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# Afro-Hispanic *villancico* in Spain and Spanish America

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## 1. Introduction

Afro-Hispanic *villancico* is a literary-musical form that appeared in 16<sup>th</sup>-century Spain as a subgenre of the *villancico a lo divino*. To their contemporaries, Afro-Hispanic *villancicos* (henceforth AHVs) were variously known as *negros*, *villancicos de negros*, *negritos*, *negrillos*, *negrillas*, or *guineos* (Operstein 1996; Swiadon 2000). The earliest known AHVs had been performed in the last two decades of the sixteenth century in the Royal Chapel in Madrid, while the latest date from the second half of the eighteenth century, both in Spain and Spanish America. The surviving AHVs were written for all principal Church celebrations, including Christmas, Corpus Christi, Epiphany, the Immaculate Conception, and the Assumption of St. Mary.

Contemporary observers testify to the immense popularity of AHVs. For example, León Marchante, a prolific Peninsular author of *villancicos*, writes in one of them:

Los negros que están cansados  
de ser, cada Nochebuena,  
años de los villancicos,  
porque con frío se beba. . . . (12.12-15)

As a genre, the popularity of *villancicos* was such that contemporary secular and ecclesiastical authorities and the more serious-minded of the observers thoroughly disapproved of the practice of including them in the Church service. Pietro Cerone writes in 1613 in *El Melopeo y Maestro*:

“[el uso de los villancicos] no solamente no nos convida a devoción mas nos distrae della; particularmente aquellos villancicos que tienen diversidad de lenguajes. . . . Porque el oír agora un portugués y agora un vizcaíno, cuando un italiano y cuando un tudesco, primero un gitano y luego un negro, ¿qué efecto puede hacer semejante música sino forzar los oyentes, aunque no quieran, a reírse y burlarse y hacer de la iglesia de Dios un auditorio de comedias, y de casa de oración sala de recreación?” (quoted in López Calo 1983: 118).

Against this background, the lasting popularity of AHVs may be attributed, at least in part, to the “humorous piquancy” (Wilson 1954: 127) of the speech mode they portray. Known to the contemporaries as *guineo*, *habla bozal*, or *habla de negros*, and in present-day scientific discourse as Afro-Hispanic language (e.g., Lipski 2005), this variety represents the less-than-perfect Spanish of sub-Saharan Africans who had been exposed to the language as adults and in less-than-optimal conditions. Distinctive and instantly recognizable by the public, it helped to relieve the tedium and provided the much-needed comic relief to the delighted audiences.

Over the years, AHVs have caught the attention of various specialist domains. For example, Megenney (1985) and Lipsky (1994, 2005) study them as manifestations of the period's Afro-Hispanic language, Operstein (1996) and Swiadon (2000) as a sub-genre of the religious *villancico*, and Mendoza (1956) as a component of Afro-Mexican folklore. For compilers of anthologies of Afro-Hispanic poetry, such as Mansour (1973), they form an integral part of the poetic tradition that has culminated in the poetry of Nicolás Guillén, while musicologists, such as Stevenson (1968), are interested in them as forming part of a successful musical tradition that spanned over two centuries on both sides of the Atlantic. Despite previous work, AHVs have hardly been studied as potential sources of cultural, linguistic, and socio-historical information about the period they reflect. The remarks below aim to begin to fill this gap by analyzing some of the linguistic and socio-historical data in a representative selection of AHVs. When possible, this data is correlated with what can be gleaned from other contemporary sources about the language and social customs associated with sub-Saharan Africans in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Spain and Spanish America.

## 2. The corpus

This section of the paper focuses on the formal and structural aspects of AHVs. The analysis centers on sixty-eight AHVs, thirty-one of which derive from Peninsular sources and thirty-seven from Spanish American ones (for detailed information about the corpus, see Operstein 1996). The corpus covers the entire period of the popularity of AHVs, with the earliest pieces dating from the beginning of the seventeenth and the latest from the end of the eighteenth century, both in Spain and Spanish America. *Villancicos* from the Old and New World display sufficient similarities in form, content, and language to be studied together as part of the same cultural tradition.

Structurally, the majority of the AHVs adhere to the classic tripartition into the *introducción*, *estribillo*, and *coplas*. The introduction and *coplas* are strophic, while the *estribillo* is through-composed, and may be as short as one line or as long as the rest of the *villancico*. The introduction and *coplas* may be composed of 4, 8, 10, or 12 usually octosyllabic lines, although penta-, hexa- and heptasyllabic metres also occur. As in other types of the *villancico*, the *estribillo* lacks metrical regularity. In terms of content, ten of the *villancicos* were written for the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of St. Mary, four for the Epiphany, three for the patron saints, one for Corpus Christi, one for the celebration of a new mass, and one more for an unspecified occasion. The majority, or forty-eight out of sixty seven, are Christmas *villancicos*.

In her well-known 1940 study, Sister St. Amour divided Christmas *villancicos* into four groups. In the first, the emphasis is on the figure of the Christ-Child; the second focuses on the events immediately preceding the birth of Christ and takes the form of dialogues between St. Mary and St. Joseph, or the latter and the innkeeper; the next group comprises *villancicos* written for the post-Nativity feasts, such as the Circumcision; and the pastoral type features the shepherds of Bethlehem who learn of the birth of Christ and depart for the manger. The fourth type was perceived by the writers of *villancicos* as the most suitable for the introduction of ethnic types, such as Galicians, Germans, gypsies, and black Africans. And, indeed, all the Christmas *villancicos* in the corpus belong to this type.

Often, the Christmas *villancicos* represent a black African announcing to his or her kinsmen the miracle that has occurred in Bethlehem:

- Oh, qué vimo, Mangalena!  
¡Oh, qué vimo!  
- ¿Donde, primo?  
- No portalo de Belena.  
-¿E qué fu?  
- Entre la hena  
mucho Sol con mucha raya. . . . (2.1-7)

Or:

- Dame albriciã, mano Anton  
que Jisú naçe en Guinea . . . (32.1-2)

In other *villancicos*, no announcement is represented; instead, the Africans are shown on their way to the manger:

- ¿Qué vamo a vé, Catalina?  
- Dioso que nace siquito  
en pajita y peseblito  
como hijo de gayina. . . . (14.1-4)

Or:

Esta noche lo Neglillo,  
vestira de moginganga,  
viene turu en una manga,  
con sonaja y tamburillo  
a vel al Ziolo Manué. . . . (23.1-5)

Or:

- ¡A palente, a palente!  
- ¿Qué quelé, senol neglico?  
- Que bamo a lo portalico  
a yevá a niño plesente. . . . (36.1-4)

Sometimes, the *villancico* opens with expressions of the Africans' joy and desire to take part in the celebration:

Hy, hy, hy, que de riza morremo,  
ha, ha, ha, contenta,  
que aregría que temo  
pos la santa nacimiento  
deste Deoso que nace na seno . . . (13.1-5)

Before departing for the manger, Africans prepare gifts and entertainment for the Child:

- ¿Y qué yevamo, soblina,  
a la nacirolimito?
- Vn capisaya branquito.
- ¿Y qué más se yeva?
- Maneciya de cablito.
- ¿Y qué más se yeva?
- De caña lo cabayito.
- ¿Y qué más se yeva?
- Una danza de neglito. . . . (14.5-13)

Or:

Lebalemo tulona,  
nuesa piño mondara,  
aseytuna y alcaparra,  
camueza y melocotona.  
Y llebalemo mantiya,  
aunque turu bale cara,  
para la miga cuchara,  
y miele pala papiya. . . . (10.65-72)

Neither St. Mary nor St. Joseph are forgotten:

- ¿Parira no yeva nara?
- A la siola Malía  
yevamo a su señolía  
manteyina cururara,  
guante polviya picara,  
abanico, galgantiya,  
manto con punta de Flande,  
do libla de sucalcande,  
y confite con que beba. . . . (14.37-45)

And:

Lebalemo a la siola,  
pala abrigaya frasarra  
amariya y cururada,  
que tlaemo desde Angola.  
Y a Jusepe le dalé  
tora una samarra entera,  
que paleza consejela  
si se la quiele poné. . . . (10.73-80)

The entertainment they prepare includes music, dancing, singing, and acting:

- ¿Y qué yeva tú?  
- Tamboletiyo le gugulugú  
con que baila tú y Andlés;  
y turo neglo y tura Guinea  
aleglamo lo Niño Sesú. . . . (10.15-19)

And:

- Ha negliyo, ha negliyo de Santo Thomé,  
vaya de vuia de festa y placé,  
y arruyemos al niño que nace en Belé  
con la tonadiya del Zanguangué. . . . (55.1-4)

The Africans often describe the musical instruments they are going to play:

Tura instrumenta se escuche;  
toquemo como pelsona  
chirimíngula y baxona,  
culnetiya y sacabucho  
que se cieba como estuche,  
y si le toca un negliyo,  
a pulo de inchal el carriyo,  
atluena como alcabús. . . . (55.24-31)

One of the *villancicos* announces: “Benimo cargara / de dusienta estlumentiya” (13.28-29).  
The instruments mentioned are not always of a conventional kind:

Yo solito quielo  
-tocal la multelo,  
sono la pandelo,  
cántala e coldelo . . . (59.11-14)

One *villancico* centers on the play that the Africans represent about the Nativity:

- Vengan, vengan,  
que lo plegona la negla,  
que la negla lo plegona  
con vose de caramela;  
vengan a ber  
comeria nueba,  
que la negla representa  
del Dioso recién nacido  
y su madle helmosa, beya;  
- que ya empiesa, que ya empiesa,

cayar:  
que ya salen a cantar,  
¡cayar! . . . (61.1-13)

Another focuses on a series of *pasos* with which the Africans propose to entertain the Child:

Pue que eça la noche buena  
en que lo neglo no ayuna,  
si a de salir paso alguna,  
salga al paso de la çena  
.....  
Saquemo el paso del huerto,  
pue la noche turu es flores,  
y admiremo a los pastoles  
de ber neglo con consierto  
.....  
Si lo neglo solisita  
daye gusto al sagalito,  
al paso de huir a Ejipto  
benga con la borriquita. . . . (64.49-52, 57-60, 65-68)

The Africans of No. 57 represent an *entremés*, those of No. 31, several dances, and those of No. 40 disguise themselves as parrots and monkeys. No. 23 shows the Africans about to present a *mogiganga*:

Esta noche lo Neglillo  
vestira de mokinganga  
viene turu en una manga  
con sonaja y tamburillo  
a vel al ziolo Manué. . . . (23.1-5)

In another type of Christmas *villancico*, the protagonists describe the events at the manger and depict the characters present. For instance, the characters of No. 18 declare that they have seen the Child, St. Mary, St. Joseph, shepherds with their gifts, Gypsies dancing (while St. Joseph keeps an eye on the mule), the Magi (“dos re marfil eran, / uno re azabache”, 71-72), and other Africans who brought along a camel loaded with gifts. In this type of *villancico*, the protagonist may introduce himself first:

Yo soy Anton molinela,  
y ese niño qui nació  
hijo es li unos lablalola:  
li tura mi estimación. . . . (42.4-7)

Some Christmas *villancicos* seemingly have little to do with the argument they treat. The one performed in San Lorenzo El Real de El Escorial in 1753 depicts a male and a

female black Africans getting into the festive church under the cover of the night (“que de noche loz gatoz son pardoz”) and describing the singers, musicians, and instruments they find there. The only allusion to Christmas is in the *estribillo*:

Turulu neglu  
e turu la negla,  
vengan a ver  
al zior nacimienta! . . . (24.17-20)

Some of the eighteenth-century Christmas *villancicos* have clearly lost the freshness and spontaneity of the earlier specimens of the genre. Instead, they speak directly of the concepts of the Christian faith, at times in an unexpectedly elevated language:

Bendita la Mare tuya  
y bendito San José:  
esta polque te palió,  
polque no es tu pare Aquel. . . (25.42-45)

And

Eze branco cuelpesito  
con el tiempo ze ha de ver  
denegrado y en un palo  
zólo por quelerme bien. . . (26.34-37)

The *villancicos de Reyes* do not differ substantially from those written for the Nativity. One of the Magi is represented as black. In Góngora’s *villancico*, two shepherds meet the black king (this time this is Melchior) who comes to offer incense to the Child. In No. 16, the African chocolate-makers are bringing chocolate to please the Child; the reference to the Feast of the Epiphany is slight:

- Antoniya, ¿dónde va?  
Cuenta me da.  
- A ver el Infante elmosa,  
que nace tan podelosa  
que a la Negla blanca alá.  
Vamo ayá;  
que ya yega el Rey Neglo,  
y podemos cantá  
gulunguá, gulunguá. . . (16.7-15)

Africans in the Epiphany *villancicos* may be depicted arriving at the manger to divert the Child and the Magi:

En el portal, muy alegre  
Unas sonajas tocando

Entró un Negro, tan obscuro,  
Que no se vía la mano.  
Por divertir a los Reyes,  
Empezó a cantar con garvo . . . (13.1-6)

They assert and pride themselves in their relationship with the Black King:

A lun Rey de Inciensa  
Dexale venil,  
Que zamo pintara  
De un mismo barniz. . . . (19.58-61)

The *villancicos* to St. Mary commemorate the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of the Virgin. Sor Juana's "Acá tamo tolo" depicts an African who kills the serpent (Devil) that tried to bite the Virgin. Other *villancicos* of the Immaculate Conception feast are not as inventive. They often picture Africans exalting the purity of the Virgin:

Negro soy, y aunque boçal,  
por decir daré la vida  
que es la Virgen concebida  
sin pecado original . . . (6.8-11)

In the Assumption type, Africans express their sadness at the departure of the Virgin:

- Cantemo, Pilico,  
que se va las Reina,  
y dalemu turo  
una noche buena.

- Iguale yolale,  
Flacico, de pena,  
que nos deja ascula  
a turo las Negla.

Si las Cielo va  
y Dioso la lleva,  
pala qué yolá,  
si Eya sa cuntenta? . . . (44.1-12)

Some of the *villancicos* of the Assumption end with a request to the Virgin to deliver Africans from their slavery:

- Mas ya que te va,  
ruégale a mi Dios  
que nos saque lible

de aquesta plisión. . . . (48.36-39)

In one of the *villancicos*, an African *camotero* (street-vendor) brings the Virgin his humble offerings:

- Espela, aún no suba,  
que tu negro Antón  
te guarra cuajala  
branca como Sol.

Garvanza salara,  
tostada ri doy,  
que compló Cristina  
más de un tostón. . . . (48.21-28)

Sometimes, the Africans dance to celebrate the event:

- Pues priviní la tambó,  
porque en fiesa la Sunció  
no se está queda la pie. . . . (50.10-12)

And:

- Flacica, turu la Negla  
hoy de guto bailalá,  
polque una Nenglita beya  
e Cielo va gobelná. . . . (53.17-20)

*Villancicos* written for other occasions – Corpus Christi (No. 1), patron saints (Nos. 46, 49, 54), and the celebration of a new mass (No. 7) – are variations of the ones already described. The *villancico de Corpus* represents two female Africans on their way to join the festive procession. They discuss whether they deserve being present near the Sacrament:

Samo negra pecandora,  
e branca la Sacramenta. . . . (1.7-8)

and describe the procession, with flattering allusions to the bishop of Córdoba:

- ¿Si viene la Obispa santa?  
.....  
la mano le besará,  
que mano que tanto da  
en Congo aun sará bien quista. . . . (1.34, 38-40)

In the *villancico* “Tacico, vena conmigo”, an African persuades his fellow-slave to go listen to a new mass; they discuss what they are going to see:

Veremo una sacerote  
cantar la Kirie Leyson,  
vestira una camisión  
y una pulida capote . . . (7.15-18)

In the *villancico* for San José (No. 49), the African character invites himself to take part in a quiz about St. Joseph, which has been offered to the choirboys:

- Pues, y yo  
también alivinalé;  
lele, lele, lele, lele  
¡que pudo ser Neglo  
Señol San José! . . . (49.1-4)

Finally, Gabriel de Santillana’s *villancico* for San Pedro shows two Africans, Francisco and Manuel, preparing their instruments to join the chant of the matins:

- Flastico, atesió! -  
- ¿Qui lisi, Manué?  
- Fiesa li San Perro  
Esta noche es.  
- Ya yo lo sabé.  
- Cantal lo Mastine,  
mus tocá també. . . . (54.1-7)

### 3. Sociocultural data

The AHVs supply a wealth of information about the life of African slaves and freedmen in Spain and the Americas, in particular as regards their origin, occupations, social position, and recreation. This section will briefly look at this type of previously overlooked data.

Black Africans are mentioned as working at textile manufacturing (*Oblaje*) and as being day-workers (*samo neglito / que andamo jolmal*), street vendors (among their wares are chickpeas and sweet potatoes), chocolate-makers, and town-criers. Other historical sources tell us that the last occupation was usually reserved for black Africans.

The AHVs mention the practice of sprinkling boiling lard over the wounds received by slaves after a whipping (*pringar*). This practice is mentioned in other contemporary literature, always for humorous effect.

A curious custom, mentioned in several of the AHVs, is the way blacks were greeted by whites by a sneezing sound called *estornudo*. In Quevedo’s *Boda de negros* one reads: “Hundíase de estornudos / la calle par do volvían; / que una boda semejante / hace dar más que un pimientó”. The AHVs show that this greeting was perceived by the Africans as an insult:

que los blancos no vengan bullal  
de los negros hablándonos “guachí”,  
porque a tolos nos hacen labial. . . . (27.62-64)

Black Africans address one another in the *villancicos* as *hermano*, *primo*, or *pariente*. The insults applied to them are *perro*, *caballo*, and *bellaco*.

References to the Africans' places of origin include Congo, Ethiopia, Guinea, Santo Thome, Angola, Goa, Mozambique (Sofala), Puerto Rico, and Panama. Sometimes a tribal designation is given: *lucumé*, *conga*, *carabalí*, *mandinga*, *matamba*.

Almost all Africans bear European names, which almost always occur in diminutives. The most common masculine names in the corpus are Francisco and Antón; next in frequency are Tomás, Pedro, Andrés, Manuel, Miguel, and Gaspar. Others (Blas, Juan, Pascual, Pablo, Jorge, Alonso, Guillermo, Clement, “Gelomiya”, “Juzepilla”, Martín, and Bastolo) occur once each. One African character is called Mamede. Female protagonists are less numerous: the names Juana and Catalina appear twice each; and Clara, Magdalena, Francisca, Cristina, María, and Esperanza, once each.

The Africans are mentioned as using a variety of musical instruments. The more conventional ones include hornpipe, sackbut, shawm, clarion, horn (*trompa*, *bocina*), *churumbela*, bugle, flute, Aragonese flute, bagpipe, bassoon, organ, large lute (*archilaúd*), rabel (an ancient pastoral bow instrument), trumpet, tambourine, jingle bells, castanets, and rattles. Alongside these are mentioned instruments specifically associated with black Africans, including drums (*tanbore/tamburillo/tamboretillo*, *zambacaté*, *tambaco*), kettledrum, calabash, marimba, *cacambé*, *guache*, and *birimbao*. The *bitangola*, although as yet unidentified, appears three times (see Megenny 1985 for a possible etymology of this word). The less conventional musical devices include pails, pots, jugs, and mortars.

The dances mentioned in the AHVs include *caballero*, *camerón*, *canario*, *capona*, *cuacuaraní*, *chacóna*, *chucumbé*, *floreta*, *folía*, *garimbola*, *guineo*, *gulugá* / *gurugú*, *gulumbé* / *gurumbé* / *gulumpé* / *gurupé*, *matachín*, *pandorga*, *savanna*, *puertorrico*, *salterén*, *sanguanguán*, *villano*, *zalambequé* / *zulambaqué*, *zarabanda*. The number of seventeenth-century dances surprised even contemporaries: e.g., Cervantes makes one of his characters in the entremés *La cueva de Salamanca* say, “Dígame, señor mío, pues los diablos lo saben todo, ¿dónde se inventaron todos estos bailes de las Zarabandas, Zambapalo y Dello me pesa, con el famoso del nuevo Escarramán?” The following *tonadillas* are also mentioned: *cubé*, *gulunguá*, *run-rún*, *tapalatá*, *zambucutí*, *zanguangué*, *zarabuyí*. Some *tonadillas* are left unspecified:

A moler, a moler empezad,  
porque al son de las piedras  
podremos cantar  
tonadillas de Angola  
y de Panamá. . . . (16.33-37)

Only some of the above dances and tunes are registered in dictionaries, such as Covarrubias' *Tesoro, Diccionario de Autoridades*, Cotarelo (1911), or the *Glosario de afronegrismos* by F. Ortiz. Some previous scholars have implied that some of the above

dances and tunes may be the fruit of imagination of the authors; nevertheless, it is possible that at least some of them are legitimate words whose etymologies can be traced.

#### 4. The language

The authors of AHVs tried to imitate, or recreate artistically, the speech of the African component of the population. They did this with the practical aim to guide white performers to perform the *villancicos* for the best amusement of their audiences. That the performers did not differ from those that sung *villancicos* in Latin, Spanish, or other languages, can be seen, for instance, from the following introduction to a *villancico de negros* by Sor Juana, which forms part of a larger *Ensalada*. After the *coplas* in Latin the introduction continues as follows:

- Bueno está en Latin; mas yo  
de la Ensalada, os prometo  
que lo que es deste bocado,  
lo que soy yo, ayuno quedo.

Y para darme un hartazgo,  
como un Negro camotero  
quiero cantar, que al fin es  
cosa que gusto y entiendo;

pero que han de ayudar todos.  
(Tropa) - Todos os lo prometemos.

- Pues a la mano de Dios,  
y transfórmome en Guineo. . . . (48.1-12)

It seems likely that after the last line the singer put on a mask, “transforming” himself into a black African. This conclusion derives support from the practice of the contemporary theater, where disguise as a black African was often used. For example, a character in Gil Vicente’s *Floresta d’Enganos* manages to pass himself off as a black maid by dressing himself in female clothes and speaking in *guineo*, and four thieves in the entremés *Los negros de Santo Tomé* disguise themselves as black Africans to avoid imprisonment. The disguise used by the thieves cannot be simpler: one of them appears on the stage “con unas máscaras de negros y sus bonetes y tamborillos”, while a few lines later a stage direction says: “Pónense las máscaras y empiezan a tañer y a danzar. . . .” (Cotarelo 1:138). The singing is performed in *guineo*.

To its contemporaries, the language used by African characters in AHVs was familiar and instantly recognizable. Even though it shares some its features with dialectal, rustic, and other Hispano-Romance varieties, it is also worth studying, and has been studied, as a system in its own right. To quote Weber de Kurlat,

“Creo que debemos estudiar la fonética de los negros como un *sistema propio*, una organización peculiar, simplificada, del castellano de la época y si bien es cierto que

encontramos tendencias que coinciden con la lengua de los rústicos o de otros grupos sociales o dialectales, éstas son mutaciones paralelas en el habla del rústico y en la del negro, o contaminación en la creación artística de los autores, en tanto que otras . . . son consecuencia del influjo del sustrato de sus lenguas nativas, influencia poderosa en la reproducción de los sonidos con que deformaban el castellano” (1962: 140).

The following subsections of the paper discuss the main features of Afro-Hispanic phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon as they are reflected in the corpus.

#### 4.1 Phonology

(1) Final consonants are often deleted, unless supported by an epenthetic vowel; hence pairs like the following:

- (-s) vamo/vamoso, dejemo/dejémoso, ma/máse;
- (-r, -l) cantá/cantale, poné/ponele, potá/potale, po/polo, pañó/pañola, crabé/cravela;
- (-n) plusisió/plocesiona, atesió/atesiona;
- (-y) Re/Reya; bu/bueya;
- (-z) pa (paz), luzu (luz).

Also:

- (-d) libeltá, nobelá, Magetá, eculilá (oscuridad).

(2) Consonant groups are typically simplified, sometimes with comic results:

(a) through consonant deletion:

- (-dr-) San Perro, poremo;
- (-rd-) sacerdote;
- (-gd-) Mangalena;
- (-sc-) Flasco, ecrava, eculilá (oscuridad);
- (-st-) fieta, taba, sa, metiso, guto, eta, Mageta, Jesumclisa, vitita (vestida);
- (-rs-) mecé;
- (-rp-) cuepo;
- (-rt-) potal, ceto;
- (-lt-) cumtlata;
- (-fr-) asafá;

(b) or through the insertion of an epenthetic vowel:

- (-sp-) resepondé, Gasipar;
- (-sc-) acicuchele;
- (-fl-) falauta;
- (-rg-) guruganta.

(3) Both  $b > v$  (vaylaron, vandela, tanvé, Velena, estliviyo, garvo) and  $v > b$  (ban, yebar,

buelta, buesa, nobelá, bel, bonzansé) are attested. It is uncertain whether this may be considered a characteristic trait of the Afro-Hispanic speech mode since other *villancicos* display similar interchanges (printers' choice?)

(4) /d/ > /t/ or /l/. This change is very characteristic of Afro-Hispanic language:

(initially) riabo, rimoño, rentlo (dentro), rivota (devota), lunçuya (doncella), londe, lisi (dice), re ~ ri ~ le ~ li (de);  
(intervocally) vira, turu, puero, helilas, pulo, picalo (pecado), piselumble (pesadumbre);  
(before a consonant) palre.

(5) Interchangeability of <r> and <l>:

(initially) leina, labial (rabiar), levés, lebaño, ruego (luego);  
(intervocally) moleno, culazón, siñula, valita, butiló, pastola, palabén, Malía;  
(next to a consonant) putilica, poltá, estleya, plima, matlaca, gobelná, neglo, gorria, pruma, nobre, copriya, Crara, Jesumclisa, ecravita, diabro, palde, malde;  
(finally) labial, quelel, zeol (señor).

(6) *rr* > *r* or *l*, as in core (correr), pero (perro), mira (mirra), tiela (tierra).

(7) /k/ and /ɲ/ > /j/ or /ø/, as in:

/k/: acuyá, creeya, negriyo, cayar, yena; gaína, paxia (pajilla), aí (allí);  
/ɲ/: siolo, zeol.

Depalatalization of /k/ is also attested, as in *lena* (*llena*), *caramela* (*caramillo*), *molinela* (*morenillo*).

(8) Examples of *seseo* include *viyansico*, *lus*, *fosico*, *amanesé*, *palesé*, *comensá*. Those of *ceceo* include *Diozo*, *zeolo*, *tantuz*, *ziendo*, *zi*, “*loz gatoz zon pardoz*” (24.35). It seems that *ceceo*, or more accurately “*zeceo*”, is an invention of the eighteenth-century authors as this speech tag had been traditionally reserved for gypsies.

(9) The only fricative used in these texts is /s/, as in *siquito* (= *chiquito*), *musa* (= *mucha*); *Sesú* (= *Jesus*), *Susé* (= *José*), *Susepe*, *Soseph*, *sente* (*gente*).

(10) Metathesis is common, cf. *presona*, *probeza*, *turmenta* (*instrumentos*), *palde*, *malde*, and *palra* (= *parla*).

(11) Unstressed, especially pretonic, vowels are unstable:

/e/ > /i/: vizina, trivimenta, privinilu, billaco, siol, señal, virgi, subi (=suben);  
/e/ > /u/: surpiente, burugunçaro, hurmosa, plugunto;

/o/ > /u/: currendo, culnetiya, cumtlata, cultés, cunsielta, Batulumé, plusisión, lunçuya, lun Niño, cun tesuro, cururara (colorada), tantuz, quisu.

(12) Stressed vowels occasionally change, too:

/o/ > /u/: (cun) tesuro, turu, cumu, tuca.

(13) Diphthongs may be simplified:

/ie/ > /e/: currendo, ben, ceto, parente, trivimenta, nasimento, pe;

/ue/ > /u/: pus, fu, bu;

/ue/ > /o/: portorrico, nostla, pos casolita (cazuelita);

(14) Hiatus may be resolved through the introduction of a semivowel, as in *Maliya*, *Guineya*, *torneya*.

(15) Apheresis is frequent, cf. *mana* (*hermana*), *panta* (*espanta*), *crivana* (*escribano*), *treya* (*estrella*), *tandarte* (*estandarte*), *cienso* (*incienso*), *turmenta* (*instrumentos*), *manecé* (*amanecer*), *miscla* (*almizcle*), *Sunció* (*Asunción*).

(16) Vowel nasalization is characteristic of Afro-Hispanic language, cf. *moginganga*, *pampangaya*, *lan dunceya*, *lon Dioso*, *Mangalena*, *Minguel*, *ninglo* ~ *nengre* ~ *ninglito*, *Jesumclisa*, *pecandora*, *bosanse*, *sacanbuche*, *milanglosa*, *cambayela*. The accuracy of these representations is confirmed by parallel developments in Afro-Hispanic creoles.

## 4.2 Morphosyntax

(1) Both definite and indefinite articles may be missing:

“[una] cosa vimo, que creeya / pantará” (2.21-22);

“en [la] fiesa la Sunció” (50.11);

“a[l] niño seluimo” (36.19);

“queremo que [el] niño vea” (33.22);

or superfluous:

“perimo al Dioso lisencia / e luego a Reye Gazpala” (68.66-67); “lon Dios”; “a lan Dioso que sa yoranda / le cantemo la salabanda” (51.10-11).

The article may disagree with the noun in number and/or gender, due in part to the loss of final /s/:

las Leina (la Reina), las alma (el alma), unas cantaleta(s), unos lablalola(s), las pastola(s), las mula, las consuelo, la cuepo, la niño Dios, la Santo Papa.

There is a tendency to use the masculine singular article derived from the masculine plural, perhaps by analogy with the feminine articles (*las, la* → *los, lo*). Examples include *lo Nino Jesús, lo Dioso, lo Pesebre, lo Potal*, and *lo cabayito*. This form is not to be confused with the plural article *lo*, as in “lo pe” (*los pies*) and “lo neglo venimo” (36.13).

(2) Nouns may disagree with the modifying adjectives in number and gender. The loss of final *-s* may be partially responsible for this phenomenon:

corason abierta, el Infante elmosa, lo[s] Negro[s] Chuculatera[s], mi siñula[s] Malía y Jusepe.

Nouns may also change their gender:

mucha raya (muchos rayos); la perrera (el perrero); la nascimenta; la bueya; una sola (el sol); jumenta; el arpo.

(3) The earlier *villancicos* contain some instances of an oblique pronoun employed as a subject pronoun, as in “mi ezta pozillón” (20.3) and “mi quedar . . . reya” (20.6), though this phenomenon is more frequent in Afro-Portuguese than in Afro-Spanish:

“mim não quelé senão paz” (30.11)

“mim fessa sar plimela” (30.12)

“mim tocalá os pandeilo” (30.22).

(4) There are many instances of forms like *pinsiaba, sirviaba, quiriaba/queliba*, as well as of deficient conjugation:

“el Niño diosa yoramo” (10.50);

“si tu yolamo pol mi, / yo me aleglamo pol tu” (40.46-47);

“Nacimo de huns may donzera / huns Rey que mia Deuza he” (29.31-32).

Uninflected infinitives are usually scattered among the inflected forms. The only AHVs to employ them more or less systematically are Nos. 30 and 63. The following may be quoted as examples:

“esa noche yo bailá” (63.1);

“zi hayar grazia en el Garzón / a quien plezenta yevamo, / mí quedar tan reya / como mi Amo (20.4-7);

“Eya dici: So molena / con las Sole que mirá” (44.46-47).

In *villancicos* with predominantly infinitive forms, tenses are distinguished by means of adverbs:

“su hichito ya nacé” (63.13);

“lo garganta ya causá / . . . / pechuguera yo tené” (63.58-60).

(5) The most characteristic Afro-Hispanic verbal form is *sa(r)* (more rarely, *ta*), a phonetic/semantic derivation of Portuguese/Spanish *ser* and *estar*. It is used concurrently with regular copulas, whether correctly or incorrectly inflected, and may stand for any person in the singular and for the third person plural. In the first person plural, it may take the form *samo* (*tamo*):

*sa(r)* for *soy/estoy*

“¡Ay, Jesús, cómo sa mu trista!” (1.5);

“aunque negra, sa presona” (1.21);

“hormiga sa, juro a tal” (3.27);

“saró bu” (2.17);

*sa* for *eres/estás*

“sa hermosa tú” (1.14);

“¿E qué sará, primo, tú?” (2.16);

*sa* for *es/está*

“la alma sa como la denta” (1.9);

“¿Quién sa aquel?” (1.26);

“¡qué sa cosa buena!” (44.38);

“sa yoranda” (51.10);

“sa siempre / milando la Iglesia” (44.29-30);

“sa cuntenta” (44.20);

“mano que tanto da / en Congo aún sará bien quista” (1.38-39);

*sa* for *son/están*

“sa lo moleno ya / cayendo . . . de risa” (40.7-8);

“sa turu negla fea” (33.21);

*samo/tamo*

“si debota samo, / peldone mi amo” (10.6-7);

“samo negra pecandora” (1.7);

“samo enfadado ya” (3.17);

“tamo lena li glolia (47.19);

“acá tamo tolo” (45.1);

*sando* (gerundive of *sar/sa*):

“sando ronca y resfriara, / cantalemo mal, siñole” (51.19-20).

(6) The preposition *a* is often eliminated:

as an object marker:

“sola saca [a] las Pañola” (46.25);  
“¿Qué vamo a vé, Catalina? / [a] Dioso qué nace siquito” (14.1-2);  
“tambié sabemo / cantalle [a] las Leina” (45.3-4);  
“[a] la Reya mía / incienso ofrece sagrado” (3.30-31);  
“¿[a] Parira no yeva nara?” (14.37);

as a locative and directional preposition:

“[a] la Oblaje nos deja” (44.28);  
“yo [a] la Oblaje vivo” (46.19);  
“turu la ninglito / se pone culbata, / que vini lan fieta / [al] piscueso  
colgala” (5-2.9-12);  
“va subiendo [a] lo sumo” (47.33);  
“venga cun la tandarte / mañana [a] la Prucisio” (50.32-33);  
“[a] las Cielo va” (44.17);  
“vini [a] lan fieta” (52.11).

(7) The preposition *de* is sometimes also eliminated:

“entlamo ba tlopa [de] Gazpala” (68.3);  
“ra Gualda / re reye [de] Guineya” (68.6-7);  
“vestira [de] una camison / y una pulida capote” (7.17-18);  
“entle [de] Angola Pampangaya” (23.19);  
“en fiesa [de] la Suncio” (50.11).

(8) Auxiliary verbs may be missing:

“[he] acabada de yegar” (16.22);  
“donde ya [está] Pilico, escrava no queda” (46.10);  
“iguale [es] yolale” (44.5);  
“samo negra pecandora / e branca [es] la Sacramenta” (1.7-8).

#### 4.4 Vocabulary

Although the vocabulary of AHVs is predominantly Spanish, the earlier *villancicos* occasionally contain Portuguese-sounding words such as *menin(o)*, *chorar*, and definite articles or preposition-article contractions, such as “*a mula un coz me tiró*” (2.36); “*escravita do nasimento*” (2.15). As mentioned in section 3, AHVs may also contain words of African origin pertaining to the protagonists’ place of origin, dances, music, and musical instruments; additionally, Sor Juana appears to have employed authentic expressions from some African language. AHVs are also rich in seemingly senseless words that typically appear in the refrains and create the rhythm by communicating to the pieces an African flavor. Some of these are onomatopoeic, imitating sounds of the instruments (e.g., rattles or

drums), or accompanying the movements of an energetic dance: *he he he; ha ha ha; ho ho ho; le le le; rorro ro; achihé, achihá; ah ah ah; uh uh uh; husihé husihá; tarara, tantarantán; tururu, farará; que tum polotum tum tum tum; aha aha; tan tan tan; funfunrrumfun; tuturutu tu*. Others are composed of independent words, the most frequent of which are *gulugué* (with variants), *gulumbé* (with variants), *tequé-lequé*, and *dale que dale*. Some of these became such a recurrent feature of the genre that a character in one of the *villancicos* declares that he wants to compose a *villancico*

Zin zanguaguá,  
Gurupá, gurupé,  
Ni zambucutú,  
usiá, usié. . . (15.9-12).

Analyzing the above words, it is possible to pick out those with established or conjectured independent meanings, such as *gulugué*, *gulumbé*, *teque*, and *leque* (cf. references in Operstein 1996: 105), while others remain to be identified.

#### 4.5 Preliminary assessment of the Afro-Hispanic language of AHVs

Analysing the language of sixteenth-century Portuguese texts containing Afro-Portuguese, Megenny asks: “¿Representa esto una verdadera reflexión del habla negra . . . o es simplemente un artificio estilístico común que fue ampliamente usado por los autores peninsulares que deseaban crear la impresión de cierto estilo de habla?” (1990: 335-336). This question fully applies to the Afro-Hispanic language as documented in the AHVs, and, although a definitive answer cannot be provided here, a few considerations may be offered.

It is apparent from the available evidence that black Africans in the Peninsula and Spanish America spoke the peninsular languages with varying degrees of proficiency. It follows that an imitation, even a faithful one, of any one model can never have pretensions at universality. Moreover, various authors at various periods and in various locations had different opportunities for observing Afro-Hispanic speech at first hand. It is more than likely that not all of them were in a position to observe the speech of Africans in their own household (as was Góngora, for example). In addition, black Africans were never distributed evenly throughout the Peninsula, and were more numerous in the seventeenth than in the eighteenth century. Printed booklets of *villancicos* could be easily purchased every year, and Afro-Spanish studied and imitated. Other genres of the *literatura de cordel* provided additional samples of this literary dialect, as also did stage Afro-Spanish. The authors of AHVs that could not (or would not) base their writing on linguistic observation, could easily concoct a *habla*, combining a few salient language-traits, phonetic or lexical. From this perspective, it is possible that Quevedo’s recipe given in his *Libro de todas las cosas* – “Si escribes comedias y eres poeta sabrás guineo en volviendo las *rr ll*, y al contrario: como Francisco, *Flancisco*; primo, *plimo*” – may be only a slight exaggeration.

On the other hand, many of the linguistic traits of Afro-Spanish, as reflected in the *villancicos*, run parallel to those found in Afro-Romance creoles and partially restructured vernaculars. For instance, the copula *sa* survives as one of the auxiliary verbs in Cape-Verdean creole (Lopes da Silva 1957: 139), and the adverb *ya* marks past tense or perfective aspect in a variety of Iberian-based creoles (Lipski 1986: 4). The elimination of

articles, prepositions, and copula is common to all Hispanic-based creoles, as are many of the phonetic changes noted here, including vowel nasalization, final consonant deletion, interchange of liquids, neutralization of <d> and <r> in favor of the latter, simplification of consonant groups and diphthongs, and instability of unstressed vowels (Mendonça 1935: 101-124; Megenney 1990: 362-370). Given these similarities, it appears likely that the language of AHVs is best viewed as a combination of observation and stereotyping, where the proportion of the two components has to be determined for each and every author, and in the absence of a known author, for the individual *villancicos*.

## 5. Conclusion

AHVs form part of the tradition of the religious *villancico* that originated in Spain and was subsequently exported to the Americas. In common with other ethnic *villancico* sub-genres, AHVs use theatrical improvisation while exploiting to the full the comic effect of “broken” Spanish. In common with other genres of the *literatura de cordel*, they contain numerous details of contemporary life and customs, as well as allusions to many contemporary events. In a sense, they may and should be studied as a mirror of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century social life, often providing details not available in the more serious contemporary genres. AHVs also contain valuable data on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Afro-Hispanic language, providing evidence for it for a period during which this speech modality is not otherwise well documented, the bulk of the known documentation coming from the preceding century in Spain (Santos 2010) and the following century in Spanish America (Lipski 2005). The language of the AHVs is not uniform across the *villancicos*, which is to be expected based on the assumption that it represents a series of L2 varieties of Spanish.

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