INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.
Narratives of astonishment: Miscegenation in New World literature

Buaas, John Wesley, Ph.D.

Rice University, 1994
RICE UNIVERSITY

NARRATIVES OF ASTONISHMENT:
MISCEGENATION IN NEW WORLD LITERATURE

by

JOHN WESLEY BUAAAS

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

APPROVED, THESIS COMMITTEE

Wesley A. Morris, Professor, Director
English

Walter W. Isle, Professor
English

Ricardo Yamal, Associate Professor
Hispanic and Classical Studies

Houston, Texas

May, 1994
ABSTRACT

Narratives of Astonishment: Miscenation in New World Literature

by

John Wesley Buasas

Through readings of a variety of literary and historical narratives from throughout the Americas dating from the 16th century to the present, I show that miscegenation, its sudden and disrupting revelation in these narratives serving as the catalyst for utopian and/or apocalyptic rhetoric, becomes a trope for New World cultural identity (Utopia and Apocalypse themselves being crucial ideas for this hemisphere). I call by the name "Astonishment" the resulting space created by the sudden revelation of miscegenation in these narratives.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It seems appropriate, given the subject of this dissertation, that a diverse group of people has been most influential in shaping my thought on the pages that follow. My work here, whatever its present merits, would have been far poorer if not for them and their willingness to talk to me, argue with me, and encourage me.

I first of all would like to extend a heartfelt thank-you to the members of my committee, Wesley Morris, Walter Isle, and Ricardo Yamal. I especially appreciate their (and, by extension, my department's) willingness to serve as the readers for a study that does not fit comfortably within the boundaries of either "English" or "Spanish."

While at Rice, I talked about this project to just about everyone in my department who showed a willingness to listen; I hope I was not too pesky, too cavalier with their time. In addition to my committee members, I wish especially to thank faculty members Lucille Fultz and Katherine "Kit" Wallingford; of fellow and former students, the stamina/tolerance awards go to Jane Creighton, Larry Kraemer, Peter Norberg, Nell Sullivan, and Margaret Wong.

A special thank-you to Linda Driskill, who not only offered me employment but who taught me how to be a better writer by paying more attention to my processes as a writer. Although I would be hard-pressed to demonstrate exactly how, I am convinced that this document is far better than it otherwise would have been due to her teaching.

I must also extend a personal thank you to the staff and participants of the June 1992 LSU Summer Institute for College Teachers, "Poetics of the Americas: Epic, Novel,
Civilization," held in Baton Rouge, at which I gave a brief talk on miscegenation in New World literature. Their energy, openness, and occasional contentiousness encouraged and challenged me, and, in the end, helped me teach myself what I believe to be an appropriate way to approach this project. In particular I wish to thank Director Bainard Cowan of LSU, and faculty members Larry Allums (University of Mobile), Glenn Arbery (Thomas More College), Carmen Del Río (Southern University), and Carolyn Jones (LSU); and participants Carolyn Allen (Virginia), Debra Anderson (Northeast Louisiana State), Janet Barnwell (University of New Orleans), Kay Bradford (Grambling), Ellen Chauvin (Nicholls State), Adam Collins (Grambling), Paul Connell (LSU), Christine Cowan (LSU), Gabrielle Gautreaux (University of New Orleans), Eamon Halpin (LSU), Randi Kristensen (LSU), Chris Mitchell (University of New Orleans), and, especially, Maarten van Delden (NYU). A very special thank you as well to Lois Parkinson Zamora of the University of Houston for giving my name to Bainard Cowan in the first place, and for expressing interest in my work.

Portions of two chapters were read at conferences. A truncated version of Chapter One was read at the 1992 Convention of the South Central Modern Language Association, held in Memphis, Tennessee; a portion of Chapter Two was read at the 1993 Convention of the Western Literature Association, held in Wichita, Kansas. I appreciate their receptiveness to my work.

Most especially of all, I wish to thank my wife, Pamela, who has been, over the course of four years and (now) two states, my editor, devil's advocate, encouragement, and computer technician, and who is by now, no doubt, weary of hearing the word
"miscegenation." As important as my work was to me, she made me keep it in perspective. I could never have asked her for so much; her generosity was such that I never had to.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ................................................................. ii
Acknowledgements ....................................................... iii

Prologue. Re-reading Columbus's (Dis)Course: Toward a Reading of New World Literature ......................................................... 1

"Delta Autumn" and Tenda dos milagres: Toward a Theory of Astonishment ......... 16

"Regions beyond right knowing": Cabeza de Vaca's Search for a Language .......... 51

¿Quiénes somos?: Labyrinths of Blood in de la Vega, Faulkner, and Paz .............. 100

Gonzalo Guerrero's Children: A Survey of Narratives of Astonishment ............... 154

Conclusion .................................................................... 209

Works Cited and Consulted ................................................ 219
PROLOGUE

REREADING COLUMBUS’S (DIS)COURSE: TOWARD A READING
OF NEW WORLD LITERATURE

No educated person of the time needed Christopher Columbus to "prove" the "world" was round, an idea that had been known and accepted for centuries in Europe.¹ Even so, Europeans lived and acted as though the earth, as well as the world, was flat. Consider the world as known to Europeans through the Bible, Marco Polo, and Vasco de Gama: Europe, Africa, and Asia—the so-called Island of the Earth, a sort of intellectual Gondwanaland created by a fusion of Judeo-Christian teaching and a smattering of calculations from the ancient Greeks. Because of the positions of the continents relative to each other, Europeans had no real need to know the other side of the planet. Their trade and military routes moved over land through Constantinople or hugged the coasts of Africa and Asia as they moved from Europe to India to China and back. A round earth was not a lived experience for pre-Renaissance Europe; it existed in the Old World mind somewhat in the same way that the Milky Way’s spiral shape exists in ours—as demonstrable, "known-that" information, but not as experienced knowledge.

¹ The spark for the central idea in this prologue comes from my understanding of Edmundo O’Gorman’s The Invention of America: An inquiry into the historical nature of the New World and the meaning of its history (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961) as read through the lens of Antonio Benítez-Rojo’s The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1992). I should mention here that the word world had a different significance for Columbus’s age than for ours. As I will explain later, before the Encounter the "world" was understood to consist precisely of the then-known inhabited landmasses; Earth, on the other hand, names the planet which contains the world.
Imagine for a moment that you have the three then-known continents, vastly reduced in size but accurate in terms of scale, and converted into pieces of parchment, spread out in front of you on a table and arranged as they are on the planet itself. Mark the overland trade routes from Venice to Kashmir and Cathay; trace the Horn of Africa up to the Indian subcontinent and beyond. You can see that Europeans travelled across the known world somewhat in the manner that they read texts written in European languages, as though, indeed, the continents themselves were texts: from West to East and North to South, or, on our parchments, from left to right and up to down. This sort of reading had the effect, as I mentioned, of flattening the planet the Old World "knew that" it inhabited but did not actually "know" it inhabited. The early-Renaissance standard mode of travelling/reading, while certainly functional, was little more than that. It got one to where one was going; upon arrival, one assumed, one would reap the expected benefits for which one had made the journey in the first place. But one’s vision of the earth did not necessarily change appreciably for having made that journey.

Columbus’s project, then—of sailing East to West, or from right to left on our (flat) maps/parchments—becomes all the more audacious in concept when considered in this context. His act would actually make the world a globe, would make it round in the experience as well as in the imagination of the Old World. If we continue with our travelling-as-reading analogy, meanwhile, Columbus’s theorized reading practice loses none of its audacity. In a sense, he was proposing to read backwards, even to read in and beyond the margin in the silent oceanic space surrounding the Book of the Old World.
Even if he had found only Japan or India, as he intended, his act would have been a crucial one. He would be reading an "other" text, the text of the world-become-globe. As we know from elementary school history classes, Columbus thought he actually did find Asia. But his insistence on this point, in the face of mounting evidence to the contrary, had—and continues to have—immense consequences for the Americas as an imagined space, since, I will argue, criticism even today tends to continue making an equivalent error when reading New World texts.

By acting from a combination of theory and rumor rather than the above-mentioned accepted sources of knowledge, Columbus read against the intellectual grain

---

2 This Prologue is not the place to attempt to determine what Columbus knew/did not know about what lay to the west besides Asia. That function I leave to the various Columbus books now available, two of which I mention below. I prefer to think he did not comprehend what he found (if he ever did, he was a fine actor as well as a sailor). Even if he did, the force of my argument lies in the fact that the Old World was totally unprepared for the events of October 12, 1492, and beyond, even if Columbus was; and that Columbus, no matter the extent of his prior knowledge, was the catalyst that prompted that Europe-wide surprise.

3 See O'Gorman, 54-61; and Robert Fuson, ed. and trans., *The Log of Christopher Columbus* (Camden, Maine: International Marine Publishing Company, 1987), 25-29. I should add here that Columbus's many biographers, especially those of the Quincentennial variety, seem more intent on profits or in furthering predetermined agendas than in trying to convey a sense of the man and his times. Among the chief offenders are Samuel Eliot Morison's *Admiral of the Ocean Sea* (New York: Little, Brown, 1942, which seeks only to glorify the man; and Kirkpatrick Sale's *The Conquest of Paradise: Christopher Columbus and the Columbian Legacy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), which not only maintains a running argument with Morison's beatification of Columbus, but also, as its title and dedication ("... to those who were here first") indicate, reeks of the most offensive kind of romanticization of the pre-Columbian inhabitants of the Americas. Moreover, it lays the blame for the destruction of the cultures of indigenous Americans directly on Columbus's shoulders: a judgement that is true only if we wish to make of Columbus a sort of *ex post facto* scapegoat for the subsequent violences of others. The result of such treatments has been to make Columbus, a mysterious personage even in his own time, still more so today. Perhaps the best way for readers to learn about the
of the 15th century; doing so had the potential of throwing into doubt the received truths of the time, depending on the results of that reading. That reading resulted in, as we know, the finding of the Bahamas, Cuba, Haiti, Puerto Rico, the coast of Venezuela: pieces of something much larger that we now call the Americas. Yet Columbus continued to read those pieces as "Asia" because, even though he had rejected the then-current travelling/reading practice by which one arrived at Asia from Europe, he still expected to achieve the same then-current results of that practice. To read backwards, yet to continue to expect one's reading to yield the same results as those of one who reads forward: this was, in essence, Columbus's reading practice.

Columbus, simultaneously text-bound and -unbound, sailed about the Caribbean looking for Japan; in some ways his logs are as much the record of that search as they are about the Caribbean basin itself. Since then, the search for Japan has become no easier. Roland Barthes, for example, tells us that he has gone to a place that he calls Japan, and has written about the experience in a book, Empire of Signs. But Barthes makes clear in the preface to that book that he thinks he has no more described the "real" Japan than Columbus’s log does. In the preface, entitled "Là-bas," Barthes maps out the ground rules of the game by which he feels compelled to play as a writer of a travel

"Discovery" and the man who receives credit for it is to read Fusan's translation of the log of the First Voyage (itself a problematic text, as Fusan’s introduction makes clear) in conjunction with O’Gorman’s book. The log reveals the man to be--surprise--a human being, neither saint nor villain; The Invention of America places him in his intellectual context, an act which has the effect of further humanizing him. He acted in accord with the best teachings of his (not our) culture and religion: what more could he--or any of us--have done? See as well James Axtell's remarkably balanced assessment of postColumbian European-indigenous dealings, Beyond 1492: Encounters in Colonial North America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).
book:

If I want to imagine a fictive nation, I can give it an invented name, treat it declaratively as a novelistic object, create a new Garabagne, so as to compromise no real country by my fantasy. . . . I can also . . . isolate somewhere in the world (faraway) a certain number of features (a term employed in linguistics), and out of these features deliberately form a system. It is that system that I shall call: Japan.  

Antonio Benítez-Rojo makes the following observations concerning Barthes’s project:

[T]he result [of a traveller’s reading of the places he visits] must be a text, that is, a signifier that has to fall short of signifying the Other. . . . [R]eportage, just as much as any chronicle, account, travel book, letter, diary, biography, history, or even novel, must find itself at an unbridgeable distance, over there—or simply there—from the threshold of the Other; or, as [Cuban writer Alejo] Carpentier concludes, in his lucid innocence: beyond the lives of those now writing."

---

4 Roland Barthes, Empire of Signs (trans. Richard Howard), quoted in Benítez-Rojo, The Repeating Island, 181. The structuralists’ recognition of this dilemma has trickled down into the work of contemporary novelists. Compare, for example, the passage from Barthes to the following one, from Salman Rushdie’s Shame (1983; New York: Vintage, 1989):

The country in this story is not Pakistan, or not quite. There are two countries, real and fictional, occupying the same space, or almost the same space. . . .

I have not given the country a name. And Q. is not really Quetta at all. But I don’t want to be precious about this: when I arrive at the big city, I shall call it Karachi. (23-24)

5 The Repeating Island, 182.
To put it succinctly, Columbus's problems were that, on the one hand, he thought he knew where he was, and that, on the other hand, what he described would correspond to where he thought he knew he was. Columbus's inability or refusal, in his reading practice, to let go of the texts that formed the context out of which he attempted to read—even though he had, in imagining his voyage, metaphorically sailed off the pages of those texts—resulted in his confused reading of the Caribbean. Sailing about as he was in a space in which everything he saw—"Asia" or not—was the Other, he could not accept the omnipresence of the Other. Or, rather, he accepted so readily the challenge of transcribing the Other that, paradoxically, the entire globe became the Other, a space even whose physical shape, according to Columbus, the Old World had not previously suspected. The more "faithfully"—in terms of the texts of the Old World—Columbus transcribed the New World, the more strange the whole planet became.

I can best clarify this point by transcribing here a summary of a letter from Columbus to Ferdinand and Isabella dated October 18, 1498.⁶ Columbus, recovering from a serious illness, had just returned to Santo Domingo from his third voyage, during which he explored a freshwater gulf off what we now know as the northern coast of South America. Neither the fresh water nor the landmass that produced it, according to accepted (read: non-heretical) authorities, should have been where they were. Columbus had again been searching for a westward passage to Asia, and was bewildered when his fleet encountered the freshwater gulf. To accept the presence of a landmass discontinuous with the known continents (the Bible makes no mention of such a possibility) would be to lend

---

⁶ This summary appears in O'Gorman, 98.
creden
cere to assertions in pagan texts of the existence of an orbis alterius ("other world"): a heretical act, and thus a dangerous one, given the zeal of the Inquisition at that point in time. In the letter, then, Columbus attempts to account for such a landmass:

[Contrary to the accepted opinion, the terrestrial globe is not a perfect sphere; its true form is that of a pear or of a ball having a protuberance like a woman's breast, the nipple of which would be under the line of the equator at the "end of the East," where the earth [read: landmasses] ends with all its offshore islands. In other words, it is the eastern extremity of the Island of the Earth or Orbis Terrarum. On the summit of this great mountain or breast, which rises very gradually from a point in the Ocean one hundred leagues from the Azores, lies the Terrestrial Paradise. . . .

[Since the land of Paria was at the "end of the East," close by the equator, and its qualities appeared to make it the "most noble region of the Earth," and since celestial observations had revealed that the fleet had sailed uphill after crossing the meridian one hundred leagues from the Azores, it seemed quite natural to believe that the fresh water of the gulf of Paria came from the fountain of Paradise.

Imagine the intellectual context out of which Columbus feels compelled to read as a pair of hands squeezing a balloon that is the globe, and the result is analogous to what we see above. It is also a measure of how the Old World's attempts to read the New World in terms of the Old distorts the entire world. A pear-shaped-Earth theory is no better than a flat-world theory for describing the realities of a globe.
But it is too easy, especially given the present academic climate, to say, It follows then that the New World is merely the resultant text produced by the Old World's terrible transcription of itself on the already-written-upon parchment that was the pre-Columbian Western Hemisphere. Saying such a thing presumes, on the one hand, that Europe understood the Americas in the reductive, uncomplicated way that it would understand any other mere geographic space ripe for exploitation, and, on the other hand, that in the intervening 500 years the inhabitants of the Americas have had nothing to say about that experience. Let us consider Europe's understanding of the Americas first: The significance of the components of the very term New World, as understood during the Renaissance, suggests something of the complexity of the issue even for Columbus's contemporaries. World designates the space set aside by God for humans; before Columbus made his voyage it consisted of the known landmasses and their nearby islands. The oceans, uninhabitable, effectively marked the boundaries of the world. The world, then, is as old as the peoples to whom God gave it. New, on the other hand, suggests "virginal," "untouched" (terms which, of course, did not account for the presence of indigenous peoples in this newly-found space--after all, this world was for the chosen of God). Yet even if the Americas had been empty of people upon Columbus's arrival, any space designated as "New World," given the significance of the term, would have ceased to exist in the very instant of its discovery, except as a construct of the imagination. For the world is always touched by people; new implies just the opposite. The New World, then, is an oxymoron, a paradox, a signifier whose signified cannot exist, and so might as well be called "Utopia" as "New World."
To return to my suggestion that Columbus essentially proposed to read without or outside a text proper/proper text: what that act accidentally resulted in was, as O'Gorman argues, the creation of a space that had to be invented before it could be talked about. The New World, then, is a metatext, a self-conscious text. It is the ongoing rereading and rewriting of itself, and, as well, of the Old World's reading of it.

The enormous implications this idea has for the reading of texts produced in this hemisphere, "literary" and otherwise, bear considering. To begin with, such an idea throws into doubt the relevance for this region of such terms as the "literary tradition" of a given nation, or how one determines, for example, the "influence" of European literature on Latin American literature. But even beyond this, it seems to me, lies the suggestion that New World texts require a different sort of reading, one that befits the condition of the region as an invented space. For questions of "tradition" and "influence" tend to privilege the position of texts from Europe (and, depending on the writer, even those from the United States) over that held by texts from, users of such terms imply, the more culturally-impoverished regions of this hemisphere. Moreover, the employment of such terms tends to elide the issue of the contribution of a writer's culture(s) to the text; or, if such issues are raised, they are traditionally passed off as (significantly for this study)

---

"local color."

I recognize that my language so far has been Eurocentric in the extreme; on the other hand--especially given the subject at hand: the mental construction of a world, a space created entirely of words--what language can I or anyone employ except some sort of discourse that is at base ethnocentric? The central paradox of much current critical theory, what it fails to or does not wish to recognize, is this: that, even as the practitioners of its various permutations rail at the crimes of Western culture (many of them...8 Michel Foucault's notion of "heterotopias"--spaces which "secretly undermine language, . . . [which] desiccate speech, stop words in their tracks" (The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences [1971; New York: Vintage, 1973], xvii) is very much like the space I have chosen to call the "New World." I will discuss heterotopias in more detail later in this dissertation. But for now I would like to say that to figure the New World as a heterotopia is to reveal much that is silly about current pronouncements on ethnocentricity. As Foucault suggests, the language of the heterotopia that is the New World--itself a construct of discourse--is the not-language of the resulting vacuum caused by the collapse of old worlds, both indigenous and interloping. It would seem, then, that any known language spoken within such a space would destroy the space itself, or, at the very least, would fail to describe such a space. Yet some critics, as they casually substitute "New World" for "Americas" and vice-versa, fail to see this. The indigenous peoples of the Americas, for example, did not know they lived in a space David E. Johnson designates as the "New World", yet, Johnson says, "[A] properly New World writing would be the hieroglyphs of the Maya, the pictographs of the Aztecs, the knot system [quipu] of the Inca[.]" ("Voice, the New Historicism, and the Americas," Arizona Quarterly 48.2 [Summer 1992]: 83). Why such a proposition is any less ethnocentric than the historical fact of Indians made to learn Latin (the language in which, by the way, the term New World [as novus orbis] first made its appearance) is a question Johnson fails to answer to my satisfaction.

On the contrary: the space of the New World seems to privilege all languages equally, the resulting cacophony itself being the language of that space. See, for example, Garcilaso de la Vega's Royal Commentaries of the Incas and General History of Peru (1612), in which the author, himself a mestizo, transcribes an Inca poem from quipu into a phonetic representation of the language, then provides translations in Latin and Spanish, the latter having been translated into English for the present edition (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1966, 1989: 127-128). I shall examine this particular passage more closely in chapter 2 of the dissertation.
perpetrated and perpetuated by language), they employ the discourse of Western culture. So now we have the highly ironic--not to say awkward--situation of the planet's "dominant culture" telling the other peoples of the Earth that the notion of "dominant culture" is problematic. It proves, by not escaping from language, that one cannot escape language's power. It was precisely this paradox that Columbus could not negotiate, as we have seen, and we have become no better at that negotiation in the intervening 500 years.

I cannot resolve this dilemma within the modest realm of the project that follows. This project does make the claim, however, that it is not only possible but necessary to articulate a theory of "New-World-centric" discourse, a theory which does not merely transpose Old World theory onto the cultural realities of the Americas. Such a discourse would both produce and comment upon New World texts in a manner peculiar to (or, if you like, "indigenous to") the region. It would, like New World culture itself, synthesize discourses from throughout the world into a heteroglossic amalgamen that both blends and becomes something other than its components. Like many studies of Latin American

---

9 I hesitate to use a less-awkward adjective which at first came to mind--"Americentric"--because of the difficulty of the meaning of the word America. On the one hand, America is of European origin; does this fact therefore imply that the so-called "first Americans," who certainly are not of European descent, are not "Americans?" On the other hand, America (originally intended to designate the landmasses of the Western Hemisphere) has been appropriated as a signifier by people throughout the world to designate the nation officially known as the "United States of America." Would "Americentric" thus, in the minds of some, exclude all the nations south of the Rio Grande? Such are (or should be) the concerns of those who attempt to imagine an invented space as inclusive as that designated by "New World."

10 The critical work of describing this discourse has just begun. Benítez-Rojo's The Repeating Island, to which I have frequently referred thus far, is one such text; Kutzinski's Against the American Grain is another. Other critical texts include: Bell Gale Chevigny and Gari LaGuardia, eds., Reinventing the Americas: Comparative Studies of
literature, this one accepts as given the critical commonplace that New World literature is a literature of encounter, a literature of the meeting and clashing of cultures. But in the recent past many critical texts have pursued this commonplace in an equally commonplace direction. While certainly canny—as they should be—on the subject of the historical narratives of the Encounter and the Conquest when it suits their needs, these texts tend to regard those events as though it were still 1492, as though, if we just knew when and where, we could still stop Cortés from sailing in search of the rumored Indian empires on the mainland west of Cuba. My point here is not to make light of the history of the Conquest, but to suggest that seeing the Encounter always and only in terms of the Conquest effectively effaces much of what has occurred in the intervening half-a-millennium: chiefly, the emergence of a culture which is composed of European, African, and indigenous elements yet which is something more than a mere sum of its parts. It is a culture that celebrates itself even as it ponders and agonizes over its origins. It is a culture that, perhaps most important, was not "supposed" to happen. Not to read this

culture is to repeat Columbus's act of travelling/reading. To read New World texts only as we are "supposed" to read them, to see in them only what it is trendily expedient to see, is tantamount to seeing "Asia" while surrounded by the Americas.

By way of illustrating what I mean, I would like to discuss here an example of what I consider a less-than-accurate reading of a text along with an alternative reading of the sort that I wish to provide in the chapters that follow. The example comes from the introduction to David Brookshaw's study of racial stereotypes in Brazilian literary texts, *Race and Color in Brazilian Literature*, and concerns his reading of the following excerpt from a poem by the 19th-century poet Luiz Gama, "Junto à estátua" ("Next to the Statue"). The (rather awkward) English translation that follows is Brookshaw's own:

```plaintext
Formosa virgem de nevada colo,
De garços olhos, de cabelos louros,
Sanguíneos lábios, elegante porte,
Mimoso rosto de Ericina bela,
Curvando o seio de albastro fino,
Mimosa impreme nos meus lábios negros.

[Beautiful virgin with your snowy neck,
green-eyed and golden-haired,
blood-red lips, graceful bearing,
gentle countenance like that of beautiful Erincina,
Upon the curve of your fine alabaster breast,
```
my pretty one, I place my black lips.]

Brookshaw reads the images in this excerpt as an indication that Gama has become so influenced by Brazil's dominant culture that even he, an Afro-Brazilian abolitionist, also sees "white" as the positive ideal of human beauty: "For the black writer, the extent to which he is conditioned to the idea of positive white and negative black is a measure of his dependence on white literary and cultural precedents which continue to enslave him."¹¹ But I see a problem with such a reading. Brookshaw's focus on the physical description of the woman as a site of stereotyping causes him to ignore the real energy of the excerpt, which does not really appear until we reach its final line--a line which, by the way, Brookshaw does not even mention in his explication. I think it is that energy which, if we only described it, would lead us toward a reading that more accurately reflects the excerpt's "New-World-centric" rhetoric. Let me suggest the following reading, then: This excerpt so obviously invokes the stereotype of white beauty that Brookshaw rightly finds present here that the stereotype collapses under its own weight in the final line. If the lily-white maiden that is the ideal for white Woman is truly unapproachable, as Brookshaw contends elsewhere, then certainly this excerpt denies that unapproachability. Far from being some sort of unconscious celebration of white beauty by a black writer, this poem in fact deliberately violates the central implication of such a code: that white women are off limits to black men. Brookshaw will argue later that apparently only black writers can write about black subjects without resorting to

stereotype\textsuperscript{12}, suggesting by implication that black writers should write only about black subjects, whites about white subjects. But this seems no happier a dictum than what Brookshaw sees writers of whatever race actually doing (depicting people who are not of their race), which leads inevitably to the falling into the snares of stereotypes that he rightly finds so unfortunate. I think that Brookshaw would find my reading of the poem to be far more positive, in terms of the position his book takes, than he does his own reading--yet my reading can occur only if, as in the case of Gama's poem, certain "transgressions," certain crossings of boundaries, are committed by writers and the characters that populate their texts.

I would like to suggest, then, that we consider these texts not merely as narratives of the Encounter, but as something "other": as narratives of the encounter with the Encounter; that is, as narratives of the culture that is the result of the Encounter. In such narratives, interracial mixing becomes a crucial trope, for in the text's revelation of that act we see created a space wherein we find pieces of the meaning of "the New World" as it means to the New World. In the pages to follow, I will try to delineate that space.

\textsuperscript{12} Brookshaw, 168.
"DELTA AUTUMN" AND TENDA DOS MILAGRES:
TOWARD A THEORY OF ASTONISHMENT

Narratives of the encounter with the Encounter take place, as one might expect, in the most unexpected of places: after all, such is the story of the Encounter itself. Their chief quality—their irruption into and disruption of "dominant" narratives (those of texts proper and of the larger social contexts which inform texts)—ensure their effect of surprise when they appear. Or, if you wish, their subversive quality. For such narratives, given certain traditional assumptions we have of texts as ordered, structured objects, are not "supposed" to happen. The appearance of miscgenation into "dominant" narratives raises the issues, through its interruptions, irruptions, disruptions, of far more than the immediate question of racial identity.

But in order to arrive at a discussion of these issues, we should first look at some texts which raise them. I wish to begin this chapter, then, by examining at some length excerpts from two texts in which I believe the narrative of the encounter with the Encounter does occur: William Faulkner’s "Delta Autumn," and Brazilian novelist Jorge Amado’s Tenda dos milagres (1969; English translation: Tent of Miracles). On one level, both these books are themselves about books: one that insists on being read, and one that insists on being written. These texts-within-texts allow miscgenation to enter into the larger narratives of the respective novels and raise the questions I have just alluded to. But what I find most interesting is that the books these books are about are, in a manner of speaking, versions of the same Book, a Book which, I hope to show, serves as a
genealogy of the New World.

I

It is hard to know exactly what to call *Go Down, Moses* (1942), the book in which "Delta Autumn" appears. Faulkner himself insisted it was a novel, and most critics agree with that assessment. But it is hard to make this text correspond to our traditional notions of what a novel "is." Most of its "sections" concern themselves with the convoluted genealogy of the McCaslin family, though one of the sections, "Pantalooin in Black," bears at best a tangential relationship to the others. In terms of chronology, the sections move from 1859 to the 1940s back to the 1880s and then ahead again to the 1940s. The fact that almost all of the novel's sections had previously appeared as stories and can, indeed, stand alone as stories, further confounds the issue. Yet textual evidence shows that Faulkner worked hard while producing *Go Down, Moses* to convert these stories into pieces of a larger narrative.¹ Does *Go Down, Moses*, then, belong to the same genre as Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* or Boccaccio's *Decameron*: that of the framed narrative? If so, what serves as the book's frame?

James A. Snead seems to suggest that that frame, the book's ordering narrative, is the theme of miscegenation. Snead observes that, given the fact that a predominant

theme in *Go Down, Moses* is miscegenation, it is highly appropriate that the structure of the book confuses traditional distinctions between "stories" and "novels," and so is itself miscegenated. If, Snead continues, narrative is a site of authority and rule (because ordered and ordering), then a structure which disrupts conventional notions of narrative implicitly calls into question other such rules of ordering. Therefore, "[t]he prose of *Go Down, Moses* is in the truest sense a 'dialogue,' not an authoritarian 'telling.'" Not merely the content of the text, but its entire structure, becomes dialogic in quality. The frame is that there is not a true frame in terms of "plot." As a result, the blocks of ostensibly self-contained text that comprise the novel spill over the bounds of their respective sections and into the other sections. For example, in the course of discussing "Delta Autumn," I will often have to refer to the section which precedes it, "The Bear," as well as other sections throughout *Go Down, Moses*.

In this scene from "Delta Autumn," Ike McCaslin, a man horrified by miscegenation\(^2\) who is approaching the end of his life, is in the midst of a conversation

\(^2\) James A. Snead, *Figures of Division: William Faulkner’s Major Novels* (New York: Methuen, 1986), 206. Along these same lines, Carol Clancy Harter, when describing the structure of the novel, uses the verb *amalgamates*, a verb that, prior to the mid-19th century in the United States, described racial commingling: "[A] close scrutiny of the two independent versions of ["Delta Autumn"] offers insights into the creative processes which are operative in the formulation of a novel that amalgamates and synthesizes the originally disparate raw materials of previously-published stories" ("The Winter of Ike McCaslin: Revisions and Irony in Faulkner’s 'Delta Autumn'" *Journal of Modern Literature* 1.2 (1970-1971), 210-211).

\(^3\) In part 4 of "The Bear," Ike learns by reading the commissary ledgers of the McCaslin plantation (the book that *Go Down, Moses* is in part about) that his grandfather, Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin, not only had fathered a daughter by one of his slaves, he had also had fathered a son by that same daughter. Hence Ike's long association of miscegenation with incest--and, hence, one very powerful reason for Ike's
with a woman who has come to Ike's camp looking for Ike's grandnephew, Roth Edmonds, her lover and the father of the child she carries with her:

"But I got a job, teaching school here in Aluschaskuna, because my aunt was a widow, with a big family, taking in washing to sup--"

"Took in what?" he said. "Took in washing?" He sprang, still seated even, flinging himself backward onto one arm, awry-haired, glaring. Now he understood what it was she had brought into the tent with her, what old Isham had already told him by sending the youth to bring her in--to him--the pale lips, the skin pallid and dead-looking yet not yet ill, the dark and tragic and foreknowing eyes. *Maybe in a thousand or two thousand years in America*, he thought. *But not now! Not now!* He cried, not loud, in a voice of amazement, pity, and outrage: "You're a nigger!"

"Yes," she said. "James Beauchamp--you called him Tennie's Jim though he had a name--was my grandfather. I said you were Uncle Ike."

... Then, a bit later in the text:

---

repudiation of the land which was once his grandfather's plantation. Moreover, one can see instantly the irony of finding someone as horrified by miscegenation as Ike is in the center of a text whose very structure is miscegenated, himself reading a text (his grandfather's ledgers) that serves as a record of miscegenation.

At least in Mississippi, the association of miscegenation with incest has legal precedent. Vernon Lane Watson, in his book *The Negro in Mississippi, 1865-1890*, notes that an 1876 state law declared interracial marriage "to be 'incestuous [sic] and void,' and the parties participating were made subject to the penalties for incest. These included a maximum of ten years in prison" (in Arthur F. Kinney, ed., *Critical Essays on William Faulkner: The McCaslin Family* (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1990), 75).
He didn't grasp [her hand], he merely touched it--the gnarled, bloodless, bone-light bone-dry old man's fingers touching for a second the smooth young flesh where the strong old blood ran after its long lost journey back to home. "Tennie's Jim," he said. "Tennie's Jim."4

Of the characters in "Delta Autumn," Ike receives the most critical attention. One should expect this: after all, well over half of the pages in Go Down, Moses--"The Old People," "The Bear," and "Delta Autumn"--is given over to the direct telling of his life. But the other stories are "about" Ike, as well, in the sense that they form a narrative context for Ike and his actions. For example, the first paragraph of "Was" (which opens the novel), and which "Delta Autumn" repeats almost verbatim, adopts the tone of an epitaph: "Isaac McCaslin, 'Uncle Ike,' past seventy and nearer to eighty than he ever corroborated anymore, a widower now and uncle to half a county and father to no one" (3). By the time of "Was," set in 1859, Ike's grandfather had already committed (in the 1830s) the crucial acts that lead Ike to repudiate his inheritance, and recorded them in the plantation ledger that we read with Ike (in 1883) in "The Bear." (If one wants to think about this novel in terms of its structure, already we can see here the beginnings of not so much a linear narrative as a collage of events that inform Ike's actions.5) But

4 William Faulkner, Go Down, Moses (1942; New York: Vintage International, 1990), 343-44; 345. Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

5 We see something of this collage-like effect even in how the novel's narrator describes Ike's relationship to his cousin Carothers McCaslin ("Cass"): 
   . . . grandson of [Ike's] father's sister, sixteen years his senior and, since both he and McCaslin were only children and the boy's father had been nearing seventy when he was born, more his brother than his cousin and