

## “El encuentro” by Carlos Arturo Truque: An Overlooked Literary Response to the 1928 *Masacre de las Bananeras*

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### Abstract

“El encuentro” (1973), by Carlos Arturo Truque, represents part of the violent history of the twentieth century in the Colombian Caribbean. The most revealing aspect of this short story is the reference to the *Masacre de las Bananeras*, the brutal killing of striking sub-contracted United Fruit Company Workers on December 6, 1928. “El encuentro” explores a point of view that had not been examined previously in regard to this tragedy: the Afro-Colombian narrative on violence tied to banana cultivation and transnational exploitation in the Caribbean. Truque provides the reader with a literary representation of the relationship between race, class, and violence, and how the memory of this tragedy in Ciénaga informed labor relations in subsequent generations.

**Keywords:** hunger, labor, race, United Fruit Company, violence

### Resumen

“El encuentro” (1973), por Carlos Arturo Truque, representa parte de la historia violenta del siglo veinte en el Caribe colombiano. El aspecto más revelador de este cuento es la referencia a la *Masacre de las Bananeras*, la matanza de trabajadores sub-contratadas de la United Fruit Company el 6 de diciembre de 1928. “El encuentro” explora un punto de vista no examinado anteriormente en cuanto a esta tragedia: la narrativa por una voz afro-colombiana acerca de la violencia asociada con el cultivo de bananos y la explotación transnacional en el Caribe. Truque provee al lector una representación literaria de la relación entre raza, clase y violencia, y cómo la memoria de esta tragedia en Ciénaga informó relaciones laborales en generaciones posteriores.

**Palabras clave:** hambre, labor, raza, United Fruit Company, violencia

In the middle decades of the twentieth century, Colombian literature became synonymous with what are classified as the *novelas de La Violencia*: the social realist, Andean novels which portrayed the civil war that occurred primarily in the central regions of Colombia from the late 1940s to the early 1960s.<sup>1</sup> Regardless of their literary merit, these *novelas de la Violencia* were celebrated for representing synchronous national tragedies within the interior regions of Colombia, an area geographically and thematically associated with the nation’s cultural and political power. Of course this regional authority came at the price of the marginalization of select writers whose works may not have focused either thematically or geographically on the specifically Andean areas of the nation. Contemporaneous to the novelists who chronicled *La Violencia*, many prose writers of Afro-Colombian descent such as Arnolando Palacios (b. 1924), Manuel Zapata Olivella (1920–2005), and Carlos Arturo Truque (1927–1970) also took on the topic of violence throughout Colombia, yet they emphasized geographically and culturally marginalized areas of the nation, such as the Caribbean and Pacific regions.

Given the dearth of scholarship on political and historical violence in Colombia as a more widespread national tragedy, this article focuses on the literary production of Carlos Arturo Truque, and more specifically on his posthumously published short story “El encuentro” (1973) and its attention to the often violent exploitation of Colombia’s labor force. The most revealing aspect of this short story, however, is Truque’s reference to the *Masacre de las Bananeras*. This tragedy unfolded amidst the labor disputes against the United Fruit Company in Ciénaga-Magdalena (part of Colombia’s Caribbean region) and resulted in the brutal killing of striking sub-contracted union workers on December 6, 1928.<sup>2</sup> Although appearing only a few years after the publication of the most celebrated depiction of this same tragic event in Gabriel García Márquez’s *Cien años de soledad* (1967), it is possible that Truque’s story was indeed written simultaneously to, or even before García Márquez penned the Macondonian account. The depiction of events surrounding the workers’ plight as seen in “El encuentro” represents the transitional literature that surfaced in the second half of the twentieth century, just as a new wave of innovative Colombian writers (including García Márquez and Truque, as well as the aforementioned Palacios and Zapata Olivella) challenged not only the orthodox confinement of the nation’s literary output, but also the cultural and thematic

dominance of the nation’s center-Andean region.

Unfortunately, the categorization of Truque as a short story writer with an inclination towards Afro-Colombian consciousness in his writings has rendered his contribution to Colombia’s literary representations of this tragedy widely unexplored within literary criticism. In my assessment, Truque’s “El encuentro” explores a point of view that had not been examined previously: the Afro-Colombian narrative on violence tied to banana cultivation and transnational exploitation in the Caribbean. Moreover, these aspects are intertwined with what I deem to be a transitional text for Afro-Colombian writing. Truque’s “El encuentro” thus represents one of the few examples of the literary relationship between race, class, and violence of the *Masacre de las Bananeras*, and certainly due to these intertwining factors critics have ignored this poignant tale when contemplating the literary representations of this tragedy.

Carlos Arturo Truque was born in 1927 in Condotó, in the department of Chocó, Colombia. His father, Sergio Isaac Truque Müeller, was of German heritage and his mother, Luisa Asprilla, of Afro-Colombian descent. Shortly after his birth, the family moved south to the city of Buenaventura, in the department of the Valle del Cauca and closer to Cali, one of Colombia’s major cities. This move provided the Truque-Asprilla family with more educational and professional opportunities than those available to them previously. Although his father was a staunch conservative who preferred more stable careers for his children, the younger Truque eventually chose, against the older Truque’s demands, to pursue a career in writing. He began his career contributing various articles, book reviews, and poetry to the newspaper *El Liberal*. In “Carlos Arturo Truque: Colombia a corazón abierto,” the prologue to the anthology of Carlos Arturo Truque’s short stories published in the *Colección de literatura afrocolombiana* in 2010, Sonia Nadezhda-Truque, daughter of the writer, discusses her father’s failure to find work in Bogotá in 1954 due to his political views against the government. It is because of these beliefs, she contends, that he chose to use a number of pseudonyms, such as Charles Blaine, or Euqurt (his last name in reverse), in order to avoid any problems for himself or his family (S.N. Truque 12). Nevertheless, some of Truque’s earliest literary recognitions came under his birth name, including a 1951 prize for his play *Hay que vivir en paz*, a 1953 award for his short story “Vivan los compañeros” (published in *Tres cuentos colombianos* alongside stories by Gabriel García Márquez and Guillermo Ruiz Rivas), and a third place award at the Manizales Folklore Competition for his short story “Sonatina para dos tambores” in 1958. In 1964 he suffered a stroke, which left him unable to work. Supported by friends and family, however, he continued to produce short stories during the last few years of his life. He died in Buenaventura in 1970 at the age of 42. Three years later, due to the efforts of his wife Nelly, the Colombian Ministry of Education published the collection *El día que terminó el verano y otros cuentos*. This assemblage of Truque’s short

stories includes some formerly published works, as well as un-published stories, including “El encuentro.”

Truque’s importance within the trajectory of Colombian literature first and foremost owes to the fact that he pertained to the wave of twentieth-century writers that shook the foundation of the nation’s literary production. However there are two other, equally important reasons for which we must recognize his literary contribution. First, Truque is one of many overlooked Afro-Latin American prose writers, much lesser known than Manuel Zapata Olivella, who is rightfully celebrated as one of the most important writers of the twentieth century, both in and outside of Colombia. Secondly, Truque’s “El encuentro” as a work of fiction, has been largely ignored within the bibliography of writers who represented the 1928 *bananeras* tragedy.<sup>3</sup> Like Gabriel García Márquez, Truque uses the symbolism surrounding the workers strike (*la huelga*), and its ensuing violence as his reference point for drawing attention to the deplorable working and living conditions in the Caribbean. In Truque’s work, however, the allusion of the transnational factory’s control over the area and the flashbacks to the strike of 1928 are presented using narrative techniques that coincide more with a neorealist tradition (Clarke 11), as opposed to the magical-realist style in which García Márquez’s prose has been widely categorized.

“El encuentro” is a glimpse into the life of an individual family afflicted by the exploitation of the factory, a symbol of modern progress which has served, for decades, as the only labor opportunity available for the town’s inhabitants. A modest house in the anonymous town provides the backdrop for a short scene involving two protagonists: Alonso and his wife María. Alonso works at the local factory, but recently his hours of labor have been reduced and he finds himself bringing less and less money into the household. Ambrosio, the union leader, although not appearing physically in the one-scene story, is detailed as having a strong influence on the socialist leanings of Alonso, much to the dismay of María. Within María’s interior monologue, her opinion of Ambrosio’s influence is drawn out according to what she deems as a parallel between the suffering of her household and that of Ambrosio. When Alonso returns home early from the factory, María assumes he is not putting in the same time at work, and her thoughts immediately turn to Ambrosio, whom she blames for Alonso’s involvement with the union. However, due to the steady decay of their marriage—“Eran apenas como dos buenos perros tolerantes que mordían el mismo hueso sin causarse daños” (“El encuentro” 112)—she holds her tongue against questioning Alonso about either his labor at the factory or his early return. For María, Alonso’s involvement with the union makes no sense, given that Ambrosio’s children were suffering just as much as theirs: “andaban [...] con las nalgas afuera, sin una mecha que ponerse” (112). Even more, according to María, Ambrosio’s leadership in the union endeavors was based on “pura pereza, por no trabajar y andar en busca de los de la fábrica para hablarles de su maldito sindicato” (112).

The factory itself plays a major and dual role in the story. First, this space of industrial innovation functions as a root cause of Alonso and María's anguish as a couple. Apart from Alonso's scarce pay, which results in his family's hunger and constant financial uncertainty, María complains that the factory itself produces continuous dirt and dust in the house, thereby emphasizing its presence and stronghold over the town, as well as its unceasing metaphorical existence within the domestic sphere. Secondly, the factory effectively controls their fate, just as it has that of other families in the town for generations. The nature of its existence and violence is cyclical. The narrator stresses the parallel between the current conditions and those that both Alonso's and María's fathers experienced as workers in the factory decades prior: "Eso fue para María la huelga del 28. Un obrero muerto, una bandera roja, muchos borrachos, y Alonso niño, grave y solemne, empezando a ser hombre por un mandato de la vida" (114). María, like Alonso, experienced the original strike as the child of one of its workers; the Ciénaga tragedy is referenced by way of the "Huelga del 28" when both were merely youngsters unable to understand the struggle between the United Fruit Company and those they exploited. Since then, Alonso and María's fate has been intrinsically tied to the factory, as well as to each other, as Alonso's life and that of their family has been since affected in two important ways. First, Alonso came of age due to this capitalist structure that reigns over the town, since he experienced his father's death as a result of the violent outcome of the strike. And secondly, his push towards adulthood occurred upon taking over the role of "man of the family" with his recruitment by the factory. The narrator describes how María's parents commented on this event, thus serving as a parallel between the Alonso/María relationship and that of her own parents:

—Hoy recibieron a Alonso en la fábrica  
 —¿Alonso? —preguntó ella— ¿No es... ?  
 —“¡Anjá! —cortó él, acompañando la exclamación con un enérgico movimiento en la cabeza.  
 —¡Es un niño! —trató de protestar la vieja.  
 Pero él tomó un pan de la mesa, lo partió en dos, se llevó la mitad a la boca y con esta aún llena repuso:  
 —Y qué. Ya se hará hombre; yo entré antes que él... (115)

In this scene, the basic struggle for survival is symbolized by María's father's breaking of the bread in the midst of his discussion: it is the need to provide basic sustenance for the family that allows the factory to exploit the town, as its owners know that their employees have no other viable options.

Concerning this concept of hunger, Marvin A. Lewis observes the following regarding Truque's short stories:

Many of these vital moments interpreted by Truque are plagued with violence, terror, alienation, and

dehumanization. Rarely is there a positive moment in the interactions of his literary characters. Rather, most of them are so engrossed in the struggle to survive that they do not pause to think of the positive in their lives. Hunger is a recurring motif in Truque's works [...] the force of this instinctual drive causes men to react irrationally in their relations with others (41).<sup>4</sup>

We see that it is precisely the prevention of hunger—María's own, as well as that of Alonso and their small child—that is the driving force behind María's preoccupation with Alonso's work. Nevertheless, and ironically, María accepts the inescapable and dominant nature of the factory, even recognizing that she feels comfort in knowing that this is an everyday part of life: "Sentíase segura, firme en su centro, cuando el hombre salía por las madrugadas y regresaba a los mediodías trayendo con su presencia la seguridad del pan escaso y el techo polvoriento" (115–116). María thus fears Ambrosio, for he threatens the paradoxical security—one of daily hunger and poverty as tied to the factory—that previous generations also experienced:

[...] la fábrica había estado allí antes que Alonso, ella, su padre y el padre de Alonso; que sus muros se habían ensanchado sobre la barriada como el agua mala y que los hombres que en ella nacieran le pertenecían como Alonso le pertenecía. Todo lo que se saliera de este círculo no formaba parte de su verdad, era antinatural, contra todas las reglas. (115)

No other worry, not even the maintenance of shelter or the quest for education, is as a viable concern for María, or for the household in total. It is only after Alonso is unable to have a second serving of a modest bowl of soup—due to the lack of a sufficient amount of food—when his thoughts wander because of his resultant state of hunger. However, unlike María who interpreted their hunger as part of an inescapable reality, hunger becomes the precise force that drives him to listen to the call to join the masses of workers standing up against the factory's exploitation, as led by Ambrosio in the final scene.

In his critical analysis of this scarce economic security that the capitalist edifice provides, Lewis says:

María, his wife, constantly reminds him [Alonso] that a little bit of something is more than a whole lot of nothing [...] The dichotomy in "The Encounter" is between the economic security the factory could provide and the abject poverty in which the workers live and from which they wish to break (56).

In effect, the story confirms the cyclical nature of historical violence: the final scene has María remembering the outcome of the strike of 1928, "unida extrañamente a un pasado que no quería que se repitiera" ("El encuentro" 119). Alonso's choice in following Ambrosio and the crowd joining the strike instead of the whistle of the factory (in

spite of María’s pleads to go work instead of giving money to the union) confirms the repetition of history that will ensue. Alonso’s death is imminent upon his leaving, as the narrator describes how the scene corresponds to a final goodbye: “Ya no la veía, ya no la sentía, olvidado como estaba y sumergido, fuera de sí, limpio, ganado por esa corriente tierna y poderosa” (120). The encounter with the masses could very well be an encounter with his own death, and a parallel to his father’s demise decades prior.

The notion of the “encounter” that the title suggests can lead us to various interpretations of the *encuentro* itself. The first and only literal encounter during the story is between Alonso and María. But the ultimate encounter is that of Alonso with his future, as he leaves the house against María’s wishes to confirm his solidarity with Ambrosio and the union cause. His departure will ultimately result in the repetition of historical violence, tied directly to the 1928 events. Both the plot of “El encuentro,” and the husband’s final goodbye bear a striking resemblance to another of Truque’s short stories, “Lo triste de vivir así” (1953). “Lo triste de vivir así” is also a one-scene construction that becomes a platform from which to discuss the situation of the labor force and transnational exploitation, particularly how these components result in hunger and an overall sense of instability for the household.<sup>5</sup> In general, Truque’s work stays faithful to detailed descriptions of those suffering under transnational exploitation. He highlights these basic elements of survival in congruence with marginalized communities, in particular with Afro-Colombians who have historically represented a large portion of this class struggle between the worker and the factory. Truque’s literary technique in these detailed yet short descriptions forfeits both the exaggerative and experimental styles, each of which was in vogue throughout the middle decades of the twentieth century. This consciousness is also the nucleus of Benita J. Clarke’s examination of Truque’s work in “‘La fuga’ de Carlos Arturo Truque: El tema de la locura en una clave menor.”<sup>6</sup> Clarke places “La fuga,” as well as Truque’s prose fiction in general, within a discussion of the neorealist style:

Una clave de la técnica literaria [neorrealista] de Truque es su presentación de una situación específica en la que el (los) protagonista(s) actúan frente a las circunstancias de su medio ambiente, dejando así que la crítica sea implícita [...] Así, encontramos en los cuentos de Truque una descripción detalladísima de cierto momento clave en la vida de los personajes que cambia el rumbo de su existencia de alguna manera u otra.” (13)

Thus, similar to “Lo triste de vivir así” or “La fuga,” various instances detailed meticulously by Truque, lead to the final, crucial moment of “El encuentro.” But it is one particular moment—the very act of Alonso’s leaving the house—which causes a rift in the cyclical nature of his life with María and their unbinding connection to the factory.

Yet, whatever the outcome of Alonso’s action, he and María will remain tied intrinsically to the factory’s control.

Alonso’s attempt to break from the confinement perpetuated by the factory’s control of the town for generations is comparable to Truque’s political viewpoints as an Afro-Colombian writer. In Lewis’s introduction to *Treading the Ebony Path*, he discusses the intertwining of race and class as core elements of which authors—such as Truque, Palacios, and Zapata Olivella—have been historically conscious. Lewis states:

The word *Afro-Colombian* is used in this study to suggest that these writers recognize the importance of their ethnic backgrounds in the development of their literary creations and in the manner in which they relate to Colombian society. They are faced with the task of writing both as Colombians and as blacks. This creates a unique problem of duality of perspective since they cannot separate the situation of poor blacks from that of the majority of destitute Colombians. Therefore, the issue in the literature becomes one of balancing class/caste against ethnicity, with the realization by the authors that, for Afro-Colombians, the class problem is compounded by one of color. (2)

We see, therefore, precisely how the class struggle present in Truque’s work is also inherently tied to ethnic and racial marginalization in Colombia. The boundaries that slavery imposed have historically victimized Afro-Colombians within racist systemic practices, such as lack of access to both education and alternative opportunities for employment. Transnational corporations such as the United Fruit Company had been exploiting these conditions for almost a century by the time “El encuentro” was published, and Truque’s work, both in narratives and essays, showcase this injustice. Truque’s autobiographical essay “La vocación y el medio. Historia de un escritor” (1955) sheds further light on the consciousness he shared with other Afro-Colombian writers, in particular the barriers that writers face in Colombia when challenging the dominant ideology of the nation:

[...] el artista es tolerado apenas cuando la clase dirigente quiere olvidar por unos minutos la tragedia de los balances y las cotizaciones de la bolsa. Entonces esa clase rectora inepta pone sus condiciones y obliga al artista a hacer una obra alejada de la realidad, con materiales de segunda mano, pero que puedan servir si el objetivo es llenar los deseos enfermizos de una casta que ha vivido de los sufrimientos ajenos y que no quiere un arte que pueda mostrarle su culpabilidad. (39)<sup>7</sup>

These words indicate the strategic and careful way in which Truque discussed violence in “El encuentro” and relates the overall feeling of instability in the household and the town. Brought on by both class and racial hierarchies,

this subordinate position proves to be a manifestation of the continuation of a more subtle, institutionalized and thus more dangerous violence. This is consistent with the previously discussed attempt to move away from the explicit and saturated accounts of violence; a strategy of which the writers of Truque's generation were fierce proponents.

Nevertheless, Truque's story maintains a crucial ambiguity in regards to the actual events and details surrounding the 1928 tragedy. This is important because Truque—who hailed from Condotó, Chocó—may have been consciously vague in order to avoid drawing attention to himself during the 1960s. Although the era of *La Violencia* had subsided, the “Frente Nacional” (1958 – 1974) was in place, and these years still formed a very conflicted political timeframe in Colombia.<sup>8</sup> Thus, in congruence with Lewis's discussion on the consciousness of Afro-Colombian writers, although the commitment to present marginalized themes and geographic regions was at the forefront of their consciousness, it was important that they not be overly explicit in the condemnation of the state. This is perhaps one of the reasons that references to the 1928 tragedy were virtually unknown within literature prior to the 1960s, and thus little was known about the massacre outside of the Caribbean. This is in opposition to the way in which the *novelas de La Violencia* indeed focused on the fighting that occurred during the 1940s and 1950s in the nation's Andean region at the exact historical moment in which the actual events were occurring.

Nevertheless, one literary or artistic reference that may have some connection to the strikes of the 1920s is the poem “El líder negro,” which appeared in the Cartagena-born writer Jorge Artel's collection of poetry *Tambores en la noche* (1940). Artel composed these verses in homage to Diego Luis Córdoba, an Afro-Colombian politician active in the first half of the twentieth century. Córdoba founded the Department of Chocó in 1947. A selection of verses in “El líder negro” reads:

Ep pueblo te quiere a tí,  
Diego Luí,  
ep pueblo te quiere a ti.

[...]

Tú erej eggrito y la sangre  
de locque ettamoj abajo,  
de locque tenemoj hambre  
y no tenemoj trabajo,  
*de loc que en la huegga sufren*  
*la bayoneta calá [...]* (52-53, my emphasis)

We can interpret these verses as a connection that Artel draws between the leadership of Córdoba and the struggles not only of Afro-Colombians (who undeniably comprised a large part of the banana plantations' workers in the Magdalena region of the Caribbean), but of all those socially alienated

workers without a voice who could find their silenced “grito” with the leader. Laurence E. Prescott discusses Artel's work in *Without Hatreds or Fears: Jorge Artel and the Struggle for Black Literary Expression in Colombia* and how the 1920s in particular were a pivotal time in the young writer's awakening to the historical changes occurring throughout Colombia:

The close of the 1920s also witnessed the end of the long period of Conservative political rule of Colombia, begun in 1884. In 1930, the very year that Artel went to Bogotá, Liberal candidate Enrique Olaya Herrera was elected president of Colombia. During that same period Marxist and other leftist ideas, spread by the triumph of the Russian Revolution and the successes of the Mexican Revolution, began to take hold in the country, particularly among Liberal youth. (67)

Written in colloquial vernacular, lines such as “Tú erej eggrito y la sangre/[...] *de loc que en la huegga sufren/la bayoneta calá*” (Tú eres el grito y la sangre/ [...] de los que en la huelga sufren/la bayoneta calada) refer back to a symbolic leadership found in Córdoba. Though Artel does not explicitly speak about the United Fruit Company workers of the 1920s, his position as a writer who grew up on the Caribbean coast and was a published poet at the time of the 1928 tragedy is nevertheless evident in these verses. Further, as Prescott discusses in regards to Artel's poem “El líder negro,” “[...] the *grito* is not only a manifestation of coastal identity, but also, particularly, of black identity. The freedom and ability to “pegar un grito,” that is, to let out a shout, is essential to the costeño's expression of self” (126). Although Córdoba's leadership was primarily associated with the interior region of Antioquia (from which the Department of Chocó was formed), his poetry also gains a symbolic meaning for Afro-Colombians from the coast. This coastal group indeed suffered not only during the 1920s strikes, but also afterwards during the 1930s upon the withdrawal of the United Fruit Company from this region at the height of the worldwide economic depression.

Artel's poem, published in 1940, is noteworthy to my discussion of Truque because it references the struggles of the laborers on Colombia's Atlantic coast. Furthermore, it is a poem in which we can perceive a cautious effort to avoid explicit references to the events surrounding 1928. This caution is manifest for two intertwined reasons. First, the political atmosphere of the 1940s was one in which the hostility of the nation's Conservative and Liberal forces was morphing into rural violence, creating war and bloodshed amongst *campesinos* throughout the nation's geographic interior (in departments such as Antioquia, Cundinamarca, and the outlying areas of Bogotá). Artel—most likely aware of other leaders like Gaitán, who also served as the voice of socially marginalized groups—may not have wanted to “fuel the fire,” so to speak, that was already burning within the nation. Secondly, as an Afro-Colombian writer

whose literary themes were committed to representing the circumstances of those who shared this identity, Artel most likely knew the restrictions that were imposed upon the artistic production of socially alienated communities during the first half of the twentieth century. This is especially true in regards to voicing opinions against the government or the United States, and transnational corporations like the United Fruit Company.

These factors can certainly be applied to Truque's work decades later. In spite of the fact that “El encuentro” provides a very subtle reference to the events of December 6, 1928, Truque's identification with the tragedy in Ciénaga allows for a larger discussion on how class and racial divisions in Colombia, particularly in the Caribbean region, enabled the fruit company to take advantage of economic and social disparities which resulted in hunger and lack of alternative job opportunities. I believe that the caution with which Truque wrote “El encuentro” is related to his position as an Afro-Colombian writer; similar to the carefulness with which Jorge Artel was writing two decades prior.

Through the medium of short story, Carlos Arturo Truque's discussion of the circumstances related to a tragedy that occurred on the brink of worldwide revolutionary movements, as well as a growing and international pan-African consciousness, reveals a preoccupation with

reevaluating the nation's history—especially as it pertains to race, class, and violence. “El encuentro” represents the complex relationship between these three factors and outlines how both national and social conditions are in fact interrelated. Truque's literary endeavors attest to his consciousness as a writer attentive to these interconnections within Colombia. In specific, he adopts the premises of race, class, and violence as themes in his prose to demonstrate how such factors have historically contributed to the subordinate position of the Afro-Colombian community. I believe that it is for these aspects that his focus on the 1928 violence against the *bananeros* in the Caribbean has been largely ignored and uncategorized within the breadth of literary interpretations of this event. Furthermore, Truque's fiction is also significant as he was part of a generation of writers who contributed to the shift in Colombia's literary focus from *La Violencia* to other subject matters that encompassed marginalized communities and geographic regions. His exploration vis-à-vis short stories includes a discussion of class and ethnic marginalization throughout Colombia specifically, and the Caribbean more broadly. As such, these *cuentos* point to the way in which racialized identity markers have been consistently marginalized from inclusion in Colombia's national consciousness.

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### Notes

- 1 Literary critics such as Robert Kirsner (“Four Colombian Novels of ‘La Violencia’” 1966) and Lucila Inés Mena (“Bibliografía anotada sobre el ciclo de la violencia en la literatura Colombiana” 1978) classify all works that shed light on some type of violence in Colombia as pertaining to the age of *La Violencia*. This is the case even for novels that take place in the Caribbean regions of the nation, such as *La mala hora* (1962) and *Cien años de soledad*, both by García Márquez. But in reality, what is socially and historically considered *La Violencia* within Colombia is precisely the era that exploded after the *Bogotazo* of 1948, after the riots that ensued due to Jorge Eliécer Gaitán's assassination and the partisan war that continued to spread out into the rural Andean regions of the nation. However, in spite of the fact that novels such as *La mala hora* and *Cien años de soledad* discuss the historical and socio-political violence that Colombia has faced since its independence in the nineteenth century, they are not, as others have deemed, representing the age of *La Violencia* that exploded within the interior region of the nation upon Gaitán's assassination. *La mala hora* and *Cien años*, as well as some novels by Manuel Zapata Olivella, Fanny Buitrago, or Álvaro Cepeda Samudio, to name but a few, focus on the violence that afflicted the Caribbean areas of Colombia.
- 2 Often overlooked within studies of the era of *La Violencia* is that the violence surrounding the *bananeros* was actually a precursor to the *Bogotazo* two decades later. Jorge Eliécer Gaitán was a staunch supporter of the striking workers and fought vigorously for the state to investigate the transnational exploitation and tragedy that ensued on December 6, 1928. His struggle to expose the government involvement in the hostility by the United Fruit Company to their sub-contracted workers on the Caribbean coast, as well as his overall advocacy of workers' rights and support for the nation's poor and marginalized communities, helped lead him to a Liberal party presidential nomination at the time of his assassination.
- 3 The most recognized author in regards to the literary representation of the violence against the United Fruit Company workers is of course, Gabriel García Márquez, but other authors, such as Álvaro Cepeda Samudio (*La casa grande* 1962), have also received recognition for their interpretation of these events. Probably the most comprehensive study regarding the few literary representations of the 1928 *bananeras* tragedy is David H. Bost “Una vista panorámica de las respuestas literarias a la huelga de las bananeras de 1928” (1991). In addition to analysis of *La casa grande* and *Cien años de soledad*, his study includes two lesser-known novels that chronicle the events: Efraín Tovar Mozo's *Zig zag en las bananeras* (1964) and *Los muertos*

*tienen sed: el drama de las bananeras* (1969) by Javier Auqué. Further, *Rewriting the Nation: Novels by Women on Violence in Colombia* (Mendoza, 2015) discusses how Fanny Buitrago's *El hostigante verano de los dioses* (1963) also provides a fictional representation of this tragedy.

- 4 Lewis is one of the few literary critics who has discussed Truque's work, and the only one who has addressed "El encuentro" in particular in *Treading the Ebony Path: Ideology and Violence in Contemporary Afro-Colombian Prose Fiction* (1987).
- 5 Similar to "El encuentro," in "Lo triste de vivir así" factory exploitation is the backdrop for a brief confrontation between husband and wife in a modest household. The husband has been laid off and is trying to hide this fact from his wife, Amalia. He is using their savings and pretending that it is income so that his wife and children will not become alarmed. Similar to María, Amalia is against the socialist leanings of her husband, and particularly the radical literature (notwithstanding masochist and anti-female) of José María Vargas Vila Bonilla (Bogotá, 1860–1930) of which he is fond. This is particularly important as a symbolic reference against the conservative government of Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, dictator of Colombia at the time of the story's publication. The husband leaves the domestic setting in the end, not to join a radical cause, but to find solidarity with other workers who, like him, have been laid off and are disillusioned for any possibilities of possible change under the government's current administration.
- 6 "La fuga" was also published in *Granizada y otros cuentos* (1953).
- 7 "La vocación y el medio. Historia de un escritor" was originally published in the journal *Mito* in 1955 and was recently reprinted in *Vivan los compañeros. Cuentos completos* (2010), part of the Biblioteca de Literatura Afrocolombiana series published by Colombia's Ministerio de Cultura.
- 8 After the dictatorship of General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla (1953–1957) was overthrown, the Frente Nacional was put into place (1958–1974). One of the convictions of the National Front was to censor discussion on the past era of Violence that Colombia had just experienced for almost two decades.

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