

THE LEGACY OF CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS IN A ONE-ACT

Written for the Future Multimedea Art Exhibition

CEIBA DE CUBA: PART ONE:

DE SUS RAICES (*Of Her Roots*)

© 2010 by Lili Bernard

FIRST DRAFT

©2010 Lili Bernard
Lili Bernard Art Studio
935 Chung King Road
Chinatown
Los Angeles, CA 90012
(323) 936-3607
lili@lilibernard.com

NOTE: This first draft premiered on March 20, 2010 as a staged reading at Brown University's Arts in the One World (AOW) Conference with the following cast.

CAST:

LILI BERNARD as The Artist and Narrator

DOLANN ADAMS as Siboney Mother

REINA MARIELENA POWELL as Full Lyric Soprano and Ex Slave Grandmother

GRISELLE ESCOTTO as Dancer Ochun and Siboney Daughter

IAN SIMS on Bongos

MARQUIS FUSE as Ex Slave Boy and Conquistador B

RUBEN HORNILLO RODRIGUEZ provided the Spanish voice-overs for Conquistador A & B

With CORRIE TANN on Piano Accompaniment

NOTE: This draft is not to be copied. The author is currently revising it into a one-woman show, with supporting live percussionist and dancers, and pre-filmed supporting actors whose scenes will be projected on video screens intermittently throughout the one-act, off which THE ARTIST will act.

CHARACTERS

THE ARTIST: female, middle-aged, Afro-Cuban-American of mixed descent.

SIBONEY MOTHER: native Cuban, about thirty years old

MORI: ex-slave grandmother, native African, elderly and strong.

ANACAONA: Siboney daughter, native Cuban, about fifteen years old.

AYO: ex-slave grandson, native African, about sixteen years old.

AFRO-CUBAN PERCUSSIONIST: on batá, conga drums and the like.

AFRO-CUBAN FOLKLORE DANCERS: as Ochun, Yemayá, Chango, Oya, Ochosi, Babalu Ayé.

MODERN AND BALLET DANCERS: as St. Michael and his army of angels.

SETTING

An art studio. The walls teem with paintings of Afro-Caribbean themes. Upstage, a window with water droplets on its panes reveals a Chinatown alley. Outside the window, Red Chinese lanterns sway in front a neon light reading, “Fongs.” There is a large white screen nearby which is used for video projection and silhouette enactments.

Downstage, is a wooden easel with five peacock feathers adhered to the top. Upon the easel is a very large canvas, an unfinished oil painting of an early 1500’s genocide scene in Cuba. Painted on the canvas are figures of live native children and pregnant women, hanging by their necks in groups of thirteen, upon makeshift gallows made of trees, as flames char their feet, looming behind native men, carrying heavy loads upon their backs while chained in tandem by iron collars about their bleeding necks. Juxtaposed against the slaughter on the canvas is painted the lush foliage of the Sierra Maestra jungle, where Tocororo birds in their red, white and blue splendor, perch beside brilliant orange Flamboyante flowers and hearty pink blossoms of Ceiba trees upon whose spiny green trunks Conquistadores, stained in blood not of their own, bash heads of native babes. Native caciques (chiefs) burn alive at stakes while priests hold crosses to their slashed faces. Blood drips on white Mariposa flowers as seven seagulls, soaring in an azure sky, decorate the top portion of the canvas.

On one side of the stage is a blue bassinet beside a pull-out sofa bed, near a book shelf. On the opposite side of the stage is a rocking chair next to a table upon which candy and sweet fruit rest. There is a young Ceiba plant in a pot on top of the table. Next to the plant is a vase full fresh pink Ceiba flowers. Around the vase, on the table are opened pods of Ceiba, revealing their white silky floss.

TIME

Night . Sometime around 2013.

ACT I

SCENE 1

In the blackness, sounds of rain and thunder are heard. Lights come up on THE ARTSIST, standing before the canvas, wearing blue work overalls splattered in paint. A new-born baby is strapped to her chest. Weeping, she paints the canvas as sounds of waves, seagulls, natives celebrating, and Conquistadors dialoguing in Castilian while feasting on the native banquet. The sounds of festivities turn into wails of rape and genocide while related video reenactments are projected on the white screen.

VOICE-OVER SUBTITLES

The following is the English translation of the Conquistador dialogue, which is heard in Spanish in the voice-overs of the soundtrack for the projected video. The Conquistador dialogue below appears as subtitles on the video. The lines are not to be read or performed. The video suggests images of Conquistadores feasting on native food in a jungle.

CONQUISTADOR B

(slurping)

Man, this is delicious! How do they make it? Is it ginger, cinnamon?

CONQUIUSTADOR A

I think it's paprika. Was that a drop of rain or did you spit in my face?

CONQUISTADOR B

Naw man, that was rain.

CONQUIUSTADOR A

Shit, it looks like it's gonna down pour. You think we can slaughter all these savages before the rain hits?

CONQUIUSTADOR B

I dunno.

CONQUIUSTADOR A

Are you ready?

CONQUISTADOR B

Yeah.

CONQUIUSTADOR A

Got your machete?

CONQUISTADOR B

Let's make a deal: If I can chop one of these monkeys into 50 pieces in less than a minute I get to fuck the first five.

CONQUIUSTADOR A

Shit, man! If you can do that, I'll let you fuck my wife!

CONQUISTADOR B

Really?!

CONQUIUSTADOR A

What, are you stupid?

Sounds of rape and sex are heard.

CONQUIUSTADOR A

(immediately after orgasm)

Kill her!

Sounds of genocide ensue, screaming, wails, a baby cries.

CONQUIUSTADOR A (continued)

Get the baby!

CONQUISTADOR B

Which baby?

CONQUISTADOR A

(annoyed)

The one with the blue and silver beads and the pink flower in her hair.

CONQUISTADOR B

What are we gonna do with her?

CONQUIUSTADOR A

I dunno. Throw the devil in the river or bash its head against the tree or something.

CONQUIUSTADOR B

Which tree?

CONQUIUSTADOR A

That one with the thorns on it! Hell if I care!

CONQUISTADOR B

(solemly)

Here, you grab it by the feet, I'll take the arms.

CONQUISTADOR A

1-2-3- Go!

A baby' screaming is heard, then a thump, followed by quick moment of silence and then the sound of thunder. Voices of natives crying "Yumuri" are heard

CONQUISTADOR A (continued)

Look at those monkeys! They're jumping off the cliff! Go ahead kill yourselves, less work for me!

CONQUISTADOR A (continued)

Hey kid! Come here! Did you bring me the gold? Where is it? You didn't bring it?! Tie him up!
Cut off his hands! Stay still you damn savage or I'll cut your whole arm off!

Sounds of a young boy yelling, "Mamá" are heard as
a woman screams and then a man.

CONQUISTADOR A (continued)

(wailing in pain)

Fucking bitch, she bit me! I'll tear your fucking baby's head off, you fucking wench, and then I'll
fuck you up the ass, you and your daughter! I said, gimme the damn baby!

(laughing demonically)

Look at her run! Ooh, shake that ass, baby, shake that ass!

More laughter . Rain and thunder are heard while the
Cuban slave song "Oguere" begins to play and the
video ends.

THE ARTIST unwraps the baby from her chest and
places it in the bassinet, she takes a book from the
book shelf, entitled "The Devastation of the Indies: A
Brief Account" by Bartolomé de Las Casa sits on the
rocking chair and begins reading, fighting sleep.

Lights fade to black on the artist as she falls asleep in
the chair.

A spot comes up on the MORI, the exslave
grandmother, sitting on the earth, rocking two
swaddled babies in her arms. Beside her is her
grandson, AYO, and ANCAONA, the siboney
daughter who is pregnant. The teens are stuffing
white floss into two dolls made of burlap. Beside

them is a basket full of Ceiba fruit with their hard shells opened, revealing a white silky floss interior.

MORI

(to the teens)

Don't stuff them too tight or they won't be able to use them as pillows. When you're done with these I'll sew a doll for your baby.

ANACAONA

Make two, in case I have twins like Mommy!

AYO

Two?

ANACAONA

(teasing)

Yeah, two girls! Look how big I am!

AYO

Two boys.

ANACAONA

Girls.

AYO

Boys

(proudly)

And we will call the first born Taiyewo

ANACAONA

Taiyewo?

MORI

“First to taste the world.”

ANACAONA

And the second will be Kehinde.

MORI glances proudly at the boy and sings to the swaddled baby twins in her arms the Cuban slave lullaby “Oguere” as the SIBONEY MOTHER enters, carrying a basket full of more Ceiba fruit, under which are Yuca roots.

SIBONEY MOTHER

You have to teach me that song again. I forgot the words.

(puts the basket on the earth, sits down and leans her head on MORI’s shoulder.)

MORI

Did you bring the yucca?

SIBONEY MOTHER

Yes, and the knife.

(She strokes one of the babies on the cheek)

MORI

She looks just like you.

SIBONEY MOTHER

And this one like her daddy.

The baby passes gas.

ANACAONA

She farts just like her daddy too!

MORI

(lifts the baby slightly and reveals her stained garment)

That wasn't gas.

ANACAONA

Here I'll do it.

SHE takes the twins, lays it on the earth and unfolds the bottom part of the swaddling. Her mother passes her an opened Ceiba fruit full of floss.

ANACAONA (continued)

This time by the next moon, I'll be doing this for my own baby.

SHE changes the floss on the baby's bottom, as the AYO leans in lovingly to observe. Another passing of gas is heard.

MORI

(enthusiastically)

I'll get that one!

(takes the other baby from his grandmother and begins changing the bottom)

SIBONEY MOTHER crosses to the AYO and offers to help.

MORI (continued)

I got it!

SIBONEY MOTHER

(Impressed)

OK

(picks up one of the dolls)

You're stuffing them too tight. They're not gonna be able to use them as pillows.

MORI

I know I told them.

ANACAONA

(to AYO)

No, front to back. For girls you have to wipe front to back.

(noticing the baby's expression)

Oh look, she's smiling!

AYO

Oh, and she's smiling too!

ANACAONA

Mommy, look they're both smiling!

SIBONEY MOTHER

I know, they started yesterday.

ANACAONA

They do everything together at the same time!

MORI

That's because they share the same soul. Come, give me my little Ibejis . It's time to nurse.

SHE gestures to the teens who give her the twins one at a time. SHE cuddles and kisses each baby and hands them over to the SIBONEY MOTHER. The MOTHER nurses the babies as the TEENS continue to stuff the burlap dolls with Ceiba fruit floss. MORI takes the Yucca from the basket and slices off the rough brown skin of the root with a knife.

MORI (continued.)

(to the ANACAONA)

Eat some Yucca every day and your milk will be very rich, your babies will grow strong.

SIBONEY MOTHER

And drink a cup of water after every nursing, to keep the milk coming.

MORI

(to ANACAONA)

Anacaona, come, take off my necklace for me.

ANACAONA

Which one?

MORI

The blue and silver one.

ANACAONA crosses to MORI and removes her necklace for her.

MORI (continued)

Now put it on your sister.

ANACAONA

Which one?

MORI

The first one. She is a daughter of Yemoja.

ANACAONA crosses to her mother and places the necklace around the neck of her nursing baby sister. Lights fade to black on the family.

A very dim light comes up comes up on THE ARTIST, asleep on the rocking chair, a baby's cry is heard. The artist awakes, quickly removes her overalls, takes the baby from the bassinett, lies on the sofa bed with the child and immediately falls back to sleep, while nursing.

The drum beat of Ochun is heard as a peacock, in silhouette, struts across the screen. The bird pauses half way, opens his feathers, morphs into a vulture and flies away as rain is heard.

THE ARTIST awakes suddenly and places the baby in the bassinet. She lies back on the sofa bed and falls asleep.

Dim lights come up on percussionists, playing the beat of Ochun on bata drums, beneath a crescent moon. A bright spot comes up on a female DANCER. She is pregnant, dressed in yellow, and wears a crown of twelve stars upon her head. SHE dances the dance of Ochun, while reenacting the first part of Chapter 12 in the Book of Revelations.

VOICE OVER

(as Ochun dances)

“ And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.

And she, being with child cried, trevailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

VOICE OVER (continued)

And there appeared another wonder in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns upon the heads.

And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.”

A male DANCER enters, wearing a costume with ten large thorns and an elaborate headdress of seven dragon heads with crowns on each head. The DANCERS enact the fight above.

Thunder is heard as a video of a lightning storm flashes on the screen. A male DANCER enters, dressed in red and white with a crown upon his head, wielding a red and white double-edged wooden axe. The drumming changes to the beat of CHANGO. The DANCER Ochun ceases dancing and mimes giving childbirth, while hanging onto a tree branch. CHANGO, in dance fights the dragon DANCER who attempts to steel the baby from Ochun.

Videos of tornadoes and hurricanes flash on the screen as the drumming changes to the beat of the Orisha Oyá. A female DANCER, dressed in maroon, with a veil of cowry shells over her face, enters wielding a sword and dancing. Chango and Ochun disappear into the darkness as Oya, dancing, fights the dragon. A male DANCER appears, wearing huge white wings and wielding a sword. HE is accompanied by several other DANCERS with smaller wings. The angelic troupe, dancing a combination of ballet and modern dance, fight the dragon along with Oya.

Oya and Michael with his army of angels dance off into the darkness as the drum beat changes to the beat of Ochosi and in enters a male DANCER, dressed in blue and orange, clothed in animal skins and

weilding a bow and arrow. He fights with the dragon in dance.

In the dim light, the artist tosses and turns violently in her bed. A crash of lightning is heard as lights go out suddenly on the DANCERS and brighten on THE ARTIST who awakes suddenly in panick. The drumbeat of Ochosi continues. Sitting up quickly and dazed, THE ARTIST seizes her neck with both hands, sticks out her tongue like a lion and gasps loudly and violently in raspy repitition, with her eyes bugged.

The drumbeat changes to the beat of Babalu Aye as a silhouette of an old man, bent over on crutches, hobbles across the screen with two dogs, licking wounds on his boney legs. A SPOT appears on another DANCER, dressed with reeds of grass, flowing from the crown of his head to his toes. In his hand is a broom and he sweeps away the sickness as he dances. Lights fade to black on the DANCER and brighten on THE ARTIST.

THE ARTIST

(Becoming aware of her surroundings. Breathless and quickly)

Our father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, for ever and ever, amen.

(glances at the empty mattress beside her and in sudden panick cries out.)

Mommy!

SHE desperatly takes a quick look for her baby and suddenly remembers that he is in the bassinet. Panting, SHE crosses to the bassinet, sighs in relief and weeps. SHE lies back on the sofa bed and sleeps.

Lights dim on THE ARTIST asleep on the sofa bed as percussionist appear in a silhouette on the scene. They are drumming the beat of Yemayá.

A spot appears on THE SIBONEY MOTHER standing tall and worn, breathing heavily, with her head facing upward. A female DANCER, dressed in blue and white, enters the spot and dances the dance of Yemayá in circles around the SIBONEY MOTHER who watches her in a daze. THE DANCER disappears as lights brighten.

THE SIBONEY MOTHER, upon immediately noticing the large canvas of the genocide scene, gasps in familiar horror. Terrified, she runs backwards and stumbles into the rocking chair. Sitting upon the chair in a squat she is at first frightened by the swaying of the chair. Then, beginning to like it, SHE gently rocks herself. She notices the Ceiba flowers, grabs one, buries her face in it and heaves solomly. SHE places the flower back in the vase, gently strokes the thorns on the young young Ceiba plant, picks up the silky floss of the Ceiba fruit, buries her face in it and breaths in deeply. She notices the fruits on the table, puts down the Ceiba floss and quickly opens a banana. She devours it, tears open a mango, and ravenously begins to consume it. A baby is heard crying.

The SIBONEY mother wipes her mouth and looks around frantically for the baby. SHE follows the sound of the cry to the bassinet. Gingerly, she picks up the baby and takes it back to the rocking chair, upon which she squats and tries to nurse the baby. The baby continues to scream while the SIBONEY MOTHER in frustration, tries in vain to express milk from her breasts.

Suddenly, THE ARTISTS, springs up from the sofa bed in a seated position. Her shirt is wet around the nipples. There is a cage around her neck in the form of a cube, made of thorny twigs tied together with

twine. Her neck emanates a blue light.

Panicked, THE ARTIST immediately tries to remove the cage from her neck. THE SIBONEY MOTHER, baffled watches the spectacle for a second, quickly puts the crying baby back in the bassinet, crosses to the artist, unravels the twine from the thorny twigs and removes the cage from THE ARTIST's neck . The two women, stare at each other momentarily in silence. THE SIBONEY MOTHER lays her hand on THE ARTIST's neck, briefly touches THE ARTISTS wet breast, crosses to the bassinet and picks up the baby. SHE crosses back to THE ARTIST and puts the baby THE ARTISTS breast.

SIBONEY MOTHER

She's hungry.

THE ARTIST

He.

SIBONEY MOTHER

(Forlorn)

Did you ask for her permission?

THE ARTIST

Permission?

SIBONEY MOTHER

Before you took her branches and flowers?

THE ARTIST

(understanding glances at the Ceiba plant)

Yes. And her fruit.

SIBONEY MOTHER

She said it was an omen.

THE ARTIST

An omen?

SIBONEY MOTHER

The men were playing their sport in celebration of the harvest and we had laid out a banquet. Ayo and I went to the river to get more water . . . and there we saw it.

THE ARTIST

What?

SIBONEY MOTHER

The young twin Ceiba trees were cut off at the top by force. Ayo and I gasped and we ran back quick to tell Mori and the tribe.

THE ARTIST

Ayo? Mori?

SIBONEY MOTHER

Yes, Mori and Ayo. They had come to us, many years earlier, one day when we had all been

SIBONEY MOTHER (continued)

crying . . . for days . . . my mother, my husband and several other members from our tribe had been missing for three days . . . just disappeared . . . leaving no trail. On that day, when we were all crying, a cacique, a chief, who called himself Hatuey came from the next island with many men. He said that there were men, with skin as pale as the floss of the Ceiba fruit, who had taken our people by force . . . had sailed them off . . . in gigantic boats . . . to a land far away . . . to be slaves for a pale-skinned King and Queen . . . who live in a big house made of stone . . . where the God whom they worship is gold. He said that these men committed atrocities against our native people . . . that he saw it with his own eyes . . . so horrific were the accounts that we didn't believe him. When they left, that night I cried myself to sleep, thinking, could this be true?

THE ARTIST

How old were you?

SIBONEY MOTHER

I was about 15 and pregnant with my first child. I couldn't sleep, because I was near delivery . . . and so I went out into the night air . . . and there she was, strong old . . .

THE ARTIST

Your mother?

SIBONEY MOTHER

No, no. Listen! . . . her skin was as black as the night, her hair like wool. On her back was a baby boy as black as she, whom she called Ayo.

THE ARTIST

Ayo?

SIBONEY MOTHER

Yes. Ayo - Joy - her grandson. I'm talking about fifteen years earlier, before the banquet. When we first met.

THE ARTIST

Oh.

SIBONEY ANCESTOR

She . . . the old lady . . . looked at my belly, saw that I was near child birth . . . and then . . . her eyes pierced right through me . . . and I wept . . . and it was as if her soul . . . reached into mine . . . and just . . . grabbed it! She walked over to me and held me and rocked me and sang this song . . . and as she rocked me, my eyes locked with the eyes of the little baby boy on her back like this . . .

(points her two fingers of one hand at her eyes)

. . . and then he smiled at me . . . and it was like heaven . . . and I stopped crying . . . She let me go . . . and that's when I noticed . . . that on her wrists and ankles were shackles . . . iron . . . heavy . . . where chains had been cut off.

Pause. The baby cries. The SIBONEY MOTHER points to THE ARTIST'S torsoe. THE ARTISTS lifts the baby slightly, checks her shirt and sees that there is a mustard-colored stain.

THE ARTIST

Excuse me.

SHE unwraps the bottom part of swaddle and opens the baby's diaper as THE SIBONEY mother peers hopefully and anxiously . . . and then, at the sight of the penis, forelorenly. THE ARTIST begins to wipe the baby's bottom clean with baby wipes and changes the disposable diaper. The SIBONEY MOTHER quickly crosses to the table and brings

back some Ceiba floss. THE ARTIST, intrigued, watches the SIBONEY MOTHER as she stuffs the CEIBA floss in the oprn diaper and tries in vein to fasten it shut. THE ARTIST intervenes and helps fasten the diaper.)

THE ARTIST

Won't that give him rash?

SIBONEY MOTHER

No, no, it'll keep him dry.

(watches as THE ARTIST begins to swaddle her baby.)

Can I?

THE ARTIST nods and the SIBONEY MOTHER swaddles the baby.

SIBONEY MOTHER (continued)

They like it tight . . . see.

SHE hands the baby to THE ARTIST who begins to burp the baby on her shoulder. The baby does not burp.

THE ARTIST

(Trying to burp the baby)

And the omen?

THE SIBONEY MOTHER extends her hands in a beckoning gesture for the child. THE ARTIST gives the baby to the SIBONEY MOTHER who places the baby on her lap and pats his back.

SIBONEY MOTHER

(confused)

Hmm?

THE ARTIST

The omen. You were saying something about an omen.

SIBONEY MOTHER

Oh yes.

(gives the baby back to THE ARTIST)

That was many years later. Mori was --

THE ARTIST

Mori?

SIBONEY MOTHER

Mori, the sage, the old Black woman. She became like a mother to me. They became our family. We called her Mori, for “mother” in her language.

THE ARTIST

Did she tell you about her life? How she came to you?

SIBONEY MOTHER

No, it took us a while to learn each other's language . . . and whenever I asked her about her past . . . she always said that she wouldn't revisit it, not in words . . . not in thoughts . . . but I knew there were demons her past because of the shackles . . . it took tremendous effort to remove the iron from her limbs . . . she threw them in the river . . . when we asked her who put them on her . . . all she would say was "none but your soul can free your mind" . . . that's all she would say . . . "none but your soul could free your mind"

THE ARTIST

And Ayo? Did she ever tell Ayo?

SIBONEY MOTHER

No. She kept Ayo's mind clear from her past. So that he would stay true to his name - Ayo, which means Joy in her language. Ayo had grown into a very tall strong boy and had fallen in love with Anacaona.

THE ARTIST

Anacaona?

SIBONEY MOTHER

Anacaona, my daughter. The one who was in my womb when I first met them. They were nearly the same age and so they had fell in love. And we were both with child . . . my daughter and I . . . at the same time . . . but I delivered several moons before her.

THE ARTIST

You were at the river . . .

SIBONEY MOTHER

Yes, Ayo and I ran back quickly with the water to tell Mori about the twin Ceiba trees being cut at the top by force. On the way, Mori warned me to be careful in case the ancestors try to trip us . . . or mount us on our backs . . . because the rooves had been removed from their homes. It was the first time I ran so hard, since I had delivered the twins, so my legs were heavy.

When we got to the banquet with the water, the men were still playing their game and Anacoana was at the banquet table, decorating the babies with large pink Ceiba flowers in their hair.

THE ARTIST

Babies?

SIBONEY MOTHER

Yes, babies . . . two baby girls . . . had given birth to twin girls. Years had passed . . . and my husband and mother . . . and the others had never returned . . . since their disappearance . . . and so I married again and had two boys and then twin baby girls . . . and Anacoana, of course was the oldest. When we came back from the river, she saw the look on our faces and said, "What's wrong." And I said, "Where's Mori?" and she said, "In the house." And then she said, "Mommy, did you hear the thunder?" I said "Thunder?"

She said, "Yes, we heard thunder and Mori said it wasn't thunder and that we all had to go and ran into the house - -"

So I ran into the house and Ayo followed and there was Mori, gathering things in haste, saying, "We have to run we, we have to go!" And Ayo and I kept trying to tell her about the Ceiba trees being cut and she was so busy, collecting things for the babies, that we had to grab her still by the arms and say, "Mori, the Ceiba trees, the twin Ceiba trees, they've been cut!"

And Mori started to wail, that it was an omen . . . "an omen, an omen!" . . . and she moaned and chanted and called upon the ancestors' names . . . and here eyes pierced through mine and she said, "I know, I saw them just now, the ancestors soaring in the sky, and they were lost and homeless."

And then we heard the thunder . . . and it drew nearer and nearer, but it wasn't thunder. Ayo headed towards the door and Mori grabbed her grandson's arm with the force that was not of an old lady and shouted, "No!" and I ran out the door and there were --.

THE ARTIST

(interrupting as if becoming the SIBONEY MOTHER)

-- men, as pale as the floss of the Ceiba fruit . . . dismounting from large beasts with long legs and necks and tails like my hair . . . and the men were smiling and appeared to be peaceful . . . we had never seen such a sight and thought that perhaps they were spirits . . . so we offered them food and drink . . . and they sat with us and cheered our men on in their sport . . . and feasted and danced with us in celebration of the harvest moon . . . and the jungle was beautiful . . . Ceiba trees were filled with their pink hearty blooms and bees swarmed about the orange flamboyante flowers . . . tocororo birds in their red white and blue feathers were perched on palm trees . . . but Mori and Ayo stayed hidden in the house . . . and they wouldn't come out even when I told them that the men were so kind. And then all of a sudden . . .

SIBONEY MOTHER

(interrupting as if becoming THE ARTIST)

The wrath of hell fell upon us . . . First they took fire and ran to the house where Mori and Ayo were hiding inside and they lit the grass walls and Ayo ran out of the house, carrying his grand mother in his arms and they chopped off his head and pierced my Mori with a pike . . . and I grabbed my twin babies, one in each arm, as Anacaona ran to her dead husband . . . and I ran after her yelling, No" Anacaona! . . . and she could barely run because she was near delivery and her belly was so huge . . . and then one of the white men grabbed her and tied her to a Ceiba tree . . . and the thorns piercing in her belly and I . . . all I could do was scream and yell as he raped her . . . my daughter . . . my baby girl . . . my Anacaona . . . and her water broke she began to go into labor . . . and another man raped her . . . and they began raping all of us . . . and when I was being raped, with my two baby girls in my arms . . . all I could think of was my babies . . . my Anacaona . . .

From here on, THE SIBONEY MOTHER and THE ARTIST speak as if they are one in the same person.

THE ARTIST

My boyz! . . . (suddenly panicking and reliving the moment) . . . my boyz! I couldn't see them . . . there were piles of bodies . . . of flesh . . . blood ran like rivers . . . my boyz! I shouted their names and I heard "Mama!!!! Mama!!! Mama! And when he finished . . . when the man finished with me . . . another one penetrated me . . . and I fought and I ran with my babies in my arms . . . and I

THE ARTIST (continued)

found my little boy . . . found his head . . . and my other boy (panicking again) . . . they were yelling something to him about gold . . . “gold” . . . “where’s the gold?” . . . “gimme the gold” . . . and I pleaded and begged them to spare my son . . . and then they chopped off his hands . . . my baby’s hands . . . our first son . . . and my husband came from nowhere . . . and he whisked our son upon his back . . . and yelled to me . . . “Let’s go . . . lets go!” . . . And he ran with our boy on his back . . . he was looking back at me . . . with his hands cut off and bleeding . . . and he was crying, “Mama!!! Mama!!” . . . And I quickly looked for his hands on the ground . . . while I tried to hold my two babies in one arm . . . and all around me people were being slaughtered like pigs . . .

SIBONEY MOTHER

. . . and Anacaona was nowhere in sight . . . and so I ran to the river . . . in the direction where my husband had run off with our son . . . but I couldn’t see them any more . . . and then . . . there she was . . . (pause) they had put a log across the top of the twin Ceiba trees that they had cut . . . and my baby girl was hanging by her neck with 12 others . . . and water and blood was still trickling from her womb and I watched her belly tighten in contractions . . . as flames were burning under her feet . . . and she looked at me . . . still alive and said . . .

THE ARTIST

“Mama” . . . “Mama” . . . and then suddenly . . . I must have fainted because when I awoke . . . one of my babies . . . my twins . . . was dead . . . dead at the roots of the Ceiba tree . . . her head split open . . . and the other, with the pink flower still in her hair . . . was sitting on the earth beside her dead sister, crying . . . and a man! (panicking again) . . . with a pale face went to grab her . . . my baby . . . and I ran . . . and I bit him and I grabbed my baby and I ran and I ran and I ran . . . and I heard voices . . . in the distance . . . crying . . . “Yumuri” . . . “Yumuri” . . . that sounded like my son and my husband . . . but I didn’t know what they were saying . . . and I ran and I ran to the crying . . . with my baby in my arms . . . and my breasts leaking milk . . . and I nursed her as I ran . . . and I followed the trails of blood to the cliff . . . from where I heard the crying . . . and men and whole families were jumping and shouting . . .

SIBONEY MOTHER

“Yumuri” . . .

THE ARTIST

Yumuri!

SIBONEY MOTHER

Yumuri!

THE ARTIST

Yumuri!

SIBONEY MOTHER

and I stood with my toes at the ledge of the cliff . . . with my baby in my arms to see if I could find my son and my husband at the bottom of the valley . . . but it was too far to decipher . . . and all I could see were bodies at the bottom . . . as people . . . running behind me . . . soared over the cliff like birds . . . and I wanting to soar with them . . . and I yelled “Yumuri” with them . . . though I didn’t know what it meant . . . but my feet wouldn’t move . . . it was as if they were they were rooted in the soil . . . and I just couldn’t do it . . . I couldn’t do it . . . and then I saw in the distance -

THE ARTIST

. . . the ocean! And I ran and I ran and I ran to her . . . for days . . . with my baby in my arms . . . through thunder and lightning storms and heavy rain . . . and my milk drying in my chest, and we were hungry , and when the sun came up . . . I saw the ocean. By then, the baby had lost the pink Ceiba flower that Anacaona had put in her hair. But she was still wearing the blue and silver beads that Mori had given her . . . seaguls were flying above . . . and I treaded the rocks on the shore . . .

SIBONEY MOTHER

until the waves were at my feet . . . and we went in.

The two women look at each other, momentarily, dazed. THE ARTIST goes to the basinet, gives the

baby to the SIBONEY MOTHER who embraces the child and sings the Cuban slave song "Oguere."

LIGHTS OUT