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Sexual and Racial Violence in *Mosquito* by Gayl Jones

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Jones's later novels, *The Healing* and *Mosquito*, press the limits of the novel in an entirely different direction, by evoking the sound and form of oral storytelling. The narrator of *The Healing* is a faith healer who can cure afflictions of both the body and the mind; the narrator of *Mosquito* is an African American woman truck driver in South Texas who becomes involved in the new Underground Railroad, transporting illegal immigrants and providing sanctuary.

The cultural endeavor begins and deftly resists American hegemony in an Afro centric context, while aiding its victims continues in *Mosquito*, in which Jones renders her characterizations, ideas, and general literary techniques in increasingly layered and ambitious terms. It has been celebrated as a fleshing out of Jones' style, and meager racial concerns have become for some readers of *Mosquito* an excessive and ill-considered meditation on topics about which she might better have remained silent. Stretching the genre paradigms of the novel, *Mosquito* makes its own laws and breaks new ground in its unconventional storytelling techniques or radicalizing the novel form at the risk of inviting censure. It is for the accustomed structural standards of fiction matched by its unflinching confrontation of stereotypes and interactions across cultures. Full of spirit and adventure, burlesque and caricature, *Mosquito* eludes the literary border guards and fingers the new commissions of culture. It is an important novel in the sense that the stereotype is explored not primarily through the conventional perspective of white people objectifying non-whites, or the postcolonial emphasis on colonizers representing the colonized, but rather as a racial practice within and between minority communities. Subordinating the invasive presence of the dominant culture, Jones instead interrogates interactions among African Americans and Latinos, symbolically maintaining that their mutual discourse is of greater importance than their shared dialogue with white America. At the centre of these cultural dynamics is the narrator, Sojourner Nadine Jane Nzingha (Mosquito), the non-negotiable spirit of a warrior class woman. In *The Healing*, Johnson is presented as an everyday, commonsense African American woman who possesses extraordinarily independent and intellectually adventurous ideas about culture and race in the United States. Her commentary on race and the American dream sets the tone for many of the observations she makes over the course of the ensuing six hundred pages:

They just thinks they's white. And them that ain't white plays once they gets to America. Peoples that is desperate somewhere in they own little countries and America is the true dream. They might be the niggers of they own little countries, like they say, but they knows the part of the American dream is they ain't have to play the Niggers in America.

Johnson's commentary is meant to be self-reflexive partially for the benefit of the reader. Refusing to play white and becoming increasingly desperate through her involvement with the sanctuary movement, Johnson identifies herself as a contemporary manifestation of the true American dream. Johnson's characterization of the true dream is the fact that she does not limit the term nigger to the people of African descent. Another participant in the true dream of America is Johnson's iconoclastic Latina friend Delgadina, who resists American hegemony mostly through her writing. As Johnson remarks, "Delgadina says they ain't no such thing as law. That law is them that make the laws. That law is discretionary, when it ain't arbitrary". According to Delgadina, law functions as a safeguard for American gringo power and generally is damaging and irrelevant to ethnic peoples--something to be resisted. The same is true for dominant intellectual discourses. Johnson says of racial narratives: "I ain't like to hear the white man's version, 'cause everybody know that. I likes to hear the other people's eclectic stories of the southwest". Defying the law as well as accepted and established versions of race, Johnson and Delgadina generate their own meanings drawn from their exclusive and shared experiences, as well as those of their respective ethnic groups.

The fact that Johnson and Delgadina are women enters into their intellectual considerations and world-views. Johnson considers herself a believer in romantic freedom while also insisting that she is not a hoochie woman: "I'm romantically free, but it ain't no hoochified romantic freedom, and-I believes in the old-fashioned kind of romance myself". Johnson's firm assertion of romantic love and her preoccupation with

hoochie women become evident a few pages later when she recounts how a Marine guide once had looked at Delgadina "like he thought she were one of them hoochie women, you know, the stereotype they has of them women they considers exotic looking". Essential to the established portrayal of her sexual self is Johnson's declaration that she is free and uninhibited but also careful and reserved, holding out for the monogamous heterosexual pleasures of traditional romance while resisting stereotypes of exotic licentiousness. Also central to Johnson's conceptualization of herself as a woman is a belief in what she calls true feminism. Using her occupation as a truck driver, she recounts:

Man, he be driving a eighteen-wheeler he supposed to be a ordinary man, but woman, she be driving a eighteen wheeler and she ain't no common woman. Like that woman I see sometimes on my route that wears her hard hat and works with them means building them new highways. (49)

Having individually resisted and overcome these colonization attempts and become a successful trucker in spite of her gender and ethnicity, Johnson has no respect for women who pridefully call attention to themselves for inferior accomplishments. Race also problematizes Delgadina's occupational aspiration to be a writer. Johnson recounts that Delgadina:

say once when she was in high school she wrote a story a about a Chicano descriptive geometrists, – I think they call them geometrists, don't they? - and all the people did when she read it was laugh.

Having serious intellectual ambitions the young Delgadina faced special challenges when sharing her ideas with her gringo peers, most of whom could not imagine a Chicano mathematician of a female Latino writer: This problem continues to haunt Delgadina in present-tense narrative forcing her to rebuke her fellow community college writing students who believe she should write universal stories or some shit. Gringo stories, that's what they mean by universal or gringa stories, even gringa stories can be universal now.

Like Johnson, Delgadina believes that dominant American society and culture are flawed fundamentally in their adherence to the tastes and expectations of gringos. However, Delgadina also shares with Johnson the charitable philosophy of not assigning the damning gringo label to all white Americans. Using her acute white's eye, Delgadina enjoys specifying or identifying different people and their beliefs. Although ethnicity often functions as an inevitable marker of identity, Delgadina ultimately believes that it is based more on imagination, psychological, and biological – a distinction which also informs her literary agenda. Johnson explains:

Delgadina is writing what she calls a border novel for her border art project. She has a long and involved first chapter because she wants it to be like the people who reads the novel has to cross a border to get into the novel. I tells her that they's a lot of people that ain't going to want to cross the border to get into her novel.

Delgadina indicts the race of gringo while firmly places her aesthetic critique in an imaginative context. Delgadina's preoccupation with the race and culture of gringo and its precarious effects on Latinos is complemented and overlapped on African American identity, particularly in terms of stereotypes. At one point Johnson humorously projects racial awareness onto captive ocean life:

I poke my nose up against that glass and be looking at them marine animals and some of them marine animals be looking back at me like they ain't never seen a African nose. I know it's my African nose they's looking at. I should call it my west African nose, 'Cause them East that.

Playfully using sea life to point out the divergent physical characteristics of Africans, Johnson underscores the physical stereotypes associated with people on the African continent while also demonstrating the personal, physical self-consciousness she has developed over the course of growing up as an African American woman in the United States. Later expanding upon Eagleton's observations on Africa in *The Healing*, Johnson remarks:

[W]hen most people think about Africa they do not think about them cities, and they always be more interested in them animals than they is in them human beings. I said they know the names of all them animals and don't even know the names of them human beings.

In her own distinctive way, Johnson makes the familiar assertion that misconceptions about Africans largely are a result of ignorance about them, their culture, race and continent. Africans are dehumanized in terms their race and culture, the importance of which often is tellingly subordinated by highly educated people to the characteristics and value of the continent's animals. Accompanying and underlying these racist perspectives and questionable ethics is the colonizing incursion of the Western imagination, which threatens to further people's conceptualizations of Africa. Johnson explains:

I be standing there thinking about the African jungle, but seem like every time I be thinking about the African jungle Tarzan and Jane and Jane's daddy and some other man that I just calls Bwana in that jungle.

Although Johnson in partially signifying here on a manifestation of cultural misrepresentation, her comment underscores the deceptive and dangerous case with which one's culture may be stripped and reinvented. At the respective and mutual cores of their discourses, Johnson and Delgadina fundamentally are searching for methods by which to meaningfully locate their imaginations and voices in a disingenuous society that hopes to silence or alter them through economic and political means. Johnson quotes Delgadina's race:

[M]ost modern colonization is economic. That's how the modern colonists, the neocolonialists colonizes, she says. Then they can pretend they ain't colonials. Least them in power does.

In possession of an economy–driven media, the colonists dictate their collective racial vision to their various ethnic consumers, often in their own language, accompanied by a seemingly benign, though ultimately bogus, political message. Johnson explains:

Delgadina say them whites that's all for multiracialism just want to use the multirace as a buffer, you know. 'Cause somebody told them that in the next millennium the white people be the minority, so they wants as many people as they can to identify with them, rather than the other colored peoples.

Yet the attempt to generate dialogic meaning is just as much an endeavour of ethnic cultures, which hope to repudiate and heal their legacies of subjugation. For example, Saturna's regional anecdote concerning Chief Nigger Horse serves to transform the meaning of a racial epithet by employing repetition:

But it like when he say that Nigger in Chief Nigger Horse, it like that word ain't got no power. Before when he said Chief Nigger Horse, the Nigger in the Nigger Horse seem like it had so much power to make me not clear none of the other things he were saying. But now when he say that Nigger it seem like it ain't got no power in that word, least no power over me in it.

The linguistic struggle for legitimacy and power between white American culture and ethnic interests is one to which Delgadina and Johnson both remain acutely attuned, especially when cultural transmissions have been subtly manipulated. Johnson interprets the phenomenon of French braids as a form of linguistic colonization:

I guess the French musta got that style from them Africans in France and the Americans. Or maybe they know they African braid and just call them French braids cause they don't wanna call them African braids.

Recognizing a racial legacy of literal and linguistic colonization, Johnson contemplates the phenomena as a means of repudiating and moving beyond it in order to more fully establish her place in the contemporary world.

The nondiscriminatory philosophies of Johnson and Delgadina, the daughters of Nzingha name can "be used only by descendants of the victims of the African Diaspora Holocaust" (413), although it is not exclusively for women, a distinction which separates it from gender based organization. As Johnson explains:

Do not submit to your own ignorance,' the motto of the Daughters of Nzingha is actually derived from a speech given by Malcolm x. That is what is different about the Daughters of Nzingha.

Made up entirely of different types of women, the Daughters of Nzingha, is not averse to utilizing male knowledge in its quest for a better way of life. Like Johnson, the organization sees its visceral ends as being much more important than the nature or politics of its political means. Whatever collectively gives African American women increased economic and cultural legitimacy is worthy of utilization, regardless of its ideological source. Daughters of Nzingha newsletter are told that Joan, "The Bitch," Savage, the erratic rocker from *The Healing*, has become director of the Nzingha Foundation and financier of the New Palmares settlement in Brazil. In fact, just as the Daughters of Nzingha works towards redefining the cultural roles of African American women, so Jones subtly appears to use *Mosquito* as a means of recontextualizing her earlier work. A passage from one of Johnson's reveries effectively describes both endeavors:

We has spiritual perfection and we has the capacity to reverse the fables that the enemies of our peoples says about us and to attain the truth of who we is and who we wants to become.

Using the Daughters of Nzingha to revisit her earlier work, Jones underscores her desire to use *Mosquito*, a spiritual meditation, as a self-reflexive means of demonstrating where she is and who she wants to become. Jones also frequently appears to speak self-reflexively through the novel's respective storytellers such as Delgadina, Monkey Bread, Lucille Jones, Saturna, and Johnson. Monkey Bread says of her writing, "Well,

I keeps trying to get freer. You know, mixing my words with whatever I wants to mix them with", a sentiment that embodies the overall style of *Mosquito*. Speaking through Johnson, Jones elaborates that this freedom is partially a result of associating storytelling with jazz: "The story would provide the jazz foundation, the subject, but they be improvising around that subject or them subjects and be composing they own jazz story". Much like improvised jazz, the narration also remains fresh through the tone of its performance, mainly the colloquial voice of Johnson. Through the character of Ray Mendoza, Jones partially anticipates negative reactions to the narrative format. As Johnson recounts:

He said corrupted English or corruptible English or maybe even incorruptible English. I ain't sure what he says, but I know he talking about my language. What that have to do with my intelligence? I'm asking.

Jones throws the reader into a rambling tale that jumps, without warning, forward and back. Jones plants passages in her novel to explain her stylistic and structural decision, the reader ultimately must remain slightly wary of both her and her narrators. At one point she tells Mendoza, "You talking 'bout race being a myth. Well, it seem like to me that language is a myth too" (242), a comment that later has implications for her own storytelling: "I's told y' all the truth about most of the peoples in this story, although I ain't told y'all the whole truth about none of the peoples in this story".

Deprived of all the details, the novel left us to trust the general direction of Johnson's tale, which is not difficult to give her laudable principles and achievements. Destabilizing nationalist gringo subjectivity, Johnson, along with Delgadina, suggests an alternative, liberating vision of American and world culture while reaffirming the overall importance of cultural experience. This endeavor also remains the aim of Jones. Working from an Afro-centric core, Jones stretches out to establish an ambitiously inclusive portrayal of race, gender and ethnic subjectivities. She combines these themes with dark and violent results, all the while hoping to establish an elusive variety of race, and aesthetic hope for the future. Jones's remarkable ability interweaves and reconciles her "all-inclusive" themes in her early writings, to meet the demands of her own exacting theoretical structure, constitute an impressive achievement for a young writer, even though her vivid depictions of the negative aspects of African American race resulted in various derogatory appraisals of her novels. The protagonists of the novels present liberating visions of American and world culture white reaffirming the overall importance of personal, racial experience and conceptualizing healthy futures containing healing practices and evaporating racial and cultural boundaries.

In early novels such as *Corregidora* and *Eva's Man*, Jones explores taboo subjects through violence and tragedy. In *The Healing* she breaks the spell, had healed herself, turned back from the pain old fashion, aching bluesy love and headed toward a more affirmative vision. She dwells on the excessive visibility of blackness, ridiculing the white obsession with black types through parody. She recalls a rumor that while she was in the Southland eating watermelon on the front port of her uncle's house, some white tourists took a photograph of her and reprinted it as a postcard that was sold throughout the US and even became the cover photograph a "neo-African satire called The Cosmic Pickaninny". In Mosquito**,** Mosquito adamantly dispels this rumor; "I ve read the Cosmic Pickaninny, but I know for a fact that the cover photograph ain't me, nor am I depicted on any Southland tourist's maps".

The novel chronicles the adventures of Sojourner Nadine Jane Johnson, truck driver and member of the perfectibility Baptist church, seems to follow in the more hopeful directions charted by *The Healing*. Set in a south Texas border Town, *Mosquito*, unlike Jones's taut and economical early work is sprawling and unruly, spilling over into territory too broad and meandering to map or summarize easily. Reminiscent of Ishmael Reed's seriocomic Mumbo Jumbo, *Mosquito* is the novel as parody and pastiche. A composite layering of multiform texts, dense with allusions to myth and folklore, popular culture and literature, and sex and race, it offers an especially witty take on the fate of narrative, and on the making and marketing of literature in the Electronic Age.

The novel begins when Mosquito, "the onliest African-American trucker" on her route, discovers Maria, a stowaway amid the drums and crates of industrial detergent that Mosquito transports. Flashlight and stun gun at the ready, she wonders whether Maria, apparently a pregnant Mexican woman, is perhaps a prairie fox, a chameleon or a human coyote. "They's plenty of them human coyotes and coyote humans too, "She remarks. And I ain't taking abut just them tricksters nether" (23). At the moment of confrontation, Mosquito knows only two words of Spanish: "Buenas" and "Nombre"; Maria, only of English "Sanctuary." Their first meeting triggers Mosquito's accidental involvement in the new underground railroad, a sanctuary movement for Mexican refugees, disguised as migrant workers, whom she ferries from one hideout to

another. But this is the short of the story, for this loosely plotted novel is packed with confounding detours and digressions.

Jones invokes the iconographic tropes of minstrelsy. When recounting Delgadina's colonialism, she starts to digress and thinks about a proverb that aligns human complexity with a melon, "which don't exactly make sense, 'cause seem like compared to human beings, a melon, and even one of them watermelons, is pretty easy to understand". She then defensively addresses the reader; "Now don't none of I'all come calling me no stereotype 'cause I'm mentioning them watermelons and signifying on 'em either". Mosquito's second digression on watermelons occurs when she is thinking about the markers of Chicanismo: she draws comparisons between Chicanos who avoid eating tacos and African Americans who refuse to eat water watermelons, "because they thinks they be stereotyping themselves". Types that form of characterization most commonly associated with oral performativity such as the theater or storytelling are employed to create a heightened sense of novelistic processes of racial characterization: how racial characters are made visible discursively through a lexicon of same markers. Jones intentionally selects the most outrageous and the most taboo to underscore the role of visibility in playing with the limits of plausibility. Characters that are too recognizable are perceived as clichéd and flat. Monkey Bread, Mosquito's oldest friend from Kentucky, thinks so: "I knows they is probably white people that has met Nadine and if they even mentions her in the story it is probably as a minor personality type and maybe even a stereotype".

But she knows that Mosquito can think deep enough to understand the "silly stories that she sends her and even if she can't understand the stories she can at least remember them". Like Delgadina, Mosquito gives little away to her reader. In this nearly six – hundred – page running commentary of her thoughts, opinions, and observations, we learn relatively little about Mosquito, about her family, her past, and even about her present life in Texas City. "I ain't gonna tell y'all all my business, though. I don't play that". When she does confide in the reader, it is unconvincing, to say the least. In fact, once she married to a former Kentucky Derby Jockey who is now running an eco-tourist business in Tasmania. Delgadina remains skeptical. Degladina is not solely left to the reader to recognize that is an explicit theme that preoccupies Mosquito as well as Delgadina. In this first encounter in a Texas City cantina, Mosquito sees Delgadina working as a bartender, an image that triggers a familiar racial and sexual type for Mosquito, or at least she thinks it is a familiar type: "And then I be thinking that I heard or read somewhere that bartending Mexican American women supposed to be a stereotype". Mosquito's uncertainty about the source of this image underscores Rosello in *Declining the Stereotype* point that there are no recognizable origins to stereotypes:

their anonymity is a source of their power. Mosquito wonders if the bartender stereotype is supposed to be a Mexican-American woman or a Mexican Woman: Or maybe it bartending Mexican women supposed to be a stereotype.

In this initial encounter, Jones humorously dramatizes how stereotypes are made familiar through affirmation and repetition. No version is precisely identical with the one that precedes it; but with each invocation of this image-the Mexican-American bartender stereotype – Mosquito's tone becomes increasingly confident, as the image becomes increasingly encoded in her own habits of thought with each utterance. Stereotypes are characterized by interactivity, which in this scene is rather humorously performed through Mosquito's obsession over the trivial details of an image that she does n't quite remember seeing or hearing. Stereotypes have often been identified with the mixer of racial and sexual discussion.

Mosquito repeats this image; the significance of the stereotype starts to change. Her use of the subjunctive phrase "supposed to be" now betrays a degree of self-reflexive doubt. As if she is trying to persuade herself of the veracity of this type, Mosquito says, "Bartending Chicano women that supposed to be a stereotype". This final "supposed to" is constructed in such a way that it can be inflected as a question or as an affirmation. There is a structural ambiguity in this sentence that makes the states of the bartender stereotype rather uncertain and unconvincing. The encounter between Mosquito and Delgadina introduces an important paradox of stereotyping: it is the result of external pressures as well as a deep internalized practice that has become a habitual response in social encounters.

Mosquito further characterizes Delgadina but now according to a storetype that is far more loaded and ubiquitous than the rather arbitrary Chicano bartender type. Mosquito admits, for instance, that from their first encounter at the cantina she considered Delgadina exotic:

To tell the truth, though, when I first seen that Delgadina, I be seeing her as a exotic, with all them glass leads she sometimes wear, and them skirts with peacocks and birds of paradise, but after she be lecturing me on that exoticism I stopped seeing her as exotic.

Throughout the novel, there is a homoerotic charge to Mosquito's bodily descriptions of Delgadina: she smells like cloves, she throws her long dark hair back after wetting it behind the bar on hot afternoons; she wears "feminine-type blouses" with an embroidery design:

She spritzes her hair and face, then wipes her face with a towel from behind the bar, the same towel she used to wipe off the bar. Budweiser and cloves, I'm thinking, is her perfume. And the Rita Moreno flashing her eyes at the hero or the villain, when this vato making a play for her come up to the bar.

Although Mosquito insists that Delgadina is just a Woman friend, Mosquito is unable to relinquish the exotic Latina stereotype because it expresses the attraction that underlines their friendship. As she adds about herself, "Ain't nobody think I'm exotic looking. They might think I'm a nut. But not even no exotic nut". Aware and somewhat guilty about how she is encoding Delgadina within the "hoochie woman" stereotype of the lascivious Latina, she humorously tacks on such qualifiers as "she (Delgadina) be talking about her culture, but she ain't no stereotype". Or, when mentioning Delgadina's probable affinity for jalapenos, Mosquito quickly adds, "I ain't mean to stereotype her, though". The "true" Delgadina is instigated, in large part, by Delgadina herself. She is equally absorbed with stereotyping and asks Mosquito if she looks "like a stereotype". Mosquito runs down the list of identity tropes– "flashing eyes," peacock skirt, women of questionable virtue. Regarding the latter, Mosquito quickly adds like us pointing to the shared radicalized and gendered stereotypes that cast black women and Latinas as hypersexual subjects. Delgadina responds in a highly sexual way, leaning over the bar toward Mosquito with her breath smelling like them cloves" and says, "I am the amiable sort, she say. But my virtue ain't to be questioned". The dialogue on stereotypes is in large part a common bond between them, a source of homoerotic playfulness, where Mosquito encourages Delgadina to laugh about such typologies rather than to take them seriously.

Mosquito's characterization of Delgadina is produced out of the tension between the true Latina woman and the "Stereotype Latina woman". Mosquito repeatedly renders Delgadina within familiar Latina stereotypes and then apologizes for this act, insisting that there is a depth to Delgadina that evades ethnic types:

I tell her she should be in a book and represent the true Chicana, 'cause she ain't like none of them chicanas they puts in the movies. She is more like Rita Moreno than Rosie perez, but she ain't exactly like Rita Moreno neither, because she is of a deeper hue.

The irony of this passage is that in casting Delgadina as the true Chicana, Mosquito reduces her to a type which elides her deeper hue. The problem is not solely with Mosquito. The inability to portray Delgadina's deeper hue is also a problem of language. Characterization, which is a form of fictional typing, relies on the paradox of generalized particularities. Jones takes this as a step further to experiment with sex in written discourse, a sign of difference to the reader and to other characters.

Not only is Mosquito disoriented by Delgadina's multivocal speech patterns, but she is also perplexed by her writing. When reading Delgadina's notebooks, Mosquito experiences a degree of estrangement from her friend, precisely because "there is things in Delgadina's notebooks, that sound like Delgadina". In her notebooks, which is one of the few instances when we gain access to Delgadina's "deeper hue" unmediated by Mosquito's speech, Delgadina grapples with Du Boisian double consciousness with the ways in which she signifies as a Chicano and the assumptions surrounding this sexual type, and with her own inner monologue that wants to break free from these typological limits.

As a counterbalance to Mosquito's incessant humor, Delgadina offers a sobering critique of how sexual stereotypes perniciously haunt the sexualized subject in the powerful domain of self-image. The self-consciousness of this notebook entry is a painful testimony to the pervasiveness of sexual and social typologies and the degree to which they have been internalized by people of color, even among those who are the most aware and critical of their presence in society. We are told that Delgadina protested against the "Frito Bandito" and that she talks back to the television when Juan Valdez appears in commercials. But what is significant about the notebook passage is that even in private writing Delgadina is still aware of how she sounds, monitoring her own internal voice according to internalized images of Chicano stereotypes.

The self-consciousness of the notebook entry suggests that even-though it is private writing, it is still highly performative. What is more, Jones takes the opportunity of a notebook to portray Delgadina as a round

character, riddle with personal angst, as a way to draw attention to the literary conventions of characterization and the contrast between Mosquito's speech acts and Delgadina's prose. Jones is also careful to point out that at times Delgadina stereotypes herself, borrowing from Chicano identity tropes to present herself as an authentic border subject. Mosquito is not simply the stereotype and Delgadina the stereotyped. Through her exploration of characterization, Jones raises a general point about the limits of what we, can know about a character. We are given brief glimpses of Delgadina, a limited view circumscribed by what Mosquito knows and more importantly, by what she does not know. Mosquito is the ubiquitous presence of the novel, but she is not an omniscient one: "she knows me almost like I knows myself. Now, I ain't told her what I knows. I just plays her game as she plays it" (500). Geopolitical border between nation-states is reflected in boundaries between people. In fact, national borders are easier to cross in this novel than interpersonal ones. If the "Delgadina" constructed through Mosquito's speech acts appears flat, then her notebook entry is an attempt to portray her as round, with an interiority that is torn between sexual prescriptions and creative autonomy. But Jones's Metadiscursive study of characterization suggests that this round characterization is just as limited and artificial as its flat counterpart. Depth does not suggest an underlying authenticity, but is as much a product of authorial tricksterism as the stereotype.

Mosquito first appears in Jones's novel *The Healing*, where the protagonist, Harlan Jane Eagleton, refers to her friend Mosquito, who is by now running a cantina-styled restaurant in Cuba, New Mexico. While visiting Mosquito's Cantina, Harlan needs Jimmy Cuervo, a Chicano guitarist who was performing that evening. Like the cantina in Texas City, Mosquito's cantina is also a brown black contact zone, where Mosquito becomes a cross-cultural interlocutor facilitating the history of Mexican corridor inflected with blues and jazz. *Mosquito* is the part of an oral narrative tradition that depends upon repetition to shape history from perspectives that allow a voice to those traditionally denied opportunities to inscribe their histories through race and sex.

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