

## **A Review of Sources for the Study of Juan Latino: the first Afro-Spanish Poet in Renaissance Europe<sup>1</sup>**

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### **1. Introducción**

Juan Latino (Joannes Latinus) was a talented Afro-Spanish citizen who overcame his slave origins to become a Renaissance humanist in the city of Granada (Spain); he was the first Afro-Spaniard and Afro-European Humanist. This article is an update of the bibliography (published in Spanish and English) covering the life and works of Juan Latino from the first essays to the most recent, compiling the research that has been done about the author, and bringing to light works that have often been misquoted or ignored. I refer primarily to the early work of Marín Ocete (1920s) and to his counterparts across the Atlantic, mainly Spratlin, Woodson (1930s) and Masó (1970). And, I will also refer to Sánchez Marín, who did the first translation of Juan Latino's poem on the Lepanto Battle into Spanish (1981). The last decade has seen renewed attention paid to the Afro-Spanish writer, with the appearance of several publications offering new perspectives on the Renaissance humanist, revealing Juan Latino's international dimension. Within this framework, the life and work of Latino at times appears out of context, and his profound relationship with the Spanish Renaissance and the city of Granada (where he was born and lived) is sometimes poorly interpreted. Therefore, an update of the Spanish and English bibliographical sources for the study of the poet seems to be more than appropriate.

As the head of the Juan Latino Studies Centre (JLSC) at the University of Granada, I realized the current need to update the literature on Juan Latino. Therefore, in this article I will discuss the various publications that have addressed the figure of Juan Latino and the different academic perspectives (hispanic literature, historical anthropology, romance languages, etc) from which his work and his life have been studied since the 1920s to the present. I will try to offer a complete and updated panorama of the sources for the study of the biography and writings of Juan Latino, undoubtedly a major Renaissance author.

### **2. Antonio Marín Ocete and his essay on Juan Latino (2016).**

While Juan Latino was cited in different compendiums of Spanish literature, he did not receive proper academic attention until the early 20th century. In the 1920's, professor Antonio Marín Ocete was the first scholar to draw particular attention to the figure. Marín Ocete was powerfully attracted to the Afro-Spanish writer's enormous talent and to the brilliance of his Latin poetry. He actually re-discovered the personality and works of Juan Latino, making his research accessible to experts through a long case

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BN: Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid.

BHR: Biblioteca del Hospital Real de la Universidad, Granada.

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study. That fact that Ionnnes Latinum - as his poems were usually signed - came from the lowest strata of society (he was a slave owned by the Duke of Sessa) so fascinated Marín Ocete that he spent much of his life searching for archival sources to trace Latino's life and works. Although he referred to the author as “the black Juan Latino”, emphasizing colour and perceiving him as a “prodigy”, he established that Juan Latino was an admirable humanist of great talent.

In fact, Marín Ocete was greatly concerned with recovering the memory of Juan Latino, and therefore he published a vast essay about his work and life in two parts, the first one in 1923 and the second one in 1924.<sup>3</sup> The title of the publication was “El negro Juan Latino. Ensayo crítico y estudio biográfico” (The Black Juan Latino: critical essay and biographical study) and “Conclusiones” (conclusions). The mentioned essay was published in the *Revista del Centro de Estudios Históricos de Granada y su Reino* (Journal of the Center for Historical Studies of Granada and its Kingdom). Although this work has frequently been cited, however, it has been insufficiently consulted. Precisely for this reason, it is often cited incorrectly, with page, year or journal number errors being repeated from one author to the other.

Marín Ocete was a full professor in the Faculty of Philosophy and was appointed Rector of the University of Granada in 1933. He resigned in April, 1936, resuming that position in July of that year until leaving in 1951. Besides being Rector, he was also a member of the Royal Academy of History. He might have studied the three original manuscripts of Juan Latino preserved at the Royal Hospital Library while he was the head of the publications department at the University of Granada. His training in palaeography led him to focus on Juan Latino's life and work. It can be said that the rediscovery of Juan Latino at the beginning of the 20th century was due to Antonio Marín Ocete, and that both Latino his work greatly attracted the attention of another prominent member of the University of Granada centuries later. At times, Marín Ocete's important work has been misinterpreted or under-cited, even though it had rapid international repercussions. This is evidenced by the fact that some African-American scholars across the Atlantic echo his work at the end of the 30's.

Perhaps the biggest mistake that some authors have made when citing Antonio Marín Ocete is to claim that his essay on Juan Latino was published in a single volume, but rather in two different numbers of the Journal, since at the time it was relatively common to publish in installments. Specifically, the introduction, first chapter and second chapter of Marín Ocete's essay were published in numbers one and two of 1923, of volume XIII of the mentioned Journal under the title: “The black Juan Latino. Bibliographical and critical essay”.<sup>4</sup> The introduction extends between pages 97 and 100, the first chapter is called “(1518?-1546)”<sup>5</sup> and it is subtitled: “Place and date of birth of Juan Latino. His childhood and coming to Granada. First studies and teachers. Foundation of the University and other colleges. Bachelors degree”,<sup>6</sup> pages 100-111. The second chapter is titled “(1547-1565)” and the subtitle is: “Juan Latino's friends.

<sup>3</sup> Antonio Marín Ocete, “El negro Juan Latino. Ensayo de un estudio biográfico y crítico”, *Revista del Centro de Estudios Históricos de Granada y su Reino*, vol. XIII, 1923, pp. 97-120. Antonio Marín Ocete, “El negro Juan Latino. Ensayo de un estudio biográfico y crítico (Continuación)”, *Revista del Centro de Estudios Históricos de Granada y su Reino*, vol. XIV, 1924, pp. 25-82.

<sup>4</sup> *El negro Juan Latino. Ensayo de un estudio biográfico y crítico por A. Martín Ocete*

<sup>5</sup> in brackets.

<sup>6</sup> *Lugar y fecha del nacimiento de Juan Latino. Su niñez y su venida a Granada. Primeros Estudios y maestros. Fundación de la Universidad y de otros colegios. Grado de Bachiller.*

The Carlobal family. Love and marriage. News about his children”.<sup>7</sup> He was appointed Master of Grammar of the Holy Cathedral. End of his University studies. San Luca’s feast 1865), pages 111-120. At the end of page 120, we can read in brackets: “to be continued”.<sup>8</sup>

The following year, 1924, the second part of Marín Ocete’s essay was finally published in numbers one and two of the volume corresponding to year XIII of the journal. Always under the same title (The Black Juan Latino...), but with the addition of the word “conclusions”, in brackets. This second part contains the third, fourth and fifth chapters, appendices and bibliography, all of it in pages 25-83. Chapter three is entitled “(1566-156?)”<sup>9</sup> and subtitled: “The uprising of the Moors. Don Juan de Austria in Granada. The academy of d. Alonso Granada Venegas. Juan Latino lawsuit with the Royal College on the location and ownership of his Chair. Other mishaps. Aging of the poet. His death”<sup>10</sup>. The chapter runs from page 25 to 36. The title of chapter four is “Bibliographic description and study of the works of Juan Latino”,<sup>11</sup> on pages 36-60. And Chapter five’s title is: “Impact of the famous black—some old events. Jiménez de Enciso comedy. Modern critics of Juan Latino”<sup>12</sup>, pages 60-64. Finally, Marín Ocete published the “Appendices”, that is to say the transcript of several archival documents regarding the life and social networks of Juan Latino, some of them unfortunately with incomplete signatures.

Marín Ocete devoted the end of his essay to the bibliography on Juan Latino, specifically pages 81 and 82. In those pages, we can appreciate that major collections of Spanish literature of the first half of the 20th century included brief mentions of the Afro-Spanish Humanist. From my point of view, the work of Marín Ocete has not been sufficiently recognized, although most of the data that has been subsequently repeated about Juan Latino’s life and work comes from his pioneering essay. Marín Ocete, with his shadows and lights, had the merit of highlighting the Renaissance Afro-Spanish author with true devotion to Latino’s character. His particular reference to the figure as a “black prodigy”, however, issued from the social context in which he lived.

### 3. Juan Latino and the *Journal of Negro History* (30s).

On the other side of the Atlantic, two African-Americans scholars, Velaurez B. Spratlin and Carter G. Woodson studied the figure of Juan Latino within the field of “Negro Studies”, established in order to vindicate the recognition of African peoples.<sup>13</sup> Precisely, Carter G. Woodson founded the *Journal of Negro History* in 1916 to promote research on Black life, history and culture. In this flourishing context, Velaurez B. Spratlin was an Associate Professor on Romance Languages at Howard University (Washington D.C.), a university that was established in 1867 and whose mission is

<sup>7</sup> *Amistades de Juan Latino. La familia Carlobal. Amores y casamiento. Noticias acerca de sus hijos. Es nombrado maestro de Gramática de la Santa Iglesia Catedral. Completa sus Estudios Universitarios. Fiesta de San Lucas del año 1865.*

<sup>8</sup> “(continuará)”

<sup>9</sup> in brackets

<sup>10</sup> “La sublevación de los moriscos. Don Juan de Austria en Granada. La academia de d. Alonso Granada Venegas. Pleito de Juan Latino con el colegio Real sobre la posesión y local de su Cátedra. Otros contratiempo. Vejez del poeta. Su muerte”

<sup>11</sup> “Descripción bibliográfica y estudio de las obras de Juan Latino”

<sup>12</sup> “Extensión de la fama del Negro—algunas citas antiguas. La comedia de Jiménez de Enciso. Los críticos modernos de Juan Latino”

<sup>13</sup> *The Journal of Negro History* changed its name to *The Journal of African American History* in 2012, which implies not only a nominal change but also one of concept and scope.

defined to this day as: “a historically Black private university with particular emphasis upon educational opportunities for Black students”.

At that time, Spratlin briefly described the figure of Juan Latino in a highly illustrative article entitled: “The negro in Spanish literature”, published in 1934, in the *Journal of Negro History*.<sup>14</sup> The author begins the article by inviting young African Americans “to turn their gaze to Spain and Spanish America”. Spratlin takes us through the history of African personalities in the arts and literature in the Hispanic World, mainly in Spain but also in the Americas. He notes, for example: “we are not surprised to find negros among the motley procession that was the stupendous creation of the literary genius of Renaissance Spain”.<sup>15</sup> He also mentions the presence of black illiterate buffoons in Golden Age comedies, puts the accent on the black step-father of the *Lazarillo de Tormes*, mentions Juan de Pareja (the black slave of the painter Diego Velázquez), and, among other Afro-hispanic figures, mentions the Cuban-slave poet Juan Francisco Manzano, who wrote his auto-biography.<sup>16</sup> Spratlin introduces a brief and appealing presentation of Juan Latino that reveals the interest aroused by his life and works. He says: “the climax of the Negro’s achievement in Spain is the career of Juan Latino, whose Latin verses entitle him to a prominent place among the Spanish humanists of the sixteenth century (...) All Granada paid him homage (...)”.<sup>17</sup> He also mentions the *Austrias Carmine*. This is indeed a well-documented and interesting article, one that has probably inspired other contemporary scholars, although not always sufficiently cited.

A year later, in 1935, Carter G. Woodson mentioned Juan Latino in another article that was also published in *The Journal of Negro History*, entitled “Attitudes of the Iberian Peninsula in literature”.<sup>18</sup> The article discusses multiple issues, including the influence of the Moors and Africans on the Spanish race. It also touches on black African influence in Spanish literature, mentioning Juan Latino.

Finally, three years later in 1938, Spratlin published a volume called “Juan Latino: Slave and Humanist”, wholly dedicated to the Afro-Spanish author.<sup>19</sup> The book was based on his doctoral study: “The career and works of Juan Latino” earned at Middlebury College. Spratlin divided the volume into three parts: “The life” (p 1-22), “Juan Latino and Don Juan of Austria” (p. 23-33) and “The poems of Juan Latino” (p.33-62). He also included a “Memorabilia” (p. 63-68) and a long chapter entitled “The famous drama of Juan Latino” (p 69-202) with an appendix on Diego Jiménez de Enciso, the author of the mentioned drama (p. 213-212). It is an interesting work, with some parts based on previous Spanish studies, including Marín Ocete’s, in which the author displays thorough knowledge of Spanish Golden Age literature as well as

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<sup>14</sup> Velaurez B. Spratlin, “The negro in Spanish literature,” *Journal of Negro History* 19 (1934), pp. 62–71, reprinted in Miriam De Costa (ed.): *Blacks in Hispanic literature: Critical Essays*, Port Washington, NY: National University Publications, Kennikat Press, 1977, pp. 47–52.

<sup>15</sup> P. 63.

<sup>16</sup> Actually, regarding Manzano’s autobiography, he says: “However sympathetic such presentations as Harriet Beecher Stowe’s and Whittier’s might be, they can never move us as do the pages of this biography that are outpourings of a soul in anguish”. p. 67.

<sup>17</sup> p. 65.

<sup>18</sup> Carter G. Woodson, “Attitudes of the Iberian Peninsula in literature,” *Journal of Negro History* 20: 2 (1935), pp. 190–243, reprinted Miriam De Costa (ed.): *Blacks in Hispanic literature: Critical Essays*, Port Washington, NY: National University Publications, Kennikat Press, 1977, pp. 36–46.

<sup>19</sup> Spratlin, Velaurez B (1938): “Juan Latino: Slave and Humanist”, New York, Spinner Press.

Spanish culture.<sup>20</sup> Here he also describes the place of Juan Latino in the city of Granada with wisdom and admiration. One of Spratlin's main achievements is to gather lots of scattered information into a single volume. One can feel the fascination that the author has for the figure in his descriptions.

I have found two book reviews published in 1939 - a year after Spratlin's work. One is by the aforementioned Carter G. Woodson, appearing in the *Journal of Negro History*,<sup>21</sup> and another is by Otis H. Green, professor in Pennsylvania University, published in the *Hispanic Review*.<sup>21</sup> Woodson's review is quite laudatory; he is interested in highlighting that "the Negro race is endowed with the same mental capacity found in other branches of the human family". He received the book with enthusiasm, noting that the public is most fortunate in having this excellent treatment on Juan Latino's career. He also recognizes the author's mastery of Latin and Spanish, which I too have appreciated. Furthermore, it was actually the first English essay to provide an analysis of Ximénez de Enciso play. It is also true, as Woodson said, that "the historian seeing Spain through the eyes of this scholar can learn much about the Iberian Peninsula which has not otherwise been made available".

Regarding Green's review, it is quite unique in that it starts with the following sentence: "This book, for its display of erudition, is not addressed to scholars but rather to that portion of the reading public interested in the negro" with a footnote reminding us that its author was a Professor at Howard. Later on, Green criticizes some second-hand citation, stating that Spratlin's work was "derivative, rather than the product of original research". Green writes in a contemptuous and arrogant tone, although he himself makes several mistakes, such as stating that Diego Hurtado de Mendoza was not the author of the *Guerra de Granada*, when he really was. From my point of view, it is surprising that there is not a single line of praise for a text that contributed so greatly to the advancement and understanding of the figure of Juan Latino in the States, with lots of data.

In 1965, Alma C. Allen, published another interesting article in *The Journal of Negro History* concerning the literary relations between Spain and Africa, in which she also refers to Juan Latino through the eyes of Spratlin.<sup>22</sup> The author discusses the attitudes towards Juan Latino among some of his writer contemporaries. More than ten years later, in 1979, Annette Ivory, another scholar from Howard University, published an article called: "Juan Latino: The Struggle of Blacks, Jews, and Moors in Golden Age Spain".<sup>23</sup> She is one of the first scholars to be interested in the presence of slaves in Spain, and for the first time she refers to the only study available at that time on slavery in Castile, published by Dominguez Ortiz in 1952. In short, it is important to note that the recovery of the personality and works of Juan Latino in the United States can be attributed to two Afro-American Romance language scholars within a context that encouraged Black Studies. However, as I have noted in another article, the fact that their work did not become a starting point for ongoing research in the 50's and 70's may be due to their lack of support from the Academia.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Given his knowledge of Early Modern Spanish literature, it caught my attention that he repeatedly speaks about "Uganda" instead of "Urganda" (with an r) when he mentions the characters that appear at the beginning of Don Quixote.

<sup>21</sup> Otis H. Green: *Hispanic Review*, vol. III, 1939.

<sup>22</sup> Alma C. Allen (1965): "Literary relations between Spain and Africa: An introductory Statement", *The Journal of Negro History*, vol. 50, n°.2, pp. 97-105.

<sup>23</sup> Ivory, Annette (1979): "Juan Latino: The Struggle of Blacks, Jews and Moors in Golden Age Spain, *Hispania* 62, no. 4, dec: 613-618.

<sup>24</sup> Aurelia Martín Casares: "Popular Literary Depictions of Black African Weddings in Early Modern Spain", *Renaissance and Reformation*, 31:2, 2008, p. 108.

#### 4. Calixto C. Maso: An Afro-Hispanic approach (early 70's).

Calixto C. Maso was a talented Catholic Cuban historian. He spent his life teaching in Habana and left the country in 1962, at the age of 61, due to differences with the Castro government. He went into exile in the United States and was named professor emeritus in Northeastern Illinois University where there was a Chair on Afro-Hispanic Literature Studies (*Cátedra de Literatura Negroide Hispanoamericana*).

In this context, he published a text called “Juan Latino: Gloria de España y de su raza” (Juan Latino: Glory of Spain and his race, 1972), a very interesting little book in which he repeatedly compares the attitudes of Hispanics and Anglo-Saxons towards black people, using the past as an excuse to denounce the present. As Carlos M. Raggi (Russell Sage College), the author of the foreword says: “it is not an accidental study since the life of Juan Latino is linked to one of the problems of contemporary societies”. Here he is clearly referring to racism in the contemporary world. Calixto Maso believed that the life of Juan Latino could be interpreted as an example of social integration within the Spanish context: “Juan Latino’s case is proof of this, since being a slave, he could rely neither on money nor social status in his promotion to become the Chair Professor of Grammar in Granada. Nor was the fact of being black an obstacle to overcome throughout the various milestones of his intellectual education”.<sup>25</sup>

The book starts with a remarkable introduction to the history of slavery in Spain, from the Romans to abolitionism, in order to provide context for Latino's life and works within slavery during the Spanish Renaissance. It is surely a major contribution to Juan Latino studies, as Maso magnificently masters the historical and literary sources - along with the historiography - on slavery and blackness in Spain. However, he does not seem to be aware of the aforementioned works by Woodson and Spratlin. Maso went so far as to travel to Granada when writing his book on Juan Latino, visiting the university library there in order to explore personally Juan Latino’s original works.

#### 5. Romance Languages and the translations of Juan Latino’s *Austrias Carmine*.

During the early period of post-Franco Spain, a couple of Latin professors from the University of Granada studied Juan Latino’s poetry from the linguistic and humanistic perspective. I am referring to Juan Antonio Sánchez Marín and María Nieves Muñoz Martín, both members of the Department of Latin Philology at the University of Granada. Sánchez Marín defended his doctoral thesis on Juan Latino’s *Austrias Carmine* in 1979. He published the first complete translation into Spanish in 1981, under the title “Juan Latino’s *Austriada*. Introduction, unpublished translation and text”<sup>26</sup>, making it accessible to the academic community. This first Latin-Spanish bilingual version was published by the University of Granada.

Subsequently, Marín Sánchez and his wife continued working on the figure of Juan Latino from the Latinist perspective, publishing several articles comparing the

<sup>25</sup> “El estudio de Juan Latino pone de manifiesto esa característica de la sociedad española tan contraria a la discriminación humana, cualquiera que sea la razón: sexo, raza, religión o dinero. Y Juan Latino es un caso que lo prueba puesto que como esclavo que fue, no puede basarse en ni en el dinero ni en la posición social, la razón de su ascenso hasta de profesor de Cátedra de Gramática en Granada, ni el hecho de ser un puro negro Etíope fue valladar para ir rebasando los distintos hitos de su formación intelectual”. Calixto C. Maso, p. V.

<sup>26</sup> Sánchez Marín, José Antonio y Muñoz Martín, María Nieves (1980) “La *Austriada* de Juan Latino: teoría y creación literaria épicas”, *Estudios de Filología latina*, pp. 211.216.

*Austriada* of Latino and Pinciano as epic literary creations<sup>27</sup> and studying Juan Latino's epigrams.<sup>28</sup> The couple also studied his elegies, which were published in 1573. These elegies, which were included under the general heading *De natali Serenissimi Principis Ferdinandi*, were composed of 78 verses and located on one of the manuscripts preserved at the Royal Library of the University of Granada - a text that the scholars were able to study firsthand.<sup>29</sup> Later on, they published an article entitled: "A counter vision of the papacy *De rebus et affectibus Papae Pii Quinti* of Juan Latino".<sup>30</sup> Sánchez Marín and Muñoz Martín recently published their latest article, called "Professor Juan Latino in Renaissance Granada. His city, his life and his protectors" (2009).<sup>31</sup>

Also working from within the Romance language perspective, Jose López del Toro (1950) gives details about Latino's poems in "The poets of Lepanto",<sup>1</sup> while José González Vázquez published an article in 1976 qualifying Juan Latino as an imitator of Virgil.<sup>32</sup> The very same year, Elisabeth Wright, professor in the Department of Romance languages in the University of Georgia, published an interesting article on the particular treatment of the battle of Lepanto in Juan Latino's *Austrias Carmine*.<sup>33</sup> Later on (2012), she published an article on warfare in the Latin hexameters of the *Austrias Carmine*.<sup>34</sup> In addition, Wright also referred to Juan Latino in a 2013 article focused on the vanquished side of the Lepanto battle as viewed from Granada. Here, she dedicated an entire page to Juan Latino,<sup>35</sup> reflecting on his relationship with the *Moriscos* (converted Hispano-Muslims), since they were enslaved as a consequence of their revolt in 1568-71. Quite recently, in 2014, Sarah Spence, Elisabeth Wright and Andrew Lemons published a volume called: "The Battle of Lepanto", in which they include a Latin-English bilingual version of the *Austrias Carmine* (The song of Juan of Austria, p. 289-405).<sup>36</sup> Elisabeth Wright has also written a book on the epic of Juan Latino, called "The Epic of Juan Latino: Dilemmas of race and religion in Renaissance Spain".<sup>37</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Sánchez Marín, José Antonio y Muñoz Martín, María Nieves (1980) "La Austriada de Juan Latino: teoría y creación literaria épicas", *Estudios de Filología Latina*, pp. 211-216.

<sup>28</sup> Sánchez Marín, José Antonio: (1990) "Apuntes sobre los epigramas del humanista Juan Latino", *Florentina Iliberritana*, pp. 327-333.

<sup>29</sup> Humanismo Renacentista....

<sup>30</sup> Sánchez Marín, José Antonio y Muñoz Martín, María Nieves (2003): "Una visión contrarreformista del papado: De rebus et affectibus Papae Pii Quinti de Juan Latino", *Actas. Congresso Internacional Damião de Góis na Europa do Renascimento*, Braga, pp 119-134.

<sup>31</sup> Sánchez Marín, José Antonio y Muñoz Martín, María Nieves (2009): "El maestro Juan Latino en la Granada renacentista. Su ciudad, su vida, sus protectores", *Florentina Iliberritana*, 20, pp. 231-264.

<sup>32</sup> González Vázquez, José (1983): "Juan Latino, imitador de Virgilio", *Estudios de Filología Latina* (Bimilenario de Virgilio), nº 3, pp. 129-138.

<sup>33</sup> Wright, Elisabeth R. (2009): "Narrating the Ineffable Lepanto: The Austrias Carmen of Joannes Latinus (Juan Latino)", *Hispanic Review*, pp. 71-96.

<sup>34</sup> Elisabeth Wright (2012): "Scrutinizing Early Modern Warfare in Latin Hexameters: The Austrias Carmen of Joannes Latinus (Juan Latino)", in *Poesis and Modernity in the Old and New Worlds*, Edited by Anthony J. Cascardi and Leah Middlebrook, pp. 139-158, Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.

<sup>35</sup> Wright, Elisabeth R. (2009): "Adversarios o vencidos: Los vencidos de Lepanto vistos desde Granada", en *Pictavia aurea. Actas del IX Congreso de la Asociación Internacional "Siglo de Oro"*, p. 144.

<sup>36</sup> Sarah Spence, Elisabeth Wright and Andrew Lemons: *The song of Juan of Austria*, p. 289-405.

<sup>37</sup> A review of the book in Martín Casares, Aurelia: *The Epic of Juan Latino: Dilemmas of race and religion in Renaissance Spain* by Elisabeth Wright, *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 70-3, 1210-1211.

Other authors have addressed the figure of Juan Latino, although tangentially, as in the case of Christopher Maurer.<sup>38</sup> Shortly thereafter, Díez Fernández wondered which came first, the Latin epigram by Juan Latino (20 verses, in *Ad catholicicum*, 1573) or the sonnet “Al rey, nuestro señor” by Hernando de Acuña (1591), due to their similitude.<sup>39</sup> The author notes the irony that a beloved sonnet in Franco's Spain, referring to Acuña's, might have been based on a poem composed by an “Ethiopian”. José González Vázquez also studied Juan Latino's verses, as an imitator of Virgil.<sup>40</sup>

## 6. Research into the history of slavery in Spain - the social context of Juan Latino.

In the last two decades we have witnessed the flowering of studies on slavery in Iberia. These studies have contributed to the understanding of ethnic and religious relations in early modern Spain, while recovering a great deal of the memory of anonymous as well as famous enslaved people of Sub-Saharan origin. Above all, however, they have the merit of setting new standards, since the Spanish historiography completely obviated the presence of slaves in mainland Spain. In this context of denial of slavery, I defended my doctoral thesis (1998), entitled “Slavery in 16<sup>th</sup> century Granada: Gender, race and religion” (published 2000),<sup>41</sup> and therefore, I studied the social environment in which Juan Latino lived. In that book, I analyzed more than 2,500 handwritten documents showing the enslavement of people from different ethnic groups (basically Arabs and Berbers, but also some Hindus and Native Americans).

In general, I preferred to speak about “people of sub-Saharan origin” instead of “blacks” with the objective of giving priority to geographical references instead of underlying biological traits. I also prefer to use the term “enslaved people” instead of slaves because this allocution emphasizes the fact that slavery is an acquired condition. Of course I mentioned Juan Latino, in order to illustrate different issues. For example, I mentioned the exceptionality of Juan Latino's inter-racial marriage in Early Modern Granada, a city where most marriages involving people from sub-Saharan origin took place among slave/slave or slave/freed people. Marriage among a freed black and a free white women, however, was very unusual. This was the case of Juan Latino, who married Doña Ana de Carleval.<sup>42</sup> I also noted that the nickname “Latino” that was given to the poet obviously referred to his training in Latin. Yet it could also be related to his slave origin, since “ladino” was the term virtually assimilated to slaves and foreigners who spoke good Castilian, and could therefore be perceived as a play on words at the time.

Later on, I pointed out that describing a Renaissance Humanist as “the black Juan Latino” or “the negro”, as was common in early research on the Renaissance poet, was somehow incoherent. Moreover, I mentioned that the most celebrated Spanish authors from the Golden Age, such as Miguel de Cervantes or Lope de Vega, were experts on writing ‘black speech’<sup>43</sup> while Juan Latino's fictional character - the

<sup>38</sup> Maurer, Christopher (1993): Un monarca, un imperio y una espada: Juan Latino y el soneto de Hernando de Acuña sobre Lepanto, *Hispanic Review*, vol. 61, nº 1, winter 1993, pp. 33-51.

<sup>39</sup> J. Ignacio Díez Fernández (2011): “La inspirada poética del soneto “Al rey, nuestro señor”, de Hernando de Acuña, *Hispanic Review*, vol. 79, nº 4, autumn, pp. 527-546.

<sup>40</sup> González Vázquez, José (1983): “Juan Latino, imitador de Virgilio”, *Estudios de Filología Latina*, nº 3, pp. 129-138.

<sup>41</sup> Martín Casares, Aurelia: *La esclavitud en la Granada del siglo XVI: género, raza y religión*, Universidad de Granada, 2000.

<sup>42</sup> Martín Casares, Aurelia: “Popular Depictions of Black African Weddings in Early Modern Spain”, *Renaissance and Reformation*, 31. 2, spring, 2008. p. 108 and 112.

<sup>43</sup> Martín Casares, A and García Barranco, Margarita: “The musical legacy of black Africans



protagonist of the Golden Century play - spoke perfectly correct Spanish, with no trace of "black speech", a fact that could be attributed to his birth on Spanish soil. I also stated that it seems perfectly coherent from a modern perspective to use contemporary terms when discussing past societies - terms such as Afro-hispanic or Afro-Spanish.<sup>44</sup> Among other things, I alluded to other freedmen and a freedwoman of sub-Saharan origin who also lived in 16<sup>th</sup> century Granada, such as Juan Latino.<sup>45</sup>

Arturo Morgado who devoted his research to slavery in 18<sup>th</sup> century Cádiz (2012), spoke about Juan Latino and other slaves "belonging to the realm of exceptionality", such as Antonio Machuca. Margarita García Barranco and myself pointed out the dramatic effect of the confrontation between the two protagonists of Ximénez de Enciso's play, which reaches its climax when Don Fernando de Valor, representing the *Morisco* elite, claims that his countrymen should continue owning Black slaves, even though Philip II prohibited it.<sup>46</sup> This fact is historically true, given that *Moriscos* and Muslims of Al-Andalus had always possessed slaves of sub-Saharan origin, but the king forbade it for fear of proselytizing. Consequently, studies on slavery in Andalusia have allowed us to gain a better understanding of the social construction of Juan Latino's identity and attitudes - all through knowledge of the historical context in which his life and work developed.

## 7. Other publications: literary aspects and overviews.

In 1998, Baltasar Fra Molinero highlighted the image of blacks in Golden Age Spanish literature,<sup>47</sup> a subject already introduced by Woodson and Spratlin. Fra Molinero, who studied English philology at the University of Sevilla (Spain) and ended up teaching Spanish at Bates College (Maine), focused his research on four theatre plays whose protagonists were Afro-Spanish. Juan Latino's play was among them. He approached the Renaissance poet from an ethnical perspective, emphasizing the connotations in Early Modern Spain of Latino's claim to have descended from Ethiopian or Guinean origins, while highlighting the reasons that led him to stress his Ethiopian origin.<sup>48</sup> Fra Molinero has published a large number of articles focusing on ethnical questions in the history of Spain and the Hispanic world, including the life of sister Chicaba.<sup>49</sup>

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in Spain: A review of sources", *Anthropological Notebooks*, 15 (2), p. 54.

<sup>44</sup> Martín Casares, Aurelia: "Repensar la esclavitud en el mundo hispano: reflexiones y propuestas metodológicas desde la antropología histórica", en *Esclavitudes hispánicas (siglos XV-XXI)*, Universidad de Granada, 2014.

<sup>45</sup> Martín Casares, Aurelia, "Free and freed black Africans in Granada in the time of the Spanish Renaissance", en: Earle, T. F. y Lowe, Kate (eds.), *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005.

<sup>46</sup> García Barranco, M. and Martín Casares, A.: "Attitudes des morisques et des chrétiens du Royaume de Grande face à l'esclavage", *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, 79, 2009, p. 15.

<sup>47</sup> Baltasar Fra Molinero (1998): *La imagen de los negros en el teatro del siglo de Oro*, editorial Siglo XXI España, Madrid.

<sup>48</sup> Fra-Molinero, Baltasar (2005). "Juan Latino and His Racial Difference", *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*. Ed. Tom F. Earle y Kate J. P. Lowe. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, pp. 326-44.

<sup>49</sup> Fra Molinero, Baltasar: "The Saint's Life of Sister Chicaba, c. 1676-1748: An As-Told-To Slave Narrative." With Sue E. Houchins. In *Afro-Latino Voices*. Ed. Kathryn Joy McKnight, Leo Garofalo. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publications, 2009: 214-239.

The very same year, Henry Louis Gates and Maria Wolff published an overview of sources on the life and works of Juan Latino.<sup>50</sup> This long article described the difficulties that Phillis Wheatley encountered when trying to publish her poems in the second half of the 18th century - all because of her sub-Saharan African descent. The authors wonder whether she had read Juan Latino, who published his Latin poems two centuries before. Gates and Wolff closely follow Marín Ocete and Calixto Maso and provide an overview of the poet's biography.<sup>51</sup> It is worth noting that they literally say, "Spratlin, author of an early lengthy study on Latino, is less reliable, because of his acknowledged reliance on Ximénez de Enciso's 17<sup>th</sup> century play, *Juan Latino*. Marín Ocete and Maso's research is based on original documents found in the archives from various institutions in Granada, as well as on early printed sources. We have elected to follow their conclusions, very closely, in the brief biography summarized here".<sup>52</sup> This is a curious statement, given that Ocete and Maso also relied on the Golden Age playwright for certain aspects they could not illuminate otherwise. I should also mention that most authors recognize the historical background of Enciso's plays (not only "Juan Latino", but also "La mayor hazaña de Carlos V" or "El Príncipe don Carlos") and the limited intervention of comic elements. In any case, this essay highlights the importance of Juan Latino for the general public.

I should mention that the *Dictionary of African Biography* (2012) and a chapter in *African Athena* (2011) referred to Juan Latino,<sup>53</sup> but unfortunately both texts are not sufficiently documented. To finish, I hope I have contributed with this modest article to the updating of the history and availability of sources for the study of Juan Latino.

## 8. Most recent publications on Juan Latino.

Elisabeth Wright's book, published in 2016 and entitled *The Epic of Juan Latino: Dilemmas of Race and Religion in Renaissance Spain*<sup>54</sup> is divided into two parts, each of which could stand alone. The first focuses on Juan Latino's biography (21-83), while the second deals with Latino's epic of Lepanto (86-180), with an epilogue entitled "Juan Latino in the Harlem Renaissance" (181-183).<sup>55</sup> We must thank Wright for the great effort she has made to understand the Spanish cultural context that shaped Juan Latino's works. Part 1 of her book, "From slave to freedman in Granada", is based on bibliography and previously located historical data. As regards part 2, "Latino's Lepanto epic", containing chapters 3 to 5, Wright introduces her personal and insightful interpretation of Latino's classical epic in the *Austrias Carmine*, placing

<sup>50</sup> Gates, Henry Louis, Jr., and Maria Wolff (1998): "An Overview of Sources on the Life and Work of Juan Latino, the 'Ethiopian Humanist'". *Research in African Literatures: The African Diaspora and its Origins*, 29.4: 14-51.

<sup>51</sup> Gates and Wolff have the honesty to signal, in the final bibliography, the texts they could not read under the initials "NC" meaning "Not consulted by me, unavailable".

<sup>52</sup> p. 16.

<sup>53</sup> Seo, J. Mira has written a biographical note of 2 pages which unfortunately is not well documented, the bibliography includes misquotes and even a non academic Internet source whose information has been taken from published research. Emmanuel K. Akyyeampong and Gates, Henry Louis ed. (2012): *Dictionary of African Biography*, Oxford University Press, pp. 470-472. Seo, Mira J: "Juan Latino, an African Ex-Slave, Professor, and Poet in Sixteenth-Century Granada" in Daniel Orrells, Gurminder K. Bhambra, and Tess a Roynon, eds.: *African Athena: New Agendas*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

<sup>54</sup> Wright, Elisabeth R. *The Epic of Juan Latino: Dilemmas of Race and Religion in Renaissance Spain*, University of Toronto Press, 2016.

<sup>55</sup> Part of this text has been taken from the review I made about Elisabeth Wright book to be published in *Renaissance Quarterly*.

noteworthy emphasis on the confrontation among Christians and Muslims in the Kingdom of Granada. In this case, Wright introduces a contemporary methodological perspective, focusing on the dilemmas of race and religion to explain Latino's poetry. At times, however, she seems to be carried away by Granada's historical circumstances, magnifying the *Morisco* impact on Juan Latino's epic and identity. Her interpretation is that the choice of the Latin language in Juan Latino's works does not simply follow from his aspirations to join the Latinate elite, but rather that it "provided Juan Latino some measure of safety from local tensions", a statement that could be considered somewhat questionable. Wright argues that the *Morisco* revolt against the Crown (1568-71) threatened Latino's social status, and I question this for the following reasons: Juan Latino had never been Muslim, he was raised in one of the greatest Christian aristocratic families, very close to the Crown, he was a professor of the University of Granada and he was married to a white Christian lady, so how could a pro-Muslim revolt make him significantly vulnerable? Furthermore, Wright argues that Juan Latino published the "Song of John of Austria" in order to secure his predominant social position. However, he might have done this just as any other white Spanish writer who wrote poems on Lepanto, and there were quite a few.

The very same year (2016), my book entitled "Juan Latino: Talento y Destino. Un afroespañol en tiempos de Carlos V y Felipe II" was published by the University of Granada Press. I had the honour of having two forewords, the first one written by Kate Lowe (Professor of Renaissance History and Culture, Queen Mary University of London, co-editor of the well-known volume entitled: *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*<sup>56</sup>) where she states: "Aurelia Martín Casares has conceptualised Juan Latino's life in a new light". The second foreword was written by Jean Arsene-Yao (Professor of Latin American Civilization at the Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny, Ivory Coast) who highlights, among other things, that the contribution of this novel Juan Latino's biography could allow the regression of intolerance and racism in our contemporary societies.

The book focuses on the personality and life experience of the Afro-Spaniard humanist in the light of newly uncovered historical data about Juan Latino and it is rooted in the context of the house of Sessa, the blue-blooded owners of Juan Latino, as well as on slavery in 16th century Granada. The most significant aspect of this book, however, may be that it provides unpublished historical documentation that reveals previously unknown aspects of the poet's life, such as his possible maternal filiation, the history of his family, the long trial Juan Latino had to endure in the Chancery from 1564 to 1572, the portrait that king Phillip II ordered to be made for the gallery of illustrious men of the Royal Palace, and other items that have yet to be uncovered by the reader. It is divided into three parts: the first one, called "Orígenes", deals with the puzzle of his place and date of birth as well as his kinship relations, the second one, "Talento", deals with his adolescence, his college career at the University of Granada, his interracial marriage and offspring as well as the lawsuit regarding his houses and other life experiences. In this part, I present Juan Latino's handwritten signature, which must be one of the first, if not the only autograph of an Afro-European in 16<sup>th</sup> century Europe, and moreover an Afro-Spanish humanist. Finally, the third part is entitled "Destino" and deals with Juan Latino's legacy, that is, his portrait, his published works in Latin, the allusion of Lope de Vega, Cervantes and other authors to his life and works, in addition to streets named after him in Andalusia and other legacies. The book has

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<sup>56</sup> T. F. Earle and K. J. P. Lowe eds., *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, Cambridge University Press, 2005.

already been translated into English and will be published in the coming months.

Damian Alan Pargas, in his review of the volume, published in *The Journal of Global Slavery*<sup>57</sup>, says: “Juan Latino is a pleasure to read, not least because of Martín Casares’s ability to present her detective work in vivid detail. She shows her meticulous research in the most transparent way possible, and patiently examines and tests various theories and myths about the poet’s life. Her book includes color images of important evidence (including previously undiscovered sources) as well as helpful appendices. Highly recommended for those interested in slavery and race in early modern Spain and in the lives of notable Atlantic Creoles in particular.”

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<sup>57</sup> Damian Alan Pargas, “Juan Latino: Talento y destino. Un afroespañol en tiempos de Carlos V y Felipe II, by Aurelia Martín Casares”, in *Journal of Global Slavery*, 2018, vol.3, issue 1-2, p. 180. Also, see Arturo Morgado, “Juan Latino. Talento y destino. Un afroespañol en tiempos de Carlos V y Felipe II, by Aurelia Martín Casares, in *Trocadero*, 2016, n° 28, pp. 189-190.