

The Avoidance of Prostitution in the Written Representations of Bogota.
(opus 2)

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Introduction

The realistic and open treatment, without dissembling or undue reserve, which people began to give to the subject of their sexual lives as a result of 19th century Modernity contrasts with the excessive caution with which the matter was handled in monastic Santa Fe de Bogotá. The present document is an attempt to interpret the reasons for the silence imposed by the “lettered” of the South American Athens on subjects such as prostitution and prostitutes in its written cultural legacy. “Lettered” refers to the many men and the handful of women belonging to the elite of Hispanic heritage who exercised political, social and cultural hegemony in the city and the country at the turn of the century. This work is interested in examining the relationship between remunerated sex and the scenography established by this elite to present a respectable image to the rest of the society. Therefore, responses to the following questions will be attempted: Why, if the services of prostitutes were so frequently used by members of the entire Bogotano society, is the practice not visible in the literature? Why is the subject of prostitution, sexuality, and eroticism avoided in the written testimonies of those Hispanists? What does the silence on this aspect of Bogotanos’ social life, hidden behind a scenography of honesty, pulchritude, and devotion to family values, mean? Why, if desire, sensuality, eroticism and even the explicit representation of prostitutes are subjects that appear recurrently in all written cultures in every epoch – even if only marginally – is Bogota the exception until well into the 20th century?

This work will attempt to find responses to these questions, based on two elements. The first, empiric, of showing two facets of the same problem in Bogota: on one hand, the evidence of the existence of prostitutes, houses of prostitution and remunerated sex and their use by the “lettered”, and on the other, the silence regarding this social fact in the written documentation left by illustrious Bogotanos. This duality of, on one hand, remunerated sex, and on the other, the shadowy silence hiding it, has its explanations. For that reason, the second element will include an examination of the situation in the light of the theories of cultural sociology posited by B. Anderson, A. Gramsci and E. Goffman. This process will shed light on these questions.

World literature relates, since even the Middle Ages, the social reality of prostitution. Hundreds of prayer books or missals of medieval origin in Latin had in their margins erotic drawings that made visible the sexual imaginings of the faithful. Western literature, since the end of the medieval era, has dealt with the subject of prostitutes and prostitution. With the advent of printing presses (1440), a large number of texts and images destined for the general public were circulated. Renaissance writings and stories, such as those of Boccaccio (Italy 1313-1373), in which prostitutes are key characters, existed. As well, there were pornographic texts from the Italian Pietro Aretino (1492-1556), *I Ragionamenti*, which included conversations between two whores (Hunt, 1996:11). With Modernity already well underway, the subject of prostitutes appeared in the writing of the Marquis de Sade (France: 1740-1814), in his long novel *Histoire de Juliette: ou les prospérités du vice* and in *120 Journées de Sodome* (Isherwood). Aside from these examples there was large scale production of leaflets including icon-pornography with visual references to brothels, printed for political purposes during the French Revolution. (Hunt, 1996:301-340).

In the 18th century, erotic-pornography poetry, recited or sung to a live audience, was broadly disseminated in England. An example is *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, a novel about the life of a prostitute, Fanny Hill, written by the Englishman John Cleland (1709-1798) (Wagner: 133-42). At the end of the century, after *Fanny Hill*, came a wave of literature of this type, frequently written by and for “gentlemen”; it has been interpreted as “the religion of libertinism” – a religion that in opposition to orthodox Christianity assigned a positive value to sexual experience, considering it to be central in human life, and sexual pleasure as well as sex itself therefore good and natural. Sex and sexual organs were a symbol of the strength of a superior life and thus of grace, which was the life of the soul. Randolph Thymback rightly declares that this representation of relations between men and women, seen in the novel *Fanny Hill*, is a consequence of the effects of Modernity on gender roles. The new frontiers for experimentation and representation of the erotic fantasy were thus established (Thymback, 254).

Nevertheless, the spontaneous way in which these scenes were narrated and painted did not permit them and their authors, publishers, distributors and so on to elude the censorship to which the Church and conservative sectors subjected them. This was the case of the Marquis de Sade who was persecuted and imprisoned during the best years of his life in the castle at Vincennes and in the Bastille (1763, 1768, 1773). The reasons for these periods of imprisonment were not his extravagant practices with

prostitutes, but rather the dissemination of writings and his proselytism about them. Similarly, *Fanny Hill* was withdrawn from the market shortly after its publication. This is without mentioning the ultra-conservative spirit prevailing during the Victorian era, which left few social spaces for rebelling groups to openly express themselves on matters to do with their sexual lives, including those experiences to do with prostitutes. This was the case of Dickens, who in his famous novel *Hard Times*, does not mention prostitutes within the group of rascals and socially marginal characters portrayed.

Censorship varied according to many factors. It is clear that the Catholic Church was more tolerant of prostitution than the Lutheran reformers. Catholic theology not only recognized the existence of prostitution within the society, but also considered it a necessary evil. Saint Augustine said that if prostitutes were removed from human affairs everything would become confused. The absence of prostitution would provoke the corruption of honest women and domination of the world by the evil of lasciviousness (Atondo, 27). Luther (1483-1543), in contrast, in one of his 95 theses (1519), defended matrimony as the only legitimate space for having sexual relations and enjoying sexual pleasure. Thus a position was developed that was more radically opposed to prostitution than the more ambiguous position of the Catholic Church. Prostitution, for the Reform, was contrary to matrimony; for this reason, Luther offered advice on how to achieve a full sexual life within matrimony. This never occurred within Catholicism, for which matrimony was more a social formality, thus validating prostitution as a necessity that had to be tolerated, even though it was a mortal sin. This social situation forced non-compliance with the religious law, generating a double standard, which Hispanic America inherited from Catholic Spain. We know from Spanish literary texts of the 15th century, such as *La Celestina*, that the honor of the family depended in large part on its women's sexuality being kept in line with the moral norms: the woman had to be virgins prior to marriage and faithful to their husbands after entering it (Atondo, 24). The Reform, a social and cultural process that transformed family, religious and cultural customs, finally set Modernity rolling in the most rational sense as Weber understood it, that is to say, by adapting social customs to the industrialization then in progress. Catholicism, on the other hand, was an obstacle to achieving complete Modernity (Weber).

In the century that is the object of this work, some Bogotano writers and poets were focused no longer on Spain, but on England, France and the United States. In the latter countries, where Modernity was flourishing, large and influential sectors struggled from 1870 on to break Victorian

structures, opposing the existing repression of the public's sexual experiences and references to them. France was undergoing a period in which *Les poètes maudits* painted Modernity as full of insatiable passions, exotic odors and tempting drugs coming from far-away lands. Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891) described his life in Paris as hellish and, throughout the poem "The Parisian Orgy" (1871), described Paris poetically as the Rome of the West and spoke openly of the "furies, orgies, craziness, which I'm familiar with, all the impulses and all the disasters ..." (Rimbaud, 1972:56). Baudelaire (1821-1867), similarly boasted of portraying in a beautifully poetic way the upper spheres of the government as similar to the depths of the underworld. And, in that underworld there was a colourful Bohemian culture, which included drugs and prostitutes. Baudelaire intimately narrated his experiences in the ordinary world of Paris in the eras of Napoleon III and Haussmann, thereby portraying daily life in its entirety, without exclusions, secrets, hidden terrains, that is to say, without fragmentation (Berman, 1991: 142-147). Walt Whitman's (1819-1892) portrayal of New York was no more serene. Whitman introduced and treated in his poetry new subjects such as sex, the city, poverty and suffering, with which he laid the ground for poets like Vachel Lindsay (1879-1931), Carl Sandburg (1879-1967), Edgar Lee Masters (1869-1950), and others, who believed that they could make poetry about all of these subjects: Lincoln, homosexuals, prostitutes, the port of Manhattan or hospital wards (Crunden, 267). There was a direct flow between written expression and daily practice. It is true that the literature on prostitution did not recognize the reality of the practice, but rather the erotic fantasy, and that the stereotypes of the prostitutes had more to do with male fantasies than with the social reality (Norberg, 1996: 225-252). It is appropriate to ask ourselves, then, if what the Hispanists' writers of the South American Athens were hiding were their erotic fantasies or the reality of prostitution itself.

To explain the Bogota case that is the object of our concern, we have to take into account that neither the Reform (1519) nor Modernity had reached Hispanic America in the period studied. Printing presses reached Bogota 300 years after their introduction in Europe. The peripheral city had been slightly influenced by Modernity. Therefore, there was inevitably an ambiguous situation with regard to prostitution, the same as that characterizing Catholic Europe. However, we have already cited pre-Modern and pre-Reform examples of both literature and iconography in which prostitutes and their activities were frequently represented. Nothing like that existed in Bogota, even exceptionally, which would lead us to think that the Bogotano silence on remunerated sex was not related exclusively to censorship by the Catholic Church, nor to the echoes of far-

away Victorian England heard by Bogotanos, but rather to a taboo that had to be handled according to certain established rules.

Bogotano censorship was very strict. An example of it is the book written by the Jesuit Pablo Ladrón de Guevara, published in 1910, which judged severely what was written in novels published both in Colombia and elsewhere. It judged in an Inquisitional manner the private life of the authors, as well as their work. It was this pitiless censorship that Cordovez Moure referred to in his narratives about the Bogotano group known as “Los capuchinos”: They were precisely a group of young people who in terms of today could be called “sexually free” or with “modern” sexual habits. Cordovez Moure wished to correct some of the misbeliefs about them held in the city, for example that they were cannibals. However, he said, “They were enemies of the cardinal virtues, and decided defenders of the world, the devil and the flesh, especially this last thing, but not in the way that is sometimes attributed to them, because they were not cannibals... With the ladies that attended the party with them, they danced all night; they were enemies of light, and gave themselves over to scandalizing excesses when reading about some ancient peoples. Aside from that, they were very good fellows, they didn’t murder or rob anyone ...” (Cordovez Moure, T.VIII ps. 118-119). But censorship did not prevent the existence of prostitutes and prostitution in the city, as will be seen below.

While all of this was going on, in parochial Bogota the most human emotions and instincts were chastely silenced. Sexual life was silenced in the private sphere and a mantle of secrecy cloaked that particular sexual activity exercised in the public sphere: prostitution (Habermas).

Despite the fact that the Bogotano upper class was known for aping the customs coming from the modern metropolises – Paris, London, New York – examples cannot be found in the written Hispanic culture of the city of public confessions of the nature then common in those metropolises. I have reviewed and visited magazines, booksellers, bibliophiles, specialists, historians and librarians, all of them specialists in the South American Athens, and none of them are aware of references to this subject in the city’s literature. Not even the inquisitional Jesuit Pablo Ladrón de Guevara, who scrutinized everything published in the era, mentions the presence of people from the world of prostitutes. He would have relished such a target. Only with the publication of the novels *María Magdalena* (1919) and *Salomé* (1920) by Jose María Vargas Vila (1860-1933), and *Diana Cazadora* (1917) by Clímaco Soto Borda (1870-1919) does this subject appear in literature (Jaramillo Zuluaga, 79-80). In the novel *De Sobremesa*

by José Asunción Silva vague allusions are made to the “horizontal”, a euphemism for the whores that appear in the work. Nevertheless, the novel was only published thirty years after it was written, with its first edition appearing in Bogotá in 1925, in honour of the sixtieth anniversary of its author’s birth. Silva’s novel, although the author was well known in the era as a poet, was presented to his readers as a minor work, of which only 50 copies were made. Therefore, as Jaramillo Zuluaga says, “(t)he scandal of *De Sobremesa* in Colombia’s literary history is that its ideal reader, the reader it never had, who he could never scandalize with it, was the reader of the Regeneration”.²

The city boasted it was the land of poets, and effectively it was, but their poetry did not express life as it was really lived, nor their deepest fantasies. Rather, it was part of a socially established scenography, as were chronicles, realistic stories, autobiographies and memoirs, all of them part of the “set”. A clear example is that of the Santafereno poet José Asunción Silva who, a contemporary and admirer of the *poètes maudits*, lived in Paris in 1884. When he was only 19 years old, according to some of his biographers, he personally met Stephane Mallarmé (1842-1898) and Paul Verlaine (1844–1896), the latter Rimbaud’s lover. As well, the work of Baudelaire left a strong impression on him, to the point that in his novel *De sobremesa* (1925) he recognized Baudelaire as the best poet of the previous 50 years. Silva was, like the *poètes maudits*, a fan of the changes wrought by Modernity; possibly he had a frustrated longing for Modernity, something quite common in Latin America, peripheral to the main events. Silva said that, being a poet, everything fascinated him: the arts, sciences, politics, speculation, luxury, pleasures, mysticism, love, war, every kind of human activity, all forms of life, material life, sensations (Roggiano, 1949:600). Nevertheless, his poetry did not express the deep reality of his desires, his emotions and longings. Unlike the Symbolist poets, his contemporaries, Silva masked his emotions with a romantic cloak, under the style known in Latin America as Modernism. And I say masked, because both historians and literary critics have questioned his sexual orientation, his incestuous relationship with his sister, Elvira, and many other hidden aspects of his life, revealed only by second and third-hand testimonials. Nothing clear, nothing direct, everything covered and hidden to fit into the scenario accepted by the society of his native city. Was it just

² *Regeneration* was the period of Colombian history that began in 1886, when the new Conservative constitution came into effect, and goes more or less to the end of the Hundred Day War.

bad luck that his writings about his experiences in France were lost during a shipwreck on a return voyage to Colombia? Accident? Or did Silva himself, faced with the risk of the most intimate details of his life coming to light, cast the writings into the sea? And then, sorry to have done so, gather his recollections and put together the lost novel, no longer in France but in monastic Bogota?

Other Bogotanos wove the same veil as Silva did to separate public life from private life when it came to prostitution, the desire for which they wished to leave no trace; and effectively all trace was destroyed. The situation was hidden behind the scenography so that it would not become known, so that it would not be commented upon outside the circle of one's intimate friends, thus constituting a "black" secret that one's intimates or members of a group knew, one that did not circulate outside of these closed circles of fraternities. Erving Goffman says that a particular secret considered to be "black" unifies within closed groups all those who hold the secret in common. In this case, the practice of prostitution made white men of Spanish descent who practiced it feel a certain solidarity between them (Goffman: 1959, 141). They, in turn, as protagonists in a social drama, constructed the scenography, embellishing it with the books written for their families and posterity. These written products of an orthodox Catholic ideology, are far from reflecting reality. They reflect *Imagined communities*, as Benedict Anderson would say. But in this case, these representations of an imagined community, at the same time, contradicted reality itself. In this process of constructing an *Imagined Community*, an iron veil was created that did not permit the reality to filter through to literary cultural expressions. Erving Goffman would say that for Bogotanos there existed a virtual social reality – the written one – and a real social identity – real life with everything, including prostitutes (Goffman, 1963, 2).

We can identify an attitude on the part of Bogotanos similar to the *Ancien Regime's*, examined in Lynn Hunt's work about sexual life during the French Revolution. Hunt states that the capacity to hide emotional truths, that is to say, to act one way in public and another in private, was one of the most important characteristics of life in the court of the *Ancien Regime* and of aristocratic life in general. Transparency in both private and public life was considered the only truly "Republican" way to behave, whereas dissimulation in either sphere was perceived as symptomatic of dishonesty that Republicans feared would weaken the Republic (Hunt, 1991, 112). Can we associate the Bogotanos' situation with the inability to assume Republican liberties?

III

Although there are few studies of prostitution in Bogota, social historians of the city have noted constant evidence of it throughout its history (Peralta: 127; Urrego: 207). Information about the matter is presented in the existing primary data in an indirect way. The testimonies appear as part of the social effects that this activity had on public order and public health³ in the city but were not issued by its principal protagonists – the prostitutes and their customers. Foreign visitors, not being involved in the social dynamic of the prevailing silence on the subject, also described with considerable frankness the phenomenon of prostitution in the city (Boussingault, Vol. 3, 56-57). These sources provide an opportunity to corroborate the existence of prostitution in Bogota, and at the same time contrast this reality with the silence about this social activity that prevailed in literary documents emanating from the Bogotano elite.

Thus, the sources say that in the year 1885, when Bogota had about 95,000 inhabitants (Arboleda, 12), of which presumably half, that is to say, 47,500, were women, prostitution increased in Bogota. This increase is tangible in the incidence of syphilis. The hospital of San Juan de Dios, according to the source, attended 2,333 cases of women with the disease in a 6-year period, between 1886 and 1892, of which 1,575 were self-identified prostitutes (Saa. 6). This figure alone, of the sub-group of syphilitic prostitutes, points to 3.3 percent of the female population being involved in this work and sick with syphilis. What would the figure be if healthy prostitutes were included? This cannot be known with precision. Other important texts qualitatively compliment this information and illustrate the effective market for prostitution in Bogota. There were prostitutes for all tastes. In 1915 Bogotanos' tastes were varied, as the data indicates. White, mestiza and certainly indigenous women sold their charms. But, apparently, no black woman appeared in the list.

The following sample incorporates the 1,575 women examined for syphilis by public health authorities.

³ See: AGN Fondos Ministerio de Grno, Policía Nacional. 1891-1892 T.1 (f.176-178), (f.219-227), (f. 383) (f. 416) y Luque, Manuel José. *Observaciones Medico-Sociales sobre la Sífilis y la prostitución en Bogotá*: Tesis para Doctorarse. Bogotá: Tipografía Artística,191

HAIR	SKIN	EYES
light brown 490 (31.1%)	white 598 (37.9%)	indeterminate ⁴ 670 (42.5%)
dark brown 405 (25.7%)	v. white 75 (4.7%)	caramel 430 (27.3%)
black 600 (38 %)	dark 422 (26.7%)	brown 320 (20.3%)
blond 80 (5.2%)	olive 480 (30.4 %)	black 70 (4.4%)
		blue 24 (1.5%)
		golden ⁵ 55 (3.4%)
		green 6 (0.38%)
<hr/>		
1,575 (100%)	1,575 (100%)	1,575 (100%)

Their ages ranged from 19 to 40, with the largest group being that of the 19 to 23-year-olds. The average height was 1.55 m, with the shortest ones being 1.34 m and the tallest 1.74 m. With respect to their marital status, 1,565 were single, 6 were married and 4 were widows. Forty-eight percent were literate. (Luque: 53-56)

The workplaces for these women, especially for those of the lowest class during the entire 19th century, were the *chicha* and *pulque* stores. They met soldiers and even indigent men there; the business was initiated in the store, and consummated in the back room. Those prostitutes who offered their

⁴ *Pardo* in the Spanish original, a term for eyes of a brown, green and rust mix of colours.

⁵ *Garzos* in the Spanish original, a term referring to a blue-green-gold tone, similar to cats' eyes.

services to the highest-ranking members of the society rented houses legally. These places were known by names like “*Cara de Perro*” and “*La Brisca*” (literally “*Dog Face*”, or “*The Whist*”), etc., (AGN, Republica, Ministerio del Gobierno, f. 383 of 1892). They were apparently luxurious places, where brandy was drunk and people danced, and were frequented by high-ranking military officers and “gentlemen”. In a letter sent to the Chief of the National Police, Mr. Arturo Pomareda Franco complained of the presence of National Police staff in a “*Casa de filles de fois*”, which according to him damaged the prestige of the national institution. He called upon the police to set an example of morality. That is to say, the presence of the police there set a bad example (AGN, Republica, Ministerio del Gobierno, f. 176-177-178 of 1892). The signatory had gone “accompanied by Mr. Samper, journalist” (AGN, Republica, Ministerio del Gobierno, f. 383 of 1892); obviously he did not explain the reasons for his presence in the establishment, nor that of Mr. Samper, nor did he consider that that might damage their prestige or set a “bad example.”

A property registry of this class of private establishments catering to a more select clientele was drawn up in 1892 by the National Police. “It is not a complete job, but may serve as the basis for a later registry that must be established of the ‘wretched’ women”, said the source (AGN , Republica, Ministerio del Gobierno, f. 219 of 1892). In this registry 165 houses throughout the city are listed, with the names of the landlords and renters. Camacho Roldán appears as owner of three houses on Seventh Avenue, numbers 573, 575, and 577, rented to Felisa Pinzón, Elisa Macías and Dolores, respectively. Alejandro Narváez, Doctor Rubio Frade and Ricardo Umaña appear as landlords, as does a commercial company called Fajardo y Cia, landlord of 14 houses.

Since what is of interest here is not counting prostitutes, but rather the reasons why silence about the practice of prostitution was maintained, I want to proceed to the examination of these reasons.

IV

The Bogotano writer Salvador Camacho Roldán, cited above as the landlord of several brothels, wrote in his memoirs (1900): “Unbridled prostitution and the spread of venereal diseases was another sad flaw on the face of the Bogotano population. This epidemic must be very serious when a governor, noted for his activity and energy, has them (*the prostitutes*) collected and expelled to *Los Llanos Orientales*, then unpopulated and then being settled in the territory of San Martin” (Camacho Roldán: 1923, t.1, p 139). Taking as his point of departure the idea of the *Imagined Community*,

Miguel Angel Urrego commented: “according to society and media, prostitution had to be hidden, for simply referring to it would damage the society’s dignity. Besides, prostitution involved only the lower classes, since the upper classes were marginal to it due to their good habits and observance of religious principles above dirty and immoral things” (Urrego, 208). An ideal far from the reality, in which the custom of frequenting prostitutes was well established in the upper classes, leaving their religious principles at the level of the dirty and immoral people.

The literature left by the Lettered City reflected the desire for their *Imagined Community*. It was intended to last, to educate, to be recorded for posterity. It was intended to impose a social and cultural hegemony over other groups, genders and races, making manifest dignity, honor, racial purity, “lettered” enlightenment and firm religious beliefs (Anderson, 141). With that mindset, Luis López de Mesa (1884-1967) said: “(t)he common man must be inculcated with the idea that anyone, no matter how humble or even criminal their forebears may have been ... (may) lead a new lineage in their family and have an enduring presence in descendants of noble moral origins.” (López de Mesa, 57).

José María Vargas Vila (1860-1933) was the first Bogotano writer who nurtured through his written work the erotic fantasies of various generations in Colombia (Osorio, XXXI). He and Clímaco Soto Borda (1870-1919) were the first writers to portray prostitutes in their works. Vargas Vila, a polemical figure in his time, has also generated controversy as a writer. Malcolm Deas, for example, has dismissed him as a bad writer, while Consuelo Triviño has revived his name as a good one. His novels, *María Magdalena* (1919) and *Salomé* (1920) illustrate the gender problem at that moment in the city’s history. The principal female characters of both novels – María Magdalena and Salomé - dare to be active subjects, and therefore independent in their sexual lives. In the novel *María Magdalena*, Jesús de Galilea, after having allowed himself to be seduced by a beautiful prostitute, loses all political power over his multitudes of followers and becomes a pathetic figure. In Vargas Vila’s novel this figure, who previously has guided the multitudes with merely a gesture or glance, is abruptly stripped of his physical vitality and will (Osorio, XXIX). Other literary works from the same period exist which, without being as explicit regarding prostitution, portray the same disgrace suffered by men who allow themselves to be carried away by a passion; this is the case with *Diana la Cazadora* (1917) by Clímaco Soto Borda (1870-1919). *Diana Cazadora* “a well-crafted melodrama intended to criticize the society of its era” (Moreno Duran , 194-198), narrates the fall from grace of a member of the Bogotano society, Fernando Acosta, at the cunning hands of Adriana

Montero, alias Diana, a woman from Tolima who the narrator says “exuded extravagant ideas from a cold and ambitious heart, schooled in the workshops of vice and scheming”. As in *María Magdalena*, Fernando Acosta lost his self-control, fortune and honour, given that, to top off his misfortunes, Diana abandons him for a *costeño* congressman. Like Jesús de Galilea, Fernando Acosta becomes a man who arouses the pity of even the city’s beggars.

Conclusion

While Benedict Anderson was studying the Nation as an *Imagined Community*, Antonio Gramsci considered, in a complementary way, that the Achilles’ heel of the literary-humanist elites was their inability to represent the subaltern classes. Gramsci uses Italian nationalism as an example of this failure (Beverley, 141). For Anderson, imagining the community is the first step to consolidating the Nation, then comes its molding, adaptation and only after, its transformation.

In the case examined here, of Bogota, the Hispanic literary-humanist elite who exercise hegemony on power, adequately imagined its community; the problem arose when it failed to represent its subalterns, in this case the prostitutes sub-group. This failure led to the defeat of a common social project, therefore of a national project and as well to the breaking of the hegemony that elite had imposed for centuries. Why is the representation of prostitutes so important?

The silence on the subject in literature corroborates the absence of representation of both the erotic fantasy and the reality of prostitution itself. The virtual reality contradicts the real reality. Frequenting prostitutes being one of the principle kinds of sexual activity of the hegemonic group, this activity involved prostitutes themselves in the elite’s everyday life. The works by Vargas Vila and Soto Borda demonstrate that a profound fear of being subject to the yoke of passion was felt. They demonstrate that remunerated sex represented danger to the majority of the Hispanists. Therefore, not incorporating prostitutes into the *Imagined Community* was to only half-represent themselves.

I am not trying to argue that they should have made a proclamation regarding this activity. Given the existing public censorship, the mere mention of the fact would have generated adverse reactions. Nevertheless, social mechanisms used, like dissimulation with the technique of the “black

secret”, allowed those accustomed to patronizing prostitutes to create sub-groups in whose circles conversations about the matter must have been enjoyable knowing that they would remain confidential and within the confines of the groups of close friends involved. To reveal these conversations in an impersonal and indirect way would have been possible. But it did not happen. That is corroborated by Eduardo Jaramillo Zuluaga’s study, *El Deseo y el Decoro* (literally, *Desire and Decorum*) of Colombian literature. Jaramillo says that “since Gabriel Garcia Márquez (1928) brought together in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* the euphemisms, periphrasis and phrases with veiled meanings that Fernanda del Carpio used in her communication with invisible doctors, the discretion of the traditional writers occupies a less than glorious place in Colombian literature.” (Jaramillo Zuluaga, 20).

Fears, taboos and censure prevented the “lettered” from portraying the social reality in its entirety. Excluding prostitution from literary representation was to exclude it from the most valuable legacy for the future community, which does not fail to confirm Gramsci’s thinking: the *Imagined Community* must represent itself in its entirety. Otherwise, as Lynn Hunt says, it demonstrates its inability to fully assume Republican liberties (Hunt, 1991, 112). And the consequence of not having done it was, therefore, that a potential consolidation of the Athenian Republic was destined to failure.

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