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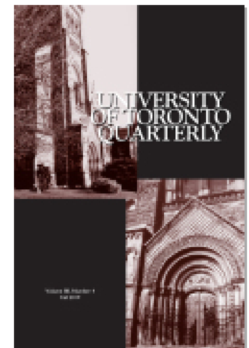

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Casting a Literary Mammy in Diego Sánchez de Badajoz's *Farsa de la hechizera*

ABSTRACT: This article analyses the theatrical representation of an unnamed black woman in Diego Sánchez de Badajoz's *Farsa de la hechizera* (1523/1540–49). In doing so, I employ the term "mammy" – and, more loosely, the Castilian word "*nodriza*" – in order to capture an interdisciplinary mode of literary criticism that resituates Sánchez de Badajoz's black woman character in Renaissance Iberian cultural and literary studies. A non-passive agent who possesses traits analogous to maternal mammy figures across the African diaspora, this study argues that Sánchez de Badajoz's black woman personage subverts the work's suicidal *galán*'s aristocratic might and ultimately destabilizes his masculinity. To that end, this article sets out to demonstrate, more broadly, that scholarly interpretations of black women in early modern Iberia have overlooked the heterogeneous and subversive ways in which these women paradoxically oscillate between the antinomies of objectification and personhood.

KEYWORDS: African diaspora studies, blacks in Renaissance Spain, black women, mammy, Spanish theatre studies

In early modern Castilian literary texts, a variety of titles are used to construct pejorative ideations of black women's bodies and sexuality: *negra* ("black woman"), *negrilla* ("little black chick"), *puta negra* ("black bitch"; "black ho"), *ébano* ("ebony"), "*carbón*" ("coal black"), *galguinegra* (black doggedy bitch"), and *azabache* ("anodyne jet").[1] As Hortense Spillers heralds in her tour-de-force essay "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," not everybody knows these women's names from the African diaspora:

> Let's face it. I am a marked woman, but not everybody knows my name. "Peaches" and "Brown Sugar," "Sapphire" and "Earth Mother," "Aunty," "Granny," God's "Holy Fool," a "Miss Ebony First," or "Black Woman at the Podium": I describe a locus of confounded identities, a meeting ground of investments and privations in the national treasury of rhetorical wealth.

1 Please also note that all English translations from the original Castilian and *habla de negros* language are mine, unless otherwise noted.

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> My country needs me, and if I were not here, I would have to be invented.[2] (Spillers 65)

I channel Spillers's oft-cited opening lines to highlight the literary presence and representation of African-descended women in early modern Spain. As marked women, black female literary characters occupy a conflictive and paradoxical space in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spanish cultural imaginary. In urban centres across the Iberian Peninsula, Spanish writers such as Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, Pedro Calderón de la Barca, Diego Sánchez de Badajoz, Luis de Góngora y Argote, Francisco de Quevedo, Lope de Rueda, Lope de Vega, María de Zayas y Sotomayor, and Rodrigo de Reinosa, among others, presented black women in their literary works. As a point of departure, Spillers affords me a black feminist theoretical framework with which to analyse such early modern Spanish cultural and literary representations of black women. And this framework extends also to the intentional creative licence I take in translating the variety of names assigned to black African women in Iberian early modernity. My argot and literal translations of these numerous titles ultimately aim to highlight the colloquially vernacular, yet institutionally paradoxical, representation and presence of black women in Renaissance Spain.

This study is an intervention aimed at waking Hispanism up from its still unexamined compromises with a long tradition of Spanish ethno-nationalism masquerading as critical discourse. For too long, the orthodoxy of early modern Hispanism – and its method of criticism – has disciplined critical race analysis into silence as a viable analytic for literary and cultural analysis of Iberian canonical texts and their authors. The commonplace critical reception of *negra* characters has repeatedly emphasized a white Iberian stereotyping of black women as obscenely hypersexual, yet brutishly ugly, intellectually inferior, and helplessly weak.[3] Even the quote I originally chose for this article's title, but subsequently omitted – "Puta negra, ¿dasme besos?" ("You black bitch! You dare kiss me?") – verbally brutalizes and violently dehumanizes the black woman character represented in the text, an exchange that occurs between her and the lead male actor (*galán*) during the opening act of Sánchez de Badajoz's *Farsa de la hechizera* (1523/1540–49).[4]

2 Spillers's quote also echoes literary critic Trudier Harris's call to contest assaulting controlling images against black women. In her 1982 monograph, *From Mammies to Militants: Domestics in Black American Literature*, Harris writes: "Called Matriarch, Emasculator and Hot Momma. Sometimes Sister, Pretty Baby, Auntie, Mammy and Girl. Called Unwed Mother, Welfare Recipient and Inner City Consumer. The Black American Woman has had to admit that while nobody knew the troubles she saw, everybody, his brother and his dog, felt qualified to explain her, even to herself" (4).

3 See Fra-Molinero; Santos Morillo. For an alternative perspective, see Jones, ch. 3.

4 Although the exact dates of composition and performance of the play are unknown, 1525 and 1547 are generally accepted among scholars. However, José López Prudencio situates the play between 1524 and 1540 and Ann E. Wiltrout between 1545 and 1549. For additional information on the performance history and publication of Sánchez de Badajoz's collection of theatrical works, see Diez Borque; López Prudencio; Wiltrout. All quotations from *Farsa de la hechizera* are taken from Barrantes.

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Scholarly attention given to this dialogue has tendentiously highlighted Sánchez de Badajoz's perceived negative marginalization and stereotyping of the *negrilla* and her marked Africanized Castilian speech (often referred to as *habla de negros*). Traditionally undermined by critics for its comic tonality and comic-grotesque distorted slang, Spanish philologist Jesús García-Varela in "Para una ideología de exclusión: El discurso del 'moro' en Sánchez de Badajoz," for example, describes the function of both *habla de negros* language and, indeed, the *negrilla* character herself as "decorative and comical."[5] Even if literary critics and philologists of Renaissance Spain doubt the importance of black female characters, one must still resist the temptation to overemphasize their perceived marginality. Such a consideration invigorates the under-investigation of Sánchez de Badajoz's *negrilla* figure in *Farsa de la hechizera* as well as black women in early modern Iberian literature more broadly.

In what follows, through the methodology of close reading, this article places black women at the forefront of critical discussion by analysing specifically *Farsa de la hechizera*'s opening scene. Despite its brevity, this opening *mise en scène* demands critical attention, as it points to the ways in which Sánchez de Badajoz's *negrilla* destabilizes and resists the text's misogynistic and racist portrayal of her perceived degradation, as manifested in her marked Africanized Castilian and comic debasement. To support this claim, I employ the term "mammy" – and, more loosely, the Castilian word *nodriza* – to capture an interdisciplinary mode of literary criticism that resituates the figure of the black woman in Renaissance Iberian literary studies. Working within the scholarly frameworks of black studies and black feminist theory, this article intervenes in these two conjoined areas of critical inquiry by connecting the figure and icon of the mammy to sixteenth-century Spain and vice versa. The

5 See Cazal 157–65; Pérez Priego 184. Sánchez de Badajoz demonstrated a keen awareness of the popular speech of a variety of marginalized characters, most notably *habla de negros* and the rustic language of shepherds and country folk from Extremadura known as *sayagués*. For a complete and robust linguistic study of Sánchez de Badajoz's literary representation of *habla de negros* language, see Lipski 74–76. Lipski asserts that this playwright's literary construction of *habla de negros* is quite accurate and not overly exaggerated. It contains a language that is indisputably pidginized where some possible traces of Portuguese may, in fact, reflect regional rustic dialects of Spain such as *sayagués* and *extremeño*. García-Varela identifies the presence of five marginalized groups, represented in Sánchez de Badajoz's *farsas*: *negros* and *negras*, prostitutes, *conversos*, Moors, and Jews. He argues that each marginalized group falls victim to destabilizing stereotypes associated with their socio-cultural difference based on class, culture and ethnicity, gender, and religion. For García-Varela, the *negrilla*'s prop-like status in Sánchez de Badajoz's text ultimately does little more than provide the playwright's audience and patrons with comic relief. He says specifically: "La presentación del negro/a en la Farsas . . . cumple pues únicamente dos tipos de funciones: una de tipo cómico centrada en el habla; y la otra es una función ambiental, diríamos costumbrista" (174–75). López Prudencio in his 1915 critical study of Sánchez de Badajoz's life and corpus of theatrical works, refers to *habla de negros* as "una incomprensible algarabía" ("an incomprehensible hubbub") (147–48).

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negrilla in the play possesses traits analogous to mammy figures that animate the cultural and historical icon's transcultural African diasporic dimensions.[6] The interdisciplinary and transatlantic lens through which I read Sánchez de Badajoz's literary case of a sixteenth-century Iberian mammy will ultimately illuminate for both scholars and students of black studies and early modern Hispanic studies how the mammy is more than a stereotype; she embodies a female agency that inverts taken-for-granted power dynamics between the mammy and white men.

I propose therefore that we think about Sánchez de Badajoz's black female character in new ways that challenge the critical traditionalisms that have rendered her nothing more than a grotesque comic prop. This manoeuvre allows us to redirect the scholarly focus on racial stereotyping to shed more light on the diminishment of black female characters' importance. To that effect, my study calls for an urgent revision of the way in which Renaissance Spanish literary studies read the presence and representation of black Africans, especially black women, who were anonymously tagged as *negra* or *negrilla*. It is my contention that early modern Hispanic literary studies have historically read such characters as voiceless brutes, thus revealing the tainted ideology of a field all too willing to reproduce in its critical practice the very ideologies it purports to critique. Because these works are primarily literary constructions controlled and orchestrated by white male writers, their representation of *negr(ill)as* raises a number of compelling (literary, sociolinguistic, historical) questions. I would like to utilize Sánchez de Badajoz's *Farsa de la hechizera* as a case study to explore the rhetorical power and value of paradox embodied in his theatrical representation of the *negrilla* character. Like other black women characters on Spanish stages, she is called a "black bitch" or *puta negra*. To echo Trudier Harris and Hortense Spillers, the violent epithet, "black bitch," obfuscates the clarity and logic of black women's agency and place in Western society. Indebted to their pioneering work in black feminist scholarship, the Castilian terms that I have enclosed in quotation marks in the preceding pages "demonstrate a sort of telegraphic coding; they are markers so loaded with mythical prepossession that there is no easy way for the agents buried beneath them to come clean."[7] I contend further that these so-called *putas negras* are not always what they seem; they are not the powerless victims and voiceless props so easily described by literary critics. To the contrary, early modern Iberian *negras* occupy a paradoxical status that highlights instantiations of their agential voices that subvert anti-black racism and patriarchy on early Spanish stages.

6 Mammy iconography and textual appearances are not only salient in the Western hemisphere. Her presence in Asia is also striking. For the global circulation of black memorabilia and blackface practices, see Russell. For a brilliant discussion of the Cuban mammy, see Pérez 9–41.

7 Spillers 65. For more on mammies and the general centring of black women in the African diaspora, see also Harris, "Yellow Rose."

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LUCRATIVE MILK: FRAMING THE MAMMY ARCHIVE IN EARLY MODERN SPAIN

To explicitly name Diego Sánchez de Badajoz's anonymous black woman character a "mammy," as I am fully aware, will empower my staunchest critics to convict me of an anachronistically forced reading of his canonical *Farsa de la hechizera*. Skeptics and supporters alike will request the empirical proof for substantiating my chief claim that, on the one hand, the anonymous *negrilla* in the play exhibits qualities of a mammy and, on the other hand, mammies existed in early modern Spain. Although the English word "mammy" was not manufactured nor operative in Sánchez de Badajoz's time, archival documents, in fact, do describe what we as present-day readers can recognize as "mamminess": her connection to domestic labour, the commodification of her lactating breasts and milk, and the emotional bond forged between her and white children.[8] In my framing of the mammy archive in early modern Spain, I am urgently proposing my readers to recognize a trans-temporal and transatlantic fluidity – a resemblance, if you will – between cultural, historical, and literary representations of mamminess across language and space.[9] My assemblage of "mamminess" through the historical vestiges of early modern Iberia echoes Kimberly Wallace-Sanders's definition of mammy and her body as grotesquely marked by excess. In *Mammy: A Century of Race, Gender, and Southern Memory*, Wallace-Sanders explains:

> [Mammy's body] is usually extremely overweight, very tall, broad-shouldered; her skin is nearly black. She manages to be a jolly presence – she often sings or tells stories while she works – and a strict disciplinarian at the same time. First as slave, then as a free woman, the mammy is largely associated with the care of white children or depicted with noticeable attachment to white children. Mammy is often both her title and the only name she has ever been given. She may also be a cook or personal maid to her mistress – a classic southern belle – whom she infantilizes. Her clothes are typical of a domestic: headscarf and apron, but she is especially attracted to brightly colored, elaborately tied scarves. (6)

The somatic excess of mammy's body in her construction in the antebellum south resonates centuries before in early modern Iberia as *nodrizas*. To that effect, my insistence of the "mammy" trope as important to my argument in this article challenges latent assumptions that lose, if not also fossilize, mammies to plantation societies of the Americas during the nineteenth century. My contentious intervention here makes a case for locating the possibility

8 My formulation of "mamminess" draws on the important critical work of Collins; Gray White; Harris, *From Mammies*; hooks; Shaw; Spillers; Wallace-Sanders.

9 Grier recasts my formulation about the need for early modernists to recognize the importance of trans-temporal and transatlantic fluidity between cultural, historical, and literary representations of race in his rigorously researched article "Staging the Cherokee *Othello*: An Imperial Economy of Indian Watching" (83–85).

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of mammies existing in an early African diaspora that complicates and transcends the specificity of time and place.

The Castilian term *nodriza*, or wet nurse, I argue, encapsulates powerfully the idea of mamminess. By linking mamminess to the category of *nodriza*, I am then able to name and give a voice to the silencing of black women – historic and literary – in Renaissance studies scholarship.[10] Black *nodrizas* abound in the early modern Spanish archive, specifically in slave owners' wills. An expert in sub-Saharan African slavery in the autonomous community of Extremadura in Western Spain – Sánchez de Badajoz's home – historian Rocío Periáñez Gómez writes about the wet nurse of Gonzalo Méndez, cleric of Alemendral, whose will expresses his request to be buried next to her. Dated in 1624, cleric Méndez's will states:

> Y que sea sepultado quando Dios Nuestro Señor fuere servido de llevarme desta vida en
>
> la Iglesia de Santa María Magdalena, en la sepultura donde está Magdalena Muñoz, esclava que fue de mi tía Beatriz Alonso, porque la dicha Magdalena me crió a sus pechos.[11] (Qtd. in Periáñez Gómez 141)

The cleric's will articulates the maternal affect and emotional bond created between black women serving as wet nurses and caretakers to white children, which is also a clear parallel that evokes Wallace-Sanders's summation of the mammy on plantations of the antebellum south.

From the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, black women's breast milk fetched high prices for its perceived freshness and potency amongst Iberian slave traders.[12] As opposed to black women, Jewish and Muslim women were prohibited by the Catholic Church from breast-feeding Christian children, unless they had been baptized and converted to Christianity. The fact that this practice of socio-religious regulation did not apply to black *nodrizas* says something about the paradoxical racialization and, at other

10 Although Sperling's *Medieval and Renaissance Lactations* is a laudable and well-executed volume comprised of cutting-edge studies on wet nurses, my main contention lies in the collection's lack of mentioning blackness and the salient role black women played in wet-nursing across Renaissance Europe.

11 Translated as: "And whenever the time comes for God Our Father to take me from this life at the Santa María Magdalena Church, I am to be buried beside Magdalena Muñoz – a slave who belonged to my aunt Beatriz Alonso – because she raised me at her breast."

12 See Iván Armenteros Martínez's doctoral dissertation, *La esclavitud en Barcelona*, specifically chapters 8 and 11, whose impressive empirical analysis and documentation of city ordinances chart not only black wet nurses but also Christian women, *moriscas*, and those from the Maghreb. Based on his dissertation, Armenteros Martínez's monograph, *L'esclavitud a la Barcelona del Renaixement (1479–1516): Un port mediterrani sota la influència del primer tràfic negrer*, expands upon and refines his examination of *nodrizas* in late Medieval and Renaissance Barcelona as well as the Iberian Peninsula at large.

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times, non-racialization of black Africans in Iberia. This ubiquitous paradox illuminates the nexus of power relations, economic institutions, and cultural practices from which black women's reproduction arose. Black women's breast milk and breast-feeding represent a paradoxical double bind that decentres her sub-Saharan African body from anti-Islamic and anti-Semitic scrutiny, while also framing black women's superior ability to suckle. What I am calling the "lucrative milk" of black *nodizas*, including that of the *negrilla*, who I read here as "mammy," can only be decoded from within a cultural logic that included European travel writing – which privileged the incomparable reproductive abilities and maternal prowess of black women – as well as the broader set of historical and material practices of slavery in early modern Iberia, as documented in the archives.[13] Black women's reproductive organs and fertile bodies were big business. At the beginning of the sixteenth century in Barcelona, for instance, an enslaved black African woman from Granada (who was the age of twenty in 1505) and another from Guinea (who was the age of twenty-nine in 1512) served as wet nurses in *Barcelonés* households.[14] More specifically, Iván Armenteros Martínez brilliantly captures the explicit ways in which aristocrats and noblemen as well as merchants and slave traders prized – if not literally capitalized on – black women's breast milk to nourish their children. For example, slave owners took out insurance claims on their wet nurses in order to monitor and to protect their lactating, fertile, and highly profitable bodies. Additional efforts to control the high value of these women's bodies manifested in the restriction of their sartorial expression. City ordinances, for instance, prohibited black wet nurses from having sexual relations and thus required them to receive specially made blouses, dresses, and stockings to cover their bodies and veils to adorn their hair (Armenteros Martínez 510).

In the Atlantic port city of Cádiz, the businessman Raimundo de Lantery in his *Memorias* writes that he purchased a black female slave in 1675 because she "tenía leche fresca" ("had fresh milk") to nurse and raise his newborn son Antonio. The emphasis on "fresh milk" underscores the substance's quality as a generative and life-giving force. Lantery would later acquire a thirty-year-old *mulata* slave, whose exact role in his household is unclear, but historians of African slavery in Cádiz concur that Lantery amassed a large household of African-descended domestics and slaves to run his household and accompany his family on trips (qtd. in Lomas Salmonte 377; see also Bustos Rodríguez 113).

In addition to Cádiz, the acquisition of black domestics and wet nurses occurred across many of Spain's metropolises. Concerning the marketing and selling of these women's domestic labour, Arturo Morgado García describes the frequency with which auctioneers and slave traders advertised in print the services of black *nodrizas*. Citing an ad placed in the *Semanario de Zaragoza* on 10 October 1798, Morgado García reveals that "a child is born and it is immediately given to a black woman – whose habits and inclinations are

13 See Morgan 12–49; see also West and Knight 37–68.

14 Refer to Armenteros Martínez, *La esclavitud en Barcelona*, 508–15; see also Winer 55–78.

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perverse. This black woman transmits these (habits and inclinations) to the baby, wrapped in both the nutrients and the corrupted humors. That is why newborns are given to black women slaves in their prime age" ("*Zinda*" 190).[15] This excerpt from the *Semanario de Zaragoza* – redolent with the moral alarm of an author worried about social corruption via the transmission of the essence of the black female body – reveals how late eighteenth-century Spanish print culture marketed black women's bodies, which also circulated ads for lost animals and the work of unemployed clerics as tutors. Such texts point to the black wet nurse as a figure whose full social and economic role in Iberian culture has not been sufficiently appreciated. My translation of this advertisement reflects the complex contradictions associated with the black wet nurse: she is desired (for her milk) and vituperated (as a perverse entity). As I have expressed earlier, the *negra*'s textual representation more broadly – either in drama or in print culture – is paradoxical: on the one hand, she is often sexual and, on the other, she is a beast.[16]

15 The original text states: "[N]ace el niño y le entregan a una negra, cuyas costumbres e inclinaciones por lo regular son perversas, ésta las comunica a la criatura envueltas en el alimento así como los humores corrompidos . . . en la edad más preciosa . . . entonces se entregan a una esclava." On 10 April 1806, the *Diario de Madrid* advertises the domestic services of a young black woman. It reports: "[A] voluntad de su dueño se vende una negra esclava de edad de 20 años, poco mas o menos, sana y robusta, que sabe lavar y planchar, algo de coser y todo lo necesario para el aseo de una casa" ("[A]s per her master's choice, a black female slave, twenty-years-old, give or take, is for sale. She's robust and in good health; knows how to wash and iron; can also sew a bit and performs all the necessary tasks for cleaning a home") (Morgado García, "*Zinda*" 190).

16 But this paradox need not be opposed. See Masten, specifically 213–30, where Masten advocates for the complex intersection of gender, sexuality, and race. My translation aims to convey the passage's implied logic: through breast milk, the black woman in the ad transfers, transmits, or spreads her so-called "perverse habits and inclinations" to the baby she nurses. With respect to bodily humours and breast-feeding, it is worth adding that heated debates occurred on both sides of the Atlantic. In Iberia, as I have mentioned earlier, Jewish and Muslim women could not breast-feed Christian infants. In the Spanish Americas, for instance, Amerindian wet nurses presented the problem to moralists and theologians that their moral perversion would be transmitted via humours to the babies they nursed. The role of humouralism is key here. Because food is one of the six "non-naturals" in Hippocratic-Galenic medicine, doctors and theologians viewed it as something that could interfere with a person's "natural" *krasis* ("balance"). Thus, in light of the quote, ingesting milk that comes from a "naturally unbalanced" or "extreme" body could, according to some people, lead to those imbalances being "communicated" to the babies they nurse. For comprehensive study of breast-feeding and breast milk, see Earle, ch. 5; Krögel; Sperling. The contradictory nature and paradoxical portrayal of the black wet nurse in this ad is what makes this text fascinating. As is also the case in the Spanish Americas, where doctors, moralists, and satirists might express problems with wet nurses, on the one hand, but the acquisition of wet nurses was a common quotidian practice, on the other hand, especially the expressed preference for black wet nurses. A similar parallel could be made to *gallegas* ("women from Galicia"). For a discussion of breast-feeding, colonial archives, and imperial power, consult Stoler.

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What the historical documentation of these archival *nodrizas* in Spain – as illustrated in the family portrait shown in Figure 1 – illuminates is the fact that black domestics and wet nurses formed an integral part of many white Spanish households. My interest in excavating and highlighting what I have

Figure 1.Family portrait, Fotografía de Compañy Abad, Manuel, ca. 1870–99. Source: Museo del Traje, Doc. FD012914, Centro de Investigación del Patrimonio Etnolóico, Madrid.

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referred to as a "mammy archive" in early modern Spain both adds to and compliments current scholarship on lactation, milk, and wet-nursing in Renaissance Europe more broadly. As I have worked to assemble "mamminess" through the early modern Iberian archive, the photograph in Figure 1 renders visible the subterranean connections linking the Iberian *nodriza* with the nineteenth-century antebellum mammy. The photograph captures the timelessness of an Iberian blackness in a domestic space. The sepia-toned image animates visually for my readers – as well as for its nineteenth-century audience and photographer – a mode of Iberian blackness that archives – and has archived – textually the black (female) body. And, to close this section, via the family portrait, I utilize it in order to correct the assumption that the mammy and what we now recognize as her "mamminess" have always been a static figure over time, restricted to the historical spaces of the southern United States (Wallace-Sanders 7).

NOBODY KNOWS HER NAME: SÁNCHEZ DE BADAJOZ CASTS A LITERARY MAMMY

Farsa de la hechizera features the following characters: a shepherd ("*pastor*"), an aristocratic gentleman ("*galán*") and his love interest ("*amiga*" or "*dama*") (mentioned only para-textually and who does not speak in the text), a black woman ("*negrilla*"), an old woman candle maker (called the *vieja candelera*, who is also the *hechicera* ["sorceress"; "witch"), a devil, and a sheriff ("*aguacil*"). The plot involves a lovesick *galán* who calls upon death to free him from his suffering. Attempting suicide, he unsuccessfully stabs himself and suddenly faints. He is then rescued by a shepherd who places a clove of garlic in his mouth as a remedy and hurries off in search of a witch – the *hechicera* – who is expert in the treatment of cramps. Once the *hechicera* realizes that she has to treat a more serious sickness, she draws a circle on the ground, scatters grain in the form of a cross and performs a magic spell that will kindle love in the heart of the lady whom the *galán* cherishes. A devil appears and is sent off to reunite the lovers, while the shepherd, very much frightened, takes refuge with the *hechicera* inside the magic circle. The play's unclear ending leaves the audience unsure about the fate of the lovesick *galán*, while the magistrate hauls the shepherd off to jail on a false charge brought by the elderly witch.

The scene is abruptly interrupted by the arrival of the *negrilla*, who rushes towards the weakened man in order to dissuade him from committing suicide. Like the nineteenth-century mammy who speaks the ungrammatical "plantation dialect" made famous in the 1890s by popular white southern authors like Joel Chandler Harris and by subsequent minstrel shows (see Wallace-Sanders 6), Sánchez de Badajoz's *negrilla* also speaks in the ungrammatical Africanized Castilian speech form, known in the sixteenth century as *habla de negros*. In her marked language, she inundates the lovesick *galán*

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with affectionate words and caresses as only a mother would give to her son. In the play, I position the *negrilla* as a character who substitutes the *galán*'s (white) lady. In the text, the *dama* is absent. And while the *negrilla* may not replace the *dama*'s Petrarchan beauty – snow white skin, red-as-a-rose lips, an elegantly framed neck, and long-flowing golden hair – Sánchez de Badajoz strategically employs his black female character to replicate the *dama*'s power over, and superiority to, the *galán*. The black/white contrast between the two women – one that is classed, chromatic, and racially gendered – generates a new critical reading of *Farsa de la hechizera*. Rather than providing entertainment, my interpretation of Sánchez de Badajoz's *negrilla* positions her as a central figure in the *galán*'s character development. To that end, the play's *negrilla* figure not only functions as a foil to the absent and silent white *dama* but also paradoxically reifies and troubles racial purity for Sánchez de Badajoz's audience.

Once the shepherd's opening prologue ends, the *galán* recites his lengthy monologue announcing the torment caused by his *dama*'s unreciprocated attention and love: "Aquí entra el Galán quejándose de su amiga, muy triste" (qtd. in Barrantes 222).[17] The leading male actor's long speech imitates the clichés and themes found in the *lírica cancioneril*, which is also known as *Poesía de Cancionero* ("*Songbook Poetry*") (see a version of this songbook by Álvaro Alonso). This poetic form, like the play itself, was staged and performed in the courts and palaces of the aristocracy. Between lines 33–40 and 41–44, for example, Sánchez de Badajoz displays a wrathful, lovesick, and suicidal *galán* who laments his lady's disapproval. As already established by the poetic codes of the aristocratic courtliness of the *lírica cancioneril* genre, the *galán* is characterized by his passivity. Condemned by his *dama*'s unreciprocated love and literally sick from excess melancholy, the opening scene of *Farsa de la hechizera* highlights the *galán*'s immense desperation and sadness.[18]

In what follows, the conversation between the *galán* and the *negrilla* serves as a vehicle to elucidate how Sánchez de Badajoz casts a literary mammy in *Farsa de la hechizera*. Underscoring broad definitions of literary expressions of "mammy" as asexual and maternal, this scene illuminates the lack of any aggressive sexual foul play committed by her in the text. As we shall see, the *negrilla* only gently holds her male counterpart. Studies on domestic labour

17 Translated as "Distressed, the *galán* enters complaining about his *dama*." For more information about literary conventions and styles of late medieval and Renaissance prologues, see Surtz, ch. 5. On the function of the dramatic prologue before the age of Lope de Vega, see not only Surtz but also Gillet; López Morales; Meredith.

18 Considered a sickness the soul, melancholy was a "popular" disease among European elites in the late sixteenth and seventeenth century. Excessive amounts of bile in a person's body prolonged fear, sadness, and a desire to be isolated. For a study of the subject in early modern studies, see Burton. From the perspective of melancholy via medical theories humouralism, refer to Nutton. Concerning melancholy in early modern Spain, see Carrera; Shuger.

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would define this kind of social interaction as "domestic labour," which I rely on as a trope to animate the *negrilla*'s asexual bodily affection.[19]

(1) "Aquí echa mano al puñal y hace denuedo para se matar: sale una NEGRILLA y arremete con él á tiralle el puñal, diciendo":

Negrilla	Sesu, sesu, marabiyo,
	Por que goyas tan bonino
	Saquero prito marino
	Sorta resara cosio.
Galán	¡Ó qué desastrado vivo!
	Negra, déjame matar.
Negrilla	Parios no quere resar,
	No matas bonafetio.

(2) "Aquí se abraza la NEGRA con el GALÁN y llega su cara con la de él, halagándolo":

Negrilla	Magre, magre, magre, sesus,
	Mi corason y mi bira
	Nunca bono far morira.
Galán	Puta negra, ¿dasme besos?
	Hacerte saltar los sesos
	Si dese modo me tratas.
Negrilla	Parios vos nunca me matas,
	Aunque me das binte quesos.

(3) "Apártase la NEGRA dél, y vase diciendo":

Negrilla	Quéyate, canta quiseres
	Ma que riabro ra toma.
Galán	¡O! reniego de Mahoma,
	Bién muestras, en fin, quien eres.
Negrilla	Pus pantaso, tú que queres,
	No te pera mas aquí.
	Si tú te goyas atí.
	Mesor goyarás museres. (Qtd. in Barrantes 224–25; emphasis added)

19 For additional analysis of the term "mammy," see Wallace-Sanders. With respect to the trope of the fat body, see Shaw.

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(1) "Here the *galán* takes out his hand with a dagger and tries to kill himself. A *negrilla* comes out, struggling to get the dagger away, saying":

Negrilla	Lord! Oh, lord, what a sight (we have here)!
	Why are you crying, good looking?
	I want to help you,
	Let that thing go.
Galán	Oh, what a wretched life!
	Black woman, let me kill myself.
Negrilla	For God's sake, you don't want to pray on it?
	Don't kill yourself good-looking chap.

(2) "With her face pressed against his, the *negra* embraces and pampers the *galán*":

Negrilla	Mother, mother, mother of God,
	My dear, my life!
	Nothing good comes from killing yourself.
Galán	You black bitch! You dare kiss me?
	I'm going to blow your brains out,
	If you treat me like that!
Negrilla	For God's sake you'd never kill me,
	Even if you take me for a fool.

(3) "As the black woman steps away from him, she exits and says":

Negrilla	Stay here and weep if you want,
	But the Devil will be here soon to get you.
Galán	I renounce Muhammad!
	You show your true colors. Who are you anyways?
Negrilla	Well, you clown, what do *you* want?
	I'll wait for you no longer.
	Why are you crying so much?
	You cry more than women do. (Qtd. in Barrantes 224–25; emphasis added)

The *galán*'s outburst, "Puta negra, / ¿dasme besos? / Hacerte saltar los sesos / Si dese modo me tratas" ("black bitch! You dare kiss me? I'm going to blow your brains out, if you treat me like that!"), demonstrates his unstable psychological state. A type of psychotic break, the young man's love

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sickness – a literal, clinical malady called *mal de amores* – causes him to refuse the *negrilla*'s consolation, as articulated in the above-cited stage directions.[20] I interpret her interaction with the *galán* as a form of affection and protection, not one of sexual transgression or erotic behaviour. The complexity of, and strength in, her image is codified in her witty proverbial retort to the *galán*: "Parios vos nunca me matas, / Aunque me das binte quesos" ("For God's sake, you'd never kill me, even if you take me for a fool"). The woman performs her "mamminess" through the motifs of comfort and embrace as evidenced in the verbs "*abrazar*" ("to embrace") and "*halagar*" ("to pamper") from the play's stage directions cited in the passage above. According to the *Diccionario de Autoridades*, the verb "*halagar*" is in no way necessarily sexual. Highlighting the word's more general expressions of compassion and physical caring, the dictionary states that "*halagar*" refers to "[a]cariciar, atraher con acciones cariñosas y agasajos" ("caressing and receiving (or welcoming) someone with endearment"). A close reading of the Castilian word "*beso*" ("kiss") also contextualizes lexically the term's potential non-sexual meanings. For instance, Sebastián de Covarrubias Orozco in his 1611 dictionary, *Tesoro de la lengua Castellana o Española*, defines "*el beso*" as a "*señal de paz [y] confederación*" ("sign of confederation and peace") (184). While not inherently sexual, the *negrilla*'s kisses operate as part and parcel of her authoritative, yet comforting, tone throughout the play. She ultimately performs a kind of mamminess that does not depict her as a jezebel or salacious black temptress.

If the *negrilla*'s mamminess embodies asexuality, loyalty, and robustness, then the *galán*'s aristocratic patriarchy and lovesickness is her sexually motivated counterpart. While his racially charged epithet "*puta negra*" ("black bitch") sexualizes the *negrilla*, I contend that the male character himself channels a sexually motivated and perturbed state that is often cast as a kind of clinical insanity. Like other *galán* figures from Spanish literature – Calixto in *La Celestina* (1499) and Grisóstomo in *Don Quixote de la Mancha* (1605/1615) – his desperation is codified by his inability to control love. His frenzied temperament, as a result, puts his bodily humours out of balance and thus drives him literally insane with lovesickness to the point of desiring death. His death drive, catalyzed by a lovesickness embroiled in horniness and passion, causes him to filter the world through his clinical sexual frustrations. Instead of the *negrilla* sexualizing the *galán*, it is he who sexualizes her ironically out of his own position of perversion. Erratic and completely out of touch with reality, the *galán* decodes the *negrilla* as sexual, but her maternal and pious mammy-like behaviour – her charitable intervention in saving his life by removing the dagger, her affectionate embrace and kisses – suggests otherwise. The *galán*'s equivocal reading of the *negrilla* in this sense serves only to highlight his own perversion.

Aside from these gestures, what constitutes *Farsa de la hechizera*'s black female character as a mammy is her domestic labour. As I have maintained

20 To refer to this specific kind of malady of lovesickness, see Serés.

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throughout this article, mammies are not only geographically relegated to the plantations of the American antebellum south as is popularly believed. If anything, Sánchez de Badajoz's *negrilla* character transcends geographical boundaries, from the plantations of the US South or the tropical Americas, to the domestic households of Iberia, reflected in archival evidence from as early as the fifteenth century.[21] Further, it is not far-fetched to historically situate the play's *negrilla* as an extension of sub-Saharan African slavery in Extremadura. The casting and character pairing between the *galán* and the *negrilla* reflect the racially gendered constitution of noble Iberian courts and households. Experts of Sánchez de Badajoz's theatre history have suggested that *Farsa de la hechizera* was intended for, and performed at, the household of the Count of Feria or performed during a wedding festivity (Wiltrout 128). The *Recopilación*'s dedication sheds light on the author's respectful and friendly relation with his patron (128). As scions of nobility, the Count of Feria's household would have employed large numbers of slaves as domestic servants. I rely on this historical retracing to insist that Sánchez de Badajoz reflects his patron's nobility and wealth in *Farsa de la hechizera*. Therefore, I insert the dialogized opening scene between the *negrilla* (as domestic) and the *gálan* (as nobility) into a larger constellation of sub-Saharan African slavery that underscores domestic labour and space.

Domestic space and the mammy go hand in hand, and Sánchez de Badajoz inscribes upon the *negrilla* a performance of an unwritten domesticity within the play. Following Frantz Fanon's discussion of the ways in which colonized subjects deflect psychological abuse and attacks in *Black Skin, White Masks*, the *negrilla* in this play emerges as a kind of domestic who embodies an increasingly more "white-inscribed" role where she acquires authority, control, and power within the domestic space she works (Johnson 108). Michel de Certeau's formulation of the "tactic" is also important here for it complements Fanon's reframing of the domestic in its recovery of a space of agency and power from within a position dominated by the "strategies" of patriarchy and power. Concerning "tactics," de Certeau explains:

> The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus, it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power. It does not have the means to *keep to itself*, at a distance, in a position of withdrawal, foresight, and self-collection. It operates in isolated actions blow by blow. It takes advantage of "opportunities" and depends on them, being without any base where it could stockpile its winnings, build its own position, and plan raids. . . . It must vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers. It poaches them. It creates surprises in them. It can be where it is least expected. It is guileful ruse. (37; emphasis added).

21 On black Africans and slavery in early modern Europe, see Cortés López, *Los orígenes*; Earle and Lowe; Saunders. For recent studies on black women and slavery in early modern Spain, see Martín Casares and Periáñez Gómez; Periáñez Gómez.

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Thus, situating the *negrilla* as a mammy figure, her unwritten domesticity in *Farsa de la hechizera* embodies a performance, a tactic where she manipulates the domestic (slave) site in which she exists. As a literary trope, the mammy appears to be abiding by the language and laws of the labour site; she is permitted, and thereby exploits, more freedom of movement within this site. De Certeau's "tactics" reveal the performative malleability of race and racial identity – both as experienced and as imagined – by calling attention to the ways in which racial authenticity is and is not a matter of skin colour (Johnson 108). The *galán*'s exclamatory "puta negra," moreover, operates as a violation constituted by the *negrilla*'s construction of a "trusting" relationship of intimacy and concern between her and the *galán*. But, as feminist theorist Patricia Hill Collins astutely recognizes, the mammy figure is always an "outsider within," thereby affording Sánchez de Badajoz's black female character the opportunity to say and do things that subvert and suspend temporarily her perceived subordinate position (11). In other words, she represents the outsider-insider mammy. As E. Patrick Johnson holds in *Appropriating Blackness*, once the domestic – in our case, Sánchez de Badajoz's *negrilla* – learns the necessary "language" and is a trusted subordinate within her employer's home, her visibility decreases, and she is thus able to insert her own language covertly (for example, the Africanized Castilian speech form known as *habla de negros*) (109). A salient characteristic of her mamminess and linguistic blackness, the *negrilla*'s ungrammatical *habla de negros* language thus enables her to dupe and speak back to the mentally unstable *galán*.

While the *negrilla* embodies the mammy as an ideal domestic slave, her mamminess in the text also manifests through her piety and maternal affection. With pious fervour, for example, she repeatedly exclaims: "Sesu, sesu, marabiyo" ("Lord, Lord Have Mercy!") or "Magre, magre, magre, sesu, / Mi corason y mi bira" ("Mother, Mother, Mother of God, / My heart, my life") (qtd. in Barrantes 224).[22] The *negrilla* invokes the Divine here out of concern for a dying – or suicidal – man. To the contrary, she never addresses the *galán* in an amorous or sexually provocative register. The lack of amorous affection in her own discourse – as stipulated by her terms of endearment directed at the *galán* – points to the non-sexual nature of her verbal performance of the relationship with him. Like the *galán*'s white *dama*, who I have suggested earlier the *negrilla* substitutes, the play's black woman character is not overtly sexual. As an early modern Iberian mammy – most notably, one in whom we can foresee the image of the nineteenth-century antebellum mammy – the *negrilla*'s non-sexual behaviour operates under the tropes of "mother" and "motherhood." The idea of "mother" is coterminous with "mammy" due to the domestic realm that she inhabits and the status of wet nurse that she

22 Instead of performing a literal translation of this passage – "Jesus, Marvelous Jesus" – I have opted for a descriptive translation that captures the *negrilla*'s religious fervour and African diasporic blackness.

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could potentially occupy. While the *negrilla* is not overtly cast as a wet nurse in *Farsa de la hechizera*, I read her position in this scene as non-sexual and the embodied performance of her identity in the play re-inscribes more productively within the broader social and historical experience of black wet nurses, documented in contemporary sources. Her non-erotic engagement with the *galán*, a sentiment born of concern, not desire, ultimately casts her in the social and symbolic sphere of the "mammy."

As an articulation of *caritas* – as it is constructed against the *galán*'s *cupiditas* or *eros* –the *negrilla*'s kissing of the *galán*'s face, for instance, represents a maternal gesture, while also delicately traversing the line of "incest." My reading of incest into the two characters' relationship is predicated on the historically plausible notion that the *galán* might have suckled the *negrilla*'s breasts for milk when he was an infant – an interpretation that would explain why I position her as an ex-*nodriza* living in a household that is lacking in explicit babies. From this vantage, in her eyes, he still is the baby. And as evidenced in the following quote, the *negrilla* knows the *galán* will not harm her: "*Parios vos* nunca me matas" ("For the love of God, you'd never kill me") (qtd. in Barrantes 224; emphasis added). The *negrilla*'s *habla de negros* language in the phrase "Parios vos" contains multiple meanings, through polysemy, that transcend a praising of God. Operating as a foil to the standard Castilian construction "*parí vos*," which originated from the verb "*parir*" ("to give birth"), Sánchez de Badajoz encodes in the *negrilla*'s Africanized Castilian the idea that she bore the *galán*. Clearly not a literal birth, the word play in the passage, however, does extract symbolically the maternal semantic field. Via her marked *habla de negros* language, the play highlights the *negrilla*'s maternal relationship to the *galán*, in contrast with the sexual field he projects onto her.

The reading I propose at this stage of my analysis focuses on the *negrilla*'s agentive voice via her maternal wit, which more suggestively emasculates and ridicules the *galán*. I complicate my reading of Sánchez de Badajoz's depiction of his black female character's subversive authority and agentive voice by citing the closing exchange between her and the *galán*:

(3) "Apártase la NEGRA dél, y vase diciendo":

Negrilla	Quéyate, canta quiseres
	Ma que riabro ra toma.
Galán	¡O! reniego de Mahoma,
	Bién muestras, en fin, quien eres.
Negrilla	Pus pantaso, tú que queres,
	No te pera mas aquí.
	Si tú te goyas atí.
	Mesor goyarás museres. (Qtd. in Barrantes, 224–25)

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(3) "As the black woman steps away from him, she leaves saying":

Negrilla	Stay here and weep if you want,
	But the Devil will be here soon to get you.
Galán	I renounce Muhammad!
	You show your true colours. Who are you anyways?
Negrilla	Well, you clown, what do *you* want?
	I'll wait for you no longer.
	Why are you crying so much?
	You cry more than women do. (Qtd. in Barrantes, 224–25)

This conversation does not denote eroticism. There are, however, precedents for the *negrilla*'s emasculating discourse between the weeping woman-like man and his mother who criticizes him.

The textured complexity and remarkable richness of these closing lines illustrate not only how the *negrilla* inverts the scene's power relations but also, more candidly, the interwoven inversion of power relations referencing race relations via the portrayal of religious Others. In his corpus of *farsas*, Sánchez de Badajoz displayed a conciliatory attitude towards newly converted Jews – known as *conversos* – in his Corpus Christi plays. He also often paired black African and Moorish characters together (Wertheimer; Wiltrout). And it is noteworthy how, during the time in which the dramatist wrote, weeping men are racially marked and socially derided as *conversos*, Jews, *moriscos*, and Moors. To capture the *galán*'s inferiority and weakness in the play, Sánchez de Badajoz collapses, on the one hand, and encodes, on the other hand, anti-Semitic and anti-Moorish stereotypes onto this character via the motif of excessive tears (see Burshatin; Liu). I am specifically aligning the *galán* with anti-Moorish remarks through his repetitive utterance of "¡O! Reniego de Mohama" ("I renounce Muhammad!"), which behooves us not to overlook Sánchez de Badajoz's treatment of the intertextual manoeuvring of gender, race, and sexuality in his Renaissance Iberian milieu in Extremadura (a province key in training and supplying many Spanish conquistadors who traversed the so-called New World). For example, the trope of the weeping Moor ("*el suspiro del moro*") manifests vividly when Muhammad XII of Granada (known to the Castilians as Boadbil), the last ruler of the Nasrid Dynasty, surrenders the Emirate of Granada to the Catholic monarchs, Isabella I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon in 1492. As told by Washington Irving in *Tales of the Alhambra* (1832), Boabdil turns around while leaving Granada, and his mother, Aixa, condemns him for weeping like a woman for what he could not defend as a man. The main point of this historical anecdote is that the *negrilla/galán* pairing does not need to be erotic. Through the image of the Moor weeping, as it is encapsulated in the monumental year of 1492, Sánchez de Badajoz's

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invocation of Mahoma – via the *galán*'s cry "I renounce Muhammad!" to the *negrilla* – sets a powerful precedent for a parodic riff on the young man's suicidal passion as if it were potentially a kind of metaphoric fall of Granada.

Another instance that destabilizes the *galán* as a powerful male figure appears in his attempt to commit suicide by piercing his flesh with a dagger. Unlike the *negrilla*, his body is porous and susceptible to sharp penetration. The black woman's exclamation: "Quéyate, canta quiseres / Ma que riabro ra toma" ("Stay here and weep if you want, / But the Devil will be here soon to get you") negates her white male counterpart's masculinity on stage (Recopilación en metro, Barrantes, ed. 224–25). She furthermore demonstrates to the audience that the *galán* represents a hystericized body, as expressed, for example, in the retort: "¡O! reniego de Mahoma, / Bién muestras, en fin, quien eres" ("I renounce Muhammad! / You show your true colours. Who are your anyways?") (Recopilación en metro, Barrantes, ed. 224–25). Successful at revealing the *galán*'s hysteria, the *negrilla*, through her mammy-like behaviour, ultimately emasculates him in the scene's closing passage: "Pus pantaso, tú que queres, / No te pera mas aquí. / Si tú goya atí. Mesor goyarás museres" ("Well, you clown, what do *you* want? / I'll wait for you no longer. / Why are you crying so much? / You cry more than women do") (Recopilación en metro, Barrantes, ed. 224–25). A conventional reading of this scene would claim that she occupies a lowly status based on her racial background and gender. But, as the dialogized scene ends, it is the *negrilla*, in fact, who gets the last laugh because of her wit and ability to contradict and emasculate the *galán*.

CODA: *NEGRILLA* KNOWS BEST

This article has set out to demonstrate that black women in early modern Spain subversively complicate and paradoxically oscillate between the antinomies of objectification and personhood. Diego Sánchez de Badajoz's *Farsa de la hechizera* is a case study for unexpectedly placing the image of the nineteenth-century antebellum mammy in dialogue with early modern Spanish *negr(ill)as*. The *negrilla* of *Farsa de la hechizera* knows best! This study is an intervention aimed at waking Hispanism up from its still unexamined compromises with a long tradition of Spanish ethno-nationalism masquerading as critical discourse. By re-inscribing her role in Sánchez de Badajoz's play as a function of these broader dynamics, I have ultimately aimed to rewrite the place of black women both in early modern Iberia and in the critical practice of the discipline itself.

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