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## [Review of] Juliet of the Tropics by John Maddox

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Maddox, John. *Juliet of the Tropics*. Amherst, New York: Cambria Press, 2016. Pp. 209. ISBN 978-1-60497-967-1.

*Juliet of the Tropics: A Bilingual Edition with an Introduction of Alejandro Tapia y Rivera's La cuarterona (1867)* makes available Tapia's three-act play in an edition with a complete English translation, an introduction, a timeline in English, and a bibliography. Thanks to John Maddox's translation and critical introduction, the play, now in both Spanish and English, has the potential to reach a bilingual audience. Until this volume, none of Tapia's works of theatre had been translated into English.

Alejandro Tapia y Rivera (1826-1882) is not widely known in Latin American literature despite his role as the author of the first Puerto Rican novel and his advocacy of women's rights and of the enslaved. One of goals of this book is to help establish Tapia as a "writer of the Americas" (3).

Tapia's play, *La cuarterona*, is set in Cuba to underscore its anti-slavery message and features an interracial couple as protagonists. The word *cuarterona* literally means someone who is born of mulatto and Spanish parents and is thus one quarter black. The English term for this, quadroon, is not in common usage, however. For this reason Maddox has chosen to forego the word quadroon and call the book *Juliet of the Tropics*, referencing the name of the main character, Julia, and invoking the image of the tragic heroine in *Romeo and Juliet*. The Julia of *Juliet of the Tropics* dies at the end like the Juliet of Shakespeare's play.

Who will use this book? The focus on a Puerto Rican author who championed women, who defended abolitionism, and opposed racism makes this work very suitable for studies in a comparative context in Caribbean literature. The array of characters in addition to the tragic Julia (Juliet) include Carlos, the young man of Spanish blood who loves her, his mother, a Countess whose "noble" family has fallen on hard times, and wealthy don Crispulo, who is portrayed as fat and red, an outsider. That don Crispulo's daughter, Emilia, who is supposed to marry Carlos, turns out to be a half-sister to Julia because don Crispulo's slave María is the mother of both of them, adds to the themes of miscegenation and societal taboos. When this work is studied in a classroom, there is plenty for students to discover and discuss. The characters and social world of Tapia's play invite a comparison with Gerturdis de Avellaneda's *Sab* (1841), whose protagonist is a mulatto slave, in love with a white woman who is to marry into the family of a grasping foreigner.

Although the setting for *La cuarterona* is Havana sometime in the 1860s, a decade in which Cuba was still importing slaves from Africa, there is nothing about the slave trade as such. There are, however, numerous related themes: racial mixing, star-crossed lovers, the specter of incest, societal prejudice, and references to the sale of slaves.

The writings of Alejandro Tapia y Rivera are deserving of wider recognition, and the bilingual and annotated edition of *La cuarterona* created by John Maddox admirably serves this purpose.