  

It is, of course, ironic that Spanish nationalist causes - and a sometimes concomitant racist invective - have been so imbued with references to Spain's mythico-historic ties to Africa. And this is a process that continues to function to this day, albeit in ever-shifting ways, as the controversy over 'El Negro de Banyoles' makes clear. It was a Haitian-born black Spanish resident, the medical doctor Alphonse Arcelin, who first expressed his outrage to the town council after viewing the taxidermied body at the Darder Museum of Natural History in 1991; Arcelin also informed the International Olympic Committee, which insisted that the museum close down for the duration of the 1992 Barcelona Games. Soon thereafter, protests flooded in from other international organizations, such as the UN and the Organization of African Unity, as well as from individual African nations, but the Banyoles town council refused to discontinue the exhibit, arguing that it still had scientific merit since it reflected the worldview of nineteenth-century science. An extensive story published in the Madrid edition of the El País Sunday magazine (Anon. 2000a) highlighted instead the peculiarly 'irrational' relationship that had developed between residents of Banyoles and El Negro, and the fantastical legends that circulated concerning the African man's provenance, despite explanations to the contrary found in the museum's informational brochures (which indicated that some time around 1830 the body of a tribal chief had been stolen from a fresh grave in southern Africa and prepared for display by the French naturalist brothers Édouard and Jules Verreaux; some fifty years later, it was purchased from the Maison Verreaux in Paris by zoo director and museum founder Francesc Darder). Nor could the paper resist implicating all Catalans in the travesty: 'No podía ser malo tener algo que llevaba allí, en Banyoles, tanto tiempo. Curiosamente, este sentimiento impregnaba, inconscientemente, a toda la sociedad catalana' [it couldn't be bad to have something that had been there in Banyoles so long. Curiously, this sentiment impregnated, unconsciously, the entire Catalan society]. The more the central government insisted that the figure be removed, however, the more the town resisted. In the words of a German press release (Anon. 2000), residents of Banyoles turned El Negro 'into a symbol of their independence, sporting t-shirts reading 'Banyoles loves you black man' and even producing chocolates in his likeness'. If Madrid's officials insisted that the African man was not really theirs, the Catalan town's residents would make him their own through the pseudo-cannibalistic incorporation of newly spawned mini-effigies. It is difficult to envision a more bizarre form of cultural surrogation, perhaps only a marginally sweeter version of the African cannibalism described (naturally, second-hand) by a horrified yet fascinated Iradier, in which human heads and testicles were reportedly consumed with hot peppers (I, 232).

But similar forms of cultural surrogation were also practised by the central government. After years of negotiation, the Banyoles town council finally agreed to an exchange: El Negro for a generous state-funded renovation of the Darder Museum. In September 2000, the body was smuggled out of Banyoles at night (in an operation evocative of the Verreaux brothers' initial midnight grave robbery) and transported to the National Museum of Anthropology in Madrid. There, a team of anthropologists under the direction of Consuelo Mora undertook to dismantle the taxidermied body, discarding the vegetable fibre stuffing and support wires, after removing what remained of the boot-blackened skin (while some members of Gómez-Peña and Fusco's Spanish audience at Madrid's Columbus Plaza had objected that the two were not dark enough to be indigenous [Fusco and Heredia], the problem
had been avoided in the case of El Negro, who had been painted with shoe polish so he would appear more exotically 'negro'). Only the skull and some bones were left; it was deemed more 'politically correct' to return the body in that form, since a developed, Western nation simply could not repatriate a stuffed human (Antón, 2000a). The lugubrious scientific procedure, however, while reprising the Verreaux brothers' original taxidermic task, was also oddly reminiscent of the Aztec rituals of playing described by Spanish conquerors of the Americas: restoring a veneer of civilization required the Spanish government to engage in eminently 'uncivilized' practices. In this sense, the details of the affair resembled those Spanish colonial-era accounts that, according to Joseph Roach (1998: 148), had portrayed 'the horrors of human sacrifice to establish not only the uncanny otherness of the Indians but also their uncanny familiarity'. Not surprisingly, though, the decision to dismantle El Negro created another firestorm, when the unexpectedly small box with a peep-hole for the skull arrived in Botswana. An embittered Arcelin, present at the re-burial ceremony in Gaborone, remarked that 'No he gastado tantos esfuerzos y dinero para que lo devuelvan asi' ['I haven't spent so much effort and money for them to return him this way], and accused the Spanish government of engaging in a cover-up. Indeed, if in the previous century Iradier had emphasized the Africans' 'deceptive nature', now it was the turn of a number of disillusioned Africans to decry Spain's cruel truco ['trick'] as they lined up to view the body. And, in yet another ironic twist, the controversy was lent scientific legitimacy when a Spanish expert on mummies who had previously examined the taxidermied El Negro also cast doubt on the authenticity of the bones (Antón 2000c).

Arcelin's impassioned protest suggested that Spain's dis-membering was also a dis­remembering that would irredeem reverberate recollection of El Negro and his fate. But a number of reporters assigned to the story described the multivalent performances of memory at the state funeral and burial site: Rachel Swarns's article (2000) in the New York Times, titled 'Africa Rejoices as a Wandering Soul Finds Rest', quotes a nurse who held back tears as she recognized features similar to her own in the skull, and the accompanying photograph shows a young couple with hands entwined, gazing with serene curiosity upon the remains; for his part, Jacinto Antón writes in El País (2000d) of a recent graduate who, a week after the memorial, chose to have her photograph taken in front of the tomb. Antón also observes that the ceremonial procession itself had been enlivened by the participation of a man dressed in impressive tribal costume, including a leopard-skin cape and antelope-tail sceptre, who claimed to be a descendent of the Tsawna kings. According to Antón (2000c), though he was generally taken for a sort of holy fool, this particular royal surrogate also 'parecía el espe- cto del Negro' ['seemed to be El Negro's spectre']. If ghosts serve to embody the past in the present, as Jo Labanyi (2001) has argued within the context of contemporary Spanish culture (drawing upon theorists such as Jacques Derrida and Avery Gordon), if they give voice through their hauntings to the gaps and silences of canonical history, then it seems undeniable that in his various guises El Negro has managed to rattle a few chains. The polemic over his treatment may have settled down along with the earth over his grave, but the questions concerning Spain's historical and ongoing ties to Africa, as well as the complex imbrication of Spanish national and regional identities with the representation of Africans, would hardly appear to be dead and buried. And although he will no longer be physically present in Banyoles — indeed, the entire section of the Darder devoted to anthropology will disappear, to be replaced by didactic panels detailing the history of the display (Bagué 2000) — surely El Negro's spirit will inhabit the pristine halls of the newly revamped, nationally financed regional museum.

Notes

1 I will use the name El Negro throughout this essay, since it was also adopted in Botswana to refer to the repatriated body, whose exact origins remain undetermined.

2 Though Basques probably made up a

3 Oddly, Iradier rarely mentions the presence of the two women on his first mp; they only 

4 Gerald Bender (1978: 34) has analysed population data from a number of formerly

5 Iradier attributes this dreamy passage to his exploration of another mysterious

6 Although Basques probably made up a substantial percentage of the Spaniards who arrived at the islands in the fifteenth century — as is evident in part from the common Canarian surname 'Vizcaíno' (Fernández-Armesto 1982: 44) — they were certainly not the only regional populations from the Peninsula responsible for the conquest, as Iradier implies here.

7 As Felipe Fernández-Armesto (1982: 8) has written, 'no ethnographical museum of the islands is complete without its mummified specimens, ghoulish witnesses to the Canarians' remarkable proficiency in the art'.

8 In one successful ambush, for example, the Canarians dressed in the clothing of the Spaniards they had just killed in battle, and driving sheep before them, approached a Spanish fort late at night. Their 'performance' of the return of a foraging mission was utterly convincing, and the Spaniards were overcome as they opened up their fort to their presumed countrymen. On another occasion, the Canarians tied far seagulls to the rooftops of their dwellings to give their village the (false) appearance of abandonment;
once again, the Spaniards were fooled and slaughtered (Mercer 1980: 188). In the last several decades, Canarian nationalist leaders have invoked this early history of the archipelago to justify their demand for independence from Spain. Although I will not have the opportunity here to elaborate upon the ways in which contemporary regional movements in Spain are bolstered by notions of an African legacy—and seek concrete inspiration in the African decolonization struggle—it is a subject I address in the book manuscript from which this essay has been excerpted.

9 Whites are not the only ones to engage in this sort of inside/outside dichotomization of colour, though; Iradier transcribes a conversation he has had with one of his servants, in which the subject of body odour arises, and the latter defends the superiority of African hygiene, arguing that '¡nosaotro nos lavamos varias veces al día y nos enjuagamos completamente la boca después de cada comida. Como tiene el Europeo el cuerpo forrado con tantas telas, no lo sé, pero supongo que está negro como sus dientes o suelo como los bolillos en que guarda las mucosidades que se quiza de las narices' ('We wash ourselves several times a day and we completely rinse out our mouths after every meal. Since the European covers over his body with such much cloth, I don't know, but I suppose that he must be as black as his teeth or dirty like the pockets in which he stores the mucous that he removes from his nose') (II, 169). If black skin might envelop a white interior, whites may very well be black inside.

10 Upon returning from his self-financed first trip, with his entire life's savings completely depleted, Iradier had reactivated La Exploradora, but despite their concerted efforts the group's members were never able to gather together the necessary funds for the second journey, estimated to be 20,000 pesetas. Money eventually came from a variety of sources, including banks, aristocrats and other private donors, the Ministry of State (7,500 ptas) and King Alfonso XII (3,000 ptas) (Martinez Salazar 1993: 95).

Iradier would later suffer a falling out with Costa, who had come to renown the Africanist mission in disgust over the Spanish government's colonial ineptitude, as well as with Ossorio, who publicly accused Iradier of inflating his accomplishments in Equatorial Guinea. Although Iradier published a persuasive defence of his actions, which was supported by many of his expedition members, he never recovered from his profound distress over the controversy (Martinez Salazar 1993: 123–8).

11 Henry Stanley himself was taken for a Bacewiz on his later expeditions through the region (1913: II, 345, 365–6). His characterization of the racial makeup of Africans—particularly his discussion of the 'improvement' of the 'primitive races' through mixing with presumably whiter immigrants—is typical: 'the indigenous races, such as we see in the Congo basin and near the littoral of east Africa, disparaged by the waves of migrating peoples on their country's south, have been so thoroughly extinguished by the superior Indian-African race that the vast area of the upland from the Victoria Nile to the Gulf of Aden simply repeats its long established types, which we may call Galla, Abyssinian, Ethiopic, or Indo-African. This too brief outline will serve to prepare the reader for knowing something more of the Wahuma [Bahuma], the true descendents of those Ethiopians, who have for fifty centuries been pouring over the continent of Africa east and west of Victoria Nyanza in search of pasture, and while doing so have formed superior tribes and nations along their course, from the Gulf of Aden to the Cape of Good Hope—a vast improvement on the old primitive races of Africa' (1913: II, 389).

Warm thanks to Rick Shain, who very generously shared his expertise on Africa as I was preparing this essay.

12 These articles have to my knowledge only garnered a quick dismissal by the scholar of Basque nationalism Jon Juaristi, who simply describes the series as 'tan virulenta como carante de rigor' [as virulent as it is lacking in rigor] (1987: 200). Yet it seems difficult to argue that any number of Arana's other pieces could be described as more 'rigorous' than these, admittedly fantastic, essays. And curiously, Juaristi does not mention Arana's contribution to 'Tubalism', or the notion that the Basques descended directly from Tubal and were the original inhabitants of the Iberian peninsula, in his detailed treatment of the subject (see his chapter on 'Caldea', 2000: esp. 139–46). However, one Basque scholar, Joseba Gabilondo, has recognized that there is indeed a significant connection between constructions of Basque and African identity, although he presents in effect the flip side of the coin that I scrutinize here. Gabilondo asserts that for Anton Abbadie, the nineteenth-century Irish-born explorer of Africa, the Basque Country functioned as a 'compensation' for colonialist loss: after years of mapping Ethiopia yet failing to discover the source of the Nile, Abbadie, together with his Ethiopian slave boy Adula, set up housekeeping—or, more accurately, castle-keeping—in the Basque Country. Abbadie's publications concerning the region draw upon the same forms of colonialist rhetoric used to describe Africa, thus contributing to the representation of the Basque Country as an 'internal other' within Spain. I would like to express my gratitude to Joseba Gabilondo for sharing his fascinating essay with me.

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The plunder of Africa by European colonial powers has been all too conveniently forgotten in recent decades by the countries who enriched themselves in the process, as this issue of the Journal of Romance Studies stresses. But Europeans have had no opportunity to forget the devastating chemical wars waged by the colonial powers in Africa and the Middle East because they did not know about them in the first place. The toxic wars unleashed by European powers against Bedouins, Iraqis, Moroccans, Libyans, Somalis, and Ethiopians between 1920 and 1939 have been kept largely hidden by their governments. Only in 1996 did the Italian State admit for the first time that under Mussolini it had deployed massive quantities of chemicals against its colonial enemies. No such acknowledgment has ever been made in Spain and the overwhelming majority of Spanish people have been kept in the dark about what their army and air force did to Moroccans in the 1920s.

After Hiroshima and the Vietnam War, it may seem somewhat quaint to imagine that there could ever have been any boundaries to war, that warfare was never less than undiluted barbarity, limited only by the extent of technological power. The First World War, for example, was a war in which technology overtook the inherited rules of warfare. The massacre of millions of men on the Western and Eastern Fronts was due above all to the disparity between the means of destruction and the military strategies employed. The standard bayonet charges and the static war of position were no match for the power of the new weaponry, especially the artillery. New chemical weapons also caught the armies unprepared. Tear gas hand grenades and projectile were used from the beginning but as the war progressed more lethal methods were developed that left the troops fatally exposed. Chlorine gas released from cylinders first employed in 1915. It was then mixed with a more powerful chemical phosgene. In an important technological advance in 1916, artillery shells filled with more noxious chemicals were fired at troops. And in 1917 the most powerful toxic substance, the vesicant chemical mustard-gas or dichlorethylsulphide, was launched by the Germans on the Ypres front (hence its nickname Iperite or Iperita). By the last year of the war, both sides were employing this devastating new weapon (Keegan 1998: 214; Ferguson 1998: 290; Haber 1986: 23–6; Marx Evans 1997: 27–32).

Part of the deadliness of mustard gas is that it is not immediately perceptible, unlike the toxic gases. Despite the name, it is not a gas but a liquid that is exploded in mid-air and scattered over an area. This liquid contaminates everything to which it adheres, water, earth, stones, rocks, materials, vegetation, animals, clothing and

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