

UC Berkeley

UC Berkeley Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

Sexual Order, Racial Progress: Queering Racial Democracy in Brazil

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4gj5z4w9>

Author

Mundell, John Andrew

Publication Date

2022

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

Sexual Order, Racial Progress: Queering Racial Democracy in Brazil

By

John Andrew Mundell

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

African American Studies

and the Designated Emphasis

in

Women, Gender & Sexuality

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Tianna S. Paschel, Chair

Professor Darieck B. Scott

Professor Juana María Rodríguez

Professor Natalia Brizuela

Spring 2022

Abstract

Sexual Order, Racial Progress: Queering Racial Democracy in Brazil

by

John Andrew Mundell

Doctor of Philosophy in African American Studies

Designated Emphasis in Women, Gender & Sexuality

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Tianna S. Paschel, Chair

This dissertation conducts a critical examination of narratives of racial democracy in Brazilian cultural production while re-centering sexuality and desire in its analysis. One of many national narratives of race mixture in Latin America, racial democracy in Brazil is the ideology that race does not inform social, political, or economic differences between racial groups on the basis of a centuries-long sexual and cultural miscegenation. While many attribute racial democracy's ideological birth to Gilberto Freyre's 1933 text, *Casa-grande & senzala* (translated into English as *The Masters and the Slaves*), this established principle of Brazilian nationalism was first articulated in literature and art of the nineteenth century's romantic period. Cultural production in romanticism often depicted interracial unions between white men and black, indigenous, and mixed-race women as metonyms for ethno-racial and class conflict resolution. Nonetheless, little work has engaged the role of sexuality, sex, and desire in the construction of race-mixing ideology in Brazil since then, particularly as it appears in popular culture. While racial democracy promulgates equal inclusion of each race's influence on the nation, the white minority's control over national literature and popular culture keeps discursive power over this mixture as truism, one that evokes whiteness' longings for an illusory past. These representations of history are re-worked in every era of Brazil's re-invention as a modern nation. This dissertation chooses to analyze these re-worked histories in the media and genres considered most popular as enigmatic examples of the era in which they were produced: the novel in the First Republic (1889-1930), comedy film during the Vargas era (1930-1954), samba throughout the military dictatorship (1964-1985), and soap operas after re-democratization toward the end of the twentieth century. Pulling from Latin American cultural studies, black feminisms, black queer studies, and critical whiteness studies, the dissertation offers *queer miscegenation* as a mutable hermeneutic of cultural production to explain the racial and sexual abjection upon which racial democracy is founded.

Through archival work and close readings of Brazilian literature, film, music, and television, this dissertation is divided into four respective chapters. The first chapter, "Queer Miscegenation: Adolfo Caminha's *Bom-Crioulo* and Re-reading the Revolt of the Lash," engages Caminha's allegorical novel as a national fiction at the height of late-nineteenth century literary and scientific naturalism. The homoeroticism in *Bom-Crioulo* literally and figuratively queers the interraciality common to national fictions by depicting the rise and fall of a relationship between

an enslaved black man impressed into the Brazilian Navy and a white immigrant cabin-boy. As the novel's use of racial science suggests the untenable survival of abject social actors like blacks and queers, I develop the concept of *queer miscegenation* to show how the characters seek to achieve belonging to the nation through race mixture and their imminent failure. Meanwhile, the novel serves as a script to re-read the history of the 1910 Revolt of the Lash as the press and state projected a racial-sexual degeneration onto the mostly black mutineers protesting the continuation of slavery-like conditions in the navy. The second chapter, "Gilberto Freyre, Oscarito, and Grande Otelo: Colonial Gestures and Race Play in the Chanchadas," builds on interracial desire between men in the first chapter as a spectacle for whiteness. Focusing on comedy films, or *chanchadas*, during the Vargas Era (1930-1954) featuring the white-black comedy duo, Oscarito and Grande Otelo, the sadomasochism of slapstick comedy and its racial gestures harkens back to the slavocratic patriarchy described by the contemporaneous theories expounded by Gilberto Freyre. Interracial homoerotic play in the *chanchadas* and Freyre serve as a space of Brazilian (male) sexual and racial formation considered foundational to Brazil's modernity.

The latter half of the dissertation envisions how interracial desires, like queer miscegenation, explored in the first two chapters are incarnated within single bodies and their negotiations with whiteness. The third chapter, titled "The Drag of Mestiça Nationalism: Performing Africanity in the Samba of Clara Nunes," explores the samba career of singer Clara Nunes and how the military dictatorship of the 1960s, 70s, and 80s and its institutionalization of ethnic Africanity as foundational to racial democracy came to be reflected in her aesthetic. I use the language of drag to show how, as a white woman, she visually and sonically blackened herself to present as a mixed-race (*mestiça*) woman through her folklorization of Afro-Brazilian religions and the racial-sexual tropes of spiritual miscegenation. The final chapter, titled "Slavery's Seductions: Reproducibility and Queer Consumptions in *Xica da Silva*," examines how the global hit soap opera, *Xica da Silva* (1996-1997), firmly planted interracial sexual desire in Brazil's history in Brazil's return to democracy post-dictatorship. Re-fashioning the mythicized history of Chica da Silva, an enslaved mixed-race woman who gains freedom and status through an affair with her master, this chapter considers the various racial and sexually queer circumstances of not only this relationship's recitation on television but the protagonist's body and her marketing to Brazil and the outside world at the end of the twentieth century.

Thinking specifically about how elite white cultural producers and whiteness-as-paradigm direct the cultural narrative through their performances of blackness as queer and historically inert, this study shows how racial democracy—and the whiteness that drives it—shifts over time. Representations of and a desire for history effectively enact a national project toward modernity. While racial democracy's provenance intimates interracial heterosexual sex, whiteness' choreographed performances of an unsophisticated, unchanging blackness strip it of historical mobility and allude its contributions to Brazilian identity to be strictly sexual and abject. Whiteness' desire for history to secure progress thus coincides with its desire for blackness and queers the national project of racial democracy.

*For Janeen M. Vance Irving
1972 – 2021*

*A student who asked questions
A friend who gave answers
A spirit who listens*

Contents

Prologue	1
Introduction – Sexing Racial Democracy and the Making of Brazilian Popular Culture	4
Chapter 1 – Queer Miscegenation: Adolfo Caminha’s <i>Bom-Crioulo</i> and Re-reading the Revolt of the Lash	23
Chapter 2 – Gilberto Freyre, Oscarito, and Grande Otelo: Colonial Gestures and Race Play in the Chanchadas	51
Chapter 3 – The Drag of Mestiça Nationalism: Performing Africanity in the Samba of Clara Nunes	80
Chapter 4 – Slavery’s Seductions: Reproducibility and Queer Consumptions in <i>Xica da Silva</i>	120
Conclusion – Modern Blackness and the Limits of Popular Culture	150
Bibliography	155

Acknowledgments

I took my first Portuguese class in 2007 and had no idea then how much my life would change in the 15 years since. The pages that follow are a culmination of years of work and play, a love letter of sorts to a nation that has embraced me and jostled me, making me into who I am today. This project started in late-night conversations with friends over cold beer in *botecos* across the city of Salvador, Brazil. There, between the chewing of barbecued meat and weekend gossip, we shared books, beat out sambas on the plastic tables, and made our own predictions about what would happen next in our favorite primetime soap opera. This dissertation is a testament to a life in and outside of academia, to a life in the archives and the classroom, but also to a life of laughter in unison, of dancing in the streets with thousands, of eating acarajé on the beach, of sucking on mangos on the doorstep watching the world go by. This is a testament not only to my life, but to the lives of so many people that I have loved, still living or long gone, and the art and culture that enchants us, deceives us, and gives us a sense of who we are.

For these reasons, I want to first thank those in Brazil who have made this work possible. For over a decade, six friends in Brazil have become pillars of my life, chosen family, constantly present no matter the hemisphere, and with whom I have laughed and cried more than any one person probably ever should: Roberta Rodrigues Rocha Pitta, Almerison Cerqueira Passos, Elliza Oliveira do Nascimento, Igor Leonardo da Rocha dos Santos, Vagner José Rocha Santos and, most of all, Aline Santos Cardoso de Almeida. Aline, tudo isto é para e por você, meu amor, pelo carinho, pelas madrugadas com histórias longas e altas risadas, por sua paixão pelo samba que compartilhou comigo, pelo amor que me ancora desde há muito tempo. Without Patricia Helena Fuentes Lima, my lifelong Portuguese instructor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and now dear friend, much of this would quite literally, in language, not be possible. My gratitude and love go to the entire Pinho family in Salvador's Cidade Baixa for their care for me over the past decade, my Brazilian vovó, tios, primos, sobrinhos, in particular Maria, Livinha, Irani, Leila, Luciene, Arismar, Lícia, Maiara, Marinês, and Bioco. They opened their doors to me at every birthday or random Sunday, stuffing me with feijoada, beer, moqueca, empada, cozido, coffee, and cake. I would also like to thank other friends in Brazil who have sustained me over the years, Diego de Souza da Silva, Paulo Xavier, Pedro Leonardo Oliveira, Geny Ferreira Guimarães, Valéria Catarina dos Santos Lima, Daisy Santos, Letícia Maria de Souza Pereira, Bruna Cristina Jaquetto Pereira, Luis Sacramento, Diogo Sousa, Fernando Chan, Cleyson 'Zulu' Duarte, and Joelza Vernick. I am also so grateful to João Flor de Maio and his mother Rita for housing me in Diamantina, and for the pão-de-queijo recipe that I now refuse to share with anybody.

In Brazil, I would be remiss to not thank all of the institutional support that I received toward this project. My deep appreciation to the Centro de Estudos Afro-Orientais and the Postgraduate Program in Ethnic and African Studies at the Universidade Federal da Bahia for inviting me to return to my old stomping grounds as a visiting scholar and facilitating a research visa, especially Lindinalva Amaro Barbosa for the support and logistical help since my time as a master's degree student through my return to CEOA for doctoral research. Thanks to navy officer Sousa Lima at the Arquivo da Marinha for providing access to the João Cândido papers for the first chapter, as well as previous projects; to Desirree Reis and Vanessa Alves at the Museu do Samba; and to Daniella Gomes dos Santos for the help and free books at the Museu Histórico Nacional. Much of this project has been successful because of the assistance I received in three archives in particular. At the Museu da Imagem e do Som in Rio de Janeiro and the same institution in São Paulo, Luiz Antonio de Almeida, Eliane Antunes, Rodrigo Manoel, Maria Augusta

Bortolasi Aranha, and Cristina Pereira Araujo were incredibly accommodating to my requests on multiple visits for weeks at a time. I would also like to give special thanks to all of the researchers and staff at the Instituto Clara Nunes in Caetanópolis for traveling from cities across the state of Minas Gerais just to open the facility for me for a week. Marlon de Souza Silva, Rafael Teodoro Teixeira, and Tayane Aparecida Rodrigues de Oliveira were so welcoming, showed me around town, and broke bread with me every day of my stay. Additional thanks to the managing scholar of the ICN, Silvia Maria Jardim Brügger, for making this all possible.

In the seven years that I have spent living in the Bay Area, I have had the fortune of encountering so much generosity and guidance from people who helped me in this project while also shaping me as a scholar and global citizen. The dedication of my mentor and chair, Tianna Paschel, has not wavered since we first met during my second year of the Ph.D. You deserve the utmost appreciation for your guiding hand, heart, and resounding laugh that has held me up when I wanted so many times to throw in the towel. I owe you many jars of homemade jam. To the other members of my committee, Juana María Rodríguez, Darieck Scott, and Natalia Brizuela, thank you for your shared enthusiasm for this project, for pushing my thinking through your attentive questions and readings, and most of all, for your kindness. I am also grateful to other faculty in African American & African Diaspora Studies, especially Chiyuma Elliott, Aya de León, Brandi Catanese, Nikki Jones, Michael Cohen, Leigh Raiford, and in other departments, Nadia Ellis, Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Paola Bacchetta, Minoo Moallem, Clélia Donovan, and Nathaniel Wolfson, for your teachings, the opportunities you have given me toward my professionalization, and our conversations over the years. My sincerest gratitude goes to the inimitable Ula Y. Taylor for her cheerleading, prayers, brilliance, and warmth. I have learned more from you than you can even imagine, most of all what love looks like in this profession and how much it can accomplish.

To the remarkable staff in my department, Lindsey Villarreal, Sandy Richmond, Althea Grannum-Cummings, Lauren Taylor, as well as Gillian Edgelow in Gender & Women's Studies and Verónica Lopez in Spanish & Portuguese, my warmest thanks for the unwavering support over the years in walks, phone calls, institutional wisdom, forgotten keys, and hugs. To our dear late Toni Whittle-Ciprazo, I miss your smile so much and I thank you for the sugar. Sincerest gratitude goes to the staff of the Center for Latin American Studies, in particular Julia Byrd and Janet Waggaman, for giving me and my colleagues the opportunity to explore our interests further through research funds and events. I would also like to thank faculty at other institutions, especially Patricia de Santana Pinho, Christen Smith, Kia Caldwell, Jasmine Mitchell, and Micol Seigel who shared their work and their encouragement for my project from afar and at conferences.

As a doctoral student in the Bay Area, suffice to say that the stresses are many, on our bodies and our minds. I would like to show my appreciation for two healthcare providers in particular, Melanie Deal and Linda Carlson. Both of you helped me to take better care of my physical and mental health during the arduous journey that is the pursuit of a Ph.D. You deserve all of the laurels for the incredible work that you do every day and I appreciate your advocacy, education, and care that went into my well-being during my time at Berkeley.

This project would not have been possible without the care, feedback, and friendship from colleagues at Berkeley and beyond who have inspired me with their work, passion, and willingness to be vulnerable throughout the years. First and foremost, to the wonderful Mariko Pegs, Vanessa Castañeda, Nicole Ramsey, and Amy Andrea Martinez, thank you for riding this out with me all these years, for the co-mentorship, accountability, inside scoops, and love. I have also learned so much from a long line of friends and colleagues, current and alumni, from my department, in particular, Ra Malika Imhotep, Elizabeth Löwe Hunter, Malika Crutchfield, Gabriel Regalado,

Nitoshia Ford, Nejat Kedir, Rashad Timmons, reelaviolette botts-ward, Charisse Burden-Stelly, Lia Bascomb, Jarvis Givens, Kim McNair, Grace Gipson, Zach Manditch-Prottas, Kia Middleton, and Selina Makana. Both Ianna Hawkins Owen and Kathryn Benjamin Golden, especially, shared with me such wisdom, kindness, and humor at my lowest and highest. Dear friends in the Department of Spanish & Portuguese, especially Catarina de Morais Gama, Poema Quesado Valente Meyer, Ariel Wind, Delia Neyra Tercero, Mônica Carvalho Gimenes, Manuel Cuellar, Alejandro Múnera, and Sebastião Edson Macedo have given me a home away from home at UC Berkeley and helpful critiques toward improving this project. More colleagues at Berkeley like Kerby Lynch, Ina Kelleher, Rachel Lim, Darius Gordon, Tara Phillips, maria faini, Desirée Valadares, Omar Davila, Jennifer Alpert, Melanie Plascencia, and Julia Havard have shown grace and empathy as colleagues, friends, and co-activists. I also want to thank the multi-institutional Blackness in Latin America and the Caribbean working group whose research and friendship has sustained me throughout the Ph.D. In your own special way, you have each helped me see how academia can be a transformational, justice-oriented space that crosses borders, disciplines, and language while centering love. Nicole Ramsey, Vanessa Castañeda, Jamie Lee Andreson, Krista L. Cortes, Ashley Ngozi Agbasoga, Jane Henderson, Andreína Soto Segura, Cassandra Osei, Génesis Lara, and Rashana Lydner, you are exceptional, compassionate thinkers and colleagues with whom I look forward to continuing the work.

More friends beyond academia, new and old, have given me respite and breath away from research, writing, and teaching. Hailey Loftis, Jacob Perry, Anand and Riti Dwivedi, Andrés Flores, Claudia Parker, Ky'ree Fuller, Christian Herrera, Hannah Griggs, Kwanza Musi dos Santos, Miguel Pérez, Anil Fermín, Francisco Guzmán, Manish Samrat Karney, Andrea Marchiano, Emily Munns, and Rishi Mistry, thank you for sticking it out with me and keeping me company all of these years. To Janeen Vance Irving, wherever you are, this dissertation is dedicated to your memory. First my student, forever my friend, you have known my intentions and rooted for me always. Every day, I miss your laughter, wild stories, and your ability to make a connection with anyone you meet. Save me a seat at the bar.

To my family, I thank you for the depth of your love and support. This work is to honor my parents, Jim and Beth Mundell, for you have always encouraged me to pursue the life I wanted and the infinite wonders of knowledge, an open mind, and heart. To my brother, David, and sister-in-law, Rachel, thank you for always leaving the door open for me, for your compassion and acceptance, and the example you have set as partners and parents. For my sister, Katie, who has been my first and forever teacher, my hype-woman, friend, and confidant, and to Wendell, my brother-in-law, for demonstrating the power of quiet in order to be a better listener, all of my admiration. For my nephew, Dexter, and my nieces, Cora and Callie, this work has kept me far from you as you have grown and I pray that, some day, you will forgive me. My love for you has never wavered and I will always be your biggest fan and cannot wait to share my world with you as young adults. Thank you for the cuddles, jokes, and hope you have inspired in first walks, teeth lost, books read, and bicycles ridden. Y para Nancy Yolanda Cortés González, mi otra mamá, y David Bernal, mi ñaño: Uds. me enseñaron la banalidad de la sangre con respecto a quien se considera familia además de la tremenda distancia que el amor puede alcanzar. Los quiero mucho.

I owe the deepest gratitude of all to my beloved partner and best friend, Cliff Baclay Magno. Meeting you in the middle of this dissertation and a pandemic turned my world upside down in the most beautiful of ways. You taught me that work should never be my first priority and to appreciate life's detours because you never know who might appear. Your love has inspired me to see this degree to the finish as one step of many in building a life together. Iniibig kita, darling.

Prologue

*E vem a saudade da Bahia
Onde o samba tem, canjerê também
Numa batucada
Boom, chic, boom, boom, boom, boom.
É brasileiro o chica chica boom chic.*

- Carmen Miranda, *That Night in Rio*, 1941¹

Black studies is the scholarly and very personal space in which I learned what it means to walk as a white man in the world. Here is where I acquired the language that challenged the alleged racial neutrality of whiteness in the U.S. and, to some degree, across the Americas. This is a field that privileges the lived experience as integral while also intricately woven with an archive, both four-walled and figurative, cultural production, and the politics of everyday life. This is a story of relationships, of being called into conversation, of collaborative successes, and the occasional faux pas as we all trudge forward and sometimes trip on our own feet. My own journey in the field, and this research as its microcosm, is one based in sharing, reading, listening, and, above all, reflection: have you heard this song? You should read their book. Step into my office, her classroom, onto that plane, that dance floor, the cold, wet sand. Break bread. Read everything twice. Ask yourself the same questions you ask him. Play the song over and over. Like all research, this one is personal. Mess and contradiction give birth to nuance. Wading through the messiness of my own identity as a white scholar of the African diaspora who has lived between multiple worlds and identities challenges, yes, but readies an analysis unafraid of ambiguity and paradox.

As a college student in the mid-2000s, my Spanish, Portuguese, and even Latin American Studies coursework rarely broached the topic of race. In the few times that it did, mestizaje narratives were regularly reproduced, often in contrast to U.S. racial frameworks as ‘better,’ ‘more civilized,’ or even ‘loving,’ thus whitewashing interracial sexual violence. With the exception of a few excerpts from Peruvian mestizo Inca Garcilaso de la Vega’s (1539-1616) chronicle of the Spanish conquest and two poems by Afro-Cuban writer Nicolás Guillén (1902-1989), we read no people of color; from women, only a sonnet and riposte by the white Mexican nun Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648-1695). While some of my African American Studies courses took a more global approach, the focus of the diaspora remained firmly focused on the United States. One course in particular, taught by the black feminist anthropologist Kia Caldwell, sought to fill in the gaps in my education by focusing squarely on Afro-Latin America. Specializing in Brazil, Caldwell bore witness to these lacunas in my education and pushed me to pursue research to not only bridge my fields of interest but to live the work. Her class was my first inspiration to move to Brazil.

My experience as a gay white man from the U.S. who lived for four years in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil deeply informs how I came to this work and my overall analysis of race and sexuality in Brazilian popular culture and society. While my whiteness has never been up for discussion in the United States, my friends, colleagues, and adopted family in Brazil have regularly offset my whiteness due to my scholarly and personal resolve in defending black culture and life. This took on another layer of nuance in the context of Bahia, long-considered the cradle of Brazil’s African heritage, during my masters at the Centro de Estudos Afro-Orientais (Center of Afro-Oriental Studies) at the Federal University of Bahia where I was regularly invited by colleagues and friends to attend private Candomblé ceremonies, encouraged to seek guidance from local Candomblé priestesses, or *mães-de-santo*, on personal matters, and requested that I give formal and informal teachings on racial formations in the U.S. as someone born and raised here with a more critical

eye to the inner workings of race and anti-blackness. Usually given as off-the-cuff remarks, I have been told, among other things, by these people close to me, “*de coração, você é negro*,” “*você tem dendê correndo na veia*,” and “*sua baianidade é nagô*.” These translate, respectively, as “You are black at heart”; “You have palm oil running in your veins,” referring to the predominance of palm oil in Bahian cuisine that connects it to West Africa; and “your Bahianness is nagô,” or Yoruba, that is, authentically West African and spiritually tied to Afro-diasporic religions like Candomblé. Two close friends, both gay black men, who knew me as a romantically gregarious man enjoying my bachelorhood at the time joked on more than one occasion, saying, “*seu sangue é quente; é de homem negro*” (“your blood is hot; it’s that of a black man’s”). All of these expressions made me incredibly uncomfortable since such comments in a U.S. context would be seen as odd, indelicate, if not vulgar. While some were meant as jokes, I began to take these comments more curiously, especially when coming from close friends who all self-identify as black, and yet their tone insinuated them to be complimentary. I initially thought that perhaps my queerness made this transition more possible or natural as a differently marginalized subject, despite never losing sight of the fact that race and sexuality, while co-constitutive, are never interchangeable. While these rhetorical gestures were made in an effort to foster a sense of belonging, I recognize that they were unquestionably steeped in the constructs of race and sexuality specific to Brazil and how my own whiteness, both U.S. and Brazilian, was interpolated in them.

As an adopted citizen of Brazil, these comments expose the transmutability of Afro-Brazilian culture in making Brazil appear to be a racial democracy. Not to be confused with the pale skin, light hair, blue eyes, and straight nose that is my white racial phenotype, the narratives of race mixture and racial democracy in Brazil have made it so black culture could allegedly still be something possible within a white body, that someone white could embody. Deeply contrasting the almost inseparability of race from culture in the U.S., in the context of Brazilian racial formations, these comments demonstrate what Saidiya Hartman describes as the fungibility of blackness.² That is to say, blackness was made accessible to me, like it has been to many white Brazilian singers, musicians, artists, writers, and politicians throughout their careers. The most renowned example of this is the Luso-Brazilian singer, dancer, and actress Carmen Miranda whose epigraph opens the dissertation. As she performed a colorful, pan-Latin American *joie de vivre* for U.S. audiences in 1940s Hollywood cinema, for Brazilians, she became an ambassador of national identity. Through colonial *saudade*, or longing, for folkloric black cultural expressions most readily ascribed to Bahia, her popularization through the performance of samba, accessorized by her use of headwraps, jewelry, and language historically used by black women, gestured to an inherent blackness within her white body. Almost like collective spiritual possession—*canjerê*—blackness emerged through the enchantment of her hips swinging to the samba’s *batucada* rhythm. Miranda’s iconic performance announced a mixture of the nation’s cultures dripping with sensuality. The carnal, the erotic of her chica-chica-boom-chic moved her body into Brazilianness—*é brasileiro*.

Blackness in Brazil, as throughout the diaspora, became mutable, an accessory, folkloric accoutrement to the nation’s progress. Through the enduring ideologies surrounding its commodification and expendability since slavery, blackness and its performance could serve as a repository for personal pleasures concocted in whiteness—Miranda’s, my own or otherwise. With the rhetorical gestures of blackness offered to me by others, I could potentially fashion my own sense of belonging and enjoy projecting fetishized difference, as many indeed do. The implications of my being given the possibility to explore race as a white man in Brazil show how even these fleeting comments as echoes of cultural production suggest the control that whiteness continues to

hold over blackness in mandating which parts go where in the creation of the nation. This racial fluidity, however, is constructed repeatedly in the everyday but also imagined and often celebrated outright in the popular culture that Brazilians consume. In how this flux has pervaded literature, film, music, television, popular performance, and digital media, the replication and consumption of racial democracy rhetoric makes it likely the most effective form of indoctrination into national longings for an imaginary racelessness. In short, these depictions of racial harmony are addictive due to the literal and metaphorical seductions that assemble them. For this reason, I hope to show in this dissertation how the entanglement of carnal pleasures and historical nostalgias that mold racial democracy demands a closer reading.

John A. Mundell
April 19, 2022
Oakland, California, U.S.A.

¹ *That Night in Rio*, directed by Irving Cummings (1941; Los Angeles: 20th Century Fox).

² Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 21-26.

Introduction

Sexing Racial Democracy and the Making of Brazilian Popular Culture

When I first lived in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil in the early 2010s, I frequented the gay nightclub Boate Tropical near the city center many Saturdays. On a sticky dance floor illuminated from above by a disco ball and cheap rainbow strobe lights, the DJ had us grinding on each other and for ourselves in fogged-up mirrors while he pumped national and regional music from Brazil through the speakers. On occasion, the stylings of bad-girl diva starlets Rihanna, Britney Spears, or Beyoncé were sprinkled in for good measure. Tropical, however, long resisted the desire of Bahia's gay white upper-middle class men who only wanted to hear house music and U.S. pop club remixes. Instead, they stuck to hip hop, samba, and Bahian axé music while keeping its prices reasonably affordable. For its all-around cheapness, the white electronica gays often derided the club as *brega*, or tacky; any way to insinuate its clientele and general aesthetic as excessively black, femme, and poor. Tropical had nevertheless offered a safe haven for predominantly black queer and trans clubgoers to party safely with their friends and partners with less harassment from white gays and the police.

Every weekend, just after midnight, Tropical's patrons would shuffle upstairs from the steamy dancefloor to sit in the lounge hugging friends, holding nameless lovers, or leaning taciturn and alone against the back wall awaiting the drag show. One Saturday in 2012, as the music started for the opening number to the whistling crowd, the lights faded in and the silhouette of our host emerged. To the sound of a single conga drum and guitar, her mouth undulated, "*Ninguém ouviu/Um soluçar de dor/No canto do Brasil*" ("Nobody heard/A sob of pain/In Brazil's song.") The *transformista*, or drag queen, Andrezza Lamarck was dressed in all white, crowned with paper flowers, and weighed down in countless necklaces and metal bangles. She spun in her floor-length gown throwing black power fists in the air and holding up her skirt to expose the samba of her bare feet. It was through the choreography of Andrezza's lips that I heard the voice of Clara Nunes for the first time. Her layers upon layers of lace ebbed seafoam with each step and lunge of her arms, the song intoning the combined struggles of indigenous, black, and white Brazilians. With all but me singing along, the somber samba transformed into a queer commemoration of a Brazilian resilience achieved through race mixture.

This funneling of Clara Nunes through the *transformista*'s staged brown body elicited questions that haunted me, like the singer's voice echoing in my ear drum and memory. I became an admitted fan of Clara Nunes over the years, whom is often described as black or mixed-race. However, to my surprise, I discovered that she was not, in fact, a black woman, even while she performed blackness and Afro-Brazilian folklore. Yet, my exposure to her through Andrezza Lamarck gestured metaphorically and quite literally to the very drag-ability of Brazilianness, with Clara Nunes' performance of mixed race-ness as merely a node in a much longer arc of cultural nationalism that extends well into the twenty-first century. Clara Nunes, as a symbol of Brazil's ideals of race mixture, or *mestiçagem*, was transposed for black queer belonging at Boate Tropical, as many other white women performers before and after her became bodies upon which to project a sexual liberation always circumscribed by race.

Researching how gay black men saw themselves in a heterosexist, anti-black and, yet, majority black city of Salvador, Brazil, my master's thesis project at the time did not include the popular culture that my interlocutors consumed on a daily basis.¹ This became especially apparent in their—and soon my own—adoration of axé music, a style endemic to Bahia that blends samba,

reggae, rock, hip hop, and Afro-Brazilian liturgical chants from the Candomblé *terreiros*, or temples, into an electrified tropical beat perfect for the annual carnival's mosh-pit parades. As a genre of Brazilian popular music from the Northeast that has been nationalized through carnival since the 1990s, it pulls almost exclusively from rhythms across the African diaspora in the Americas. Curiously, however, the most well-paid and popular singers of axé have been white women, especially Daniela Mercury, Ivete Sangalo, and Claudia Leitte, who continue to tap directly into the tradition continued by Clara Nunes, Carmen Miranda, and their predecessors. These women's performance of axé surrounded by all-black instrumentalists and dancers mark them as racially fluid. Selling out stadiums from Maracanã to Madison Square Garden, the commodification of black popular culture and the high-spirited beats that envelop them on stage make them icons especially popular with black and LGBT fans while seemingly embodying Brazilian myths of racial democracy.

This dissertation therefore aims to re-center sex and sexuality in Brazil's myth of racial democracy. Similar to many other ideologies of race mixture across Latin America and the Caribbean like *mestizaje*, *mulatismo*, or *creolité*, racial democracy is yet another national script of historically affable race mixture which has been repeatedly produced, circulated, and exchanged in public discourse by the state, cultural actors, and everyday people. The white elites who have created and controlled this historical and cultural capital have enforced it in an attempt to ensure not only cordial race relations but, more importantly, the status quo of national identity as dictated by whiteness. In short, due to centuries of miscegenation under colonialism and slavery in Brazil, racial democracy argues that race neither permeates social relations nor is it the basis for inequality. In a racial democracy, race is to be understood as less salient in everyday life than other structures that generate inequality like class and gender. Most commonplace in racial democracy rhetorics is the spouting off of family genealogies of mixture to offer nuance to one's racial positioning, to undermine grievances of racism, or even to distinguish Brazil from places like the United States and South Africa which have more widely recognizable histories of racial segregation. Still, albeit veiled and yet implied between the lines, the interracial sex and desire that make the appearance of a racial democracy possible in Brazil are rarely discussed by everyday people, the state, or in popular culture. This project seeks to draw out the underlying specter of sex in Brazil's rhetoric of race-making, especially as it appears widely in literature and popular culture.

Discussions on race in regional and national identity in Brazil have not only permeated the pages, paintings, film reels, vinyl, and air waves of Brazil. Indeed, cultural production has both influenced and been influenced by the discourses of race-making like racial democracy proffered by the state and policy. In the late-nineteenth century, the Brazilian government sanctioned its first whitening campaign—*embranquecimento*—by subsidizing the immigration of impoverished Europeans and offering jobs and free land contracts that it had subsequently denied to Afro-Brazilians after the abolition of slavery in 1888. The white Brazilian elite envisioned *embranquecimento* as a policy that would lead to the biological and social whitening of black and mixed-race Brazilians. With the goal of sexual intermixture between these two classes, the plan was largely fraught due to the preference of immigrants mostly from Italy, Germany, Spain, Portugal, and, later, Japan, to remain within their ethnic enclaves due to their own anti-blackness. Nonetheless, *embranquecimento* bolstered the well-established elite's racial and class claims to whiteness while their miscegenation project permitted the emergence of an ironic social theory that race ceased to have relevance. Later, at the height of the international eugenics movement in the 1920s and 30s, this mythic and deceptive social theory of racial democracy became currency in sociological and anthropological circles. It was taken up into official policy by dictator and,

later, democratically re-elected president Getúlio Vargas (1930-1945, 1951-1954). Under Vargas, racial democracy soon became a discreet discursive tool of authoritarianism that would be maintained with just as much dictatorial fervor under liberal-minded presidents Juscelino Kubitschek (1956-1961), Jânio Quadros (1961), and João Goulart (1961-1964), and the far-right military dictatorship that followed (1964-1985). Despite the fall of the military dictatorship which sought to market Brazil to the rest of the world as a racial democracy and quashed any political activism, including that which centered race, the ideology still carries great political relevance in Brazilian nationalist rhetoric of everyday life. My project provides a genealogy of racial democracy in Brazil to show how it evolved from the national project of *embranquecimento* and later developed by intellectuals and cultural producers alike whose work, in its repetition and recitation, carried these ideas over well into the twenty-first century. As such, concurrent and competing histories were fashioned in service of a well-maintained but allegedly imperceptible white supremacy that was not only reinforced but inspired by contemporaneous popular culture. As this project shows, culture clearly feeds off and into racial democracy as a social theory, the ideology having been depicted, enacted, produced—that is, performed—in popular culture for well over a century both with and without explicit sponsorship from the state.

Since the late 1960s, social scientists, historians, and cultural studies scholars of Brazil have generally agreed that Brazilian racial democracy is a myth. In their critiques, my predecessors and contemporaries have approached racial democracy as a structure, narrative, and metaphor through which policies, histories, and representations of race and gender—albeit, admittedly, not so much sex and sexuality—are constructed. While I lean heavily on others' work around racial democracy across multiple fields of study, I find it paramount to wade into the ideology's complexities and awkward contradictions over time with the help of an interdisciplinary lens. Across media from the turn of the twentieth century to the new millennium, iterations of racial democracy might appear totally different, perhaps to even refute each other, especially on the grounds of where, when, and how they are expressed. This mapping of racial democracy's genealogical trajectory speaks to its very performativity, that is, how intellectuals and cultural producers have recited its tenets, projecting racial democracy through and onto bodies as the means of their very racialization while giving the illusion of progressive thinking. As a cultural studies scholar and black feminist historian of the African diaspora, Saidiya Hartman's arguments in her pivotal 1997 text, *Scenes of Subjection*, speak to how I approach these nuances in time, space, performance, and genre.² Hartman expands on sociologist Orlando Patterson's theory of social death through enslavement in her theory of *fungibility*, or the reduction of blackness through its commodification to an animate inanimacy, a body, a thing, a canvas upon which the fears, desires, lusts, and experiments of whiteness and the state can be painted, explored, sold, or even obliterated.³ As a commodity traded and sold, blackness—or what it is imagined to be through state policy and cultural production that is, more often than not, controlled almost exclusively by white people—is cyclically repeated and recited, often in search of an essence or authenticity staid in time. The alleged stasis of blackness thus serves as foil to a linear, forward-marching progress narrative of the Western nation. In the case of Brazil, as a country that has deftly mastered the ability to incorporate and exclude blackness from its vision of modernity, racial democracy has ironically depended on the hypervisibility of race. However, what other studies of race-making in Brazil have often glossed over or outright ignored is how race actually gets made through sexual desire, innuendo, and gesture pervasive in popular culture and daily speech practices. In the cultural cartography I offer here, I demonstrate how racial democracy charts itself through my

analysis of cultural productions that have at once reached the level of national consumption as they have helped to paint Brazil on the world stage as a racial paradise.

In order to achieve this, I use archival research and close and queer reading of literature, film, music, and television to question how sexuality and queerness undergird racial democracy discourse in popular culture. As a verb, *to queer* these cultural objects means to question or challenge the heterosexist frameworks they reproduce like racial democracy. This re-reading simultaneously brings to light the erotics of race-making in Brazil as a national progress narrative. My queer reading pinpoints racial democracy's white authorship and folklorization of African heritage and blackness as fueled by a longing for a past that never quite existed. Based in interdisciplinary methods that heavily engages cultural studies and transnational black feminist and queer theories, this project contributes to the growing field of critical whiteness in Latin America and the Caribbean by raising new questions about ideologies of race mixture and how sexuality figures more broadly into race- and nation-making in Brazil and the Atlantic world. Therefore, I interrogate the deployment of racial democracy and, to that effect, the construction of whiteness, blackness, and mixed race-ness in Brazilian popular culture. This project especially seeks to engage three guiding questions. First, with respect to ideological genealogy, how has racial democracy discursively developed over time via cultural production, from the rise of the Brazilian Republic at the turn of the twentieth century to the new millennium? In turn, how has cultural production itself produced racial democracy quite literally and symbolically? As a fundamental national project of Brazil that has been inscribed not only nationally but regionally within Brazil as well as internationally, how does racial democracy change across time and space? Second, how does a queer reading of racial democracy make plain the racial and sexual complexities of the ideology? Finally, where racial democracy serves as Brazil's own linear progress narrative, what is the performative role of whiteness in longing for history and where does this leave blackness? To address these questions, my analysis of popular culture over the long twentieth century illustrates how racial democracy surged as an ideology and has, through popular culture, become a discursive chameleon that can adapt due to longstanding racial hegemonies of whiteness in Brazil.

The Father(ing) of Racial Democracy: Gilberto Freyre and White Heteropatriarchy

Since the publication of his *Casa-grande & senzala* in 1933, Gilberto Freyre (1900-1987) has been considered the father of racial democracy ideology. *Casa-grande & senzala*, better known in English as *The Masters and the Slaves*, managed to seemingly invert the turn-of-the-twentieth-century belief that miscegenation was causing a racial and sexual degeneracy of the nation, instead, into a cultural boon for national progress between the World Wars. Despite this, Freyre continued to place Brazil's European colonizers and their descendants as the brains—and balls, both in brawn and breeding—behind racial democracy. With his proclivity for lyrical writing that crisscrosses genre, the figure of the European undoubtedly reflects the author's own self-perception and personal experience as the son of a wealthy plantation-owning family.

Freyre received his formal training under famed anthropologist Franz Boas at Columbia University after having studied at Baylor University in Texas at the height of Jim Crow. Soon after completing his master's degree in New York, he returned to Brazil, later transforming his deeply

eugenicist thesis into the long-winded essay that we know today.ⁱ In it, he most notably romanticizes interracial sexual violence as the basis for Brazil's allegedly cordial race relations. As part of the white aristocracy in the northeastern state of Pernambuco, his family owned large sugar plantations and enslaved black and mixed-race people for generations until abolition in 1888. Born 12 years after emancipation, Freyre grew up with many of those who were once-enslaved but remained on his family's plantation as laborers. In his extensive readings of his sociologist and anthropologist contemporaries—and his family's own personal plantation records—at the height of the Brazilian eugenics movement, Freyre employed sweeping racial and sexual generalizations of Brazil's formative past. These oversimplifications were most frequently masked behind extensive detail and exclusive source material from the U.S. and European academies. My dissertation sits within these contradictions of looking to the past, where the past—or what is considered 'past,' 'pure,' 'authentic,' or 'timeless'—is one anchored in blackness in order to help situate whiteness as overseer of the national project for the future. As Freyre's work makes clear, he envisions racial progress through a heteropatriarchal sexual order made manifest through interracial sex, desire, and violence.

Contrary to U.S. racial logics, the *embranquecimento* campaigns of the Brazilian Republic at the turn of the twentieth century insinuated that a cultural miscegenation of recently arrived European immigrants with poor Afro-Brazilians would beget a procreative miscegenation. However, Gilberto Freyre was the first to explicitly express these racial rhetorics as intrinsically intersected with the sexual. He built on these previously established ideas in Brazil and abroad; ideas about proper and improper races, sexualities, and sexual practices that, as Siobhan Somerville shows in the case of the United States, were simultaneously devised to improve a society perceived to be morally corrupt.⁴ However, as expressed in multiple forms of cultural production where whites play on their own understandings of blackness and its contributions to the Brazilian nation, as I will show in the following chapters, these ideas transmogrified over time. After Freyre, the sexual aspects of racial democracy, again, became more muted. By viewing racial democracy as a cultural performance of blackness carried out by white elites in order to mythicize the racial origins of the mixed-race Brazilian nation, the embodiment of blackness can be viewed as material, affective, and archivable according to nationalist longings for a collective history.

Several prominent Brazilian thinkers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, like jurist-physician Raimundo Nina Rodrigues, refuted *embranquecimento* in favor of stricter, more traditional Northern European eugenics. This school of thought, which greatly shaped Brazilian social policy at the time, advocated for segregation, sterilization, or removal of 'inferior' races.⁵ Freyre's *Casa-grande & senzala*, which heavily cites Nina Rodrigues among others in the burgeoning field of medical anthropology, in turn, sought to highlight the positive and negative aspects that each race brought to the Brazilian nation. For him, miscegenation did not determine biological inferiority but, instead, the possibilities for cultural ascendancy and the broader national progress narrative. In *Casa-grande & senzala* and almost all of his subsequent works that would form what has come to be called Lusotropicalism, Freyre argued that the African's contribution to Brazil was largely one founded in sensuality and eroticism; in the ability to not only produce capital in the form of Brazilian goods like sugar, coffee, gold, and diamonds, but also in the reproduction of bodies, themselves enslaved property. With this racial-sexual argument, Freyre was able to lay

ⁱ For a thorough comparison between Freyre's thesis and its transformation into *Casa-grande & senzala*, see Alexandra Isfahani-Hammond's *White Negritude: Race, Writing, and Brazilian Cultural Identity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

the structure for racial democracy as one where the influence of the ‘slave quarters’ (*senzala*) on the structure of the ‘big house’ (*casa-grande*) was present through heritage, an almost spiritual and sexual essence, while remaining relatively insignificant to the day-to-day running of political and economic affairs. Nonetheless, it is Freyre’s focus on the African’s sexual contribution to Brazilian identity via simultaneous desire and depravity that has only more recently been analyzed.

While there have been extensive critiques of Freyre by black feminist scholars attuned to the racial and gendered underpinnings of his work, few queer theorists have paid much attention to Freyre’s work. My work seeks to contribute by asking how race and sexual desire are co-constitutive in the construction of nationalist mythologies in Brazil, including *Casa-grande & senzala*’s with its unambiguous interracial homoeroticism and illicit sex throughout. Famously, Freyre sums up his many lurid descriptions, writing, “There is no slavery without sexual depravity. Depravity is the essence of such a regime.”⁶ His pornographic re-envisioning of Brazilian history offers the scholarly reader an almost Shakespearean spectacle: the chance to delight in a sensorial past of star-crossed romance, imperial conquest, secret interracial rendezvous, and the violence of scorned white women. Freyre’s own whiteness becomes buttressed by the disembodied representations of blackness on the page that read as queer and abject, yet foundational to how we still understand the Brazilian nation today.

In the preface to *Casa-grande & senzala*, Freyre recites a macabre “tradition” from his native northeastern Brazil as if offered as an analogy to the grounding of Brazilian culture. When a sugar plantation owner felt worried about his legacy, “he would order to kill two slaves and bury them in the foundation of the house. The sweat and sometimes the blood of the slaves would be the oil, even more so than that from a whale, that helped to give the foundations of the big houses their almost fort-like structure.”⁷ Whether true or not, this custom clearly suggests, first, how chattel slavery and its inherent brutality were pivotal to Brazil’s foundation. It lays out how Freyre envisions blackness, in bondage and in freedom, to be the direct object or recipient of white action made profitable or gratifying through its manipulation. A closer reading, however, shows that, throughout his writing, Freyre commonly described the interactions between whites and blacks as ‘lubricated’, ‘greased’, ‘oiled,’ or ‘sticky.’ Used throughout with pronounced innuendo, even the most violent of anecdotes, like the aforementioned with its oily blackness as the result of slaughter, bequeaths whiteness a well-lubed leeway of racial flux with heavy erotic overtones. Building off of the author’s analogy, a now-greased and well-established whiteness can consolidate power in black fungibility made possible through enslavement. Even further, just like Freyre himself, centuries of racial subjugation in Brazil have given whiteness the authority and capital to re-tell its own narrative in an erudite yet idiomatic verse that changes this slaughter and subjugation to black self-sacrifice for the sake of the nation. Chapter 2 offers a deeper look into Freyre’s seminal text—all puns intended—and how a queer reading of *Casa-grande & senzala* vis-à-vis films produced in the years following reflect a new but also more nuanced understanding of his broader work.

Gilberto Freyre haunts this dissertation from start to finish, much like the souls holding up his *casa-grande*’s mudsills.ⁱⁱ It is indisputable the profound effect of this one thinker on the study

ⁱⁱ I choose this wording intentionally. Freyre’s recounting of northern Brazilian “tradition” is likely a very deliberate paraphrasing of U.S. Senator James Henry Hammond’s mudsill theory, highlighting Freyre’s penchant for North Atlantic thought, often quoting in the original English or French in his writing in Portuguese. Dating back to a speech in 1858, Hammond declared that every modern society must have an under-class to support the foundations of progress. This was used as a theoretical and moral argument to uphold slavery by the senator and plantation owner from South Carolina three years before the declaration of the U.S. Civil War, arguing that enslaved African Americans were the ‘mudsills’ to the U.S.’s proverbial house. Attributed as one of the theories of early sociology, it is very likely that Freyre read about the mudsill theory during his education at Baylor and Columbia as a young sociologist and

of race in Brazil. By rejecting the maxims of whitening campaigns in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, his nationalist argument that the Brazilian people had taken the best from the indigenous, the African, and the European to become a singular national ‘race’ was seen as revolutionary and clearly seduced the likes of Getúlio Vargas and his authoritarian government. Despite this, Freyre attempted to make this racial argument on the basis of cultural constructs and exchange—particularly enslavement—while still grounding it in the original eugenicist theories that he sought to allegedly reject. While his explanations of ‘exchange’ are often accompanied by, if not explained directly through, the intricately detailed practices of illicit sex and the innuendos therein, there is still much to be gleaned, both for this dissertation and beyond. To write about race in Brazil, and especially racial democracy, without mentioning Freyre’s impact remains unfeasible, much to the chagrin of many scholars today. As an interdisciplinary scholar, I urge us to neither fully accept nor throw out entirely the oeuvre of Gilberto Freyre. As the central pillar to various fields in the study of Brazil and the Luso-Atlantic world, from sociology and anthropology to ethnic studies, folklore, and journalism, he has made sound contributions, particularly with regard to archival methods, close reading, ethnography, and public history. Yet, I also urge a de-centering of Freyre as he cannot and should never be the starting point or final destination of any racial analysis in Brazil. In my case, his work—always interwoven with his person—offers a lens for new readings and new questions. With Freyre as the axis upon which scholarly and activist discourse on race in Brazil remains based at some of its deepest roots even today, this dissertation’s queer intentions tilt that axis. By grounding my arguments first in the cultural texts I have chosen, my re-centering of sex and sexuality in racial democracy ideology engages Freyre as merely another useful node in a vast network of scholarship. Regardless, to those reading who know his work well, his presence looms in the echoes of these pages, even in the moments that I choose not to cite him.

Beyond Freyre: Black Feminisms, Black Queer Studies, and Critical Whiteness in Brazil

From the 1930s until the 1990s, folklore became the most attractive medium through which to theorize and re-imagine Brazil in addition to market the nation’s progress to the outside world and Brazilians themselves. Freyre’s work offered especially productive space for the growing field of anthropology to measure the authenticity and purity of what scholars perceived to be the cultural practices of an ethnic Africanness that survived the traumas of diaspora. Such ‘survivals’ provided a litmus test against which mostly elite white scholars could compare, substantiate, and claim performances of blackness as belonging to Brazil’s ethno-cultural fabric while turning away from discourses of race like eugenics.⁸ By the 1960s, scholars like sociologist Florestan Fernandes began to delineate how racial democracy was not only impossible, but also implausible given the economic, social, and moral degradation that black Brazilians had been put through by both the Brazilian state and white elites since abolition.⁹ In the same period, under a military dictatorship that promoted racial democracy yet banned any discussion of race and racism beyond the folkloric, black activists such as Abdias do Nascimento questioned racial democracy as the nation’s lifeblood. In a lecture given at the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Cultures in Lagos in 1977, he stated that racial democracy was not only a “myth,” but a “subtle form of ethnocide.” Black people were seen as animalistic, of the earth, folkloric, and thus instill the belief that “they have no history,” where African heritage was considered by the state a valuable talisman

anthropologist and highlights the ongoing scholarly conversations between the U.S., Latin America, and the broader Atlantic world.

of Brazil's past. This gave whites the power to "manipulate to their benefit" the "raw material" of black folklore and refine blackness in order to create national myths, narratives, and nostalgias for that which was never true.¹⁰ Albeit not mentioned by Nascimento in these terms, my work shows that this inalienable essence attributed to blackness was foundationally circumscribed to the libidinal and the imagined possibilities it could offer to Brazil, not least the sensual nature of race in the Brazilian and broader Latin American contexts.

Of the various fields critiquing racial democracy, black feminist thought across the disciplines has most biting questioned the legitimacy of racial democracy and how its underlying sensuality gets written onto bodies and spaces. Black feminist activists and thinkers starting in the late 1970s and 80s like Lélia Gonzalez, Sueli Carneiro, and Beatriz Nascimento have demonstrated how black women have been invisibilized, silenced, and forgotten due to racial democracy discourse that reduces them to objects of sexual servitude. Gonzalez, in particular, understood this as common across the Americas, especially among black and indigenous women who, like black and Native Brazilian women, endured exclusion by the patriarchy of national narratives of race mixture like *mestizaje* and *creolité*. Through her building of women of color coalition networks between Brazil, Spanish America, and the Caribbean, Gonzalez's concepts of *amefricanidade* (Amerafricanity) and *feminismo afrolatinoamericano* (Afro-Latin feminism) helped to expand an understanding of blackness and racial formations to be hemispheric, in conversation, and relational across the diaspora.¹¹ As a project held firm by black diasporic feminist thought, the frameworks developed by Gonzalez inform my own intervention into scholarship on racial democracy in how they engage this myth as but one of many whose repercussions are felt across the Americas. As I work to show the efficacy of re-centering sexuality and desire in national narratives of race mixture, the ways in which these myths are embodied, felt in the skin, accepted or resisted by those they look to empower and those they look to disenfranchise could be further explored in other contexts outside of Brazil.

As this dissertation heavily engages the embodiment of racial democracy in certain bodies but not others, black feminist performance scholar Christen Smith reveals the very stakes of embodied blackness as it intersects with Brazil's carnivalesque in her book, *Afro-Paradise: Blackness, Violence, and Performance in Brazil*. Through the body memory of carnival, activism, and anti-black police violence in the city of Salvador, Bahia, Smith names the duality of the city's identity as an 'Afro-paradise.' Marketed by the state as a playground for tourists to enjoy blackness and black people, especially during carnival season, Salvador also constitutes a space of black terror and death at the hands of its notorious anti-black police violence. Afro-paradise is a performance of racial democracy's desire for black folklore and silencing of everyday black suffering that is staged, scripted, choreographed, and repeatedly enunciated against the backdrop of the distressed black body. Citing Smith throughout, Afro-paradise offers itself as a useful concept to better understand here the paradoxes of cultural production in Brazil: the tremendous dependence on black popular culture to constantly re-make the nation on the global stage while dissociating from any meaningful conversation on everyday black life. As the ephemeral, non-reproducible knowledge of grief, pain, and even pleasure hold memory in repetition, Smith conjectures that this repetition of spectacular violence informs the embodiment of race and racism and makes cultural production and performance an appropriate route through which we might interrogate these structures found in Brazilian nationalist ideologies of race.¹²

Other black feminist scholarship like Kia Caldwell's pivotal *Negras in Brazil: Re-envisioning Black Women, Citizenship, and the Politics of Identity* illustrate the multiple racisms black women in Brazil experience across space. She problematizes the overlap of historical and

contemporary racial and gendered representations in mainstream culture specific to Brazil while her work maintains a transnational legibility due to the shared experiences of her black women interlocutors. By focusing on the embodiment of assuming one's blackness as at once raced as it is gendered, Caldwell gives credence to the theories of intersectionality developed in U.S. black feminism while also troubling their absolutism.¹³ These considerations offer support to my argument that racial democracy, while often treated as a static ideology, is a living, breathing being. Erica Williams' ethnographic work on black and mixed-race women sex workers in Salvador, for example, shows how these women are expected to embody racial democracy. Williams illustrates here sex's intersection with race and gender within racial democracy rhetoric and how racial democracy is globalized to produce foreign men's desires for black and mixed-race Brazilian women. Through her genealogy of the *mulata*—mulatta, in English—as a sexual figure, the fluidity of race mixture in Brazil becomes a marketing tool fueled by local and global desires for idealized racial formations that, in the end, profit off of anti-blackness and misogyny.¹⁴

The discussion of race as fluid in Brazil is by no means new. As I will explore in the first and second chapters, the language of fluidity, viscosity, and stickiness between whiteness and blackness used by white Brazilian writers and theorists, not least Gilberto Freyre, reinforce a perceived sensuality intrinsic to Brazilianness at home and on the world stage. Despite the Brazilian state and many thinkers and cultural producers have imbued black and mixed-race women's bodies with an imagined racial and sexual fluidity for the sake of national pleasures and reproduction, I also show through queer reading how black men are rendered by the same actors as fluid in an attempt to mark them as dangerous while, still, seductive. This rhetoric of racial fluidity has pervaded national and global perceptions of Brazilianness through a folkloric lens of the carnivalesque against which black feminist scholars and activists especially have struggled. For the Brazilian anthropologist Roberto DaMatta, the annual carnival festival in the days leading up to Lent provides a pressure release for Brazilian society to allegedly subvert all social categories.¹⁵ Following the thinking of semiotician Mikhail Bakhtin on the carnivalesque as an avenue of signification, the celebration of the profane during carnival allows Brazil to market itself as the sex-positive, gender-bending, liberated foil to the world order—albeit for a limited period of time—where supposedly opposing bodies mix, inverting meaning and creating new subjectivities on the basis of shared national affects. The sensuality of this fluidity, inversion, and subversion, according to Bakhtin, encourages a resignification of language, bodies, and national culture.¹⁶ While black feminists in the 1980s began critiquing the carnivalesque as a framework to study “Brazilianness,” scholars of sexuality and queer theory embraced it without paying much attention to race.

Earlier works on Brazilian national identity and sexuality from the late 1980s and early 90s like João Silveiro Trevisan's *Devassos no paraíso* (*Perverts in Paradise*) and Richard Parker's *Bodies, Pleasures, and Passions* relied heavily on the carnivalesque to show how Brazilianness gets written onto bodies, normative, deviant, and otherwise. They nonetheless replicate the tired adages of race mixture from the colonial period, using them as grounds to make cultural arguments on the evolution of sexualities and desires in Brazil that frequently revolve around carnival and dichotomies between public and private space.¹⁷ Although, today, it is less common for queer theory in Brazil to overlook race and its intersections with gender and sexuality, the carnivalesque remains a constant point of reference when discussing gender and sexual dissidence in Brazil, embodiment, and gendered and anti-black violence.¹⁸ Impossible to avoid carnival altogether as a pillar of Brazilian popular culture and folkloric renderings, my work pulls from and, yet, troubles these discursive practices of the carnivalesque in studies of sex and sexuality in Brazil. While

carnival and its semiotic importance to Brazilian culture and identity formation occasionally surface throughout the dissertation, I have deliberately chosen not to dedicate any singular chapter to carnival as a paradigm in Brazilian cultural studies and the narratives of racial democracy. Scholars of race, sexuality, and popular culture in Brazil may see this as a shortcoming to the project, however, my methodology demonstrates the racial and sexual disorder and dysfunction that are made necessary in the everyday recitations of racial democracy across media and time.

While scholars like historian James Green have fleshed out carnival as a birthplace of sorts of queer theory in Brazil, foundational studies of blackness and queerness grounded in the historical archive influence this work more. Of most noted importance is Lamonte Aidoo's black queer historiography, *Slavery Unseen: Sex, Power, and Violence in Brazilian History* that I cite throughout the dissertation. Using Inquisition records, state documents, and social histories like those by Gilberto Freyre, Aidoo seeks "to make violence against Brazilian slaves legible by renaming it, removing the exculpatory terms used by the Portuguese Inquisition, slaveholders, and Brazilian government."¹⁹ Sex, in particular the practices that evade the normativity of heterosexual procreation, was foundational to the empowerment and enrichment of the slaveholding class as a weapon of violence, especially as exposed by Aidoo's critical practice of privileging enslaved voices in the archive. Sex became a moral measure against which black freedom through denunciation, Catholic guilt, and colonial progress could be measured, if not also a tool for profit and pleasure. Following Aidoo's lead, my work in cultural production shows how the erotic power structure of queer interracial sex and desire becomes equally informative of miscegenation narratives while also a productive space for their critique.

Beyond the archive, black queer studies in Brazil have been most fueled by embodiment explored in spirituality, performance, and popular culture. Starting with ethnographies from the early twentieth century on Afro-Brazilian religions like Candomblé, such as those by Raimundo Nina Rodrigues, Arthur Ramos, and Ruth Landes, Candomblé terreiros became the first sites of anthropological study on homosexuality and black matriarchal power in Brazil, albeit rarely in flattering terms.²⁰ More recent studies by J. Lorand Matory and Roberto Strongman have endeavored to distinguish how black matriarchal and black queer power are, in fact, foundational to Afro-diasporic religious spaces in Brazil and across the diaspora.²¹ This is largely in spite of nationalist narratives of race mixture that, in the case of Brazil, capitalize on the folklorization of Candomblé and other Afro-Brazilian religions as a marketing tool for Brazil's multiculturalism within its racial democracy. Alongside Strongman, other scholars like Yvonne Daniel, Mattijs van de Port, Luís Felipe Rios, and Valéria Amim have demonstrated the transgressive and transcorporeal qualities of spiritual embodiment experienced by practitioners that affirm but can also diverge from their racial and gendered selves in the material world.²² These resonate loudest in the third chapter on Clara Nunes who blackened her aesthetic through her religious affiliation to Umbanda, another Afro-Brazilian religion, and performed spiritual embodiment and possession on stage that, as I suggest, should be read through the lens of drag.

Among Brazilian anthropologists, the embodiment of racial and sexual difference in the context of Afro-diasporic faith practices and their folklorization finds its strongest case studies in well-known black queer figures from the mid-twentieth century like Joãozinho da Goméia and Madame Satã. João Alves de Torres Filho, better known as Joãozinho da Goméia, was a Candomblé priest from Bahia who was discussed in the early ethnographies of the religion by Ruth Landes and Edison Carneiro. After he moved to the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro in 1948, Joãozinho da Goméia's religious practices, flamboyant performances on the Rio carnival circuit, and various controversies made him famous with the media, giving increased exposure to Afro-diasporic

religions as a moderately safer harbor for black queers at a time of incredible repression.ⁱⁱⁱ In the case of João Francisco dos Santos, or Madame Satã, he found fame in his cabaret drag performances, often including the mythologies of Candomblé and Umbanda in his repertoire at nightclubs and in Rio's carnival. In an effort to restore the memory of queer black histories in early to mid-twentieth century Rio through the drag queen's life, filmmaker Karim Aïnouz wrote and directed the eponymous and wildly successful biopic of Madame Satã in 2002.²³

Echoing the legacies of Joãozinho da Goméia and Madame Satã and the choreographies of Afro-diasporic religious rituals, performance becomes the main avenue through which black queer study, largely outside of the academy in Brazil, has been able to explore the complexities of race, gender, and sexuality. Since Aïnouz's *Madame Satã* in 2002, the 'queer boom' in Brazilian cinema in the past two decades—or the *new queer cinema brasileiro* as Lucas Murari, Mateus Nagime, and Stephanie Dennison have explored—has undoubtedly depicted black queer identities, albeit still in a limited capacity.²⁴ From Héctor Babenco's re-telling of the Carandiru prison massacre in *Carandiru* (2003) and Monique Gardenberg's adaptation of Márcio Meirelles comedic play, *Ó Paí, Ó* (2007), to more recent films like Marcelo Caetano's *Corpo Elétrico* (2017), Alexandre Moratto's *Sócrates* (2018), and Claudia Priscilla and Kiko Goifman's 2018 documentary on trans woman rapper Linn da Quebrada, *Bixa Travesty*, movies such as these have explored those sectors of Brazilian society that are excluded from racial democracy discourse and, in effect, the ability to be seen as equal citizens.²⁵ However, as Osmundo Pinho shows in his writing on race in Brazilian gay pornography, the inclusion of black and queer representation is not always one of inclusion but, indeed, can contribute to exclusion through sexual exotification.²⁶ Nonetheless, Pinho is one of the few scholars who has worked to re-center sex when discussing Brazilian narratives of race mixture, particularly through ethnography.

Especially in the past decade, the music of queer and trans black singer-songwriters like Linn da Quebrada, Majur, Luedji Luna, Gloria Groove, Ludmilla, and Liniker have each used their artist platforms for black and LGBT activism to challenge the exotification of blackness and queerness in Brazilian popular music, funk, and hip hop. An emergent queer "artivism" in the face of the Brazilian far-right's rise, as Leandro Colling has termed it, their music, performances, and sheer existence as popular figures push the Brazilian public's perception of black queer and trans people.²⁷ Similarly, black queer collectives, particularly in Salvador, Bahia like the dance troupe AfroBapho, the carnival band Cortejo Afro, and the fashion house Dendezeiro have used their popularity to work with academics, policymakers, and the media to center black queer and trans people in the city's continued mythification as an 'Afro-paradise' due to its majority black population. Despite black queer studies in the academy and beyond have found a sanctuary in popular culture, the work often stands as a counter to racial democracy often without explicitly addressing it, much less discussing the sexual and racial desires that rhetorically undergird it. While this dissertation seeks an intervention to that effect, its intervention will serve as a theoretical bridge between black queer studies and the nascent field of critical whiteness in Brazil that has built its legacy on deconstructing racial democracy.

Critical whiteness in Brazil emerged initially as a field through which to first understand massive backlash to affirmative action in Brazilian universities and public sector jobs started under

ⁱⁱⁱ In 2020, a special issue of the education, culture, and communication studies journal, *Periferia*, was dedicated entirely to research on Joãozinho da Goméia. Two articles in particular stand out for my arguments here: see Ricardo Oliveira de Freitas, "Joãozinho da Goméia: rei do candomblé e rei da mídia," *Periferia* 12, no. 3 (2020): 94-128; and Leonardo Augusto Bora, Gabriel Haddad Gomes Porto, and Vinícius Ferreira Natal, "Candomblés e carnavais: corpos desfilantes de Joãozinho da Goméia," *Periferia* 12, no. 3 (2020): 224-252.

the Workers' Party government in 2004. As a field dominated by the social sciences, scholars like Patricia Pinho have worked to dissect the affects of whiteness as "injured," "wounded," but also, for many who are not white, "aspirational."²⁸ Other anthropologists of whiteness in Brazil like Valeria Ribeiro Corossacz and Ana Ramos-Zayas have discussed how whiteness is constructed as a force of social and sexual domination, especially over black and mixed-race women, that sustains racial democracy rhetoric.²⁹ Historians of racial formations in Brazil throughout here have provided crucial groundwork on whiteness, where scholars such as Nancy Stepan, Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, Thomas Skidmore, and Paulina Alberto have determined whiteness to be rather porous, flexible social structure to which people of all colors have aspired and, yet, questioned.³⁰ These concepts around the affects of whiteness and the use of sex and desire as tools of social power prove pivotal for this project, however the work in the humanities remains fairly scant.

Two notable exceptions are the work of Joel Zito Araújo and Kathryn Bishop-Sanchez, both of whom conduct critical whiteness scholarship from the lens of visual culture and performance and, in many ways, offer a model for this dissertation. Araújo, a filmmaker, scholar, and activist, has actively employed frameworks to pick apart whiteness, especially as it pertains to Brazilian television. Most notable is his renowned documentary and book from 2000, *A negação do Brasil (Denying Brazil)*, which depict with minute detail the varying representations of Afro-Brazilian characters written, directed, and even, at times, portrayed by white people. From the one-dimensional, the disparaging, and the rarely affirming, Araújo lays out the stakes of whiteness, particularly as it pertains to directors and writers behind the camera and the Brazil they wanted to portray on screen for the viewing public.³¹ Following his documentary, Araújo has offered critiques of the perpetuation of white beauty standards in Brazilian television and pushed for more positive black representation on public television. A scholar of performance in Brazil, Bishop-Sanchez's performance studies biography of Carmen Miranda, *Creating Carmen Miranda: Race, Camp, and Transnational Stardom*, follows the trans-American camp icon, with sharp focus on race, gender, and the choreographies of the Brazilian nation channeled through a single body.³² As the pinnacle of performing blackness without black people, Carmen Miranda remains a figure whose performances and legacy demarcate the stakes of racial democracy, sexuality, and Brazilianness in popular culture. Her dancing, singing, and acting were rife with cultural references in dress, dance, and language to black Brazilian identity, especially stemming from the state of Bahia, memory of slavery, and the popular Candomblé practices there. As she watered down and camped up these racial gestures with drag-like flare and sensuality, their repetition seared them into public memory and affirmed national access to folkloric blackness through a staged racial democracy. What the case of Carmen Miranda shows for us here is that popular culture is not only a reaction to the ways that race and racial ideologies are embodied in everyday life. Popular culture very actively contributes to how certain bodies erotically incarnate racial democracy as an accumulation of historical acts that traverse the African diaspora.

My project therefore takes into account how Brazilian cultural and state actors sought to project an image of racial democracy undergirded by sex, both heterosexual and queer, on the world stage. Despite much of the scholarship appears to accept racial democracy as an a priori design that Brazilians must negotiate, I instead argue it to be an amorphous ideology that transmogrifies through repetition and recitation. As racial democracy remains largely dependent on the ideals of heteronormative reproduction, this dissertation gestures to the urgent need that racial democracy, like other national narratives of race mixture in Latin America and the Caribbean, be read through embodiment. This means reading how these literary, visual, musical, and performative texts project onto racialized bodies thought to be constitutive of the nation while

others remain in abjection. In shifting our attention to the vicissitudes of racial democracy as they are embodied over time, it becomes notable how central sex and desire serve as the driving force behind the ideology's very existence. As a project in black queer studies and critical whiteness that relies heavily on black feminist theories in the Americas, I ask how the creation and re-production of racial and sexual tropes across media help to constitute racial democracy. These fields, in turn, offer valuable theoretical frameworks to read these texts along and against the grain as they emerge, mature, and ultimately change.

Queering Racial Democracy and Queer Reading as Method

In her comparative close readings of race in modernist literature from Brazil and the U.S. in the 1920s and 30s, Zita Nunes takes issue with the term 'racial democracy' itself. She writes that it "presents itself as the ideal of democracy, yet, racial democracy seems at once a redundancy and a contradiction in terms. It would appear that in the relationship, the democracy in "racial democracy" somehow undoes the salience and importance of race; however, the very idea of race as modifying the democracy implies that without it democracy would not be as visible."³³ These questions of paradox, contradiction, and in/visibility guide very much my own reading of racial democracy in order to make salient the particular ways that sexuality is the driving force behind how racial democracy—and race more broadly in Brazil—gets made and shows up in popular culture. Casting a long shadow over each of the cultural texts that I bring, authoritarian regimes and practices are essentially what allow 'race' and 'democracy' to be visible or not in racial democracy. Some of the more carnal, exotic, or suggestive details are muted or even promoted by government censors, if not ridiculed or celebrated by learned critics and everyday consumers. The censorship that runs through each of these objects defines especially the type of methods I use to read into these silences that actually make race more salient.

With its discursive silences on race and racism in the archive and everyday life, racial democracy constitutes what Isar Godreau considers a "racial script." Racial scripts in Latin America and the Caribbean consist of state-sponsored rhetoric of a historical, mutually beneficial and desired miscegenation on account of a more benevolent type of chattel slavery in contrast to the U.S. in order to suppress any discussion on race and racism in the present-day.³⁴ This project utilizes Godreau's intervention by recognizing how these racial scripts are taken up as beneficial to one's social standing in society and the world within the Latin American nationalist context of *mestiçagem*, *mestizaje*, and racial democracy for the everyday citizen and the state via popular cultural production. Due to Brazilian whiteness' wielding of a nationalist dogma that constructs a future based in a rhetoric of a past that was kinder and more wholesome than the present, I aim to understand the nostalgia, longing, or, in Portuguese, *saudade* that oozes from these texts as simultaneously racialized and sexualized content and form of the nation's archive and popular culture. As nostalgia for the morality of the past constitutes a driving force behind authoritarian nationalism, I follow poet and critic Susan Stewart who theorizes this longing as the "lost paradise of the body" at "the myths of the margin." The tools of illusion and embellishment to re-create or activate these longings are "generally placed within the domains of anti- or nonauthority" at the margins of society, like the feminine, blackness, or queerness for the sake of collective pleasure.³⁵ The authoritarian state and its policing of what could and could not be Brazilian reflects itself in the re-fashioning of a mixed-race Brazilian subjectivity through a white heteropatriarchy that heavily flirts with abject blackness. These categorizations become tools of authority in the hands of the white elite and the state to imagine a collective myth that seeks out a national

commodification of the fantastic, of longing itself in order to mitigate the “past [that] continually threatens to reproduce itself as a felt lack.”³⁶

As I discussed previously at the intersection of black feminist, black queer studies, and critical whiteness work—and the subtitle suggests—this dissertation queers racial democracy in order to better understand how sex and embodiment in cultural production hold together this racial mosaic. Yet, I am also interested in abjection built up over time in the interstices of these racial-sexual frameworks: how the projected image of a simultaneously raceless yet colorful Brazilian nation endeavors to mask or gloss over the more nefarious and murky social and cultural ambitions of whiteness. Further, ‘queering racial democracy,’ as the present progressive signals, elucidates both the ongoing quality of racial democracy as an ideology that crisscrosses historical periods and media as well as the continued, expository queer reading that it requires.

Informed by Roderick Ferguson’s conception of queer of color critique, queer reading as a resistant inquest aids the interdisciplinarity of my project. As Ferguson denounces, intellectual and cultural canonicity stands as a project of national unity and progress that elides material difference. Meanwhile, queer of color critique seeks to deconstruct the canon, normativity, and their regulation from an already anti-normative positionality that exceeds the bounds of disciplinarity.³⁷ Although queer reading could be regarded as one of the many tools of a queer of color critique in its cultural studies arsenal, it holds within it a methodological dexterity, particularly with regard to sex and sexuality as performances attuned to space, time, genre, and repetition. While blackness has always been put against the grain of national imaginings of gender and sexuality, through queer reading, we are better equipped to understand that racialized abjection becomes constitutive to production and nation-building in Western modernity.

Queer reading becomes a crucial tool in this critical whiteness project whose focus on mainstream canonical culture prescribes its very deconstruction. While the political economy of national identity, no matter the bent, has articulated itself via heteropatriarchy and the creation of a racialized other as the only way to secure the future and moral continuity of the nation, Brazil is no different. Racial and sexual otherness, in fact, become oppositional to its national motto “*Ordem e Progresso*,” Order and Progress, ensconced at the height of naturalism and eugenics, as I elaborate further in the first chapter. Therefore, for this project to wholeheartedly engage the interlocking of race and sex in Brazil’s national myths, longings, and modes of cultural production, a queer reading holds possibility in finding the potentiality within the hegemony of racial (un)formations on the basis of intersectional aspects. Racial democracy, in its Freyrian foundations, envisions white heteropatriarchy as the ultimate goal reached through a re-created history of plantation sexual trysts that elide everyday violences. In the process, blackness in Brazil becomes constructed as racially, gender, and sexually queer at its very roots for the sole purpose of affirming the normativity to whiteness.

Setting the Scene: Chapter Outlines

This dissertation is split into four substantive chapters. Each chapter engages not only how cultural production reproduced theories of race- and nation-making in Brazil, but how they are also responsible for imagining these ideas in addition to rearticulating, rehearsing, disseminating, and expanding them. Taking into account an array of media from the late-nineteenth to the late-twentieth centuries, each cultural text is picked not only for its enigmatic representation of the genre, medium, and historical period in which it was produced, but how it challenged these strictures. Since the racial scripts of Brazilian racial democracy are not necessarily locatable in

time or space, the latitudes given in cultural production allow for those with capital to re-create a point of origin, to review or recycle specific tropes, or to masquerade with entirely new ones.

Examining closely how a queer blackness is foundational to literary whiteness, Chapter 1, titled “Queer Miscegenation: Adolfo Caminha’s *Bom-Crioulo* and Reading the Revolt of the Lash,” engages Caminha’s allegorical novel as a national fiction at the height of late-nineteenth century literary and scientific naturalism. His 1895 novel attempts to warn the multiple dangers of and propose solutions to the problem of recently emancipated Afro-Brazilians. Coming from a long line of realist literature, the homoeroticism in *Bom-Crioulo* literally and figuratively queers the interraciality of the romantic period’s national fictions, which was at its height prior to abolition in 1888. By depicting the rise and fall of a relationship between Amaro, an enslaved black man impressed into the Brazilian Navy, and Aleixo, a white immigrant cabin-boy, Caminha, whether purposefully or not, also queers the nation at the peak of immigration campaigns from Europe to whiten Brazil. Nonetheless, in the novel’s eugenics perspective on the untenable survival of abject social actors like blacks and queers, I develop the concept of *queer miscegenation* to show how the protagonists’ signaling towards reprofuturity interrogates utopian dreams of racially achieving nationhood and their imminent failure. Meanwhile, I use the novel as a script to read the Revolt of the Lash mutiny 15 years later in Rio de Janeiro. Such a re-casting of *Bom-Crioulo* onto the 1910 revolt demonstrates how the press and state projected a racial-sexual degeneration onto the mostly black mutineers protesting the continuation of slavery-like conditions in the navy. This novel thus functions in favor of and against the national project of whitening as it brings queerness and blackness closer together in its understandings of abjection and belonging leading up to racial democracy’s birth as a nationalist theory at the hands of Gilberto Freyre.

In Chapter 2, titled “Gilberto Freyre, Oscarito, and Grande Otelo: Colonial Gestures and Race Play in the Chanchadas,” I closely analyze Gilberto Freyre’s *Casa-grande & senzala* and how it is reflected in the slapstick comedy films of the Vargas era, commonly referred to as *chanchadas*. While chanchadas were popular and cheaply made in the Golden Age of Brazilian cinema from the 1930s to the 1950s that gave rise to stars like Carmen Miranda, it is their production during Vargas’ fascist regime where cultural production was first explicitly sanctioned—in favor of or censored—by the state. Choosing to focus closely on two films featuring the white-black comedy duo, Oscarito and Grande Otelo, *Barnabé, Tu És Meu* (1952) and *A Dupla do Barulho* (1953), I read these films through the racial-sexual theories that Freyre develops in his *Casa-grande & senzala* that guided Vargas’ censorship policy. While Grande Otelo, the black half of the duo, quickly shot to stardom, the sadomasochism and race play found in Freyre’s imagining of racial democracy is reflected in the roles he was cast to play and his on-screen relationship with Oscarito, a white Spanish immigrant later naturalized as Brazilian. Therefore, this chapter seeks to engage the pleasures performed and gleaned by whiteness in the spectacle of Grande Otelo and Oscarito on screen together while also re-imagining the quotidian violence of Brazil’s slavocracy as foundational to its modernity.

Chapter 3, titled “The Drag of Mestiça Nationalism: Performing Africanity in the Samba of Clara Nunes,” explores the samba career of singer Clara Nunes and how the military dictatorship of the 1960s, 70s, and 80s and its institutionalization of ethnic Africanity as foundational to racial democracy came to be reflected in her aesthetic. Once illegal, the Vargas regime legalized samba and declared it national musical heritage during his authoritarian Estado Novo government (1937-1945), its production and popularity coming to its apex during the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. In turn, Clara Nunes’ career parallels the increased push for both grassroots and authoritarian racial politics during a relatively similar time frame (1966-1983). I therefore interrogate how during the military

dictatorship's repression of racial dissent, she presented herself as a mixed-race (*mestiça*) woman through the folklorization of Afro-Brazilian religions placed onto and voiced from her body. I apply the language of drag to demonstrate how Nunes transformed herself within racial-sexual tropes of Brazil's spiritual miscegenation to become a diva and almost divine figure emulated by drag queens and black women samba singers after her early death. By featuring in her lyrics, costumes, album art, and general discourse the 'African survivals' extensively studied in Brazilian, U.S., and European anthropologists work of the 1930s, 40s, and 50s, we are able to grasp her access to and deftness with the national archive and its capitalization for material gain. Following in the footsteps of Carmen Miranda, Nunes nevertheless serves as a forebear to other artists who Africanize their performance and self-presentation in an effort to become more legible as quintessentially Brazilian performing artists who fit into the mold of a racial democracy that permits whiteness to not only quite queerly perform Africanity but to use it to dictate the terms of heteronormative desire.

The final chapter, titled "Slavery's Seductions: Reproducibility and Queer Consumptions in *Xica da Silva*," I consider one of the most internationally renowned Brazilian soap operas, *Xica da Silva* (1996-1997). It recounts the history of Francisca da Silva de Oliveira, an enslaved black woman at the height of the diamond boom in Minas Gerais whose master falls in love with her, frees her, marries her and, thus, gives her an uncanny sense of status in colonial Brazil. As one of the most prominent soap operas following re-democratization in 1985, I interrogate the multiple ironies that the only telenovela transmitted across Latin America to have a black woman as protagonist—with Taís Araújo playing the lead role of Xica da Silva—sought to re-tell and further mythologize a story of the single most prominent black woman during slavery in Brazil. Considering the various racial, gendered, and sexually queer circumstances of Xica's relationship with her master-turned-husband, I also analyze what this means for renewed democracy and the marketing of media to new segments of the population and with much less censorship. In order to do this, I engage the mythologized reproduction of da Silva's life in her telenovela configuration, but also how the program's international publicity, reviews, and repetition—in the form of myth and re-runs—further queers the role of history and power in making racial democracy believable, if not achievable in Brazil's renewed democracy of the 1990s.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, this dissertation shows how whiteness remains an aspirational paradigm in Brazil in spite of, or because of, racial democracy. Even with the country's majority Afro-descendant population hovering around 55 percent, white Brazilians continue to command an overwhelming advantage in cultural capital well into the twenty-first century. While musicians are unquestionably the group of cultural workers that more closely represent the country's diversity, white Brazilians still vastly outnumber blacks as producers, writers, actors, marketers, and financiers of most popular culture consumed today and in the periods that I discuss in the dissertation. My use of a queer and close reading of mainstream cultural texts like novels, films, samba, and telenovelas identifies how nationalist longings for blackness and African heritage depend on an inertia, exoticism, and folklore first imagined by whiteness and taken up by the state and wider society—oftentimes including black people themselves. By centering sexuality in racial democracy through queer reading, this work exposes the ability of whiteness to alter its own aesthetic, gesture, and sound beyond a merely racial lens. As such, this collection of analyses over the course of a century contributes to the critical understanding of cultural hierarchies in Brazil, Latin America, and the Luso-Atlantic world.

Notes on Language

The vast majority of cultural texts in this dissertation, along with archival documents and numerous secondary sources, were originally produced in Portuguese. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own, choosing to forego long-accepted and cited English translations of texts, most notably Adolfo Caminha's *Bom-Crioulo* and the works of Gilberto Freyre. It was in the original Portuguese in which I found more fertile ground to cultivate a reading that unveiled the queerness made necessary to racial democracy's discursive constructions. Thus, I have done my best to provide for the reader accurate translations *ao pé da letra*, that is, to the letter. With the exception of song lyrics for the sake of their rhythm and rhyme, particularly in the third chapter on Clara Nunes, I have not included the original Portuguese of primary texts in this version in order to spare the reader with extra verbiage that may unintentionally draw their attention away from the flow of my arguments. With that said, I sometimes choose to highlight certain words or phrases in Portuguese in order to demonstrate the duality of their meaning, intention, and how this might get lost or even misrepresented in translation.

Throughout the dissertation, I employ an array of ethno-racial identifiers that, no doubt, demonstrate the confusing nature of race-making in Brazil with attention to color and degrees of mixture. Common to the study of race and ethnicity in Latin America, these terms change over time—quite regularly doing so throughout the twentieth century—and are used with the specificity of historical era and region, including in recitations of the colonial period found in Brazilian popular culture. *Negro*, *preto*, *pardo*, *mulato*, *moreno*, and *mestiço* all indicate blackness, racial mixture with blackness, or, on several occasions throughout the text, the personal as well as national desires for African heritage even when *branco*, or white. While *negro* and *preto* get translated as “black,” the terms of race mixture, such as *pardo*, *mulato*, *moreno*, and *mestiço* are much more loaded historically, regionally, and politically, not only in how people self-identify but how they are identified by the media and the state. Each term is enacted and, oftentimes, explained within the time- and space-sensitive context to better attend to these nuances. To that regard, I also find it imperative to explain to the reader my choice to keep *black* and *blackness* lowercase, especially as its presentation in the uppercase has entered the mainstream Anglophone lexicon. In part, I follow La Marr Jurelle Bruce's thinking in that *black* and *blackness* are not proper nouns and, therefore, as he writes, “I use a lowercase *b* because I want to emphasize an *improper* blackness” that denounces the mores of propriety, that is “collectivist rather than individualistic; ... a blackness that is ever-unfurling rather than rigidly fixed; a blackness that is neither capitalized nor propertized via the protocols of Western grammar...”³⁸ In the context of Brazil, as is true across much of Latin America and the Caribbean where English is not the predominant language, the racial terminology in Portuguese remains in the lowercase. As I also honor translation, by using blackness in the lowercase, I can privilege the multiplicity of black life and (self-)representation while, as Bruce states, still giving respect and making claims grounded in specificity. Doing so gestures to black consciousness as an ongoing process in Brazil while also contending with the fact that scholars in black studies are largely still in disagreement over the imperative of the uppercase, especially if it actually changes anything at all beyond a symbolic grammatical gesture.

This attentiveness to linguistic trends for the English-reading audience urges me to make one final note. Throughout the dissertation, the memory of racial slavery pervades each chapter, often quite explicitly in how the cultural texts through which I map my argument about racial democracy and sexuality recall if not literally reenact the horrors of bondage. Many historians and cultural studies scholars more recently have argued for changes in the nomenclature around slavery; most predominantly, from the use of ‘slave’ to ‘enslaved’ or ‘captive,’ and from ‘master’

or ‘slave owner’ to ‘enslaver.’ Nevertheless, while I do shy away from the word ‘slave’ in most cases in order to blur this as an identity circumscribed by blackness in perpetuity, I have made the choice to use the word ‘master’ due to the framing of this project around correcting the erasure of sex and sexuality from narratives of racial democracy. Whereby the nature of slavery as an institution is completely undergirded by sex, reproduction, and the lust for capital in the form of bodies, ‘master’ signals the sadomasochism necessary to slavery’s preservation. ‘Master’ does not solely signify the owner of enslaved property. In addition, it gestures to he/she who has the will to consume or dispose of another human’s flesh, functions, and life for their own sexual gratification and the cruel but well-established belief that the objectified deserved if not themselves enjoyed it. The erotics surrounding the institution of slavery, its afterlives, and the representation of its histories—actual or imagined—that we continue to reproduce well into the twenty-first century, in fact, wholly constitute enslavement and its memory as we know it. I therefore understand the use of this language as one that may be productively uncomfortable for the reader but crucial to better understanding how the desires of whiteness were and, yet, remain central to Brazilian popular culture and historical memory.

¹ John A. Mundell, “Meninos diferentes: Construção e performance de masculinidades de homens negros gays em Salvador, Bahia,” Master’s thesis (Centro de Estudos Afro-Orientais, Universidade Federal da Bahia, 2014).

² Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

³ Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).

⁴ Siobhan B. Somerville, *Queering the Color Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in American Cultures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000).

⁵ Nancy Leys Stepan, “*The Hours of Eugenics*”: *Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 44-54; Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, *O espetáculo das raças: Cientistas, instituições e pensamento racial no Brasil, 1870-1930* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1993).

⁶ Gilberto Freyre, *Casa-grande & senzala* (São Paulo: Global, 2003 [1933]), 399.

⁷ Ibid, 38.

⁸ Paulina L. Alberto, *Terms of Inclusion: Black Intellectuals in Twentieth-Century Brazil* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 115; Edward E. Telles, *Race in Another America: The Significance of Skin Color in Brazil* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 34-37.

⁹ Florestan Fernandes, *A integração do negro na sociedade de classes, vol. I e II* (Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca Azul, 2008 [1964]).

¹⁰ Abdias do Nascimento, “Democracia racial: mito ou realidade?” (lecture, Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture, Lagos, 1977).

<http://www.geledes.org.br/democracia-racial-mito-ou-realidade/>

¹¹ Lélia Gonzalez, “A categoria político-cultural de amefricanidade,” *Tempo Brasileiro*, no. 92/93 (1988): 69-82; Lélia Gonzalez, “Por um feminismo afrolatinoamericano,” *Revista Isis Internacional* 8, (1988): 133-141.

¹² Christen A. Smith, *Afro-Paradise: Blackness, Violence, and Performance in Brazil* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016).

¹³ Kia Lilly Caldwell, *Negras in Brazil: Re-envisioning Black Women, Citizenship, and the Politics of Identity* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007).

¹⁴ Erica Lorraine Williams, *Sex Tourism in Bahia: Ambiguous Entanglements* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013).

¹⁵ Roberto DaMatta, *Carnavais, malandros e heróis: Para uma sociologia do dilema brasileiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 1979).

¹⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoyevsky’s Poetics*, trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984 [1963]).

- ¹⁷ João Silveiro Trevisan, *Devassos no paraíso: a homossexualidade no Brasil, da colônia à atualidade*, 4th ed. (Rio de Janeiro: Objetiva, 2018 [1986]); Richard G. Parker, *Bodies, Pleasures, and Passions: Sexual Culture in Contemporary Brazil*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2009 [1991]).
- ¹⁸ James N. Green, *Beyond Carnival: Male Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century Brazil* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Carlos Figari, *Eróticas de la disidencia en América Latina: Brasil, siglos XVII al XX* (Buenos Aires: Fundación Centro de Integración, Comunicación, Cultura y Sociedad, 2009); Leandro Colling, ed., *Dissidências sexuais e de gênero* (Salvador, Brazil: EDUFBA, 2016); Pablo Assumpção Barros Costal, “Carnival in hell: kinetic dissidence and the new queer carnivalesque in contemporary Brazil,” in *Performances that Change the Americas*, edited by Stuart A. Day (New York: Routledge, 2022), 59-78; João Nemi Neto, *Cannibalizing Queer: Brazilian Cinema from 1970 to 2015* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University, 2022).
- ¹⁹ Lamonte Aidoo, *Slavery Unseen: Sex, Power, and Violence in Brazilian History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 5.
- ²⁰ Raimundo Nina Rodrigues, *Os africanos no Brasil* (São Paulo: Cia. Ed. Nacional, 1932); Arthur Ramos, *O negro brasileiro* (Recife: Fundação Joaquim Nabuco/Editora Massangana, 1988 [1932]); Ruth Landes, *The City of Women* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006 [1947]); and Edison Carneiro, *Candomblés da Bahia* (Salvador, Brazil: Conquista, 1961 [1948]).
- ²¹ J. Lorand Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); Roberto Strongman, *Queering Black Atlantic Religions: Transcorporeality in Candomblé, Santería, and Vodou* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019).
- ²² Yvonne Daniel, *Dancing Wisdom: Embodied Knowledge in Haitian Vodou, Cuban Yoruba, and Bahian Candomblé* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005); Mattijs van de Port, “Candomblé in pink, green, and black: Re-scripting the Afro-Brazilian religious heritage in the public sphere of Salvador, Bahia,” *Social Anthropology* 13, no. 1 (2005): 3-26; Luís Felipe Rios, “O paradoxo dos prazeres: trabalho, homossexualidade e estilos de ser homem no candomblé queto fluminense,” *Etnográfica* 16, no. 1 (2012): 53-74; Valéria Amim, “Candomblé e mitologia: a sexualidade no rito, no corpo e na dança,” *Lingua & Literatura* 35, no. 20 (2018): 119-130.
- ²³ *Madame Satã*, directed by Karim Aïnouz (2002; Rio de Janeiro and Paris: Videofilmes and Lumière).
- ²⁴ Lucas Murari and Matues Nagime, eds., *New Queer Cinema: cinema, sexualidade e política* (São Paulo: Caixa Econômica Federal, 2015); Stephanie Dennison, “Cultura cinematográfica e identidades queer no Brasil contemporâneo,” *Cadernos Pagu* 60 (2020): 1-26.
- ²⁵ *Carandiru*, directed by Héctor Babenco (2003; Rio de Janeiro: Globofilmes); *Ó Paí, Ó*, directed by Monique Gardenberg (2007; Rio de Janeiro: Dueto Filmes); *Corpo Elétrico*, directed by Marcelo Caetano (2017; Rio de Janeiro: Vitrine Filmes); *Sócrates*, directed by Alexandre Moratto (2018; São Paulo: O2 Filmes); *Bixa Travesty*, directed by Kiko Goifman and Claudia Priscilla (2018; São Paulo: Paleo TV).
- ²⁶ Osmundo Pinho, “Race Fucker: representações raciais na pornografia gay,” *Cadernos Pagu* 38 (2012): 159-195; Osmundo de Araújo Pinho, “O efeito do sexo: políticas de raça, gênero e miscigenação,” *Cadernos Pagu* 23, (2004): 89-119.
- ²⁷ Leandro Colling, “A emergência dos ativismos das dissidências sexuais e de gêneros no Brasil da atualidade,” *Sala Preta* 18, no. 1 (2018): 153-167.
- ²⁸ Patricia de Santana Pinho, ““A casa grande surta quando a senzala aprende a ler”: Resistência antirracista e o desvendamento da branquitude injuriada no Brasil,” *Confluenze: Rivista di Studi Iberoamericani* 13, no. 1 (2021): 32-55.
- ²⁹ Valeria Ribeiro Corossacz, *White Middle-Class Men in Rio de Janeiro: The Making of a Dominant Subject* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2017); Ana Y. Ramos-Zayas, *Parenting Empires: Class, Whiteness, and the Moral Economy of Privilege in Latin America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020).
- ³⁰ Stepan, “*The Hours of Eugenics*”; Schwarcz, *O espetáculo das raças*; Thomas E. Skidmore, *Black Into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993 [1974]); Alberto, *Terms of Inclusion*.
- ³¹ *A negação do Brasil*, directed by Joel Zito Araújo (Rio de Janeiro: Casa de Criação, 2000), DVD; Joel Zito Araújo, *A negação do Brasil: O negro na telenovela brasileira* (São Paulo: Editora Senac, 2000).
- ³² Kathryn Bishop-Sanchez, *Creating Carmen Miranda: Race, Camp, and Transnational Stardom* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2016).
- ³³ Zita Nunes, *Cannibal Democracy: Race and Representation in the Literature of the Americas* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 10.
- ³⁴ Isar P. Godreau, *Scripts of Blackness: Race, Cultural Nationalism, and U.S. Colonialism in Puerto Rico* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015).
- ³⁵ Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), xiii.

³⁶ Ibid, 23.

³⁷ Roderick A. Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

³⁸ La Marr Jurelle Bruce, *How to Go Mad Without Losing Your Mind: Madness and Black Radical Creativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021): 6, original emphasis.

Chapter 1

Queer Miscegenation: Adolfo Caminha's *Bom-Crioulo* and Re-reading the Revolt of the Lash

"You are going to end up having children together."

Dona Carolina to Amaro and Aleixo¹

In late 1893, Adolfo Caminha (1867-1897) made it known that he was working on another novel on the heels of his wildly popular *A Normalista* (*The Schoolgirl*) published earlier that year. Caminha was a regular contributor of literary reviews to the widely-read republican and abolitionist Rio de Janeiro newspaper, *O Paiz* (*The Country*), which wrote on December 31 that he proposed "to study the customs and characters of military navy life." The paper assured that this upcoming manuscript "will surely confirm the author's talent and whose subject alone will be a true novelty to our literature."² However, publishing his *Bom-Crioulo* in mid-November 1895, the novel's salacious details of an interracial affair between a black sailor, Amaro, and a white teenage cabin boy, Aleixo, rocked the literary circles of the capital. It also sold out and continued to sell well into the early 1900s beyond the capital, as local newspaper advertisements from far-flung cities like Recife, São Luís, Vitória, and Curitiba show. With *Bom-Crioulo*, the 28-year-old writer, a self-declared republican, abolitionist, and ex-naval officer, born in the northeastern state of Ceará, sought to dystopically allegorize Brazil in one of the nation's most contentious periods.⁵ Nevertheless, as I will argue, the novel's plot, constructed around the rise of a discourse on race, sexuality, and perversions, called into question the very precepts of the young republic as it attempted to modernize itself in the shadow of Europe and the United States.

One year after the long-overdue abolition of slavery in 1888, a small military coup supported by disgruntled ex-slave owners removed the monarchy of Emperor Pedro II and installed a hardly democratic republic. The last quarter of the nineteenth century simultaneously witnessed the ongoing surge of white European immigrants, predominantly Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and German, attracted by the empire and, later, republic with free land contracts. Denying reparations of land to those recently manumitted from slavery, the government used these policies called *embranquecimento*, or whitening, in hopes that Afro-Brazilians would mix with European immigrants to socially and physiologically whiten their bloodlines. This ideal national racial mixture, or *mestiçagem*, would come to be accepted as necessary, albeit undesirable, by the aristocracy and intelligentsia as a solution: whiten the lower classes of the nation they believed to be too black or forego modernization.

The root of *mestiçagem* is undoubtedly miscegenation. As the basis of what would later transform into the sociocultural ideology of racial democracy, queering racial democracy for the sake of deconstructing its sexual makings requires a keen focus on miscegenation as an everyday act that can either conform to or transgress national ideas of race mixture. In Spanish America, *mestiçagem* translates to the much more well-known term of *mestizaje*. However, it is imperative to point out that, while there is a direct translation between Portuguese and Spanish, their connotations in Brazil and Spanish America remain quite different. While *mestizaje* also translates as 'miscegenation,' thus creating an etymological conglomeration that complicates the queer intentions of this project, the separations between *mestiçagem* and *miscigenação* ('miscegenation' in Portuguese) point out how the former constitutes a national ideology and ideal while the latter, at its foundation, signifies 'the act of mixing peoples.' To queer miscegenation and, later, racial

democracy, thus intimates the imbalances of who can and cannot (pro)create these ideals, depending on which racial and gendered social actors are attempting to copulate. In short, in order for *mestiçagem* to exist, miscegenation must occur, the ‘correct’ forms often regimented by the state and represented in national cultural production.

Representations of miscegenation in Brazilian literature reflected practices of race mixture before the nation abolished slavery. Heterosexual unions between predominantly white men and black, indigenous, and mixed-race women remained the only acceptable form of interraciality as they mirrored violent master-slave positionalities and produced mixed-race progeny. There remains a potential for resistance and pleasure enacted by those excluded from this nation-making standard within our understanding of miscegenation as an everyday act between differently raced subjects. In his *Slavery Unseen: Sex, Power, and Violence in Brazilian History*, Lamonte Aidoo elucidates how same-sex violence became a profound tool of control in slavery and throughout the colonial period. Notably, Aidoo explicitly rejects the term miscegenation because, he argues, it is a “relatively benign term ... in Brazilian history to mask the true aims of racial mixing” with an undercurrent of heteronormativity.³ In general agreement with Aidoo’s argument, I slightly diverge from this rhetorical aversion. In the context of *Bom-Crioulo*, the miscegenation narratives of Brazilian romanticism and naturalism become inverted or, better yet, queered. These inversions demonstrate a fluidity of gender and sexuality—and race—despite previous analyses that affirm only race as a constant in the novel. By re-centering the potential of racialized actors and their behaviors, even within the limitations of a literary narrative and racial-sexual ideologies of Brazilian nationhood, I read Caminha’s novel through an analytic that I call *queer miscegenation*. Male homosexual attempts at miscegenation lead only to failure, waste, and potentially death, yet *Bom-Crioulo* hints at a unique prospect, which becomes further fleshed out by the Revolt of the Lash. While race-mixing was a common and violent circumstance of pre-abolition Brazil due to the institutions of chattel slavery and Portuguese colonialism, Caminha suggests via an ironic observation of the third principal character, the middle-aged Portuguese prostitute, Dona Carolina, that Amaro and Aleixo are so intimately close that, as she jokes, “You are going to end up having children together.”⁴ As M. Elizabeth Ginway notes in addressing Carolina’s infertility due to age, “this demonstrates the cultural impasse or discontinuity in Brazil’s racial and colonial past because for Caminha there is no middle ground or union that could symbolize Brazil, only rupture and disjunction.”⁵ Thinking through colonial dialectics of domination as a rupture, works like *Bom-Crioulo* sought to re-litigate the recent history of slavery in Brazil, where interracial love and sex seemingly concealed these acts of violence while also negotiating an allegedly new racial-sexual contract, albeit between men.⁶ As Amaro and Aleixo grow closer through sexual and domestic intimacy (despite heteropatriarchal projects like whitening), a queer(ing of) miscegenation reveals the naturalist projects of Brazilian ‘Order and Progress’ to be founded in a cyclical dialectic with racial and sexual disorder, degeneration, and perversion.

Bom-Crioulo is often lauded as the first Brazilian novel to center a black male protagonist and one of the first in Latin America to discuss homoerotic desire. The novel finds itself breaking several norms while advancing others found in naturalism, the era’s popular scientific and aesthetic current. In the novel, Amaro, a black man, flees from slavery only to be impressed into the Imperial Navy where he receives the nickname Bom-Crioulo. Years later, Amaro meets Aleixo, the white 15-year-old cabin boy from the southern state of Santa Catarinaⁱ over whom he obsesses, proving his affection by taking a whipping to protect the boy. Upon docking in Rio de Janeiro, aftering

ⁱ Santa Catarina was one of the places that received the highest number of European immigrants, mostly from Portugal, denoting Aleixo’s synecdoche for the potential of the new, white/whitened Brazil.

having seduced Aleixo and consummated their relationship onboard, the couple rents a room from Dona Carolina on Rua da Misericórdia.ⁱⁱ As time goes by, Aleixo matures into a man while Amaro's once muscular body begins to deteriorate. The navy transfers Amaro to a new steel dreadnought-class battleship without Aleixo, unknowingly leaving him to be seduced by Dona Carolina. When he discovers that Aleixo has been unfaithful, Amaro enters into a blind rage and murders his lover in the street in broad daylight.

Bom-Crioulo's underlying themes about corporal punishment, the hypocrisies of the staunchly monarchist Brazilian navy, and the rise of a discourse on sexuality and perversions would serve as a forewarning for what was to come 15 years later. For four days in November 1910, 2,300 sailors, the majority of whom were black and *mulato*, mutinied in Rio de Janeiro's Guanabara Bay taking into their control the state-of-the-art *Minas Geraes* and *São Paulo* dreadnoughts and the destroyer *Bahia* which had recently arrived from the shipyards of Newcastle, England. With a demand to stop corporal punishment in the navyⁱⁱⁱ, low wages, and meager food, which replicated the institution of slavery on the high seas, the mutineers of what would later be called the Revolt of the Lash held the capital hostage with the 12-inch cannons pointed toward Congress and the presidential Catete Palace. Via hand-written ultimatum to President Hermes da Fonseca delivered with the bodies of officers who did not surrender to the mutiny, the insurgents stated, "We, sailors, Brazilian citizens and republicans, no longer supporting this slavery in the Brazilian Navy, the lack of protection that the Fatherland provides us and that still has not arrived, rip the black veil that covered the eyes from a patriotic and deceived people." Hermes da Fonseca was then given "twelve (12) hours to send [the sailors] a satisfactory response under the threat of seeing the fatherland annihilated."⁷ João Cândido Felisberto, a 30-year-old petty officer first class born in Rio Grande do Sul state in southern Brazil, the son of an enslaved father and mother, quickly became the figurehead of the Revolt, as he commandeered the *Minas Geraes* and dictated orders to the other ships. During the uprising, and for weeks and years thereafter, João Cândido's face and name beleaguered the local newspapers. While the prohibition of corporal punishment in the Brazilian Navy and amnesty to the mutineers were quickly signed in Congress, the aftermath of these events and how they would be represented made known Brazil's desperate need to address its entrenched racial problems.⁸ In comparing *Bom-Crioulo* with much of the writing during and after the Revolt of the Lash, it becomes clear how Caminha's novel provided a racial and sexual framework through which the rebellion could be read and remembered.

Keeping in mind how cultural production very much so affects how history is remembered, and depicted in real time, this chapter engages how *Bom-Crioulo* and the Revolt of the Lash speak to each other in how their literary and historical authors, narrators, and characters perform what we should consider the intricately crafted racial and sexual precursors to Brazil's ideology of racial democracy. On the whole, with the rise of criminology, psychology, and Western medicine, the varied pathologizations of blackness and homoeroticism prove *Bom-Crioulo* a classic example of Brazilian naturalism in the literary sphere of strong-armed nationalism and theoretical, political, racial, and sexual conflicts that characterized the late nineteenth century. These very constructions would later serve as a means to discredit both João Cândido and the predominantly black and

ⁱⁱ Rua da Misericórdia translates to "Mercy Street," but I have opted to keep it in Portuguese due to its iconic symbolism in the Rio de Janeiro and national cultural archive, which I engage later.

ⁱⁱⁱ While the third decree of President Deodoro da Fonseca, the first president of the Republic (1889-1891), was to eliminate corporal punishment in the Brazilian Armed Forces, the Navy, its most traditional and monarchist branch, continued these practices, and itself revolted against the Republic in 1891 and 1893-1894 to attempt to reinstate the Empire.

mulato mutineers as historical actors, their circumstances as society's undesirables kept locked away in the navy's floating prison of libidinous men through the help of impressment gangs and conscription.⁹ Much like in the U.S., Europe, and throughout Latin America, naturalist authors like Adolfo Caminha incorporated this context of Brazil's rapidly changing face to routinely invent characters whose social condition or identity marked them to be aberrant. Such deviance primed them for the prevalent European medico-legal, sexological, psychological, and racist scientific studies of the era.¹⁰ However, while these naturalist authors' characters acquired flesh to peel back, dissect, scrutinize, feel, I ask if biology is, in fact, an inhibitor to miscegenation and, for our sake, its metaphors. It is, indeed, through this flaying of the flesh that the reader seemingly ascertains an expertise in the study of varying races, sexualities, and abject desires that put the nation's well-being at risk. Though narrative fictions like *Bom-Crioulo* essentially perform the science of the late nineteenth century, might we reimagine miscegenation, especially within the context of studies on perversion?

The racialized and gendered abjection of these interracial, same-sex involvements inform yet put into jeopardy the success of a nation hell-bent on its own whitening through miscegenation. As such, *Bom-Crioulo* exemplifies, to borrow from Michel Foucault, a bio-moral coitus interruptus in the protagonist's attempt at reprofuturity, that is, inserting himself into national values of reproduction for posterity.¹¹ For this, I pull from an Afro-diasporic queer of color critique, Latin American literary and cultural studies, and previous reflections on *Bom-Crioulo* in order provide to "disturb the idea that racial and national formations are obviously disconnected" from each other, from gender, sexuality, and sex.¹² With mores regulated by the racial state, blackness is outcast to colonial and imperial history tomes based on a failed heteronormativity. Such dispossession structurally aligns blackness with queerness, where its dysfunction establishes a positionality for critique. While Caminha's literary musings of same-sex interraciality reify and magnify Amaro's blackness, it remains through interraciality that his racial and sexual conditions become a fluid consciousness. It is, therefore, as Caminha constructs them, Amaro's queer attempts to belong to the nation—and, later, the insinuation of João Cândido's queerness toward his delegitimization—that allows his racial-sexual subjectivity to not only readily penetrate the nation but to critique them.

Ordem e Progresso: Naturalism's Inclusive Exclusion

As a genre of literature and art in Latin America, romanticism envisioned an array of resolutions to the racial, regional, and political tensions that plagued the newly independent nations of the Americas. Romanticists aimed to allegorically represent differing interests and populations through distinct characters that fell in love, were wed, and lived happily ever after. According to Doris Sommer, the objective of these 'foundational fictions' was to incentivize Victorian values of propriety and self-regulation in the formulation of heteronormative nuclear families with the strong investment in creating cohesive nations.¹³ However, in a Foucauldian sense, the popular literature of the era also helped designate state control over the sexualities within these texts that focus emphatically on interraciality. Indeed, since romanticist novels in Latin America often depicted interracial couples, their authors thus legitimized the unhinged, and often coerced, violent miscegenation of the past three centuries in order to propose a rigid bourgeois morality akin to European values. As an initiative of national construction, these novels "invested in private passions with a public purpose," where their majority white male authors and "narrators could project an ideal future" of racial, social, political, and sexual harmony.¹⁴ A key undercurrent in

this dissertation, the medium of realist literature in the romanticist and naturalist veins of the nineteenth century demonstrate the key ways in which cultural production was not merely a reflection of national ideologies of progress but powerful in its own right to produce them. While modernization remained a clear objective of these writers, others, like Caminha as a member of the Brazilian naturalist school, challenged the logics of nation-making in their predictions of dissonance, dissent, and resistance. Due to conflicts between factions, these novels' reflection of whitening campaigns argued for a postcolonial national union via European social and sexual values, thus appealing to a sentimental public in search of adhesion.

As Brazil's elite from the late-1800s onward sought to whiten the nation, racial improvement theories abounded in policies and cultural production. From Darwin and Spencer to Lamarck and Lombroso, European theories of evolution and the perversions of urbanization circulated among Brazil's mostly white male intellectual circles. Due to debate about Brazil's vastly different racial context from Europe, levels of acceptance varied. As Nancy Stepan shows, Brazilian scientists thought the indigenous and black races would eventually disappear or die off due to genetic weakness while others feared a lingering stain.¹⁵ Among those Brazilian intellectuals theorizing an appropriate resolution to the outcomes of abolition, Raimundo Nina Rodrigues, physician-jurist at the School of Medicine in the northeastern city of Salvador, was the first to treat blacks as "the problem" of Brazil in the 1890s.¹⁶ Their presence, he argued, constituted an illness that threatened the biological, moral, and spiritual well-being of the nation. Despite all of "their indisputable services to our civilization," he writes, blacks "must always constitute one of the factors of our inferiority as a people."¹⁷ Yet, while other Brazilian eugenisists of the age cited Darwin as the source of affirmation that racial hybrids proved more resistant to a tropical climate, as Lilia Schwarcz demonstrates, Nina Rodrigues, a *mulato* himself, also cited Darwin to designate miscegenation as a producer of instability.¹⁸ He strongly believed in the hierarchy of races and proposed that each race was to have its own legal codes established and enacted by the government, as a result of extant sorts of "ethnic criminality, resultant of coexistence, in a same society, of peoples or races in diverse phases of moral and judicial evolution."¹⁹

The irony in Nina Rodrigues' hypotheses and person demonstrates the plasticity with which these Eurocentric theories of racial purity and improvement might be applied to a Latin American context of miscegenation. Adolfo Caminha, himself an avid follower of Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso, remained troubled by the biological determinism of miscegenation in predicting social deviance.²⁰ *Bom-Crioulo*'s resolution, a metaphor for his own uneasiness, reveals Caminha's uncertainty about including recently manumitted black and *mulato* men in the republican future of Brazil. Such ongoing racial and sexual scrutiny of Afro-Brazilians in the context of abolition and European mass immigration set them up to fail at acculturating to white heteropatriarchy. As Rod Ferguson aptly puts it, in the West, black people could only be "reproductive rather than *productive*, heterosexual but never *heteronormative*."²¹ Through these racial and sexual distinctions legitimated by science and the law, nonheteronormativity in the late nineteenth century went from aberrant social practice to abject sexual identity, theorized alongside the degenerative nature of blackness.

In his own discussion of *Bom-Crioulo*, Peter Beattie points out how the novel, combined with medico-legal theories and military tribunal rulings on homoeroticism, brings to the fore the cultural, intellectual, and legal rise of militarized nationalism at the turn of the twentieth century and a growing concern in defining appropriate male sexual behavior, especially that of black men.²² For both the fictional white naval officials in *Bom-Crioulo* and the actual white naval officials writing in the aftermath of the Revolt of the Lash, 'training' black and *mulato* men to be

effective, modern sailors in Brazil was code for corporal punishment. Blaming the mutiny on the hyper-modernization of the fleet but not the professionalization of the crew, Freyre states in his 1957 volume *Ordem e progresso* (*Order and Progress*) that one cannot forget the propensity of those sailors to succumb to vices like samba, domino, alcohol, and tobacco. For this, they therefore allegedly “felt a necessity for the tutelage of the officials”; “they did not feel humiliated by punishment” while Freyre also argued that they should have been given access to religious, moral, and educational outlets.²³ However, Freyre most notably reproduces the claims originally made by the disgruntled Commander Luiz Autran de Alencastro Graça in a 1949 newspaper article against João Cândido—without citing the petty officer first class’ name—is that there was “some homosexuality” particularly between “petty officers” and “young sailors” that brought out support for the Revolt of the Lash. Respectively denoting them “deacons” and “novices,” Freyre compares the Brazilian Navy in the new republic to the Catholic Church for its hierarchical, secretive, isolated, and all-male social structure in an effort to describe this relationship, much like Caminha throughout *Bom-Crioulo*, as comparable to Ancient Greek pederasty: “It is possible that, during this movement, the deacons had behaved as protectors of the novices for whom some may have considered themselves, due to possible sublimation of homosexual feelings accentuated by a solidarity of color or social origin, protectors and substitutes for fathers, uncles, or older brothers.”²⁴ Inferring João Cândido’s and the other petty officers’ homosexual proclivities, Freyre suggests that it was due to the admiration of the ‘novices’ for their ‘deacons’ and their convincing to participate that the revolt was, in the end, successful. However, like James Green explains with the modernization of the city of Rio de Janeiro, Freyre also seems to explore on the other side of Ancient Greek homoeroticism how the technical advances of the navy without an allegedly adequate training of the crew seems to arouse “a relationship between social degeneration and modernization, as if the process of [fleet modernization] and the transformation of traditional ways were to blame for same-sex erotic behavior.”²⁵

These entangled imaginings of a problematic past and a promising future envisioned in *embranquecimento* in the form of heterosexual miscegenation of black Brazilians with newly arrived white Europeans as the ultimate solution to Brazil’s ‘degeneration.’ Only through whitening could the racial problem that was purportedly triggering an uptick in crime, disease, mental illness, and sexual perversions be resolved. When Amaro explains to Aleixo onboard the decrepit corvette that he will pay for their new home in the capital, a British transatlantic steamer arriving in Brazil rolls by with Italian immigrants onboard: “They waved their handkerchiefs toward the corvette that was remaining further behind, in tatters, slow yet arrogant. And the steamer disappeared like a shadow while the corvette continued on, defeated and alone in the middle of the sea, dismal and devastated.”²⁶ With its “blackened hull” and its “sails soiled with mold,” as the opening lines of *Bom-Crioulo* illustrate, the small warship, listless in the Atlantic, counters the immigrants’ white faces and handkerchiefs billowing toward a more modern Brazil. In turn, the corvette was “a great apocalyptic bat with its wings spread over the sea” as its mostly black and *mulato* crew was quarantined away from Brazilian progress in the ship’s womb.²⁷

Especially after abolition’s alleged promises for liberation, blackness continued to be associated with wildness, to a need to be tamed and controlled out of a fear of a criminal level of sexual abandonment, contrary to whiteness’ moral restraint. On *Bom-Crioulo*, Richard Miskolci argues to this point: “Amaro’s homosexuality is racialized within a conception of white masculinity, differently and hierarchically respected for its capacity of self-control.”²⁸ The voice of the narrator emerges through Amaro’s thoughts, pathologizing himself: “If whites were doing it, blacks were doing it much more! It’s just that not everyone has the strength to resist: nature is

stronger than human will. . . .”²⁹ This transformation occurred with the shifting attention of naturalist thinkers and cultural producers on the Brazilian masses, bringing those previous populations under a blistering spotlight. Sidney Chalhoub observes that, especially after abolition and demographic labor renegotiations, the invention of the expression “dangerous classes” extended similar policies and attitudes of racial and class repression under slavery beyond the limitations of chattel.³⁰ In effect, the discourse of enslavement continued under the veil of abolition and republicanism.

In an attempt to redeem Brazil of its dark history, in 1890, Finance Minister Ruy Barbosa ordered the burning of national registries of enslaved property—a task that took years to complete. Aidoo attests to how this functioned to remove “all trace of [the enslaved’s] existence and their oppression from the official history of Brazil” while also expunging any guilt or shame felt by the white elite.³¹ However, such an act kept what archival materials were still remaining in the hands of white slaveholding families in the form of private records. Thus, the archive’s incineration encouraged turn-of-the-century white authors and historians with cultural capital to re-fashion slavery in their own image, its horrors, and its erotic indulgences. These writers, including abolitionists like Caminha, echoed Brazilian parliamentary politicians who determined that black people’s vices and sexual perversions did not disappear with abolition because they were thought to be inherent.³² As José Piedra points out, these writers then took “a textual opportunity to transform the economy of libidinal desire in colonial exchanges into the colonizers’ rhetorical gain” by exploring the alleged social ills within themselves through subaltern projections achieved under the guise of omniscient narration.³³

With pressure from the navy, Caminha’s novel was almost censored in his critique of the institutions of the old empire and the first republic for their inequities, specifically for the navy’s lingering reliance on a corrupt, aristocratic hierarchy, the impressment of black and poor men, and flogging as punishment.³⁴ Despite his indictments of the navy, Caminha’s inclusion of anal sex into the narrative, albeit often through euphemisms and Greek mythological references, distressed the literati of the time while it has troubled a more recent scholarship on how authentic of a naturalist Caminha was.³⁵ What likely disgusted critics most was the interraciality of same-sex anal intercourse, particularly around who was penetrating whom. Valentim Magalhães, a respected critic of naturalism and one of the founders of the Brazilian Academy of Letters, penned in his biting critique of the novel and its author in November 1895: “This boy is made unconscious, either by literary obsession or moral perversion. Only as such can one explain the fact that he thought such a subject to be literary, to believe that the story of a stupid black sailor’s bestial vices could be interesting to literature.”³⁶ Earlier having said that “next to *Bom Crioulo*, . . . the adventures of the Marquis de Sade and the knight Faublas [are] simple fairy tales,” Magalhães, among other critics, proves the defining factor of said sexual perversion to be Amaro’s *boçal*, or savage, blackness. While other Brazilian like Lourenço Ferreira Leal’s *Um homem gasto* (*A Spent Man*, 1885), Raul Pompéia’s *O Ateneu* (*The Athenaeum*, 1888), and Portuguese author Abel Botelho’s *O Barão de Lavos* (*The Baron of Lavos*, 1891) also exhibit homoeroticism, Caminha’s *Bom-Crioulo* definitively inverts the pre-abolition roles. The idyllic sexual romances of white men penetrating black, indigenous, and mixed-race women excluded black men from the national imaginary of *mestiçagem*. Instead, in this case, it is a once-enslaved black man who penetrates an adolescent white boy. By making Amaro the penetrating partner of this same-sex affair, Caminha complements the naturalist medico-legal logic of black and indigenous men’s culpability in polluting white Brazilians with the perversions of sodomy while, at the same time, feminizing the freshly arrived, pregnable white flesh of European immigrants. Not excluding aberrant sexualities and, instead, “prais[ing] the republic’s “scientific” efforts to correct vestiges of the empire’s

supposedly corrupt social, sexual, and political order” as the “root causes of Bom Crioulo’s sexual “pathology” and Brazil’s national malaise,” Caminha envisioned his novel a study of moral deterioration brought upon by the institutions of slavery and the navy.³⁷

In the thirteen months from *Bom-Crioulo*’s publication until the author’s sudden death from tuberculosis, the novel remained fodder for some of the top literary critics in Rio de Janeiro, like Magalhães. In the same review published in his weekly literary review for the nationally-syndicated newspaper *A Notícia*, Magalhães described his disgust and disappointment when he believed the long-advertised book had intended, yet failed, to “make a defense for the black Brazilian, whose rehabilitation was pursued via an ethnogenic element, making evident his psycho-physiological qualities. And I come to find just a coarse, illiterate, completely instinctive and aberrantly vice-ridden, huge black man.”³⁸ Another well-known literary critic, José Veríssimo, in an anonymous November 1895 article in the Rio newspaper *Jornal do Commercio* later attributed to him, asked how Caminha could expect respect from his readership when he “spent long days occupied with analyzing and discussing the improbable psychology of nauseating crimes against nature” of “such an indignant creature” like Amaro.³⁹ Finally, in a resentful, if not downright hostile eulogy of Caminha in *O Paiz* one day after the author’s death, the playwright Artur de Azevedo, brother to Aluísio de Azevedo, the father of Brazilian naturalism, questioned how Caminha “sincerely imagined that the depravation of a stupid sailor came to him as an occasion to do a pretty psychological analysis.”⁴⁰ All three of these prominent writers and literary critics believed Caminha’s exploration of the psychology of a once-enslaved black sailor with same-sex desires to go beyond the bounds of naturalism. Even more scandalously, due to naturalism’s proto-anthropological approach—and in a slight to Caminha’s circle of neophyte naturalists who favored literature informed by personal observation—all three suggested that, due to the text’s technical maritime language and thick description, the young author himself may have been a cabin boy when he started in the navy. They alleged that perhaps Caminha witnessed if not partook in similar interracial homoerotic proclivities.

Frustrated with such reproach from naturalism’s old guard, Caminha started his own monthly literary journal in January 1896, *A Nova Revista* (The New Magazine), with nine editions until he became too sick to continue the publication. In a well-known rebuttal to his critics, the last article of the February edition sought to have the last word on *Bom-Crioulo*. Titled “Um livro condemnado” (“A condemned book”), the author put his novel up against European naturalists he adored like Émile Zola, Eça de Queirós, and Gustave Flaubert while also citing prominent sexologists like Richard von Kraft-Ebbing, Albert Moll, and Ambroise Tardieu who informed his work. In so doing, Caminha wished to prove himself a legitimate naturalist or, better yet, advancing the field through his avant-garde and industrious theorizations.⁴¹ Most pointedly, Caminha asks, “What is more pernicious: BOM-CRIOULO, in which *homossexualismo* is studied and condemned, or those pages that go on preaching, in a philosophical tone, the dissolution of the family, concubinage, free love, and every type of social immorality?”⁴² Reflecting one of the first times the now-defunct term *homossexualismo*, or ‘homosexuality’^{iv}, appeared in the Brazilian press, Caminha’s literary ‘study’ astutely illustrates the belief that homosexuals and black people

^{iv} As a term of diagnosis, the Associação Brasileira de Psiquiatria (Brazilian Association of Psychiatry, ABP) and the Conselho Federal de Psicologia (Federal Council of Psychology, CFP) retired the term *homossexualismo* in the mid-1980s due to its designation of mental illness and/or social deviance. While the ABP and the CFP have adopted the term *homossexualidade* (homosexuality) to address sexuality as part of one’s socio-cultural identity, only more recently in the late 2000s and early 2010s has broader Brazilian society caught up with the de-medicalization of sexual nomenclature, showing the long shadow of pseudo-scientific thought and its recitations in cultural production.

could be carriers of psychopathologies, that same-sex desire was a mental illness caused, too, by social conditioning, on par with the adultery and incest exhibited in Flaubert's, Zola's, and Queirós' novels. As Leonardo Mendes points out, while Caminha believed himself both a literary author and a scientist reading the most cutting-edge research from Europe, his 'homosexualist' postscript puts a more in-depth psychological analysis of Amaro, his protagonist, on the table for the reader and for my analysis here, as the author's original intent.

Following the 'foundational fictions' of the romantic period, naturalism reworked the same discourse of its predecessor's allegorical interracialities to frighten the body politic into progressive action. As romanticism focused on the interiority of love, loss, and, through these, a collective identity formation, naturalism externalized the human body's anti-normativities into public behaviors. In exposing disobedient bodies and their deviant sex to the reader, naturalism could be construed as a multiplicitous queering of romanticism, also with a telos of whitened, heteropatriarchal progress. In *Bom-Crioulo*, Caminha explores how the aberrant black protagonist's psyche, sentience, and physical body might be (re)ordered and progressed, even if against his will, thereby hinting at the pleasures of both author and reader in excluding blackness via the consumptive inclusions of naturalist thought and cultural production. Nevertheless, perhaps this possibility for pleasure does not lie solely with Caminha and his reader, but also for these oft-overlooked characters themselves. If attempting queer miscegenation might bring carnal, social, and national pleasure through abjection, therein potentially exists a certain freedom within and beyond these national formations told through race and sex.

Feeling Black (Queer) Freedom

Naturalism magnified the enigma of an ostensibly equalizing freedom rendered by abolition. However, Brazilian blackness became more deeply entrenched as inferior with black men especially unamenable to the national whitening project and, thus, limited their sociopolitical independence. Black feminist cultural studies scholar Saidiya Hartman locates the paradox of this newfound "burdened individuality," that is, "the onerous responsibilities of freedom with the enjoyment of few of its entitlements" in the sensate black body. Despite the master's right to it has since evaporated, "the laboring black body remained a medium of others' power and representation," particularly state institutions and cultural production.⁴³ Once enslaved and then impressed into the navy, how does Amaro come to feel freedom, his blackness always already limited and perverse? Does his psychosocial body harbor potential for freedom or, at least, to imagine freedom vis-à-vis national race and sex narratives like *embranquecimento*? If it cannot conceive of freedom from within the apparent constraints of these narratives, of naturalism, can the black body, the black queer body, at the bare minimum feel it ephemerally? As "a profoundly ambivalent and semantically rich character", the narration of Amaro's physical and psychological construction—and its projection onto João Cândido in the context of the Revolt of the Lash—encourages us to explore his body and mind further.⁴⁴ However, I proceed here with caution to not replicate the voyeuristic violence of white male readership onto black manhood. I instead aim to illustrate how Amaro's body and mind imagine liberation through interraciality and what, if anything we might glean from a nuanced, exploratory approach.

While Caminha's depiction of Amaro's same-sex desire conveys, to a minimal degree, some sense of diegetic empathy, the nominal agency granted here pales in comparison to Amaro as a productive spectacle to be consumed and studied throughout the novel. Caminha clearly adopts Nina Rodrigues' reasoning, who wrote that "the black is not solely an *economic* machine, he is

above all, despite his ignorance, an object of *science*.⁴⁵ For Caminha, the Brazilian navy's racial makeup and the isolation of its ranks at sea created the perfect literary laboratory. As allegory for the Brazilian Empire, the decrepit, creaking, and leaky wooden ship represents a test site for modernity. For example, when Amaro's shipmates see him naked for the first time:

... it was an uproar! There was not a single bone in the giant's body: the large and erect chest, the arms, the abdomen, the thighs, the legs all formed a respectable set of muscles, giving a sense of a superhuman physical strength, dominating the crew that smiled open-mouthed before the black man. From that moment on, Bom-Crioulo came to be considered a "dangerous man," exerting a decisive influence over the spirit of everyone, imposing himself unconditionally, absolutely, as the strongest arm, the most robust chest onboard. He was the one who carried the heaviest weight. For everything, there came Bom-Crioulo, with his iron wrists, with the strength of his one hundred seventy-five pounds, showing how to hoist a main shroud, how to subdue a sail in a storm, how to work with pleasure!⁴⁶

The narrator's imagining of Amaro's pleasure in work is the racialized and sexualized labor upon which the whitened Brazilian state bases its authority. With the power to control the enslaved/impressed body in favor of production, following Foucault, "its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls" all help to produce national sovereignty.⁴⁷ Later, Amaro dozes off, exhausted from work, waking up to the realization that he ejaculated in his sleep, abhorred at "the true depletion of seminal fluid, of procreative forces, of life, in the end, that "that" was blood transformed into matter! If he had at least enjoyed it... But he felt nothing; absolutely nothing, even in his dreams!"⁴⁸ Pleasure for Amaro remains eclipsed by his work; the only possible sexual pleasure for him achieved in attempting to transform his semen into the blood of the nation. On the other hand, his body at work turns into visual pleasure for others, where the narrator/author's eyes—and the reader's—join the crew's as they scan over Amaro's silhouette, making him a "dangerous man" to be watched whose muscular splendor raises, in more ways than one, the "spirit" of the "open-mouthed" crew.



Figure 1: "The Revolt's Spectators: People at the Pharoux Wharf spying on the mutinied ships' movements and contained at a certain distance by a barricade of benches. And they say that curiosity is a *virtue* only of the feminine sex!" *O Malho*.⁴⁹



Figure 2: “Scenes from the Revolt: Land for Beans^v...: Photo taken at the Pharoux Wharf, at a moment where one of the various revolting ships shot its cannon... over that way... Such is civic courage, put into action by the rearguard! Look at how they run!...” *O Malho*.⁵⁰

Fifteen years later with the Revolt of the Lash, the press would take a similar view of awe and fear regarding João Cândido. In his popular weekly column in *O Paiz*, Gilberto Amado writes of the public’s reaction to the Revolt: “For the first time, I saw panic: pop-eyed physiognomies, trembling mouths, the upsetting commotion of people fleeing. ... It was terror; it felt like the end of the world. ... All of that was because of João Cândido.” However, at the same time, Amado calls João Cândido “a formidable sailor. ... a sailor who knows how to navigate, to steer a ship, to do threaded maneuvers. ... In Brazil, João Cândido is this divine thing, this symbol...” In these racial and sexual fascinations with a black man imposing what seemed like his singular will over Brazil, as an “arbiter over a Nation of 20 million souls,” the insurgent leader gives muscle and bone to Caminha’s Amaro.⁵¹ João Cândido, too, becomes a “dangerous man” to be watched with awe and fear, especially by curious white men (Figures 1 and 2).

Caminha’s characterization of Amaro as a hard-working, rebellious black man very likely came from his own experience of reading about the 1881 Revolt of the *Jangadeiros*^{vi} in his home state and the revolt’s leader, Francisco José do Nascimento, also known as Chico de Matilde and, later, Dragão do Mar.^{vii} The *jangadeiros*’ uprising occurred only a few months after he moved to Rio de Janeiro at the age of 13. Soon thereafter, Caminha matriculated into the Naval School and became a staunch abolitionist, while Nascimento arrived in Rio de Janeiro to a hero’s welcome. It may not be farfetched to presume even that Caminha, or his family, was acquainted with Chico de Matilde, as both hailed from the same small coastal town of Aracati. While commemorative comparisons between João Cândido and Dragão-do-Mar have come to fruition—particularly João Bosco’s 1974 samba “Mestre Sala dos Mares” (“Grand Master of the Seas”) famously performed

^v While the magazine *O Malho* (1902-1954) often sought to satirize the news and culture, the word for ‘beans’—*feijões*—is probably a play-on-words of *fujões*, or ‘runaways.’ As *O Malho* was highly critical of the Revolt of the Lash and the government’s handling of it, this very well may address not only the “civic courage” or lack thereof of the crowds but also of the mutiny itself and the government’s acquiescence to all of the sailors’ demands.

^{vi} *Jangadas* are small, flat-bottomed sailboats—*jangadeiros*, their captains—used to transport goods from larger ships into ports with shallow terrain, such as the port of Fortaleza, Ceará’s capital, whose treacherous waters required all of its goods be brought via *jangada*. The *jangadeiros*, in 1881, revolted, refusing to transport slaves to the shores of Iracema Beach, helping to fortify one of Brazil’s strongest regional abolitionist movements. In 1884, Ceará became the only state to abolish slavery before the rest of the nation in 1888.

^{vii} This nickname translates to “Sea Dragon,” underscoring Nascimento’s sailing capabilities and his célèbre valor against slavery.

by singer Elis Regina at her prime—Caminha's linkage of the two through troublesome representations of black masculine sexuality at the turn of the twentieth century places these figures of tremendous and terrible infamy into the rarely shown light of cultural critique. All three black men, fictional or factual, in their resistances to state power, however, were admired, fetishized, and feared by the white men who wrote about them. Such scrutiny cast the intersection of their blackness and masculinity into the legal, medical, and cultural darkness of abjection.

Perhaps no other thinker than Frantz Fanon better articulates this shift in perception on the corporal and social scale, as well as the potential for resistance. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon articulates the gaze that transforms his own black manhood into spectacle against the background of white power: "My body was returned to me spread-eagled, disjointed, redone, draped in mourning on this white winter's day."⁵² While his visual dismemberment translates to a fetishization such that the black man "embodies genital power out of reach of morals," a potential for resistance lies therein.⁵³ Following Fanon, the two scenes of Amaro's whippings, with their precise language and Amaro's resilient masculinity, exude as much sensuality as his love-making to Aleixo. In the first whipping, half-naked "in a rich display of muscles, the rippling chest, the sparkling black shoulder blades, the deep, smooth furrow running down the back," Amaro "didn't even groan" while "sailors and officers, in a concentrated silence, drew their gaze, full of interest, toward each blow."⁵⁴ Lasting for 150 lashes, Amaro nonetheless expresses satisfaction to himself, as he "had shown once again that he was a man" in fighting to protect his lover.⁵⁵ Aidoo confirms this, writing how Amaro's "wish is that through his pain, his endurance, his resistance to torture, he will awaken sexual desire in Aleixo, and that Aleixo will see him as a man out of gratitude."⁵⁶ However, the pleasure Amaro takes through abjection in his bottoming to the whip, emerging bloodied yet his manhood unscathed, makes this decidedly not a Fanonian enterprise.

The whip comes to epitomize white institutional power and desire. While internalizing it, Amaro submits to it and feels gratified by these violent narratives of national progress to gain a sense of favor and belonging. Hartman describes these "scenes of subjection" as a praxis for reading with and against the grain of white heteropatriarchy, allowing us the possibility to imagine where pleasure as a performance of race and sexuality fit into this assemblage. As Fanon argues for active resistance to achieve agency when coping with state-sanctioned violence, and Hartman offers modes of reading resistance and renunciation, we comprehend how Amaro effectually exerts agency through submitting, in part, to state power. This agency is achieved mainly through the narrator's construction of Amaro as a victim of his social circumstances and as an anti-here for the reader, as David William Foster argues.⁵⁷ Thus, we are made to question whether or not Caminha himself through Amaro's passivity to the whip as triumphant or tawdry.

Similar to the spectacle of Amaro's flayed black manhood, it was a particularly brutal whipping that finally set alight the 1910 Revolt of the Lash that had been postponed three times that November. While more serious offenses were punished with 25 lashes, Marcelino Rodrigues, a sailor on the new dreadnought *Minas Geraes* who had injured a colleague, was stripped and lashed 250 blows bringing him to the brink of death. João Cândido, Rodrigues' shipmate, decided to make the signal and begin the revolt, commenting in his 1968 interview on the shame he felt that "We, who had just come back from Europe, in contact with other navies, could not admit that, in the Brazilian Navy, men still removed their shirts to be whipped by other men."⁵⁸ In a separate manifesto to the Navy Minister Joaquim Marques Batista de Leão, the insurgents dictated their wish for the Brazilian Navy to be one "made up of citizens and not a plantation of slaves whose only right was to be whipped by their masters."⁵⁹ Despite this, João Cândido and the naval archive largely blame English mercenaries for instating the lash, having been hired by Emperor Pedro I to

help Brazil achieve independence from Portugal in 1822 and discipline its navy. A deeper reading evinces, however, that it was an underlying homoerotic humiliation in being seen as savage by the modern world, particularly by the English with whom Brazilians interacted long-term in Newcastle, that intensified the desire for freedom. While the revolt was not per se “*para inglês ver*,”^{viii} its inspiration, in part, was to show the Brazilian military, government, and people—as well as the international community—that poor, lowly black sailors were capable of commandeering the most technologically advanced war machines available on the high seas. As the spectacle of their maneuvers intended to advocate for their rights as equal citizens, it was the nation’s coinciding gratification and terror of black men that endured.



Figure 3: João Cândido, right, reading the newspaper reporting about the Revolt of the Lash with Antonio Ferreira de Andrade, a cabin boy. November 23, 1910. Courtesy of the Museu da Imagem e do Som - Rio de Janeiro.⁶⁰

While the mutineers fought for recognition in spite of whitening campaigns, *Bom-Crioulo* offers a script with which one might argue the dilution of black men out of the Brazilian nation via miscegenation in order to protect the purity of white women and, perchance unspoken, that of white boys as well. In gauging the prurient ecstasy in the eyes of others, as he did in his first lashing, Amaro fiddles with the threshold between white pleasure and white fear. Of the liminal freedom Amaro has secured between plantation bondage and naval impressment, Caminha’s narrative offers sex and desire as the most profitable tool of formerly enslaved black men. As Aidoo shows, Amaro’s body constitutes “his sole form of currency” and must use it to navigate the inconsistencies of his freedom.⁶¹ In scenes such as Amaro’s seduction of Aleixo under candlelight, the sexual prowess of his blackness allows him to feel empowered via the teenager’s

^{viii}“*Para inglês ver*”—literally, “for the Englishman to see”—is a common Brazilian expression used to describe when somebody, especially Brazilian politicians or the government as a whole, enacts laws or projects not meant to necessarily help Brazilian citizens, but to impress the outside world and appear more modern, civilized, and sophisticated than they actually are.

capitulation. Amaro demands that “the submissive and cowardly small boy” slowly disrobe in front of him, clearly denoting Amaro’s agency as at once racial as it is sexual: Amaro’s “libertine whims” being the only thing that “displeased the cabin boy.”⁶² Here, the ubiquitous tale of the white master who rapes his enslaved black mistress is playfully ruptured, making Aleixo’s shy, milky, feminine body and Amaro’s orders most understandable as the racial and gender inversion of sex under chattel slavery. From the text’s genre, however, we know Amaro’s seduction of Aleixo, having been subjected himself under the violence of slavery and the navy, to constitute an eventual failure, “that is, bound to serve, to service, and/or to please the provoked target.”⁶³ Following naturalist thinking and the derisive reviews of *Bom-Crioulo* as pornography not fit for consumption, Amaro’s penetration of Aleixo was probably envisaged as sexual revenge on whiteness. Nonetheless, as Foster states, “one cannot help but wonder if [Caminha’s] portrayal held a doubly morbid fascination for the readers who might have been contemplating for the first time both the possibilities of homoerotic passion and a scandalous inversion of the roles of slavery” under which they themselves might submit.⁶⁴ Related, in Gilberto Amado’s reporting on the Revolt of the Lash, he writes, “And the worst of it is that all are unanimous in recognizing that this was the only solution that remained for us: to submit ourselves to João Cândido.”⁶⁵

During the Revolt of the Lash and in the weeks after, every major newspaper in the nation sprawled João Cândido’s black face and body across the front page, a rarity for Afro-Brazilians since the rise of photojournalism. In the most well-known photograph from the mutiny, João Cândido appears unbothered, reading the newspaper reports on the revolt he himself was leading. Standing next to him is Antonio Ferreira de Andrade, a small and polished white cabin boy who stares directly into the camera, with his head slightly turned, a bag dangling from his shoulder along with a perfectly tied kerchief, and his leg bent cocking his hip upward (Figure 3). Both the photo by Augusto Malta and the press simply call Andrade João Cândido’s “secretary,” “second mate,” or “assistant,” sometimes including these suggestive quotation marks. With the cabin boy’s feminine pose and *Bom-Crioulo* as a present script in cultural memory at the time, what might it cost us to read against history, against the archive, in order to invert the narrative, to seek out other forms of racial and sexual liberation for these literary characters and the memory of real-life people? As José Carvalho points out, Andrade’s name never appears in the press.^{ix} His existence is always relational to that of João Cândido, even when Andrade sought to be discharged from the navy three weeks after the insurrection. Carvalho refers directly to *Bom-Crioulo*, asking of Andrade, “Might he be [João Cândido’s] Aleixo?”⁶⁶ While some, like the aforementioned Commander Graça and, later, Gilberto Freyre, sought to disgrace João Cândido upon implying his leadership to be tainted by homoeroticism, the leader of the revolt stated in 1968, “The other sailors always wanted to be near me ... They wanted to have direct contact with me.”⁶⁷ This expression of physical desire for João Cândido by his comrades—be it simply his presence, communication, and/or touch, we do not know—both in photographs and recounted memories complicates what we know about the potential relationships these men and boys had in the navy, be they merely fraternal or amorous. This gap allows for a plausibility of homoerotic pleasures in the navy’s literal abjection of blackness away from civilization such that the flesh and its agencies are what little remain for survival.

In *Bom-Crioulo* and its echoes heard in the Revolt of the Lash, the racial and sexual discourse of the era in Brazil and much of the West honed in on black genitalia’s perceived physiological excess as a moral threat to the nation. In the novel, the strict focus on masturbation

^{ix} The only source I found to actually list the name of Antonio Ferreira de Andrade, pictured with João Cândido in Figure 3, is the Ministry of Culture’s official biography on João Cândido, published in 2008.

and anal penetration together reduce Amaro and other secondary black male characters to their penis. Aleixo's embodied and affective fulfillment simultaneously became that of the author, the narrator, and the white male reader, further manipulating Amaro's tenuous freedom to their delight. Amaro's sexual performance, however, becomes a condition of his very life and the future of blackness. In his planning to make love to Aleixo for the first time, the narrator cites the well-endowed Greek fertility god: "Priapus swore to last to the end of the battle. It was do or die!"⁶⁸ Amaro's blackness and the almost divine nature of this Hellenic man-boy relationship are reified through the desecration of future white manhood. Therefore, Amaro's successful penetration of Aleixo constitutes Caminha's desire to discredit the navy as a hypocritical institution of classical honor and manhood since it is the navy to whom Amaro believes he owes all of his manliness and sexual teachings. "'That was where I began,'" he tells Aleixo, marking what he treats as his rebirth as a man and full citizen.⁶⁹

Such myths of the black rapist popular in naturalist literature across the Western world become recited in the representations of João Cândido and his co-insurgents in the press. Similar to Amaro's violation of Brazil's whitened future in the form of Aleixo, a political cartoon in *O Malho* satirizes this black masculine power in the aftermath of the Revolt of the Lash (Figure 4). An ogre-like João Cândido, in his navy uniform, stands pointing two smoking revolvers labeled *Minas* and *São Paulo*—after the state-of-the-art dreadnoughts—toward a trembling crowned white woman whose thigh and buttock are suggestively labeled "City of Rio de Janeiro." She is protected by an upright yet petite President Hermes da Fonseca wielding a saber. The black virility of the mutineers, through João Cândido's grimace and the long, steel barrels of his pistols threatens to pierce the "cheeks" of the innocent yet "extremely civilized" white woman, standing in for Princess Isabel who signed the Golden Law abolishing slavery in 1888. The white man and his sword stand no match to the well-endowed black man three times his caliber. Much to the chagrin of Rio de Janeiro and the rest of Brazil, the insurrectionists were seeking to insert themselves, as citizens, into society. Nonetheless, much like this cartoon and *Bom-Crioulo* suggest, this insertion into citizenship, for black men especially, had deep sexual undertones that threatened what was perceived as a well-intentioned swan song of the empire and the young republic's defense of whitened civilization.

Freedom throughout *Bom-Crioulo* builds increasingly on Amaro's acculturation into whiteness by virtue of his participation in state power. Initially, the passion of this freedom, of aiding Brazil to progress, while always reminiscent of its maritime Portuguese heritage and reliance on the slave trade, rushes through his veins like a "soft drunkenness of the senses."⁷⁰ However, it quickly dissipates as he realizes that a "sailor and a black slave, in the end, come to be the same thing."⁷¹ This very precept is reflected in the various manifestos and telegrams sent by the participants in the Revolt of the Lash to government officials 15 years later. As scholars of slavery across the African diaspora reveal, it was black people's "duty to prove their worthiness for freedom" and not the nation's obligation to fulfill it or any of its fruits.⁷² Following Fanon, black manhood becomes "unassimiable" to the project of whitening as an improper player in narratives of procreative miscegenation.⁷³ Whatever sympathy the nineteenth-century reader might feel for Amaro comes from the failure of his self-emancipation as a runaway slave due to unstoppable same-sex desires that, like the navy to João Cândido and his comrades, imprison him.

Much like the mutineers' calls to abolish the vestiges of slavery in the navy, Amaro's memory of the plantation defines his consciousness in past suffering where he "only feared returning to the plantation, returning to the breast of slavery."⁷⁴ That same consciousness' enticement with a future that has not yet come to fruition, like Amaro's plan to rent a room for

himself and Aleixo once in Rio de Janeiro, makes freedom in the present feel impossible, an unattainable but titillating sensation. As Mendes discusses, this inner monologue as mediated by the narrator “is frequently used to reveal a fictional mind suspended in the moment of the present, between a memory of the past and a preview of the future.”⁷⁵ Besides, Amaro’s potential for miscegenation manifests psychologically, as his thoughts are revealed and interpreted by his relationship to the narrator “which would not be an exaggeration to call, in a novel about sexuality, as erotic.”⁷⁶ For example, Amaro’s whipping and its recollection, intermediated by Caminha’s omniscient narrator, typifies the transient inclusion of the protagonist’s blackness contingent upon his labor’s contribution to the nation; an inclusion founded in the overlapping pains and pleasures of subjection. As the plot progresses, it becomes rather evident, however, that queerness and blackness are no longer viable, making whiteness via miscegenation a desired, albeit asymptotic, destiny.⁷⁷ More specifically, blackness falls short of white heteronormativity as both the narrator and Amaro openly accept the latter’s nickname in the navy.



Figure 4: A political cartoon in *O Malho* whose subtitle reads, “How to make a ‘complaint’—albeit fair—to a new, well-intentioned, constitutional government and on the *cheeks* of an extremely civilized capital, with a million peaceful and timid souls.”⁷⁸

Although I have taken an active stance on calling Amaro by his birth name, the nickname ‘Bom-Crioulo’ is designated by Amaro—and the narrator’s preferred use—a harmless “shipboard slang.”⁷⁹ The translator of the 1982 English edition, Edward A. Lacey, effectively conveys the occasionally pejorative nature of the Portuguese word *crioulo* to be “nigger” but, with the exception of direct insults in dialogue, refuses to use it again as a part of Amaro’s name throughout the text, deferring instead to Bom-Crioulo in the original Portuguese.⁸⁰ Yet, the resonance of literal and figurative denigration rings on, particularly in the language of the era, the archive revealing that the word was widely used in newspapers, first, to describe runaway slaves and, second, to racially denote criminals, especially black men who allegedly abducted innocent white girls for

their hypersexual fulfillment.^x Despite these words seemingly do not mesh, Amaro is esteemed as ‘good’ in his docile and hard-working demeanor and the officers’ surprise at the initial lack of necessity to whip the man who had escaped slavery. By attaching ‘Bom-,’ Caminha gestures to the eugenic possibility for racial improvement albeit conditional in hyphenation. Grammatically, this adjective referring to Amaro’s work ethic and docility, when sober and celibate, thus also gives him ample opportunity for his racial status to be lowered were he to disobey the norms of heteronormative whiteness.^{xi}

In the aftermath of the Revolt of the Lash, João Cândido would come to be nicknamed by the press and, eventually, the public as the “Almirante Negro,” or “Black Admiral.” Considering the tone of the rest of Gilberto Amado’s report on the mutiny, while complimentary at times—particularly in his skills at the helm—João Cândido’s first appearance as an “admiral” in the public lexicon lingers between the sycophantic and the sardonic. He writes for *O Paiz*, “Admiral João Cândido had the benefaction of simply demanding amnesty, so that we might live, which Congress, with a swift comprehension of the “gravity of the moment,” was accommodating in voting for.”⁸¹ Two years later, leading up to João Cândido’s release from military prison and discharge from the navy, the infamous queer black Rio de Janeiro journalist, João do Rio^{xii}, would promote him in the vernacular as the “Almirante Negro.” However, while the navy was still licking its wounds from the mutiny that brought about a massive expulsion of sailors as well as the forced retirement of officers, the nickname was not widely accepted nor utilized until much later. The 1958 definitive historiography of the mutiny by respected journalist Edmar Morel who interviewed João Cândido over the course of several years, would reveal his, overall, good behavior.^{82,xiii} While his officers, like Amaro’s, never felt the need to thrash him, João Cândido was twice placed in the brig for fighting and, in 1907 prior to his departure to northern England, definitively demoted several posts from corporal to petty officer first class for having brought onboard playing cards and cachaça. Nevertheless, that same year, he was lauded by the Ministry of the Navy “for his zeal, dedication, and patriotism which he proved in maintaining the honor and traditions of the national Navy.”⁸³ Between 1908 and 1910, he received mention for good behavior, including leading up to the mutiny. Even during the insurrection, Congressman José Carlos de Carvalho, an officer of the Brazilian Navy who was commissioned by Hermes da Fonseca as the government’s mediator, stated upon his second visit to the *Minas Geraes* regarding João Cândido, “This sailor has proven

^x Through my own comparisons of criminal reports in metropolitan area newspapers in the 1890s, 1900s, and early 1910s, the only racial signifiers used were *crioulo* and *caboclo* or *cafuzo*—dark-skinned individuals with indigenous features, largely denoted as people of mixed African and indigenous heritage—often with monstrous detail of their physical features. While the word *branco*—‘white’—or *de pele/tez clara*—‘light-skinned/colored’—rarely appeared, when a racial signifier was absent, it could be assumed the accused was not black or mixed-race. Then, whiteness became an unspoken, unanalyzed state of neutrality and point of reference even in criminology.

^{xi} Amaro’s name, according to Howes, could very well refer, first, etymologically, to his Othello-like characterization as a Moor and, second, to Caminha’s well-documented appreciation for Portuguese novelist Eça de Queirós whose *O Crime do Padre Amaro* (1875), at various points in *Bom-Crioulo*, sees itself reflected.

^{xii} João Paulo Emílio Cristóvão dos Santos Coelho Barreto, or, by his pseudonym, João do Rio, quickly became one of the most prolific and controversial writers of early twentieth-century Rio de Janeiro and Brazil, primarily in his translations into Portuguese of the works of Oscar Wilde, thus promoting the notorious Irish author imprisoned in Britain from 1895 to 1897 for gross indecency with men. Writing largely on underrepresented topics in journalism such as Afro-diasporic religions like Candomblé and Umbanda, distant and poor neighborhoods in Rio de Janeiro, and day-to-day urban life and culture, João do Rio’s blackness, paired with his rumored and not-so-discreet homosexuality, made him an unlikely popular figure in Rio de Janeiro’s cultural and literary circles.

^{xiii} While it would take Morel nearly ten years to finish his volume, he and João Cândido developed a friendship, appearing together at events. When João Cândido died on December 6, 1969, Morel served as one of the pallbearers for his funeral and burial service.

himself perfectly knowledgeable of nautical secrets and an admirable disciplinarian of the revolting sailors.”⁸⁴ After two years in military prison, his discharge without pension, and a lifetime of blackballing by the navy, João Cândido’s own testimony in 1968 showed a stunning lack of rancor for, at times even expressing gratitude to, the navy for his training.⁸⁵ While history blessed him as the Almirante Negro, his competence, decorum, leadership, and loyalty to an institution that raised and abused him could have had João Cândido dubbed another Bom-Crioulo.

While João Cândido would only later, and perhaps reluctantly, come to recognize himself as Brazilian lore’s Almirante Negro, Amaro embraces the appellation of Bom-Crioulo, using it to introduce himself to Aleixo. He believes in the navy’s proto-racial democracy, saying, “there, nobody looked at the color or race of a sailor” and that “everyone was equal.” Meanwhile, the same officers in whose good graces he is accepted, “at the beginning, [...] could hardly keep from laughing at this strange recruit, who knew nothing of military customs, boorish like a savage.”⁸⁶ Pining for onboard acceptance in the racial plurality of the navy Amaro, like João Cândido after him, comes to question this maxim: “A slave on the plantation, a slave onboard, a slave everywhere... And they call this serving your country!”⁸⁷ Abjection, as Ferguson gestures, becomes agential, stating, “emancipation, rather than being the entrance of the [black person] into the normative claims and protections of citizenship, is rearticulated as identification with and triumph of the nonheteronormative.”⁸⁸ For Amaro, it remains through these same institutional frustrations as well as interracial, same-sex desire that he acknowledges his racial and sexual difference within the naval state structure.

By also engaging the alternative meaning to *crioulo* as “Creole” in its multitudes of geographical inferences of race and origin in the Americas well into the nineteenth century, we must accept Amaro as a character who, while black, is steeped in potential for cultural and biological miscegenation. Ginway offers Amaro himself as “a cultural hybrid of European literary myths and Brazil’s historical realities” whose own miscegenation of histories underscores national dissonance.⁸⁹ This queer miscegenation thus lies at the crossroads of same-sex desire and mixed-race sexual procreation in the utopian struggle to reproduce a whitened nation. In that non-heteronormative racial formations might be seen as “the site of ruptures, critiques, and alternatives,” we might also see the struggle of queer miscegenation as a point of departure for a generative queer of color critique of Latin American nationalist narratives of *mestiçagem*, *mestizaje*, and *métissage*.⁹⁰ Blackness thus becomes a tool against which heteronormative whiteness gets defined, especially under the guise of a national *mulato* or *mestiço* identity constructed in the 1920s and 30s with widely read social histories written by Paulo Prado, Gilberto Freyre, and Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, among others. Although Amaro numbingly accepts his nickname, the foundation of his racial-sexual consciousness in a painful past and an exciting, yet uncertain, future serves as a hyphenated link between savagery and civilization: a prototype for the cultural fluidity of *mestiçagem*.

Corporeal Effluvia: Bodies of the Sea, Bodies of the City

While the *embranquecimento* campaigns and, later, racial democracy viewed miscegenation as a racial equalizer or the complete erasure of race, the failures of these national projects heavily informed by sex, in fact, reifies race. Through allegory, *Bom-Crioulo* exposes interraciality—heterosexual or homosexual—to be utopic, mainly due to the racial and sexual fluidities incurred by competing theories on racial improvement among naturalists. As the fluidity of identity impedes the Hegelian linear progress narrative of modernity, Amaro’s ruminations of

an idyllic life at sea and ashore with Aleixo as narrated by Caminha's pen simultaneously make and destroy him.

The ocean is where Amaro feels his first sensations of freedom and manhood: "That freedom now widened his eyes, as it grew immeasurably in his imagination, inducing a shockwave of delirium through him, opening broad and unknown rose-colored horizons in his soul."⁹¹ As queerness might be viewed as a rose-colored horizon, Amaro's sense of racialized freedom could be buoyed further through the potentiality of his interracial affair. However, queer black feminist scholar Omise'eke Tinsley rightfully depicts the fear of black captives ushered through the transatlantic slave trade at their initial sight of the sea and its massive, looming ships. Amaro's warship, like the slave ship where "black body waters, corporeal effluvia, and the stains of gendered and reproductive bodies were among the first sites of colonization," instead becomes a peculiar site of joy and unbridled sexual pleasure between colorful bodies.⁹² The ship sails on a horizon for which he constantly longs and hopes, as it guarantees the continuity of his, perhaps, forbidden love for Aleixo: "Only one person desired more that the voyage would last forever, that the corvette would never again arrive to port, that the sea would widen, submerging islands and continents in a tremendous deluge, and the old vessel, alone, like a ghost, would survive the cataclysm, that just she, grandiose and indestructible, would remain floating, floating for all eternity."⁹³

Caminha's literary quarantine of racial and sexual fluidity away from shore facilitates our ability not only to better envision blackness, whiteness, and queerness, but to use *Bom-Crioulo* to re-read the interstices of institutional power and resistance. The novel, therefore, offers itself as a tool that does more than flatly reclaim João Cândido and his comrades in the Revolt of the Lash as queer and black sociohistorical actors. Additionally, it helps to fill in the gaps between lived experience and the ideologies of naturalism and their literary representations; it becomes an archive to also "read between transatlantic lines and sheets."⁹⁴ As Tinsley suggests, we might be able to "read for shipmates" in the Revolt of the Lash with the help of *Bom-Crioulo*, that is, to "disrup[t] provocatively" whereby "black queerness itself becomes a crosscurrent through which to view hybrid, resistant subjectivities—opaquely, not transparently." Such opacity allows for layered meanings—present yet not always available—while reaffirming a lack of center. Thus, reading for shipmates becomes a necessary methodology since "black queers really have no ancestry except the black water."⁹⁵

The navy's ships served as symbolic and belligerent sites of capitalist expansion and preservation of national sovereignty. Meanwhile, they sundered away the undesirables from civil society as floating prisons with the façade of freedom. At the turn of the twentieth century, a state agent not only of national defense but of whitening via the protection of transatlantic migration, the Brazilian navy was completely propelled from below by men of African descent. These same men, the world would soon discover, were much more powerful than previously imagined. In its power to allegedly 'civilize' itself via corporal punishment, the navy was designated as able to civilize, or whiten, the nation as a whole through a re-fashioning of violence endemic to slavery.⁹⁶ Accordingly, while Caminha gives Amaro texture through consciousness, love, and sensation founded in a painful past and a tantalizing future, might we understand Amaro's homoerotic ventures as a form of productive counteraction, a more democratic national procreation? Could queer black men, like Amaro, not give birth to the nation? It lies in this corporeal flux of the navy, as well as the protagonist's dynamic thoughts on freedom and behaviors towards domestic and national reprofuturity, that Amaro is permitted to institutionally, allegorically, and personally press against contemporary notions of nation-making through abjection.

Recalling the aforementioned example of Amaro's nocturnal emission without pleasure or reproductive purpose, Caminha's navy comes to symbolize national waste and decadence. Revealing court-martial case files of non-procreative sex within the Brazilian armed forces in the late-nineteenth century—specifically, homoeroticism and masturbation—Peter Beattie illustrates the reality that Caminha wished to expose of a degenerate navy and exposes the environment into which João Cândido had been thrust as a 14-year-old cabin boy in 1895, the same year *Bom-Crioulo* was published. Valentim Magalhães' critique of Caminha's novel focuses his revulsion on this point most. He is abhorred by the “disgusting book because it explores — the first to do it, that I know of — a branch of pornography, until today, unpublished for being unimaginable, unnatural, ignoble.” Magalhães refuses to reveal the plot, classifying the “rotten book” as a “vomit-novel, a feces-novel, a pus-novel.”⁹⁷ Considering the dialogic qualities of *Bom-Crioulo* with its critiques, the shift in social values brought upon by naturalism, and a colossal population of unrestrained, poor, and allegedly hypersexual black men widely perceived as a threat to Brazilian modernity, the novel reveals itself as, at the heart of its social impact, seminal. Bluntly, Magalhães likely could have further described *Bom-Crioulo* as a ‘semen-novel.’

This lack of procreative sex in Amaro and Aleixo's relationship leads to Amaro's once muscular body beginning to waste away. His shipmates speculate that it might be due to “some negress,” which he quickly denies. As Amaro begins to feel fatigued from any work, Aleixo also notes his partner's weakening, but Amaro does not care because he witnesses “Aleixo grow at his side, watching the premature development of certain organs, the blossoming of his adulthood, like one who studies the evolution of a curious flower.”⁹⁸ In the late nineteenth century, scientists believed any wasting of semen in non-heterosexual, non-procreative sex could lead to men's physiological and moral breakdown.⁹⁹ As the interracial couple builds a domestic life together, it becomes apparent that Amaro's discarded sperm actually strengthens Aleixo, thus making whitened national progress dependent on the decay of blackness. Amaro's domestic regard for his home and Aleixo, setting aside his own aspirations for the sake of the cabin boy's maturation, represents, in essence, an inverted male variation of the black wet-nurse trope. As the “metaphorical father and mother of a new republic,”¹⁰⁰ his symbolic ‘milk’ helps the Brazilian nation grow into a promising future. Nevertheless, much like the turn-of-the-century scientific debates around the quality of black wet-nurse's breastmilk, this polluted nourishment puts at risk the physical and moral health of Brazil's whitening.^{xiv}

Queer desire for domestic life reigns over *Bom-Crioulo*, as Amaro and, occasionally, Aleixo attempt to construct a sort of life in the horizon, constantly desiring what they already had or are yet to have. While at sea, besides teaching the cabin boy how to pretty himself up to curry favor with the officers, Amaro and Aleixo make plans to live together in Rio de Janeiro, renting a room on Rua da Misericórdia “that would fit two iron beds, or maybe just a single wide and spacious one... He, Bom-Crioulo, would pay for everything out of his salary. They could live a tranquil life.”¹⁰¹ However, upon disembarking, Amaro reminisces of their first love-making while out to sea: “Wherever they were, they had to remember that cold, sleepy night under the same sheet on the bow of the corvette, holding each other like a pair of newlyweds in total lust of their consummation...”¹⁰² This coupling would prime them to take lodging upon the Rua da

^{xiv} For a thorough review of racial science, morality, and breastfeeding in Brazil, see Cassia Roth, “Black Nurse, White Milk: Breastfeeding, Slavery, and Abolition in 19th-Century Brazil,” *Journal of Human Lactation* 34, no. 4, (2018): 804-809; and Sandra Sofia Machado Koutsoukos, “‘Amas mercenárias’: o discurso dos doutores em medicina e os retratos de amas - Brasil, segunda metade do século XIX,” *História, Ciências, Saúde - Manguinhos* 16, no. 2, (2009): 305-324.

Misericórdia, Rio de Janeiro's oldest street now no longer in existence. It was there, it is said, that Rio de Janeiro began, becoming the most important artery in the seventeenth century but, by the late-nineteenth century, would come to accommodate marginalized populations like sailors, stevedores, ex-slaves, prostitutes, and the poor due to urban expansion and modernization away from the port. In João do Rio's 1908 essay *A alma encantadora das ruas* (*The Enchanting Soul of the Streets*), the journalist-turned-social anthropologist remarks how Rua da Misericórdia "was the first street in Rio. From it, we were all born; on it passed viceroys, swindlers, greedy men, naked slaves and their owners carried in litters."¹⁰³ It is no surprise, then, that Caminha would choose to place Amaro and Aleixo there in order to further trouble Brazil's rebirth as a republic: the menacing racial and sexual stakes of such an inversion would prove fatal, breeding only death. While Rua da Misericórdia later housed many of the sailors who mutined in 1910, its alleyways of alcohol, sex, and gambling had in them "the perfidy of the oceans, the misery of immigrations, and the vice, the great vice of the sea and the colonies."¹⁰⁴ With homoeroticism a "vice of the sea," these affective shifts between sea and land make both the Atlantic and Rio de Janeiro fluid, fecund sites of contestation and queer possibility for radical freedom.

Despite their impressment into the navy, Amaro's and João Cândido's respective feelings of freedom overcome all other sensations. While the latter affirms that "the sea never mistreated me"¹⁰⁵, Amaro feels "as if they had injected a delicious and fresh mysterious fluid into his African blood" while at sea.¹⁰⁶ Both Amaro and Aleixo seemingly fuse into nature as their bodies begin to emulate ships which, not ironically, passed in the night. Reflecting on his life on land with Amaro, besides his lover's excessive lust, Aleixo feels "like a light pleasure craft."¹²⁵ In 1910, similar language is used whereby the mutineers come to embody the four ships they have commandeered, the dreadnoughts *Minas Geraes* and *São Paulo*, the cruiser *Bahia*, and the older wooden *Deodoro*. It bears mentioning the coincidence, perhaps, that the most prominent ships that maintained loyalty to the navy during the revolt, the *Rio de Janeiro* and the *Rio Grande do Sul*^{xv}, were named after states that represented desires for modernity through whitening. Meanwhile, the three steel-hulled English-made ships were christened with names of the states upon which the vast majority of colonial and imperial had been consolidated. On the backs of slave labor, the gold and diamonds from Minas Gerais, the coffee from São Paulo, and the sugar, chocolate, and tobacco from Bahia enriched the capital of Rio de Janeiro while these states were considered primitive backwaters and regularly excluded from national policy. These ships, tainted in their blackness and lechery, threatened to annihilate Rio de Janeiro as redress while, as reported, also "dancing," "crocheting," and "pirouetting" in the Bay of Guanabara to demonstrate their finesse.¹⁰⁷ Like these warships' quick maneuvers at sea, Amaro's body melts into "the labyrinth of the city, marching with his long, nimble stride, turning onto streets, cutting corners, "veering and tacking"" as he hunts down the cabin boy for his treachery toward the end of the novel.¹⁰⁸

Much like the rickety wooden corvette that the navy never decommissions, Amaro and Aleixo enact a queer survival in their explorations toward place-making. Amaro creates his place, however, within the conquest of Aleixo as virgin land in all his allegorical splendor of Brazil and the whiteness that Amaro's blackness had created: "Aleixo was a lost land that he had to reconquer

^{xv} Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil's southernmost state, strived for independence for ten years in what would come to be known as the Ragamuffin War between 1835 and 1845, fueled by a weak economy over the prices of beef in competition with Argentina and Uruguay. As one of a series of secessionist wars against a weak monarchy due to hostile forces within the regency of Emperor Pedro II, then still a child and legally unable to rule, the Ragamuffin War would take on new meaning in Rio Grande do Sul popular culture well into the twentieth century as a missed chance to create a purer, whiter nation.

at whatever cost; nobody had the right to rob him of that friendship, that treasure of enjoyment, that ivory tower constructed by his own hands.”¹⁰⁹ Even so, as he comes to grasp that this conquest verges on futility, Amaro takes on water as he hears that Aleixo has taken a woman to their bed: “In the tepid twilight of the infirmary, his eyes took on a pained and damp expression, like the look of a shipwrecked man lost in the infinite circle of the ocean.”¹¹⁰ The sick-ward where Amaro finds himself after a second lashing effectively becomes the hull of a slave ship as he is transported back to his previous life of captivity opposite his mastery on board the corvette, in labor and sensuality, and on land, in the room on Rua da Misericórdia, over Aleixo’s passive body. All of Amaro’s agency is reversed in a whirlpool time-warp of sensation, his corporeal effluvia reminiscent of more fearful, captive times as his madness floods all senses and the “broad and unknown rose-colored horizons” in his soul where freedom and love once helmed begin to bleed.¹¹¹

Failing Miscegenation, Failing Nation

Although rights may have been achieved for certain racialized individuals prior to romanticism, figures like Amaro arguably suffer a spectacular depiction in naturalism, and their progress, albeit little, recedes. During Amaro’s reassignment aboard the new dreadnought, Dona Carolina’s seduction of Aleixo, in the absence of blackness, elucidates this misleading promise of progress and Brazil’s realignment with its European origins via immigration. As an allegory for Old Europe and its burgeoning eugenics, Carolina sees her attraction to the white cabin boy as “an act of charity” since “many times, the boy had been seduced, dragged” by the black man. As we enter her thoughts and she states that “what he had with the other man, in the end, was ... a sin, a crime!”, it begs the question of whether this ‘sin’ was thought to strictly sexual.¹¹² As Carolina and Aleixo “both profited” from the affair, through Amaro’s insistence upon sending a note that she intercepts and destroys, it becomes increasingly clear to Carolina that the iniquity of Aleixo and Amaro’s relationship was also racial. Thinking about Amaro, her mind races, “What an enormous pederast! I never imagined that such a passionate love from one man for another would be so strong, so persistent! And with a black man, Lord Jesus, with an immoral and repugnant nigger like him!”¹¹³ However, she calls herself twice “your negress” to Aleixo, herself an older, sterile white prostitute.¹¹⁴ As a running thread throughout this dissertation, this example of rhetorical blackface drives the performance of make-believe miscegenation, re-fashioning the ability to own—‘your’—and use blackness for one’s sexual aggrandizement. However, Amaro’s flesh-hewn blackness was to be discarded to slavery’s past so that a new, whiter Brazil might be begotten.

Miscegenation—queer or not—first splinters here in miscarrying a reconstructed blackness or even mixed-race identity. As Carolina wraps her pudgy legs around Aleixo, she doubts his masculine abilities, “You can’t handle me.”¹¹⁵ As Aidoo states, “Here, the heteronormative and intra-racial desensitize and obfuscate the oppressive mechanisms underlying their relationship, as Aleixo is unaware of the power that Carolina exerts over him and the personally and indeed narcissistic investment that she maintains in possessing him.”¹¹⁶ Already a well-established bottom in his sexual relationship with Amaro, Aleixo nervously attempts to prove his manhood: “The ephebe bounded over like a horny steer and, holding himself in the chair with both hands, trembling all over now, his face bloodless.”¹¹⁷ An ephebe being an adolescent boy in military training in Ancient Greece sequestered as an initiate among the company of older men, Caminha carries the references of Ancient Greek pederasty over from Aleixo’s relationship with Amaro to his

seduction by Carolina alleging, too, its intrinsic queerness and destiny for failure. Yanking the girlish Aleixo around the room, she bellows, “You’re going to have a hot-blooded old Portuguese woman. Forget your innocence, come on!”¹¹⁸ His “innocence” refers not only to his youth but his bottomhood and disputed abilities to sexually perform with a woman. Moreover, the heterosexual sex between the two white characters reads as degenerate in the absence of blackness: “She sank her teeth into the cabin boy’s face with brutal rage, and, grabbing him by his buttocks, her eyes sparkling, face ruddy, she carried him and laid him down on the bed.”¹¹⁹ Carrying Aleixo to the bed, Carolina’s butch, dominant behavior brings her heterosexuality into question; also, as she had been eyeing Aleixo from the beginning, taking delight in how his pristine self-presentation—aided by Amaro—was “like a girl growing into a woman.”¹²⁰ After repeated seduction of the boy, Caminha’s naturalist narrator voice comes through, writing with clinical color, “Dona Carolina nourished her acute hermaphroditism with kisses and embraces and violent suction...”¹²¹ Carolina’s “hermaphroditism,” that is, her fluidity between female and male roles, muddles the ordering of heteronormativity and homoeroticism.¹²² In these awkward enactments of questionable heterosexuality, whatever literary pleasure derived feels vapid, if not eccentric and absurd. Then, miscegenation as national possibility fails entirely in its mandated expurgation of blackness in favor of Old-World science and sympathies, which offer only sterility.

The culmination of this failure manifests in Amaro’s public slaying of Aleixo, where we see the degeneration of the black body and mind transpire alongside their relationship. With “the pain of ingratitude” that “entered his soul,” Amaro snatches Aleixo in the middle of the street, shouting, “You thought that you could just get with the Portuguese woman, did you? Look at this face, look at how I’m gaunt, how I’m wasting away... Look, look!”¹²³ Staying true to allegory, Afro-Brazilians’ coerced labor in bondage founded the liberal ideals and capitalist successes of the Brazilian nation. In exchange, they were cheaply rewarded with an ambivalent, emaciated freedom. Amaro’s plea to be seen and acknowledged, followed by discernible betrayal, exposes Caminha’s own complicated opinions on abolition, liberalism, and the black condition in the late nineteenth century vis-à-vis his aspiration to conduct a literary-scientific study of same-sex perversions. Nevertheless, Amaro’s last words to the pleading cabin boy prove powerful and prescient well into twenty-first century Brazil: “I won’t let you go, no, you terrible little thing, I won’t let you go, no I won’t! Bom-Crioulo, who is here in front of you, is not what you think he is...”¹²⁴ The fluid racial and sexual relationality that had at once blurred the limits of space and time as foundational to queer miscegenation become fixed at Aleixo’s death. Caminha positions Brazilian blackness before—both physically in front of and temporally before—immigrant whiteness; left on the plantation, left in the days of the colony and empire. While Amaro’s last words in *Bom-Crioulo* assert his fixity in Brazilian nation-making, the blundering despondency of “I won’t let you go” and reclamation of his identity infer an authorial mocking that relishes his operatic demise. It appears that while a staunch abolitionist, Caminha still will not let blackness cross the limits of its otherness. He instead draws a blank on the proper role of blackness in Brazilian modernity.

After Aleixo’s murder, Amaro is carted off by imperial police, leaving the corpse for the anonymous crowds, in naturalist fanfare, “to inspect the wound, to stick their nose in the sore.” And, like the easily distracted spectators in Rio de Janeiro, the reader is left to return to their own “habitual monotony, to the eternal coming and going” of their lives in the closing line of *Bom-Crioulo*.¹²⁵ As “nobody cared about ‘the other,’ the black man, that went there down the road sad and devastated, between bayonets,” this conclusion allegorically suggests an almost institutionalized forgetting of blackness, much like Barbosa’s burning of the slave registries. On

the other hand, as Amaro envisioned serving his country as a means of breaking the racial legacy of slavery, his insertion into an ever-changing society remained contingent upon the Brazilian nation's estrangement from the romanticized narratives that his had allegedly violated. Beyond biology, it was for these reasons that Amaro's miscegenation failed.

While we remain unaware of the outcome of Amaro's life, the Revolt of the Lash and its aftermath affords us an epilogue to Caminha's *Bom-Crioulo*. Following his short-lived amnesty, João Cândido was imprisoned on Christmas Eve 1910 in a windowless cell that had been washed with lime and not properly aerated. Brazilian marines who had taken up arms in an unrelated revolt that December were stuffed in the cell with him and all, besides João Cândido and one other, suffocated overnight. For the rest of his life, João Cândido suffered the trauma of nightmares and hallucinations of dead friends and colleagues. When he appealed to the administration of then-dictator Getúlio Vargas in the 1940s to be re-matriculated into the navy in order to receive his pension, he was told that no João Cândido "had ever served in the National Navy."¹²⁶ In this regard, Gilberto Amado's conjectures on what would be the rest of the ex-communicated sailor's life appear to be quite prescient: "João Cândido, victorious, [...] will have only the smile of heroes and the natural pride of a man that violated history."¹²⁷ The criteria of national memory doomed João Cândido's inclusion as a freedom fighter for human rights, constrained by a black manhood described at the time as physically violent and sexually perverse. These exclusions around the turn of the twentieth century originated most frequently from the Brazilian state, reinforced by popular media.

In 1912, one of Brazil's founding filmmakers, Alberto Botelho, attempted to show images he captured of the 1910 revolt in a Rio de Janeiro theater but the chief of police obstructed the screening and removed all of the advertisements, making it the first motion picture to ever be censored in Brazil's history. The only copy of the film was destroyed in a fire in São Paulo in 1950 before it could be publicly premiered. Later, the navy would sue for and, during Getúlio Vargas' Estado Novo dictatorship, successfully prohibit the re-publication and sale of *Bom-Crioulo* as well as any materials written about the Revolt of the Lash or João Cândido. During the military dictatorship (1964-1985), these texts, including Edmar Morel's foundational social history of the mutiny, would be considered subversive.¹²⁸ Only in 2008 would the João Cândido Files at the Navy Archive in Rio de Janeiro be opened to the public, while the nearby Naval Museum still lacks even a single mention of the Revolt of the Lash or João Cândido.

While *Bom-Crioulo* remains ambivalently included and excluded from literary portrayals of race mixture, miscegenation definitively lays the foundation for what later becomes the ideology of racial democracy. However, in miscegenation as a discourse of difference yet sameness, of inclusion yet exclusion, and its ultimate failure to soundly complete this mission, we should understand queerness and nonheteronormativity as indispensable to these national projects. Due to miscegenation's basis in eugenics discourse, the end product is not a blended body with a subdued sensibility; instead, we are left with an obsessive honing in on an ethnically unified Brazil. Exploring interracial fraternity to the point of a homoeroticism that turns lethal, *Bom-Crioulo* constructs the mixed-race nation on the basis "that fraternity, without which the reassurance of fratricide can not be born."¹²⁹ In short, the failure of *embranquecimento* as seen in Amaro and Aleixo's fruitless procreation and Aleixo's murder shore up heteropatriarchal whiteness. Although queer domesticity does not hold in the novel, failure here helps uncover blackness' visceral sexual frameworks in the age of the new Brazilian republic.

Resistance against the sterilizing heteronormative policies of whitening actively becomes a hopeful aesthetic within *Bom-Crioulo*'s perhaps unintentional convolution of naturalist

determinacy. While national progress materializes opposite racial and sexual formations, the abjection created therein situates itself as much in state taxonomies of shame and perversion as it does in everyday enactments of racial pleasure, for narrator, reader, but also, at times, for the protagonist himself. Queer miscegenation thus becomes a rich archive of potentiality within and beyond the scope of the national project. In *Bom-Crioulo*, this shame largely locates itself in Amaro's marked body, whose self-determination lives in leeway due to the forsaken promises of liberal citizenship yet continues to sustain the nation via his racialized and sexualized labor. Contemplating this, Hartman asks, "If race formerly determined who was 'man' and who was chattel, whose property rights were protected or recognized and who was property, which consequently had the effect of making race itself a kind of property, ... then how did emancipation affect the status of race?"¹³⁰ With the inheritable qualities of both race and property traditionally designated as heteronormative and patriarchal, I believe miscegenation should be surmised as not only a metaphor whose meaning is made by the co-constitutive epistemological relationship between race, gender, and sex. More so, miscegenation as an everyday act of nation-making is reinforced and altered in the multidirectional production of capital and its destruction. Miscegenation's interstices between biology and culture and their metaphors reproduced in literature and popular culture thus offer a critical site for pleasure.

Despite the repressiveness of naturalism, we might envision critical gaps for freedom to be felt by subaltern subjects, going with or against the grain of national narratives of race mixture. With Adolfo Caminha's *Bom-Crioulo* as a canonical example for analysis, it becomes evident that when we belie a queer black analytic, we facilitate the reification of the racial power structures that we originally seek to disentangle. By inverting—or queering—the canon of what is to become racial democracy, we more readily apprehend how mainstream cultural production of the era becomes implicated in the debates and struggles for national identity.

¹ Adolfo Caminha, *Bom-Crioulo* (Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca Carioca, 1895), http://www.rio.rj.gov.br/dlstatic/10112/4204210/4101368/bom_crioulo.pdf, 60.

² *O Paiz* (Rio de Janeiro), Dec. 31, 1893, 2.

³ Lamonte Aidoo, *Slavery Unseen: Sex, Power, and Violence in Brazilian History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 9.

⁴ Caminha, *Bom-Crioulo*, 60.

⁵ M. Elizabeth Ginway, "Nation Building and Heroic Undoing: Myth and Ideology in Bom-Crioulo," *Modern Language Studies* 28, no. 3-4 (1998): 45.

⁶ Jossiana Arroyo, "Brazilian Homoerotics: Cultural Subjectivity and Representation in the Fiction of Gilberto Freyre," in *Lusosex: Gender and Sexuality in the Portuguese-Speaking World*, edited by Susan Canty Quinlan and Fernando Arenas (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 57-83.

⁷ Marinheiros, *Declaração ao Presidentd Hermes da Fonseca, 22 de novembro, 1910*, letter, from Arquivo da Marinha Brasileira, *Acervo João Cândido* (accessed August 7, 2018).

⁸ "João Cândido Felisberto oral history interview conducted by Hélio Silva, Rio de Janeiro, 1968-03-20," from the Museu da Imagem e do Som - Rio de Janeiro, *Depoimentos para Posterioridade*, compact disc (accessed August 6, 2018); Zachary R. Morgan, *Legacy of the Lash: Race and Corporal Punishment in the Brazilian Navy*, (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2014).

⁹ Peter M. Beattie, *The Tribute of Blood: Army, Honor, Race, and Nation in Brazil, 1864-1945*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001).

¹⁰ Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, *O espetáculo das raças: Cientistas, instituições e pensamento racial no Brasil, 1870-1930* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1993); Nancy Stepan, *"The Hour of Eugenics": Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996).

¹¹ Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality, volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley. (New York: Pantheon, 1978), 154.

¹² Roderick A. Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 4.

-
- ¹³ Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1991).
- ¹⁴ Ibid, 7.
- ¹⁵ Stepan, "The Hour of Eugenics," 155.
- ¹⁶ Raimundo Nina Rodrigues, *Os africanos no Brasil*, (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1932), 9.
- ¹⁷ Ibid, 17.
- ¹⁸ Schwarcz, *O espetáculo das raças*.
- ¹⁹ Nina Rodrigues, *Os africanos no Brasil*, 406.
- ²⁰ César Braga-Pinto, "Othello's Pathologies: Reading Adolfo Caminha with Lombroso," *Comparative Literature* 66, no. 2 (2014): 149-172; Robert Howes, "Race and Transgressive Sexuality in Adolfo Caminha's *Bom-Crioulo*," *Luso-Brazilian Review* 38, no. 1 (2001): 41-62.
- ²¹ Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black*, 87, original emphasis.
- ²² Beattie, *The Tribute of Blood*.
- ²³ Gilberto Freyre, *Ordem e progresso*, 6th ed. (São Paulo: Global, 2004), 1018.
- ²⁴ Ibid, 150.
- ²⁵ James N. Green, *Beyond Carnival: Male Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century Brazil*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 28.
- ²⁶ Caminha, *Bom-Crioulo*, 43.
- ²⁷ Ibid, 23.
- ²⁸ Richard Miskolci, *O desejo da nação: Masculinidade e branquitude no Brasil de fins do XIX* (São Paulo: Annablume, 2013), 95.
- ²⁹ Caminha, *Bom-Crioulo*, 50.
- ³⁰ Sidney Chalhoub, *Cidade febril: cortiços e epidemias na Corte imperial* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1996), 23.
- ³¹ Aidoo, *Slavery Unseen*, 12.
- ³² Chalhoub, *Cidade febril*, 25.
- ³³ José A. Piedra, "Nationalizing Sissies," in *¿Entiendes?: Queer Readings, Hispanic Writings*, edited by Emilie L. Bergmann and Paul Julian Smith (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 384.
- ³⁴ Green, *Beyond Carnival*; Howes, "Race and Transgressive Sexuality."
- ³⁵ Leonardo Mendes, "Naturalismo com aspas: 'Bom-Crioulo' de Adolfo Caminha, a homossexualidade e os desafios da criação literária," *Gragoatá* 14 (2003): 29-44; Howes, "Race and Transgressive Sexuality."
- ³⁶ Valentim Magalhães, "Semana litteraria," *A Notícia* (Rio de Janeiro), Nov. 20-21, 1895, 1.
- ³⁷ Beattie, *The Tribute of Blood*, 199-200.
- ³⁸ Magalhães, "Semana litteraria," 1.
- ³⁹ José Veríssimo, *Jornal do Commercio* (Rio de Janeiro), Nov. 27, 1895, 2.
- ⁴⁰ Artur de Azevedo, *O Paiz* (Rio de Janeiro), Jan. 2-3, 1897, 1.
- ⁴¹ Howes, "Race and Transgressive Sexuality," 45.
- ⁴² Adolfo Caminha, "Um livro condemnado," *A nova revista*, February 1896, 41.
- ⁴³ Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in the Nineteenth Century*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 121.
- ⁴⁴ Ginway, "Nation Building and Heroic Undoing," 51.
- ⁴⁵ Nina Rodrigues, *Os africanos no Brasil*, 29, original emphasis.
- ⁴⁶ Caminha, *Bom-Crioulo*, 35.
- ⁴⁷ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, 139.
- ⁴⁸ Caminha, *Bom-Crioulo*, 51.
- ⁴⁹ *O Malho*, December 3, 1910, 27.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid, 49.
- ⁵¹ Gilberto Amado, "A Semana," *O Paiz*, November 27, 1910, 3.
- ⁵² Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008 [1953]), 93.
- ⁵³ Ibid, 154.
- ⁵⁴ Caminha, *Bom-Crioulo*, 31.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid, 30.
- ⁵⁶ Lamonte Aidoo, "Predatory Perversions: Homosexuality and the Erotics of Brazilian History in Adolfo Caminha's *Bom-Crioulo*," *Brasil/Brazil: A Journal of Brazilian Literature* 31, no. 57 (2018): 11.
- ⁵⁷ David William Foster, "Adolfo Caminha's *Bom-Crioulo*: A Founding Text of Brazilian Gay Literature," *Chasqui* 17, no. 2 (1988): 13-22.

-
- ⁵⁸ “João Cândido Felisberto oral history interview.”
- ⁵⁹ Marinheiros *apud* José Murilo de Carvalho, “Os bordados de João Cândido.” *História, Ciências, Saúde - Manguinhos* 2, no. 2, (1995), 77.
- ⁶⁰ Augusto Malta, *João Cândido e seu Secretário*, photograph, Rio de Janeiro, November 23, 1910, from Museu da Imagem e do Som – Rio de Janeiro: *Coleção Augusto Malta*.
- ⁶¹ Aidoo, “Predatory Perversions,” 15.
- ⁶² Caminha, *Bom-Crioulo*, 57.
- ⁶³ Piedra, “Nationalizing Sissies,” 374.
- ⁶⁴ Foster, “Adolfo Caminha’s Bom-Crioulo,” 18.
- ⁶⁵ Amado, “A Semana,” 3.
- ⁶⁶ Carvalho, “Os bordados de João Cândido,” 80.
- ⁶⁷ “João Cândido Felisberto oral history interview.”
- ⁶⁸ Caminha, *Bom-Crioulo*, 47.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid, 62.
- ⁷⁰ Caminha, *Bom-Crioulo*, 34.
- ⁷¹ Ibid, 61.
- ⁷² Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 118; Aidoo, *Slavery Unseen*; Chalhoub, *Cidade febril*.
- ⁷³ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 139.
- ⁷⁴ Caminha, *Bom-Crioulo*, 32.
- ⁷⁵ Mendes, “Naturalismo com aspas,” 38.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid, 40.
- ⁷⁷ Miskolci, *O desejo da nação*, 97.
- ⁷⁸ *O Malho*, December 3, 1910, 21, original emphasis.
- ⁷⁹ Caminha, *Bom-Crioulo*, 29.
- ⁸⁰ Green, *Beyond Carnival*; Howes, “Race and Transgressive Sexuality.”
- ⁸¹ Amado, “A Semana,” 3.
- ⁸² Edmar Morel, *A Revolta da Chibata* (Rio de Janeiro: Pongetti, 1958).
- ⁸³ Ministério da Cultura, *João Cândido: A Luta pelos Direitos Humanos* (Rio de Janeiro: Associação Cultural do Arquivo Nacional, 2008), 36.
- ⁸⁴ Ney Machado, “Cinco Dias que Abalaram o Rio,” *Revista da Semana* (Rio de Janeiro), August 1947, n.p.
- ⁸⁵ “João Cândido Felisberto oral history interview.”
- ⁸⁶ Caminha, *Bom-Crioulo*, 33.
- ⁸⁷ Ibid, 51.
- ⁸⁸ Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black*, 62.
- ⁸⁹ Ginway, “Nation Building,” 52.
- ⁹⁰ Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black*, 18.
- ⁹¹ Caminha, *Bom-Crioulo*, 34-35.
- ⁹² Omise’eke Natasha Tinsley, “Black Atlantic, Queer Atlantic: Queer Imaginings of the Middle Passage,” *GLQ* 14, no. 2 (2008): 198.
- ⁹³ Caminha, *Bom-Crioulo*, 39.
- ⁹⁴ Piedra, “Nationalizing Sissies,” 384.
- ⁹⁵ Tinsley, “Black Atlantic, Queer Atlantic,” 199.
- ⁹⁶ Beattie, *The Tribute of Blood*, 178.
- ⁹⁷ Magalhães, “Semana litteraria,” 1.
- ⁹⁸ Caminha, *Bom-Crioulo*, 60.
- ⁹⁹ Beattie, *The Tribute of Blood*, 199.
- ¹⁰⁰ Ginway, “Nation Building,” 52.
- ¹⁰¹ Caminha, *Bom-Crioulo*, 42.
- ¹⁰² Ibid, 49.
- ¹⁰³ João do Rio, *A alma encantadora das ruas* (Rio de Janeiro: Virtualbooks, 2000), <http://bibliotecadigital.puc-campinas.edu.br/services/e-books/Joao%20do%20Rio-1.pdf>, 7-8.
- ¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 10.
- ¹⁰⁵ “João Cândido Felisberto oral history interview.”
- ¹⁰⁶ Caminha, *Bom-Crioulo*, 32.
- ¹⁰⁷ Amado, “A Semana,” 3; Carvalho, “Os bordados de João Cândido.”
- ¹⁰⁸ Caminha, *Bom-Crioulo*, 104-105.

-
- ¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 99.
¹¹⁰ Ibid, 101.
¹¹¹ Ibid, 35.
¹¹² Ibid, 83.
¹¹³ Ibid, 93.
¹¹⁴ Ibid, 80-81.
¹¹⁵ Ibid, 66.
¹¹⁶ Aidoo, "Predatory Perversions," 18.
¹¹⁷ Caminha, *Bom-Crioulo*, 66.
¹¹⁸ Ibid, 67.
¹¹⁹ Ibid.
¹²⁰ Ibid, 58.
¹²¹ Ibid, 84.
¹²² Aidoo, "Predatory Perversions," 19.
¹²³ Caminha, *Bom-Crioulo*, 106-109.
¹²⁴ Ibid, 109.
¹²⁵ Ibid, 110.
¹²⁶ Machado, "Cinco Dias que Abalaram o Rio," n.p.
¹²⁷ Amado, "A Semana," 3.
¹²⁸ Ministério da Cultura, *João Cândido*.
¹²⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and the Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1992), 202.
¹³⁰ Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 119.

Chapter 2

Gilberto Freyre, Oscarito, and Grande Otelo: Colonial Gestures and Race Play in the Chanchadas

It was as if everything fell on me and to those of my generation; our way of solving secular issues. And of the Brazilian problems, none disquieted me more than that of miscegenation. I once saw, after more than three long years of absence from Brazil, a gaggle of national sailors—mulattos and *cafuzos*ⁱ—disembarking, I cannot recall if it was from the *São Paulo* or the *Minas*, in the soft Brooklyn snow. They gave me the impression of caricatures of men. And a phrase from a book by an American traveler that I had just read came to mind: “the fearfully mongrel aspect of most of the population.” Miscegenation resulted in that. There was no one to tell me then, like Roquette-Pinto had done in 1929 to the Aryanists at the Brazilian Eugenics Conference, that they were not simply mulattos or *cafuzos* those individuals I believed to represent Brazil, but that they were sickly mulattos and *cafuzos*.

Gilberto Freyre, Preface to *Casa-grande & senzala*¹

The chanchada truly was the expression of an era, of an era when man had not yet gone to the moon, there was no radio, no television. So, it was an era in which there was simplicity. ... So, the people of that time could see themselves on the screen while the sophistication of today doesn't allow for the viewer to see themselves, to identify with the guy up there.

Grande Otelo, 1977²

In the 1951 film *Aviso aos Navegantes* (*Calling All Sailors*), the renowned comedy duo, Oscarito (1906-1970) and Grande Otelo (1915-1993), took the celluloid by storm in one of the Atlântida studio's most successful films. A white émigré originally from Spain, Oscarito plays Frederico, a Brazilian revue theatre artist who stows away on a ship longing to return to Rio de Janeiro's bohemian Lapa neighborhood to dance samba. In their first scene together, the ship cook's assistant, Azulão, played by the iconic black Brazilian actor, Grande Otelo, discovers Frederico hiding in the pantry. Asking who he is, Azulão threatens to take Frederico to the captain. As Azulão hooks Frederico's arm into his, the stowaway turns to him seductively, “Who knows if, us talking it out, we can come to an understanding?” Azulão looks down bashfully and raises his hand to fidget his ear and says, grinning, “Well...” He suggestively slides his finger down his jawline to under his chin, gazing up at Frederico, “It depends, doesn't it?” He looks at Frederico as if to entice him. “It depends on what?!” Frederico responds brusquely. Azulão replies, “On if you accept my condition.” Frederico raises his eyebrows and also insinuates, “It depends, I guess.” Azulão starts to pet Frederico's scarf on his chest and replies, “Well, you are going to have to make a sacrifice of some kind.” Frederico's eyes bulge as the scene fades to black. As the light returns, we find Frederico struggling to peel potatoes while Azulão lounges next to him in a deck chair smoking a cigar, reading a magazine. Azulão wildly laughs as he has blackmailed the stowaway into doing his job.³

The insinuations, inversions, and gestures of this brief scene from *Aviso aos Navegantes* provide us a crucial entry point into how race and sexuality were imagined vis-à-vis the Brazilian nation during the Vargas Era (1930-1954).ⁱⁱ The government in this period embraced the theories

ⁱ *Cafuzo* is a racial distinction generally given to someone of mixed African and Native Brazilian heritage.

ⁱⁱ While scholars generally consider the Vargas Era to officially have lasted from 1930 to 1945, ending with his deposition and the start of the Fourth Brazilian Republic, I extend this to 1954, first, due to Vargas' democratic reelection to the presidency, serving again from 1951 until his suicide in 1954. More importantly, for the purposes of

propounded in the works of social historian and cultural theorist Gilberto Freyre who argued the unsuitability of race as a proper construct to understand Brazilian culture due to the country's longstanding miscegenation from the colonial period onward. The regime imagined that weaponizing these theories of partial inclusion, which would later come to be known as racial democracy, would muzzle black dissent. Meanwhile, arguing a limited amount of inclusion would bolster Brazil's image on the global stage as a modern nation whose history and sociocultural norms seemingly had the answer to the racial problems of Jim Crow in the U.S. and the rise of the Third Reich in Europe. With film as the most popular medium of cultural entertainment during this time, movies like *Aviso aos Navegantes* used race play and its intimations, especially between men, as an instructive that reinforced the racial order. By giving blackness some limited agency—here, in the form of Azulão's ultimatum rife with double-entendre, hand motions, and ogling—racial democracy could still be imagined and made pleasurable. As common across the *chanchadas*—a raucous genre of film that combined slapstick comedy and musical numbers—these interracial gestures were laden with sex and desire. They accordingly recited many of the themes presented in the work of a young white Brazilian academic from the sugarcane plantations of the Northeast by the name of Gilberto de Mello Freyre.

In 1933, Gilberto Freyre (1900-1987) published what would undoubtedly be the most influential piece of writing in Brazil's twentieth century. Having trained under famed cultural anthropologist Franz Boas at Columbia University in the early 1920s, Freyre's thesis morphed into his long-form essay *Casa-grande & senzala*, translated into English as *The Masters and the Slaves*. In it, he argues that Brazil's cultural heritage and identity are founded on “antagonisms in equilibrium.”⁴ Repeated throughout *Casa-grande & senzala*, the first of three major social histories written by Freyre on Brazil's evolution from Portuguese colony to twentieth-century independent world power, this mantra seeks to explain the economic, racial, gendered, religious, and cultural power dynamics established through a romanticized symbiosis between Portuguese colonizers, enslaved Africans, and Brazil's original indigenous inhabitants. However, such an interdependence between these three racial groups, according to Freyre, came down to biological and cultural miscegenation, much of whose violent sexual underpinnings he downplayed as muted, necessary, or, in the overt language of sadomasochism, desired by both white masters and their enslaved black, native, and mixed-race property.

While Freyre opens the preface of *Casa-grande & senzala* with the epigraph that opens this chapter, it becomes ever apparent how the racial and sexual implications of the Revolt of the Lash, discussed in Chapter 1, weighed on his mind. Over two decades later, he would return to the revolt in his third volume, *Ordem e progresso* (*Order and Progress*). While only ten years old at the time of the event, the revolt's repeated discussion by journalists and common citizens alike in the years following surely left a lasting impression and a desire to attempt to solve the “secular issues” of his generation. In contrast to W.E.B. Du Bois' famed adage of “the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line” from his *The Souls of Black Folk*, Freyre argues the apparent lack of one in Brazil, making it more abstruse to combat—or forget—the race issue.⁵ While completing his undergraduate studies at Baylor University, Freyre's witnessing the racial segregation of public space in Jim Crow Texas provided an opportunity to present what he believed to be the historical interracial intimacies in Brazilian private life as a foil to U.S. race relations and, more importantly, the foundation to Brazil's national culture. Yet, during his master's studies in

my cultural archival analysis, I consider the presidencies of José Linhares (1945-1946, interim) and Eurico Gaspar Dutra (1946-1951) as integral to the Vargas Era as they upheld many of his authoritarian institutions and policies around censorship of the press and popular culture which, unsurprisingly, Vargas would also uphold in his last term.

New York City, the *mestiçagem* of his home country still shocked him as he came face-to-face with black and mixed-race sailors in the Brazilian navy docked in Brooklyn during the winter of 1922. As he writes, Freyre believed at the time that the race mixture of these sailors made them “caricatures of men,” perhaps not so coincidentally from one of the two dreadnoughts—the *São Paulo* or the *Minas Geraes*—which, just 12 years earlier, had aimed its cannons at the political pressure points of Rio de Janeiro in the Revolt of the Lash.⁶ Long wed to eugenics during his studies followed by a more vehement rejection of racial cleansing, Freyre is disquieted in his realization that these men were, in fact, representative of and serving the Brazilian nation, their blackness notwithstanding. As “caricatures,” however, these Afro-Brazilian sailors’ bodies become imputable for an array of affective meanings, purposes, and desires constructed and enacted by Freyre, akin to the seductive quid pro quo of Grande Otelo’s Azulão offered to Oscarito’s Frederico in *Aviso aos Navegantes*. As the interracial encounter in the times of slavery becomes Freyre’s dialectical point of Brazilian meaning-making, the chanchadas filmed in the wake of his arousing writing impart a cogent analogy in cultural production, especially as films were heavily regulated by the Vargas regime that openly propagated Freyre’s theories. Moreover, this side-by-side reading of Freyre and the chanchadas also reveals blackness and interraciality to be a historically sexualized conduit through which the nation and its ideologies can be humorously fashioned onscreen.

In the wake of racial democracy’s theoretical birth and institutionalizationⁱⁱⁱ, I show in this chapter how the chanchadas provide the nationalist ideology an audiovisual medium that affirms the racial and sexual gestures of colonial history, even in the explicit absence of slavery from the screen. Here, I engage extensively with Freyre’s work in content and form as a literary performance that reaffirms whiteness through its reconstruction in modernity on the basis of black abjection. Blackness, meanwhile, serves the specific sexual purposes of reproduction and exotic sensuality to the nation and its progress. For Freyre, the sexual contributions of blackness to Brazilian culture do not and cannot exceed the discursive bounds of enslavement and its pleasures. Before moving forward, however, I would like to note that while Freyre’s *Casa-grande & senzala* focuses predominantly on the Brazilian Northeast during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries^{iv}, the transregional and transnational nature, first, of his intellectual and ethnographic archive; second, of his scholarly formation; and, third, of the taking up of his racial theories by a government based in and heavily focused on the country’s industrial southeast make the regional argument pertinent but not confining. Further, the very transregional and transnational nature of the chanchadas, including the ones I analyze more closely here, also reflects the Brazilian government’s adoption of Freyre’s work and the chanchadas as a distinct film genre. The chanchadas actively pursued to unify Brazil’s more distant regions as well as other nations in Latin America through distinct musical and dance traditions, not to mention the employ of a majority of performers who did not hail from Rio, let alone even Brazil. These varied discussions in the chapter are largely woven into close and queer readings of two well-known chanchadas featuring the comedy duo Oscarito and Grande Otelo: first, *Barnabé, Tu És Meu* (*Barnabé, You Are Mine*,

ⁱⁱⁱ While *Casa-grande & senzala* does not contain the actual neologism “racial democracy”—some stating that it was actually black activist Abdias do Nascimento to first put this into language decades later; still a contested fact—it is regarded as the text that single-handedly serves as the theory’s ideological base.

^{iv} Freyre’s second volume in the series, *Sobrados e mucambos* (*The Mansions and the Shanties*, 1936), focuses almost exclusively on the nineteenth century and Brazil’s growing urban centers. The third and final volume, *Ordem e progresso* (*Order and Progress*, 1957), focuses on Brazil from the abolition of slavery in 1888 and the proclamation of the Republic in 1889 until the mid-twentieth century.

1952), followed by *A Dupla do Barulho* (*The Terrible Twosome*, 1953), along with vignettes from other chanchadas and ephemera of Brazilian cinema.

Scenes like the one opening this chapter featuring Oscarito and Grande Otelo, the pair of actors most readily associated with the chanchada genre, expose an at once idyllic yet aberrant interraciality of Brazil's entrance into modernity. While countless scenes feature the pair in close physical touch from embraces to wallops, crossdressing, or laughing at the misfortune of others or themselves, the laughter elicited a collective catharsis from urban Brazilian audiences. I invoke Walter Benjamin here in stating that, by laughing with or at the chanchadas, and at implicitly homoerotic interraciality, Brazilians could take stock of their racial, gendered, and sexual selves facing the filth, dejection, and political uncertainty of the increased industrialization of cities, predominantly Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo.⁷ As William Solomon shows, these slapstick films, along with modernist literature at the time, sought to ameliorate the broader industrial anxieties of a struggling working class. Although focusing on the U.S., Solomon's theory of *slapstick modernism* readily applies to the chanchadas of Brazil and other Latin American comedy film industries—namely Mexico and Argentina—that sought to emulate while also reconfigure similar cinematic styles popular in Hollywood and heavily imported to Brazil's urban theaters.⁸ Though striving to bring comedy and musical fanfare to an economically disparate society, the mockery of modernity as well as high culture in the chanchadas transformed them into a Brazilian iteration of slapstick modernism.⁹

The on-screen homoerotic insinuations of this early scene in *Aviso aos Navegantes* harken back to several points of my discussion on Caminha's *Bom-Crioulo*. Within the privacy of the page and of their homes, a literary audience could revel in their own disgust at such a purportedly aberrant coupling in the novel. Now, where such intimations are given sight and sound, the collective, public glee established in the dark and damp urban cinemas provided the architectural foundations of how race and sex were to be performed in the light of the modern era. Having appeared in 15 chanchadas together between 1935 and 1954, Oscarito and Grande Otelo's antics became a cultural accoutrement of the Vargas Era. Their films together, like other chanchadas, simultaneously affirmed Vargas' heavy-handed influence in cultural production while also making light of it. Whereby the Vargas government institutionalized the censorship of films, music, theatre, literature, newspapers, and radio broadcasting, critiques of Vargas and broader Brazilian society could merely be made via the diluted shadings of comedy.

While straddling the position of clown cohort and straight man for Oscarito's follies, Brazilian audiences undoubtedly adored Grande Otelo. Newspaper articles made this clear with *Diário Carioca* declaring him as the people's "most preferred artist," and noting they "always applaud[ed] him with enthusiasm."¹⁰ Grande Otelo was the first—and for a long while only—black actor to consistently see his name on the marquis, albeit in smaller-font billing. As a 4'11" actor whose dark skin, thick lips, and broad nose were regularly caricatured in minstrel fashion on film posters and newspaper advertisements, Grande Otelo's physical figure and the roles he played infantilized him as a child-like sidekick to Oscarito's equally goofy antics. Despite the chanchadas often included black cultural expressions like maxixe and samba music without actual black people on-screen, Grande Otelo's fame as a skilled, man-boy actor made him an arbiter of blackness and collective, national laughter. We might imagine, though, that different audiences laughed and enjoyed Grande Otelo's effervescent joy on stage and screen for different reasons. Indeed, embedded in these complex performances, and in Oscarito's own personal backstory, was a mimicking of the pleasures of the white planter class of yore. In fact, we might imagine that European immigrants became Brazilian—and specifically white Brazilian—precisely through

these shared consumptions and releases that chanchada actors like Grande Otelo provided. To better understand the erotic pleasures of race and race-making onscreen, however, requires us to reconsider the work of Gilberto Freyre that left an indelible impact on cultural production and how the authoritarian state would come to interpolate race and sex.

Re-situating and Re-sexing *Casa-grande & senzala*

In response to the rise of eugenics in Brazil and around the world in the 1920s and 30s, Gilberto Freyre played Brazil's long history of racial mixture to his advantage. Reworking the more flexible scientific theories of Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, while also citing Boas and Brazilian theorists like Edgard Roquette-Pinto and Raimundo Nina Rodrigues, Freyre constructed cultural mixedness as a boon to peaceful civilization in the tropics.¹¹ While cultural mixedness did not necessarily always constitute racial mixedness, Freyre followed the theories of his academic friend and colleague, Roquette-Pinto, who was an anthropologist of indigenous Brazilian cultures and advocate of radio and film being put to use for educational purposes. Having become closely tied to Vargas, Roquette-Pinto was put forward in 1936 to establish the Instituto Nacional de Cinema Educativo (National Institute of Educational Film, INCE) where he produced hundreds of short propaganda films attached to the beginning of film reels and also had a resounding say on censorship policies. Nevertheless, Roquette-Pinto's rebuttal against theories of degeneracy as an outcome of race mixture and his theories of national unity to be a "sociological not racial" matter inspired Freyre's moderate turn away from eugenics while he decidedly gave the green light to films that would instill a sense of nationalism devoid of racial strife.¹² As such, contrary to Jim Crow and racial violence in the United States, Freyre believed race mixture not to be a sign of Brazil's mongrelization, but, instead, of the Brazilian people's social and climatic adaptability. Nonetheless, himself a product of the white planter class, Freyre's writing heavily favored the allegedly civilizing and intellectual influence of the Portuguese while referencing spiritual, culinary, linguistic, and sexual contributions—besides brute labor—made by Africans and Native Brazilians. In a nationalist effort to re-brand Brazil's attempts at whitening via its earlier immigration campaigns, Freyre's *Casa-grande & senzala* lays down the framework for what would become racial democracy as, in truth, a vision that was quite whitened.

Written in a long-winded, lyrical voice, a multitude of Freyre's contemporaries lambasted *Casa-grande & senzala* in the press, denouncing its literary tone and its haphazardly vast range of sources. Freyre's referencing of folklore, recipes, nursery rhymes, newspapers, games, clothing, anecdotes, etymology, novels, poetry, hymns, as well as official historical documents from the Inquisition, plantation records, diaries, letters, and a plethora of secondary historiographies and ethnographies, however, have helped to preserve the longevity of *Casa-grande & senzala* while also serving as a platform through which readers can interpret Brazil as an ethnic, racial, or social democracy on the basis of a sense of shared past despite Brazil's increasing lack of personal freedoms in the Vargas Era.¹³ Most notably, this diversity of sources made Freyre's text accessible to a broader audience, grooming it for replication in popular culture and, at the time, by the state that also found solace in Freyre's apparent nostalgia for the colonial past and its sexual appetites.¹⁴ With such flexibility, it became difficult to deconstruct and critique this carefully crafted argument, especially due to the apparent omnipresence of African roots within Brazilian culture, from the words people used in everyday speech, to the foods they ate, the prayers they recited, and the sexual proclivities they sated. However, with the exception of some scholars like Helena Bocayuva, Alexandre Almeida Marcussi, and Lamonte Aidoo, most scholarship has failed to

pinpoint that Freyre's original construction of racial democracy is also heavily founded in sex—a likely contributor to the book's marked commercial success across elite circles in Brazil and, after translation, abroad.

From white mistresses' violent jealousy toward enslaved black women preferred by their husbands and adolescents pining to contract syphilis as a symbol of adulthood, to Jesuit priests with indigenous concubines and effeminate courtesans with their nefarious predilections, the sensationalization of plantation life from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, including its queer constructions, illustrates how Freyre repackaged and sold Brazil in his own voice for both the literati and the lay. One particular well-known passage, often cited in the few studies that do engage sexuality in *Casa-grande & senzala*, looms over the rest of this chapter while allowing us a view into its palimpsest of accretive meanings alongside lesser discussed moments that I address in and about the text:

A species of the white man's sadism and of the masochism of the indigenous or black woman predominated as much the sexual as it did the social relations of the European with women of other races submitted to his rule. The Portuguese's furious passions were exercised on victims who were not always consenting in such pleasure; although we do know of cases where the white conqueror's sadism was offset by the indigenous or black woman's masochism. So much for the sadism of man towards woman—which not rarely was preceded by the master's for the slave boy.^v Through the slave boy's submission in the games that they played together, and especially the one called *leva-pancadas* ("take a thwacking"), the white boy was often initiated into physical love. As for the slave boy who took the thwacking, it can be said that he performed for the great slave-holding families of Brazil the same passive functions for the young master as did the adolescent slave under the Roman Empire chosen to be the companion of a youthful aristocrat: at once a species of victim as he was a playmate upon whom the family's son exercised his "*premiers élanes génésiques*."¹⁵

In Freyre's tongue-in-cheek euphemism of *leva-pancadas* for the enslaved black boy's rape by the white master's son, the definitions of child's play as well as sadomasochism begin to stretch in the Brazilian archive of slavery. Black adult men are largely rendered absent from *Casa-grande & senzala* beyond brief discussions of their contributions to production of crops and minerals. While, at one point, Freyre dismisses the likelihood of white mistresses having extramarital sex with enslaved black and indigenous men due to women's confinement and constant surveillance—contrary to ongoing discussions of white men's affairs with enslaved black and indigenous women alike—this short passage alone proves how black men, while still boys, are at once productive as they are also *reproductive* for their future masters. As if to reserve this tidbit of knowledge for the well-educated, Freyre definitively proffers in French that it was actually on the enslaved black boy that the young master performed his "first reproductive urges." Much like Freyre himself would reveal in a now-infamous 1980 *Playboy* magazine interview where he stated that he lost his virginity having anal sex with his family's black maid and, while at Oxford University, had sex with Englishmen, these penetrative rehearsals between white and black boys in Brazilian slave

^v For "slave boy," Freyre, as did other authors before him, uses the Portuguese word *moleque* throughout *Casa-grande & senzala*. Never conjoining *moleque* with the racial descriptor of *negro* in the text, Freyre's language indicates the already implied racialization of the label, contrary to his regular use of the phrase *menino branco* ("white boy"), including in this very passage. While in today's Portuguese, *moleque* can be used for, generally, any child, it often carries a negative tone that indicates a child who is bothersome, dirty, poor, black or brown, and holds within it the ability to be used as an insult whereby adults may attempt to put a difficult male child in his place. These implications will play out later in my discussion of *A Dupla do Barulho*.

society are characterized as preparatory for the longevity of white heteropatriarchy as, in the personal case of Freyre, it was for the writing of *Casa-grande & senzala*.¹⁶

In a 1968 essay written in Portuguese titled “How and why I wrote *Casa-grande & senzala*,” Freyre explains the backstory to his writing process while also vociferously rebutting critiques he received over the past 35 years on his most impactful text.¹⁷ Here, he offers, again, *Casa-grande & senzala* as a phenomenological study of Brazilian civilization, with the big house and the slave quarters as the two poles of a dialectic of cultural and biological miscegenation. For Freyre, the sadomasochism of the masters and their slaves—in all senses—enters into the phenomenology of this dialectic as an almost natural equalizer.¹⁸ Necessary to promote the development of Brazil into a modern nation, Freyre posits the dynamic of domination-submission as “a democratizing corrective” of past iniquities or, better yet, the leveling of unequal civilizations at their point of cultural exchange.¹⁹ Cultural historian Lamonte Aidoo’s interventions with the archive of slavery in Brazil and sexual desire that appear therein refute Freyre’s heel-digging 35 years later, writing, “Race was made through sex—the act itself, the personal and political meanings ascribed to it, and its use as a mechanism of power and white supremacy. Sex, like the nation, becomes the discourse that we create about it.”²⁰ Freyre clearly knew what he wished to discursively achieve in creating a multi-perspective and often contradictory text where sex and desire were, he believed, the most powerful mode of cultural exchange for Brazilian racial formation, no matter the cost in violence and violation. Nevertheless, I sustain that Freyre’s own organic introduction of sadomasochism as an analytic into *Casa-grande & senzala* provides us with a unique opportunity. While, yes, we are forced to grapple with the power struggle between black pain and white pleasure inscribed into slavery via this taxonomy of everyday life, might not there be a *modal* pleasure in the analytic itself that allows us to consider not only the embodied performances of interracial violence and desire but the racialized performativity of medium and genre?²¹ Following Ariane Cruz’s own intervention into the concept of perversion as it pertains to sadomasochism and kink for black women, I ask if making and consuming comedic films based in colonial gestures of race play can, themselves, bring about a collective, perhaps even nationally-imagined jouissance. In that vein, my analysis of Oscarito and Grande Otelo’s performances in the chanchadas and of Gilberto Freyre’s literary social histories acquires a more focused lens to frame the racial-sexual agenda of the elite white film industry in its mass-production of national affects to be consumed and regurgitated.

Such a lens stems largely from the work of black feminists long attempting to explore the interstices of race, gender, and sexuality between disciplines and media. Through the work of scholars like Ariane Cruz, we more clearly see how the sadomasochistic foundations of slavery and of race itself “illuminates the queerness of blackness” and, thus, in the case of Brazil, racial ideologies like racial democracy that depend on miscegenation narratives founded in the institution of slavery.²² Hortense Spillers argues that slavery was a “theft of the body,” reducing black subjectivity and its genders and sexualities to a flesh-hewn object made penetrable, impregnable, and disposable.²³ Saidiya Hartman notably adjoins to this the potential for other people’s joy rendered from the black body’s use and disuse, as “an abstract and empty vessel vulnerable to the projection of others’ feelings, ideas, desires, and values.”²⁴ Per Freyre and the chanchadas, blackness, enslaved or free, is imputed with a multitude of meanings beyond these figures’ control. Readers and viewers are thus brought to understand their presence—like the *leva-pancadas* of the enslaved boy or Grande Otelo’s insinuations in *Aviso aos Navegantes*—as cathartic toward the future fulfillment of whitened longings for a modernity built on the recitation of veneered colonial relationships. Thus, to quote Gloria Wekker’s research on the affects of whiteness in Black Europe,

such a racial-sexual grammar that at once strips blackness of its subjectivity and a “white innocence” that refuses to critically account for the past, absolved by an assumed historical distance, implies a generally “satisfying way of being in the world.”²⁵

Freyre’s argument of racial egalitarianism in Portuguese, African, and Native influence on national culture and society effectively silences the discussion on racial, gender, and sexual violence in the archive of slavery while projections of white male desire continue to control the narrative.²⁶ In so doing, *Casa-grande & senzala*, while attractive in its attempt to and relative success in establishing racial democracy as national ideology, occluded blackness through its diluted inclusion. For Freyre, this made it so Brazilians could never be purely white because, as I discuss later, he did not see the Portuguese as white nor did he believe the tropics to be conducive to maintaining whiteness. Nonetheless, in his theories’ becoming the foundation to racial democracy as a national ideology, he actively pursued the means through which the ideals of whiteness—and his own identity at that—could be slightly refashioned and renamed, or veiled, without losing their essence. In so doing, he imagined a new archive heavily influenced by and referent to colonialism and slavery, all the while serving as its sentinel. However, due to his partiality toward the literary in both source material and his own writing style, we must see how Freyre’s oeuvre swayed cultural production’s own unease over what was to be the newly-fashioned white Brazilian man vis-à-vis an ensconced national narrative of race mixture while understanding how cultural production itself and its reading against the racial and sexual grain becomes a mode of engagement for potential critique. At a time of immense political turmoil in Brazil that was the Vargas Era, *Casa-grande & senzala* indeed provided Brazilian readers with a language to better see themselves and their history. Yet, this mirror remains incredibly warped, instructing them on how to consume mainstream culture, like the chanchadas, without seeing them as a vehicle for sculpting an oneiric modernity much whiter than Brazil ever was or will be.

While Freyre’s stances remain a contentious topic among academics and activists alike, I am choosing here to engage the nuances of his work as controversial while, at times, contributive and innovative. Without a doubt, whether we like it or not, we must recognize the weight of Freyre’s scholarship, especially *Casa-grande & senzala*, on critical race work in Brazil. However, much like *Bom-Crioulo*, we again find ourselves interpolating the role of white authorship and its inscription of blackness and interraciality with an overtly sexual language. While Freyre captivantly wove himself into the national fabric through his erotic writing and his political connections to the Vargas government, his reach is not as vast as that of popular cultural figures like Oscarito and Grande Otelo. My queering of Freyre interjected by the chanchadas therefore seeks to show how Oscarito and Grande Otelo offered the Brazilian movie-going public a much more resounding echo of Freyre’s ideas than perhaps Freyre himself. In their queer gestures of race mixture, the extremely popular chanchadas featuring the comedy duo may, in fact, give embodied representation to colonial nostalgias and, thus, a performative recitation for the sake of national memory on-screen.

The Chanchada School

Prior to the chanchada becoming a cinematic tradition ensconced in Brazilian nation-making, Brazil, like other quickly industrializing Latin American nations such as Mexico and Argentina, experimented with silent and sounded film within and against the more mainstream U.S. and French film aesthetics. As Maite Conde shows in her study of early Brazilian cinema, popular Brazilian film in the first 30 years of the twentieth century constituted a hybrid of revue

theatre and movie screenings, the interludes between clips serving as a space for circus acts, comedy sketches, music, and dance ranging in origins from the Brazilian backlands and abroad. Serving a quickly diversifying national capital of Rio de Janeiro due to the arrival of European, Middle Eastern, and Japanese immigrants and internal migration brought on by the abolition of slavery and ongoing droughts in the Northeast, filmmakers—many of them Portuguese, Italian, and German immigrants—who were “keen to cater to a broader public began to integrate their experiences narratively and through extra textual practices that became intrinsic to the exhibition of the revue films.” As stated previously, these films, as would the chanchadas, offered spectators an opportunity to grapple with their own integration into cities like the capital, which also became a dynamic character in early cinema. Whereby the hardships brought on by an economy that could not accommodate the labor demands of the cities’ newcomers, individuals—sometimes entire families, like Oscarito’s—worked informally in the entertainment business to make ends meet.²⁷

As Maite Conde and Robert Stam both point out, many of these early short films, as cultural documentaries, recorded Rio de Janeiro’s black population and its interracial interactions with European immigrants, in particular, in the *filmes carnavlescos*, or carnival films. From the first decade of the twentieth century, these short documentaries served as the historical and cultural foundation for what would become the chanchadas.²⁸ Film thus became a new medium of documentation of not only the folkloric but also historical happenings. Conde points out how several filmmakers recreated the Revolt of the Lash on the reel in *Revolta da esquadra* (Squadron revolt, 1910) and *Revolta no Rio* (Revolt in Rio, 1910). Notably, the Italian immigrant Carlos Lambertini’s 1912 film *A vida do Cabo João Candido* (The life of Corporal João Candido) attempted to reveal the story of the uprising’s controversial yet lauded black leader, João Cândido. However, the Navy petitioned to have the government seize all materials. Still embittered from their capitulation to the sailors’ demands two years earlier, the Hermes da Fonseca administration’s decision to confiscate Lambertini’s film effectively began a long-lived tradition of the Brazilian state’s censorship of cultural production. It is the first film on record to have ever been censored by the government.²⁹

Getúlio Vargas, nevertheless, made censorship into an art. Coming to power after the 1930 Revolution and ramping up his authoritarianism with the Estado Novo (New State) between 1937 and 1945, he established a host of bureaucratic tools to regulate the film industry such as INCE with Roquette-Pinto at its helm.³⁰ Vargas believed film to be a powerful medium, “among the most useful educational agents available to the modern state” where, he writes, “cinema will become a book of luminous images through which our coastal and rural populations will learn to love Brazil, and it will raise confidence in the fortunes of our fatherland. For the many who do not read, it will be the perfect pedagogical tool, the easiest and most impressive.”³¹ In 1939, the Departamento de Imprensa e Propaganda (Department of Press and Propaganda, DIP) was established under the Ministry of Justice as a branch of the military and civil police as official censor, answering directly to Vargas. While the DIP enforced laws established previously under Vargas, who mandated a minimum of national films exhibited per movie theater^{vi}, Presidents Linhares and Dutra maintained these enforcement structures until DIP became the new and improved Departamento

^{vi} In 1939, Vargas, under the DIP and the INCE, mandated that at least one Brazilian film be exhibited per exhibition room per year. In 1946, with the dissolution of the DIP, the new censor, the Departamento de Segurança Pública (Department of Public Safety), mandated three national films per exhibition room per year. With the democratic return of Vargas in 1951, the DNI mandated that each theater show one national film per exhibition room for every eight international films shown.

Naiconal de Informações (National Department of Information, DNI) under Vargas again from 1951 until his suicide in 1954.³²

While censorship generally did not impede the assimilationist framework for the production of the musical chanchadas, it became disastrous for documentary and newsreel filmmakers whose pictures threatened to show the ‘real’ Brazil that Vargas wanted nobody in or outside of the country to see: urban and rural poverty, social movements, and cultural phenomena considered subversive or obscene. Counteracting this, the Estado Novo instead registered and exhibited in its newsreels at the start of all films images such as President Vargas greeting the people, military parades, industrial achievements, the inauguration of air fields and factories, and in an array of other well-choreographed ceremonies of patriotism, militarism, and progress.³³ During the Estado Novo, several newsreels show Vargas welcoming and fraternizing with famous U.S. filmmakers like Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Walt Disney, and Orson Welles, who had come on behalf of U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s “Good Neighbor Policy” to shore up support for the Allies during the Second World War. In one newsreel, director John Ford, cinematographer Gregg Toland, and Getúlio Vargas visit the set of Atlântida studio’s first film, *Moleque Tião* (1943), standing around and smiling above the dark-skinned, petite lead actor, Grande Otelo.³⁴ As Lisa Shaw pointedly remarks, the seriousness of these newsreels at the start of chanchadas quickly disintegrated vis-à-vis their humor. More so, their content was, at times, implicitly critiqued through slapstick comedy that regularly sought to invert the social order.

Mimicking the Hollywood studio system of the 1930s, 40s, and 50s, the Brazilian studios Cinédia and Atlântida, in particular, quickly and cheaply produced films for mass consumption. Taking advantage of the new sound technology long absent from film since its popularizations in the early 1900s, the talkies of the late 1920s in Brazil transformed into musical comedy films, or chanchadas, by the 1930s. However, unlike the novel, these films aimed to placate all classes of Brazilians, from the elite to the illiterate, with a distinct aesthetic in a period of resurgent, right-wing nationalism. Under a relatively weak and repetitive narrative of a white male heartthrob and his equally fair-skinned maiden, an inept villain, and pea-brain comics who almost accidentally save the day, chanchadas became vehicles to promote and pay homage to national and regional music, dance, and revue theatre that had previously been isolated to the cabarets, circus tents, and casinos in the decades prior. In 1935, Cinédia studio presented the first chanchada, *Alô, Alô Brasil* (*Hello, Hello Brazil*), starring the then-lesser-known Carmen Miranda. However, it was the Atlântida studio that perfected the chanchada with its first in 1944. Despite the relative success of the drama *Moleque Tião* that same year, based on the life of its then-relatively unknown black lead actor, Sebastião Bernardes de Souza Prata, stage name Grande Otelo, Atlântida soon realized that comedies were easier to produce and made more money. Not ironically, they titled their first chanchada as *Tristeza não pagam Dívidas* (*Sadness does not Pay Off Debts*), featuring Grande Otelo and Oscarito as comic relief, albeit not yet a duo.

Nonetheless, learned film critics often did not appreciate these films, initially employing the term chanchada to deride their quality of content and form. Robert Stam points out how the *Aurélio* Portuguese dictionary defines the chanchada as “a play or film without value, in which predominate crude devices, vulgar jokes and pornography.”³⁵ Citing Brazilian film critic Sérgio Augusto, Nilo Couret brings into this etymology an argument on cultural value whereby chanchada, an Argentine derivative of the Spanish word *cochinada*, comes to not only mean “pig slop” or “filth,” but “a trick, an ill-disposed action, a grift” in “an attempt to pass off the worthless as something valuable.”³⁶ Interestingly, however, other etymologies stemming from Galician show this term to have a more remote use and definition of “a racket or rough housing amongst sailors.”

Despite the term's overall acceptance by the mid-1950s as distinctly referring to this genre of film in not always a derogatory manner, overlapping the many uses of *chanchada* illuminates a close connection between cultural production and historical significance to similar arguments made around *Bom-Crioulo* and the Revolt of the Lash by the media. I am therefore choosing to understand the *chanchada* as a film genre whose low-brow, especially gestural humor—its slapstick and noisy fuckery that imply abjection, depreciation, inversion, and social terror—cleverly inscribed the values of what would become Gilberto Freyre's racial democracy and its undercurrents of sexual perversion into the visual and sonic medium of film.

The *chanchadas* that featured Oscarito and Grande Otelo, in particular, recited the intimate violence of slavery without actually depicting slavery on screen or in publicity. As this national memory was carefully reconstructed by Brazilian thinkers and the state as an allegedly far-flung yet necessary history for the enrichment of national culture (and coffers), such reconstruction of interracial relationships as congenial and egalitarian easily lent itself to comedy. Undoubtedly, the familiarity of these interracial gestures on-screen ensured the overwhelming success of *chanchadas* featuring the comic duo as some of Brazil's most memorable. For example, newspaper advertisements for the wildly popular *chanchada* *Carnaval no Fogo* (*Carnival on Fire*, 1949), featuring Oscarito and Grande Otelo as comic relief, advertised, “*Aguardem a chicoteada!*”³⁷ With Grande Otelo's wincing face on one side and Oscarito, curtsying in an apron on the other, the intended meaning of telling the audience to prepare itself for side-splitting laughter swiftly exhumes the memory of racial slavery in its literal translation: “Wait for the whipping!” With the racial and gender bending inherent to the *chanchada* genre, the queer undertones therein make no direct reference to the history of slavery. Yet, the act of racialized bondage insinuates its omnipresence.³⁸ While Brazilian scholars in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s like Paulo Prado, Edgard Roquette-Pinto, Gilberto Freyre, and Sérgio Buarque de Holanda discussed the racial becoming of Brazil in their widely-read essays, their conjectures of a national psyche constructed through miscegenation primed the Brazilian viewer to make these connections, perhaps subconsciously. The slapstick was, thus, not merely a diversion. As Christen Smith sustains throughout her book *Afro-Paradise: Blackness, Violence, and Performance in Brazil*, the violation of embodied blackness and its whitewashing, from the times of slavery to ongoing police violence today, consistently undergirds the myth of Brazilian racial democracy and invokes Brazil's image as a carefree racial paradise.³⁹ The slapstick between Oscarito and Grande Otelo had a historical resonance where the interracial physicality of cruelty and caress could elicit laughter, joy, and pleasure. In how audiences could tap into the visual and aural ecstasies of the archive of slavery, through laughter at Grande Otelo's abuse, we arrive at the potential for a multi-layered analysis of race, sex, and the order and progress of whitened affect in the Vargas Era.

In perhaps the most famous scene of any *chanchada*, the disorder of race and sex makes itself known. With Oscarito and Grande Otelo portraying hotel employees looking to put on a variety show in *Carnaval no Fogo*, they rehearse the famous balcony scene from the second act of William Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet* (Figure 1). Oscarito, in a blonde pageboy wig, tights, and a feathered cap, climbs up the balcony to meet his Juliet who has emerged to his whistles in the night. Grande Otelo, in a Renaissance dress and blonde braided wig, purses his lips, enticingly flits his false lashes and, in a light sigh, expresses, “Ay me!” An enchanted ‘Romeo’ pleads ‘Juliet’ to speak again to which Grande Otelo replies, in his well-known squeaky adolescent-like voice, “But what should I say, Romeo?!” A frustrated Oscarito bellows, “Say whatever!” Returning to his high-pitched Juliet inflection, Grande Otelo begins to seductively sigh Romeo's name, rolling the Rs longer and longer: “Romeo... Rrrromeo... Rrrrrromeo!” Upon crashing over the balcony's

banister, Oscarito holds Grande Otelo's hand, stating, "Juliet, I want to feel the perfume of your body. ... I want to kiss the virginal pulp of your lips" as Grande Otelo's eyes almost roll back into his head in pleasure. Grande Otelo coquettishly pulls away, pushing out his lips and tongue, "Oh, Romeo, the nocturnal mask hides my face. And you cannot see my damsel shame." The scene ends with Oscarito and Grande Otelo arguing over whether it is a nightingale or a lark singing in the trees and Oscarito's fall from the balcony after kissing Grande Otelo's palm.⁴⁰ As Stam points out, the "comic inversions are multiple and superimposed" in this scene where Grande Otelo, in particular, reaffirms the Shakespearean tradition of men playing women's roles, but flips this with his blackness, in a blonde wig, and a lightly powdered face.⁴¹ However, the "racket" or "rough housing" of the chanchada's sounds and silence, linked with the image, are not discussed in Stam's analysis. The change in vocal timbre from squeaky sighs to gruff shouts demarcates the very sexual, homoerotic nature of this exchange. As Grande Otelo pushes his lips out, bats his eyelashes, and moistens the words "nocturnal" and "damsel" with his tongue to heighten the humor of parody, the actor's fraught black masculinity is meant to evoke laughter at his perfunctory bid to convincingly portray a white adolescent girl. The recitation of his sighs of Romeo's name, in the overdone rolling of the R, allude to the potential for sexual ecstasy and its orgasmic repetition. Interposed into this comedic sketch, the characters played by Eliana Macedo^{vii} and Anselmo Duarte—closer to Romeo and Juliet than Oscarito and Grande Otelo ever could be—walk in on the duo's rehearsal. The cuts to Duarte and Eliana show the male lead's concerned and slightly disgusted yet interested face; Eliana, however, laughs at Grande Otelo's attempt to portray a white woman like her. However, where Eliana's laughter is silent, this lapse in audio at once suggests the proper place of whiteness to be that of a voyeur on interraciality as well as to laugh at it, to fill in for Eliana's giggles that we never hear.



Figure 1: Grande Otelo, left, as Juliet and Oscarito as Romeo parodying the famous balcony scene from William Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet* in *Carnaval no Fogo* (1949).

As such, to use Grande Otelo's words in a 1976 recorded interview, the chanchada was, in fact, a "school."⁴² He viewed the chanchada as an educational medium for training many young filmmakers and actors, like himself, that would eventually participate in the internationally

^{vii} Often billed simply as "Eliana," likely to distinguish herself from her uncle, Watson Macedo, a famed chanchada screenwriter and director, including of *Carnaval no Fogo*, I will only use her first name from here on.

renowned neorealist aesthetics of the Cinema Novo movement. With that being said, as the chanchadas were for Getúlio Vargas, we should understand them also as not mere entertainment but, in some regard, instructive for the Brazilian public through their racialized and deracialized cultural conventions on what it meant to be and not be Brazilian. Albeit not invested in questions of race in the chanchadas, Nilo Couret agrees, stating, “every invocation of the chanchada fashions the nation” where “questions of national ontology here again overlap with questions of medium ontology: from the nation defined by a pure or authentic medium to the nation defined by the medium as social practice.”⁴³ Therefore, later in the same interview, Grande Otelo’s words drive this point home: “The chanchada was truly the expression of an era ... in which there was simplicity. And that simplicity was ... reproduced in the chanchadas. So, people in those days saw themselves there on the screen whilst the sophistication of today does not always allow the viewer to see himself, to identify with the guy on screen.”⁴⁴ In contemplating the chanchada as a culturally instructive mode with a repetitive narrative structure, the Brazilian viewer recognizes, identifies with, and takes pleasure in a Brazilianness carefully crafted through censorship and nationalist propaganda. The inclusion of the anti-normative, in fact, bolstered national essentialism. As most chanchadas were released leading up to the annual carnival season, Grande Otelo and Oscarito’s comic bendings of race, gender, and sexuality played into the carnivalesque while reinforcing the white heteronormativity of the leading man and woman—like Anselmo Duarte and Eliana—taking pleasure in viewing their own parody from afar. The chanchada’s rendering of the ghosts of colonial interraciality into a jovial conflict-free Brazil made the idea of racial democracy all the more palatable and possible.

Barnabé, Tu És Meu

The repetitive narrative structure of the chanchadas allowed for audiences to, by and large, be satisfied with every visit to the movies. Even more consistent were the actors who played the same roles over and over again: Cyll Farney or Anselmo Duarte as the relatively two-dimensional leading man, Eliana or Emília Borba as his equally flat female love interest, and José Lewgoy as the dashing villain. As the comic relief, Grande Otelo and Oscarito—later, followed by Ankito—were much more intriguing to viewers, as made clear by local and national press. As Mônica Bastos writes, such “consistency of the plotlines and the association of an actor with a specific type allowed the public to identify with [the chanchada]. The viewer went to the cinema as if they were going to a party where they knew all of the guests and of whom they knew what to expect.”⁴⁵ By placing Grande Otelo and Oscarito together as a comedy duo in the last seven of their 15 films together, the pair quickly became associated with each other, the body of each a reflection of the other’s. As film scholar Luis Felipe Kojima Hirano posits, such a pairing actually made Grande Otelo’s and Oscarito’s respective stars rise while it also “reinforced the racial markers and stature of each comedian.”⁴⁶ This was especially the case as the duo toyed with the inversion of social hierarchy, racial and gender roles, and their own homoerotic insinuations. These inversions and play, brimming with innuendo, therefore also became an expectation of Brazilian viewers.

Released on the eve of the 1952 carnival, the film *Barnabé, Tu És Meu* raised the bar for a chanchada. Leading up to the movie’s premiere, the press was effusive over the influx of renowned theater and radio talent yet to be seen on-screen and its captivatingly fresh backstory. On January 31, the *Jornal do Brasil* newspaper stated, “it will be, without a doubt, the greatest cinematic event of the year.”⁴⁷ On February 3, the two-page spread in the *Diário Carioca*’s Sunday magazine,

complete with eight stills from the film, predicted it to be “the most spectacular production made by Atlântida for King Momo’s festivities.”⁴⁸ In the film, Barnabé (Oscarito), is a domestic worker in Professor Texeirão’s home, a scientist who has just invented a special permanent ink and a super powerful bomb in the shape of a ballpoint pen. On accident, Barnabé stamps the star of David on the back of his hand with the eternal ink and unknowingly takes the pen-bomb with him. Coincidentally, the Arab-Brazilian princess Sulema (Fada Santoro) is searching for the descendent of Solomon who has the star of David somewhere etched on his body. Sulema’s subjects capture Barnabé and take them to her Moorish palace in Rio de Janeiro so that he can be prepared by the princess’ right-hand servant, Captain Major Abdula, (Grande Otelo) to marry her. Once the wedding happens, Barnabé discovers that, according to tradition, the husband of the reigning princess must be sacrificed after their wedding night so that she might access Solomon’s treasures. Barnabé panics but he is saved in his capture by a group of hitmen working for Garcia (José Lewgoy), a gangster who owns a nightclub and plans to discover the secrets of the mines belonging to King Solomon and to seize Professor Texeirão’s bomb. The police are notified and, in a confusion of musical revues featuring Barnabé and Abdula running from Garcia’s and Sulema’s men, the bandits are arrested and everything turns out right. The bomb is recovered by the authorities and Barnabé reveals that he is not the royal heir apparent of Solomon.⁴⁹

Much of *Barnabé*’s plot takes place in Sulema’s palace somewhere in the upscale Rio de Janeiro neighborhood of Ipanema. A sprawling mansion made to look like a Moorish castle on either side of the Strait of Gibraltar, its location in Rio’s ritzy Zona Sul and the black men who stand watch, do the yardwork, open the doors, and ring the gongs announcing the arrival of guests to court evoke a peculiar *saudade*, perhaps displaced in its Orientalization, for the plantations so fondly described in *Casa-grande & senzala*. With an ethnic rainbow of actors portraying soldiers, servants, dancers, and musicians set in the overly ornate fortress, the film becomes a close, yet distant racial democracy. Echoing many of Gilberto Freyre’s own arguments throughout his life’s work on Brazilian excess, Helena Bocayuva notes how Freyre’s “oscillation between the languages of race and culture suggest the existence of an unstable theoretical terrain which”—much like the cultural backdrop for *Barnabé*, *Tu És Meu*—“permitted Freyre to combine them at will in his work.”⁵⁰ In this, she extends the bounds of Freyre’s theoretical manipulation of excess such that it becomes a well-lubricated maneuver to shift from ethnicity, to race, to gender, to sex, to religion, to the tropical climate, and back in order to make Brazilianness pliable for any context or critique such as the chanchadas.⁵¹

Much of Freyre’s evidence for the pervasiveness of miscegenation in Brazil’s colonization relies on his argument that the Portuguese themselves were products of miscegenation between the three faiths he clearly racializes: ‘blonde Christians’ from Northern Europe, the roaming Jews, and the darker-skinned Muslim Moors. However, in his defense of the alleged openness of Portuguese law for the continuation of minority practices post-Reconquista of the Iberian Peninsula from the Moors, Freyre fails to mention in detail the brutal Inquisition.⁵² Citing William Z. Ripley’s tripartite *The Races of Europe* (1899) and Francisco Ferraz de Macedo, the Brazilian father of a criminology driven by pseudo-racial science, Freyre goes further in choosing to return to pre-history. As he does in his later discussions of the peoples of Western and Central Africa, he makes the argument for the biological miscegenation of the Portuguese. Upon the transatlantic conquests of the Portuguese and the displacement of equally miscegeneated Africans, he theorizes each’s genetically organic predisposition for mixture with each other and the isolated indigenous populations of Brazil. For these reasons, perhaps the premise of a Spanish-born actor playing the role of a Brazilian plebeian mistaken for the heir of a Jewish king and hence brought to marry a

racially ambiguous Muslim princess with the help of a faithful black servant in Rio de Janeiro appears quite normal, quite quintessentially Brazilian in its excessiveness. *Barnabé, Tu És Meu*, then, becomes a comfortably dislodged anachronism within which the racial democracy of Iberian re-conquest and Brazilian colonization can temper racial democracy in the modern era.

In *Barnabé, Tu És Meu*, one can sense a saudade similar to the one that pervades much of Freyre's work, saudade for a more intimate past between master and slave which itself becomes the comedic crux of the film. As Alfredo Cesar Melo writes, Freyre's strategy, in *Casa-grande & senzala* and beyond, is not only to explicate the complex patriarchal roots from which Brazilians and their culture arose. Rather, he chooses to expose these roots "in a nostalgic thread in order to then study the process of decomposition of this patriarchal mold, what happens due to the country's own modernization" and the loss of the allegedly better flux of plantation life when the master and slave could be in closer proximity.⁵³ Albeit in a U.S. context, Toni Morrison's reflection on white men's authorship of a national literature could also apply to Freyre. She advances that this romance with history and the romanticization of the past simultaneously proposition writers to explore the meaning of freedom and its racial and sexual terrors, including for whom it could be most fruitful and to whom it should be rationed or all-out denied.⁵⁴ In no scene does this become more apparent than what should be Barnabé and Sulema's post-nuptials consummation. As Barnabé makes himself comfortable on a chaise, singing to himself as he awaits Sulema's entrance, he encounters Abdula sitting in a corner behind a divider pulling a string to wave an enormous peacock feather fan over their bed. Barnabé frustratedly asks, "What are you doing here?" Abdula replies in a clearly feigned deep, authoritative voice, "Carrying out my official duties." Barnabé tries to explain his desire for privacy, saying, "One is too little, two is nice, but three is too much, don't you understand?" But Abdula almost gleefully asks for further clarification. Finally, Barnabé states, "You cannot stay here." Abdula responds, "But, Your Highness, as I told you, I am carrying out my duties as lead fanner of the palace." He continues to explain the history of his role over the course of four millennia, but Barnabé asks him to at least find a way to fan from outside the window. Abdula replies, "Tradition cannot be broken." Barnabé then pushes him out of the room as Abdula goes to consult with the court council, barricading Barnabé inside the room to await Sulema.

It is in this exchange that Gilberto Freyre's work disturbs the chanchada, reminding the viewer of the enslaved black boy's formative use, of his "official duties" toward what will become white male adult sexuality. Barnabé's frustrations to move forward with the consummation of his marriage and, perhaps, the conception of a child, only grow with Abdula's unrelenting insistence to remain present for consummation. While analogous to a Brazilian Reconquista over the Moorish Princess Sulema, this consummation is flipped in Barnabé's own sacrifice unbeknownst to him. Freyre attributes the previously established "miscibility" of the Portuguese to their mixture with the Moors, in particular, their polygamous and carnal spiritual practices, thus making them more libidinous colonizers.⁵⁵ Where Freyre himself flips the racialized script of sexuality, making indigenous and black men hyposexual in stating their need to perform erotic dances to awaken their desire and achieve an erection, it becomes clear that the Portuguese's excessive lust is not being perceived poorly. Rather, according to Freyre, their sex is a rightful and formidable tool in colonization through the repetition of enslaved black people's passive, masochistic presence as a mode of support for the progressing nation. As such, while Barnabé frets over Abdula's perceived voyeurism, like Ariane Cruz suggests, "blackness is naturalized and denaturalized, stabilized and mercurial in its repetitive performance."⁵⁶ Abdula merely sits there, pulling the string back and forth to fan the newlyweds in their first copulation; a witness at the margins of the nation, not its

participant; the slave quarters complimentary to the big house as the political and economic center. In fact, in his defense of tradition, we do not see Abdula's face; the camera focuses on Barnabé's frustration with our backs turned to Abdula's voice: "Tradition cannot be broken." *Barnabé, Tu És Meu* accordingly buys into while also, in part, questions some of Freyre's argument. In the giddiness of Abdula's feigned ignorance, his performance of naïveté insinuates the possibility for pleasure, according to Cruz, in a Freudian repetitive compulsion, or the "repeated, compulsive return to the primordial scene of psychic trauma as an attempt to reestablish the past and rewrite history."⁵⁷ Perhaps Abdula's pleasure derives from knowing that his mistress will execute Barnabé. In the process, he will be elevated him to active contributor to Sulema's entrance into everlasting wealth of which he might receive a small percentage.

This cinematic reciprocity between Abdula and Sulema and Abdula and Barnabé that fails to reckon with his faithful servitude sells a sublime representation of a mythical, Near Eastern racial democracy made up of ruling whites and passive blacks set in Rio de Janeiro. Yet, we never know Abdula's status beyond his very apparent unfreedom: the *Revista do Diário Carioca* magazine spread calls him a "slave of Her Majesty's court" while his movements in and, later, beyond the palace walls potentially indicate servitude by choice or loyalty.⁵⁸ Considering Abdula's conversant relationship to his masters, Freyre attests that the "sweetness in the treatment of slaves" in Brazil derives from the Moorish influence on the Portuguese such that they were "more so family members than beasts of burden."⁵⁹ Knowing the particular brutality of slavery in Brazil and across the Americas, we must follow Saidiya Hartman's rebuttal: "The pastoral renders the state of domination as an ideal of care, duty, familiar obligation, gratitude and humanity."⁶⁰ We therefore are forced to see how Abdula fantasizes his "official duties" to be only in kind to his mistress' 'care' for him. When we come to reckon with Abdula's tradition of preparing and entertaining white masters for his mistress and the sexual undertones therein, the Brazilian archive of slavery specifically shows that such acts—especially sexual acts, be they participatory or on the margins—as the duty of the enslaved permits white masters to give "physical form to the abject, sinful stereotypes associated with black sexuality."⁶¹ Lamonte Aidoo goes on: "White pleasure obscures black captivity and injury and becomes a false equalizer."⁶² *Barnabé, Tu És Meu* normalizes the Freyrian affability, in pleasure and pain, by projecting Abdula's role as merely a repetition of intimacy to placate and inculcate Brazilian audiences instead of an intimacy circumscribed by violent domination.

In spite of this, Freyre convincingly makes the case for slavery as an institution built on sexual desire. Without calling it sexual violence, per se, he admits, "There is no slavery without sexual depravation. It is the essence of the regime."⁶³ While nonetheless true, few recognize that these powerful words are anchored in a contradictory argument made by Freyre. His principal thesis on the history of sexuality in Brazil was that what mattered was not necessarily the race of the black or indigenous people who sexually corrupted Brazilian society by sating the desires of their white masters; rather, the issue was their socially constructed position of the slave. Ironically, this argument emerges in *Casa-grande & senzala* after an earlier explanation of blackness and slavery as semiotically inextricable in Western culture. As Alexandra Isfahani-Hammond shows, this reasoning permits Freyre to distinguish biological and cultural miscegenation in his own identity as a white author whereby non-procreative sexual acts fostered a family's succession while suggesting that "these relations produced a symbolic rather than biological progeny: the seigniorial figure who assimilates African identity on the basis of his noncoercive domination of the slave's body."⁶⁴ In his essay "How and why I wrote *Casa-grande & senzala*," Freyre explains that, while he immersed himself in black culture, he wrote the book-length essay in isolation at his family's

colonial plantation while being tended to by Manoel Santana, a black man born into slavery under the Freyre family who, after emancipation, worked as a servant for his brother, Ulysses. He expounds on how Manoel—in Freyre’s words, on loan from Ulysses—became a “collaborator of mine in a way, via oral information, in the elaboration of the book *Casa-grande & senzala*. I learned much from this one just as I did from other Manoels like him, black people, if not ex-slaves from back in the times of slavery.”⁶⁵ While not explicitly sexual, the extracting of information from Manoel while in his care—without any attribution whatsoever 35 years prior in *Casa-grande & senzala*’s original publication—and Freyre’s pervasive prurience in *Casa-grande & senzala* reveals an affective relationship much like that between Abdula and his masters. While Abdula intends to operate the fan during Barnabé and Sulema’s intercourse, silently blending into the background, so too does Freyre treat his ex-enslaved servant Manoel, pushing the ephemerally named into plural anonymity: Manoels. Such extrication of Manoel and Abdula to the fringes of desire marks them as asexual yet reproductive in their coerced cooperation with the nation’s bodily and epistemological propagation.



Figure 2: After his saggy-sirwal wedding vows, Barnabé (Oscarito) wraps a belt around his waist and Abdula’s (*Grande Otelo*) neck in *Barnabé, Tu És Meu* (1952).

While previous work on black asexuality gestures to these very questions, the case of Abdula in *Barnabé, Tu És Meu*—and Manoel in Freyre’s writing *Casa-grande & senzala*—offers a possible intervention in the reproductive potential of black boys’ and men’s bodies. In her work on the mammy figure, Ianna Hawkins Owen extends well-known scholarship on how racial capitalism profited on the hypersexualization of black women by showing this to also be the case in their disaffection from desire:

The most profitable black female body was one that could be trained to labour without loving, to yield without yearning, to submit without ceasing. The resulting figure is Mammy, whose hyperproductivity can be harnessed to produce property and masters, while slavery is said to work for her by relieving her of autochthonous (and therefore always already perverse and excessive) desires.⁶⁶

In Abdula’s own ‘relief’ of sexual longing, perhaps vicariously through Sulema and Barnabé, the trope of black men’s ravenous lust that largely saw them excluded from nineteenth- and early twentieth-century narratives of race mixture to reinforce white male sexual supremacy seemingly

evaporates. Abdula becomes a figure devoid of desire. In *Barnabé, Tu És Meu*, it forges the foundation to an ongoing punchline along the axis of disavowal and excess. For example, before Barnabé's raised-sword oath to protect Sulema and their ancestors at their wedding, his oversized sirwal falls to his ankles and Abdula rushes to help raise it. Once handed a belt by a courtesan after his vow, Barnabé wraps it around his waist and Abdula's neck, choking him. "Get your head out of there!" he mutters. Abdula frantically responds, "Remove the belt!" while still faithfully assisting his new prince (Figure 2). Abdula's head sits fastened to Barnabé's crotch, the insinuation of a potential for fellatio commented in the press as one of the film's "moments of grand comicality."⁶⁷ Where "'hyper-' and 'hypo-' meet in one body, trained as an idealised collision of the presence of excessive availability and the impossibility of self-determined pleasure," as Owen states, Abdula's place as sexual servant to his master becomes ever clear and a point of comedic value for the viewing audience.⁶⁸



Figure 3: The "Grande Otelo" statuettes for the Grand Prize in Brazilian Cinema; the version on the left was awarded from 2000 until 2018 while the golden statuette has been awarded since 2019.⁶⁹

Abdula's complicity with tradition and the commands of his masters further sets up Grande Otelo as Oscarito's straight man. As race and film scholars Robert Stam and Donald Bogle suggest, these interracial comedy duos, be they Oscarito and Grande Otelo in Brazil or Will Rogers and Stepin Fetchit in the U.S., approach verisimilitude with audiences only when the white man is in charge. Calling them "wish-fulfillment fantasies," Bogle treats these 'buddy films' from the 1930s to the 1990s as the representational simplification of racial tensions distorted into national progress.⁷⁰ The black sidekicks in these partnerships can only comfortably exist as asexual and assimilationist, while it is his white counterpart who has the social dexterity to pervert without repercussions. In turn, he grows in fame. In her collection of essays on race and representation, *Black Looks*, bell hooks remarks how otherness is commodified, here such as the singularity of Grande Otelo's blackness in the booming Brazilian film industry. As his on-screen presence is "offered as a sign that progressive political change is taking place, ... it invites a resurgence of essentialist cultural nationalism," much like that of which we see in the work of Gilberto Freyre, requiring that others like him "assume recognizable forms" in order to be seen.⁷¹ Yet, Grande Otelo's perennial position as Oscarito's sidekick with his miniature and flamboyant physiognomy makes such mimicry and, thus, assimilation impossible. Stam writes that Grande Otelo's "broad gestures, exaggerated facial expressions, and acrobatic corporeality" painted him as "something

of the smart child, bright but somehow presexual, infantilized, as if the middle-class white audience might have trouble accepting a sexually assertive black male.”⁷² With the industrialization of chanchada production at Atlântida and Cinédia, the manufacture of Grande Otelo’s persona compelled him into repetition, one from which he could rarely escape.

Even after the chanchadas ceased mass production in the late 1950s, Grande Otelo’s most iconic performance repeated these notions into perpetuity. In the 1969 film adaptation of Mário de Andrade’s 1928 modernist novel, *Macunaíma*, Grande Otelo’s role as the eponymous lazy black and indigenous shapeshifter proved that he never truly avoided caricature from the film and television industries. In 2000, seven years after Grande Otelo’s death, the Ministry of Culture launched the annual Grand Prize in Brazilian Cinema awards ceremony.^{viii} The statuette awarded to recipients, more popularly known as “Grande Otelo,” immobilizes the actor’s clownery into a phallic knock-off of the American Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences’ “Oscar” (Figure 3). Originally in full-nude chocolate-brown, the “Grande Otelo” stands with enormous red lips, broad nose, catatonic eyes, tiny ears, and a thick black moustache as he tilts his oversized head upward to accentuate his child-like stature. Unlike the knight crusader Oscar who stands regal atop a reel of film brandishing a sword, Grande Otelo wields a cane. In the 2019 revamp that dresses him entirely in gold, he now poses on a top hat. His posture, excessively drawn facial features, coloring, and props leave no room for interpretation: the famed actor of stage and screen has been summoned from the grave as a black minstrel for filmmakers’ mantles. For an industry that is still overwhelmingly white, to take home a “Grande Otelo,” in all of his cane-wielding nakedness, further proves the lasting racial and sexual effects of the chanchadas on Brazilian visual culture.

A Dupla do Barulho

Eighteen months after *Barnabé, Tu És Meu* hit theaters, Grande Otelo and Oscarito’s next film together premiered in August 1953, albeit well after the Carnival season. Written and directed by left-leaning first-timer Carlos Manga, *A Dupla do Barulho*—literally, The Noisy Duo but translated officially as *The Terrible Twosome*—depicts the story of a traveling revue of circus acts and theater artists. While Tonico’s (Oscarito) stage partner, Nanico, suddenly leaves the company, the director/owner Ricardo Félix (Renato Restier) obliges a reluctant Tião (Grande Otelo), the company’s step-right-up promoter, to become Tonico’s new partner. The pair become an instant success, traveling from town to town. Tião eventually grows fond of Sílvia (Edith Morel), the company’s lead dancer/singer, who, instead, has feelings for Tonico. Discovering this, Tião grows frustrated with Tonico’s spotlight and decides to leave the company. As Tião drowns his career in alcohol and resentment, Tonico’s success grows, being cast in several films. Tião falls into destitution but Sílvia convinces Ricardo to give him another chance. In full theatrical fanfare, Tião returns to the stage to the public’s surprise and resurrects his partnership with Tonico.⁷³

More melodramatic comedy than chanchada, *A Dupla do Barulho* stretches Grande Otelo’s role as the subordinate Abdula in an allegedly distant past into a more timely critique in *Barnabé, Tu És Meu*. As nationally renowned stars from the 1940s on, the film frames the plot within the familiarity of Grande Otelo’s and Oscarito’s lives as revue theatre and circus performers at the start of their careers. The film operates, like all others before it, on Tião’s persona as Tonico’s straight man, and Tião’s frustrations therein; not so remote from the reality of Grande Otelo’s relationship to Oscarito in real life. While ‘straight man’ in Portuguese—*escada*—also means ‘step’ or ‘ladder,’ the term gains nuance throughout *A Dupla do Barulho*. In an early scene, the

^{viii} In 2002, the Grand Prize in Cinema awards were taken over by the Brazilian Film Academy.

pair almost miss their train due to Tonico's obstinate intoxication after celebrating the beginning of the company's tour with much drink and raucous laughter. As the pair wobble their way through the bowels of the sleeper car, Tião tries to finagle Tonico up into their shared top-bunk without waking the snoring woman below. As Tião gives Tonico a hand to boost his foot upward, he fails to pull himself up and sits on Tião's head, reminiscent of Abdula's brief encounter with Barnabé's crotch. Later finding a ladder, Tião climbs to their compartment and pulls Tonico up who, inebriated, grabs onto Tião's backside for support, the camera focused directly on the contact zone (Figure 4). "Straighten yourself out," Tião quietly bemoans. As he grabs for the suitcase down below, Tonico now holds onto Tião's nether regions with both hands as we hear Tião snarl off-camera, "What a limp fellow!" Tião's under-the-breath comment—in the original Portuguese, "*Que camarada mais mole!*"—contains multiple possibilities, including the homoerotic. *Mole*, meaning 'soft' or 'limp,' refers to Tonico's annoying behavior while it also refers to *molície*, literally 'softness,' a term used throughout the Inquisition in Brazil and Freyre's *Casa-grande & senzala* as a catch-all for various forms of non-penetrative sex between men, including white masters' sexual abuse of enslaved black boys and men.⁷⁴ After the comment, both Tonico and Tião complain about the bunk's small size. They then commence undressing in order to, ostensibly, share the same bed.

Here, where Grande Otelo becomes Oscarito's comedic and also literal *escada*, the mise-en-scène evokes a desire for the black male body to whom the erotic capability of desire is at once occluded. Contrasting Grande Otelo's dark face, Oscarito's white hand in various positions of splaying, squeezing, and resting on his partner's checker-clothed posterior quite literally gestures us back to Freyre's description of the *leva-pancadas*. In this tradition's own reference to noise—the *pancada*, hit, wallop, or thwack as euphemism for the sounds of anal sex—the slapstick marks Grande Otelo's blackness as it does his estrangement from his own desires and ambitions. As one of the most complex shots in any chanchada, a genre known for its simplistic cinematography, the camera's intervention in the gaze allows us—perhaps with Freyre as metaphorical choreographer—to join in on this noisy duo's comedic insinuations. Tião's muffled complaints away from the camera's focus, however, go largely unheard.



Figure 4: Film stills of Tião in the sleeper train car as *escada* for Oscarito's success and the viewer's pleasure in *A Dupla do Barulho* (1953).

In a 1985 interview, Grande Otelo reflected back on his career, stating that he felt that his singular black presence on the stage and screen could be used to problematize racial stereotypes.⁷⁵ However, at the height of his film career in the chanchadas, the press lauded Grande Otelo mostly in his interpretations of black stereotypes that proliferated Brazilian popular culture, compacted

by the wide consumption of Hollywood cinema in Brazil. Whatever high quality of acting was regularly diminished to black buffoonery. At least initially, Grande Otelo's performance was derided by the papers as an imitation of Stepin Fetchit's 'coon' stereotype, allegedly imported through U.S. cinema. Indeed, Grande Otelo himself admitted that he was influenced by Fetchit as one of the few black men on screen in the early 1930s.⁷⁶ Both Stepin Fetchit and Grande Otelo carried the stigma of the first black male actors to hit the bigtime, their reputations sullied in the press from scandals of extravagance, alcohol abuse, and sexual affairs. This led both to eventually feel rejected, in particular, by their respective country's black movements that accused them of reciting and putting into embodied form racial myths stemming from slavery. These actors and the stereotypes they played, however, became beloved by audiences in the U.S. and Brazil alike, undoubtedly through their interracial partnerships with white male actors. More so, however, their gestures and antics tapped into a collective nostalgia, a *saudade* for what was thought to be the authentically submissive carnivalesque performances of the enslaved. Freyre himself briefly mentions these traveling silhouettes: "Many a Brazilian child must have had as their first hero not a white doctor, naval officer, or lawyer, but a slave acrobat that they saw executing difficult pirouettes in the circuses and *bumba meu bois* on the plantation; or a black trumpet player or flautist."⁷⁷ This therefore blurs the lines between slavery's pains and its indulgences, and for whom. As blacks were coerced or economically obliged into performing for the pleasure of whites, such a comedy of horrors furthered the dissolution of enslaved subjectivity where, Hartman writes, "fun and frolic become the vehicles of the slave's self-betrayal and survival. ... The body of the slave, dancing and on display, seemingly revealed a comfort with bondage and a natural disposition for servitude."⁷⁸ While Bogle comments that Fetchit judiciously calculated his movements, that there was never "excessive excessiveness," the ways in which his and Grande Otelo's choreographies registered with audiences as those racial "caricatures" Freyre describes in the preface to *Casa-grande & senzala* begs to differ.⁷⁹ While both Fetchit and Grande Otelo may have meticulously thought through the characters they portrayed, they were obliged to comply with their directors—in the case of the chanchadas, all white men—who, in the face of any undesired 'improvisation,' could simply cut the shot out in the editing room.

In a 1951 interview, referring to his stage days at the exclusive Urca Cassino in Rio de Janeiro, Grande Otelo expressed his disdain for the ways directors had, in the past, abused his phenotype. They would tell him "to stick my lips out, to sway my hips, to clown around. It was a hit! From then to now, with great sadness, I keep doing just that. Not art, but easy comedy, based solely on the exploitation of my tiny stature and my color."⁸⁰ Thinking through Frantz Fanon's thesis in *Black Skin, White Masks*, we, and Grande Otelo himself, are forced to reckon with the imago, or unconscious fantasy, of black men as a pressure valve, a purging of sort for white desire. Focusing on cinema, Fanon expresses how it constitutes a medium through which a culture can make its own fantasies come to fruition unlike literature. Yet, for black viewers—and actors, I add—it becomes one of traumatic anticipation where going to the movies, they must wait for how they will be collectively represented on screen while others watch them watching themselves.⁸¹ David Marriott further analyzes Fanon's own articulations of double-consciousness in order to show that the black man is already at war with his imago, which, in turn, also becomes his own self-image. This creates a triple-consciousness of sorts, where the black man not only must, in the Dubosian sense, reckon with his national and racial duality, but the duality within his blackness, that is, the white fantasy of his blackness and the blackness he sees and wishes to protect.⁸² For Grande Otelo, ideologies like racial democracy further isolate his male-gendered blackness outside

of the miscegenation narrative that fashions the Brazilian nation, thus, throwing him and his characters into even deeper of a psychological crisis.

In *A Dupla do Barulho*, Grande Otelo's Tião discovers that Sílvia is in love with the oblivious Tonico. Already frustrated with his subservient role as Tonico's sidekick, he shows up 15 minutes late and drunk to their big show's premiere. Oscarito's Tonico comically plays a violin to entertain the crowd while the crew attempts to sober Tião up before his call. Tião argues with Ricardo, heard over the violin and Tonico, who stops to listen at certain points. Ricardo yells, "You're worthless!" "I'm worthless?" Tião asks. The manager yells, "What are you thinking, you *moleque*!?" grabbing Tião by the lapels. Tião, flustered and eyes wet, beats Ricardo's hands from his jacket and hollers, "What do I think? ... That I'm tired of being exploited. Because I'm not here anymore to be anyone's *escada*. I'm tired of this duo! Tonico and Tião. Always Tonico and Tião." He grabs Ricardo's lapels, shaking him, "Why not Tião and Tonico?!" as he lets him go and throws his head into his hands. Tonico finishes the act and comes backstage to join Ricardo, Sílvia, and her black assistant Maria surrounding Tião who is crouched behind a bannister sobbing. He defiantly says, "I don't need anybody," turning to see Tonico now looking at him. Tião leaves the theater in tears.

This iconic scene likely becomes the crux to why *A Dupla do Barulho* was at once seen as an anomaly, panned by several critics and applauded by others. A "dramatic comedy," it gives room for "Oscarito and Grande Otelo to perhaps do their best performances yet," reads one newspaper prior to the film's premiere.⁸³ Another article called it a "philosophical film" that "will make you laugh ... and sometimes get emotional."⁸⁴ However, in his "Cine Diário" column, film critic Pedro Lima wrote that "before we entered to see the movie, there was nobody that was not trying to dissuade us from seeing it" because "in truth, [it] doesn't please you. It doesn't make you laugh like the other Atlântida "chanchadas" that were always addressed to a certain public with a lesser refined taste."⁸⁵ In the scene, the weight of representation and unrequited devotion in Tião's career and personal life converge on his psyche. The singularity of his blackness, slightly offset by the doting Maria who secretly loves him, played by Mara Abrantes, erodes away at the complexity of everyday black experience off-screen. As Ricardo condemns Grande Otelo for his audacity, his insult of *moleque* taps into the moral and sexual debasement of enslaved black boys described by Freyre. Without explicitly deriding Tião for his blackness, the insinuation of his race's aberrant nature contained within the pejorative prove foundational to the whiteness of Ricardo and, by proxy, Tonico. What's more, the lack of racial markers explicitly articulated in this argument—although implied through the lexicon inherited from the institution of slavery in Brazil—make it so the issue here around Tonico's privilege over that of Tião's does not so much appear to be about racial difference as it does about Tião's vices and lack of morality. Therefore, even though Tião and, at a deeper level, Grande Otelo come to represent not just *a* but, rather, *the moleque* of Brazilian cinema, almost single-handedly representing blackness on-screen in this era, the discourse of racial democracy is maintained intact. Nicole Fleetwood reflects on the performativity of black visibility whereby such singularity, like that of Grande Otelo as well as Tião, "functions as abstraction, as decontextualized evidence of a historical narrative that is constrained by normative public discourse."⁸⁶ In the chanchadas' semblance of self-removal from Brazilian history, the influx of Freyre's work that soon became "normative public discourse" and its relative disavowal of black men's involvement in the nation decontextualized Grande Otelo's blackness through a gestural re-inscription of his alterity on-screen.

With roles like Tião, among others, the chanchadas potentially emboldened Grande Otelo to seek redress for previously damning representations of blackness during and immediately after

slavery. In the first shot of another chanchada, *...E o mundo se diverte* (...And the World Has Fun, 1948), Grande Otelo plays a receptionist backstage at a theater where the telephone rings and he answers to, ostensibly, a woman asking to speak with his boss. He begins to flirt while the conversation leads us to imagine that, at the other end of the line, she asks him what he looks like. He responds, “Sharp nose... thin lips. What? *Moreno*?^{ix} Nooo, ma’am. I... am, like, closer... to blonde.” But he quickly hangs up the phone as his boss enters the room.⁸⁷ While Oscarito regularly dresses in drag for a gag, Grande Otelo magnifies slapstick in bending both gender and race with spoofs as white(ned) women in *Carnaval no Fogo* (1950), *Barnabé, Tu És Meu* (1952), and *A Dupla do Barulho* (1953)—or a white man over the phone in *...E o mundo se diverte*. Thinking through Jack Halberstam’s work, however, the comedy of Otelo’s utter failure as a white female or male impersonator provides “alternative ways of knowing and being that are not unduly optimistic, ... nor are they mired in nihilistic critical dead ends” in critiquing “the repetitiveness and unimaginativeness of heteronormativity.”⁸⁸ For Halberstam, failure is not as simple as falling short of expectations, especially for Grande Otelo in his search for cinematic place vis-à-vis Freyre’s often contradictory racial democracy. It is a praxis in which “alternatives are embedded already in the dominant and that power is never total or consistent; indeed failure can exploit the unpredictability of ideology and its indeterminate qualities.”⁸⁹ To *crossdress* race and/or gender as a mode of *redress*, even in its entertaining malfunctions—or to leave the stage altogether like Tião in *A Dupla do Barulho*—exposes the racial-sexual undertones of excess and audience expectation in the face of Grande Otelo’s on-screen black singularity. Upon Tião’s amazing recovery and reprise to the stage, and the ovation he receives, led by a wistful Tonico sitting in the audience, he remarks, “I believe I am living one of the greatest moments of my life. Nevertheless,” he hesitates, “I want to ask just one thing: I need a particular someone to share with me this moment, that person to whom I owe my entire career. Nothing fairer as I take advantage of this opportunity to call to the stage my long-time partner, Tonico.” With the camera cutting between their two tear-filled faces, Tião re-centers superlative whiteness as a peace offering, the slave quarters’ indebtedness to the big house. Tião’s sense of obligation to whiteness at once allows Tonico to re-take the stage and lead them in their final act while giving the appearance that they are made equal as the camera zooms out from their curtain call bows to an applauding audience in the film’s final shot. As Saidiya Hartman theorizes the “inadequacy of redress” through the repetitive performance of racial-sexual signifiers, Grande Otelo’s transgressive use of his body more so “highlights the way in which pleasure or the counterinvestment in the body at stake here serves as a limited figure of social transformation.”⁹⁰ Through such repetitive recitation, then, the racial tropes that have come to shape Brazilian history in turn mark Grande Otelo’s legacy as always already dialectically bound to whiteness and its preservation.

The Legacy of the Chanchada and Other Cinematic Gestures

While not particularly popular, perhaps due to its challenge of the chanchada framework, Carlos Manga’s *A Dupla do Barulho* fossilized the legacy of Oscarito and Grande Otelo as an

^{ix} Well since the early twentieth century, *moreno*—brown-skinned—has been a catch-all term for anyone of noticeable African descent that seeks to distance their blackness from their Brazilianness. While it was often deemed a more socially acceptable way of identifying someone as black, variations in tone and context can assign to it pejorative connotations. Subscribing to Freyrian racial democracy ideology, this term has, in the past 30 years, received a more consistent questioning by black activists in Brazil and throughout Latin America who condemn it as linguistic whitewashing with aversive sociopolitical effects on black consciousness and racial equality.

interracial comedy duo beloved by the Brazilian public. After the film's petering out at national cinemas, they would come to be known and regularly referred to by the press in subsequent articles and film advertisements as the "Dupla do Barulho." The pair developed and remained the cinematic embodiment resultant of Freyre's "equilibrium of antagonisms" in the Brazilian archive of slavery: the on-screen racial democracy everyone, including Getúlio Vargas, wished to see. However, while the prodigal Tião doubles back to the stage and decides to submit to Tonico's lead, therein exists what Hartman calls "an enchanting reciprocity," or, "the state of domination as an ideal of care, duty, familial obligation, gratitude and humanity" between master and slave.⁹¹ In *Barnabé, Tu És Meu*, Abdula's duty to uphold tradition functions on the basis of a paternalistic exchange of service for care.



Figure 5: The legacy of the "Dupla do Barulho"—the "Terrible Twosome"—in one of La Selva press' most popular children's comic book series, "Oscarito and Grande Otelo." From left to right, covers for issues 4, 8, 13, and 18 designed by Jayme Cortez from between 1957 and 1959, three years after the comedy duo's last film together, *Matar ou Correr* (1954).

In the late 1950s, some years after Oscarito and Grande Otelo parted ways, La Selva, a popular comic book press, continued to market them as the Dupla do Barulho and their silly adventures as two friends who lived together, went together to the movies, the park, and the zoo, ate together and, maybe, slept together. Appearing as babies, children, and grown men, the cover art by Jayme Cortez for these children's comic books thrives on adult innuendos as the basis of racial democracy, but now in vivid color (Figure 5). Oscarito regularly touches Grande Otelo in the artwork, holding his hand on issue 4's cover, and, on issue 13's, smacking the back of his head while grinning from behind a pacifier. While Grande Otelo averts his gaze elsewhere, ostensibly due to other distractions, Oscarito's direct eye contact with the reader breaks down the fourth wall, insinuating not only the connection established through whiteness and its aspirations but a shared pleasure in Grande Otelo's continued role as *escada*. As Oscarito's eyes flirt with the reader's, Grande Otelo is interpolated only by others on the page; besides Oscarito, a caged ape seemingly in love with him and his bananas in issue 8 and, in issue 13, a brown-skinned maid sharing a furtive gaze as she washes the windows. In each of these covers, Grande Otelo clutches a phallic object that he licks, eats, sucks, or squirts: a lollipop, bananas, a baby bottle, and a water hose. Rife with queer insinuations, these comics destined for the eyes of children reproduce racial democracy whereby perversion and prurience à la Freyre become not distractions but the central productive trappings of idealized nation-making. For Freyre, such "irregular unions"—referring to well-off white men with black and mixed-race women—allowed for power and wealth to trickle down even

to, at times, illegitimate children through sex as one of the “decisive advantages for the development of Brazilian society on democratic lines.”⁹² Nonetheless, while the discourse of racial democracy heavily influenced the chanchadas, their legacy implicates the medium’s own stretching of the reproduction of quintessentially Brazilian subjectivities, especially through gestural interventions.



Figure 6: The triangulation of the “mulata” in the movie poster for *Barnabé, Tu És Meu* featuring, from left to right, Grande Otelô, Oscarito, and Fada Santoro.⁹³

One particularly powerful gesture in the chanchadas featuring Oscarito and Grande Otelô was the triangulation of the *mulata*, or mulatta in English, between them. Generally played by white actresses like Eliana, Marion, and, in *Barnabé, Tu És Meu* and *A Dupla do Barulho*, Fada Santoro and Edith Morel, respectively, the trope pulled heavily from the film industry’s well-established tradition of white women’s Africanization made common practice by Carmen Miranda. While Miranda’s tutti-frutti talent caught the eyes of Broadway director Lee Schubert and, soon thereafter, film studios like 20th Century Fox thus keeping her in the U.S. until her sudden death in 1955, Cinédia and Atlântida both sought to reconstitute the mulata as a powerful conduit for Afro-Brazilian rhythms and carnival culture in their musical numbers. While most writing on the chanchadas recognizes this to be true—and quite successful—the films closely analyzed here provide evidence wherein Oscarito and Grande Otelô’s partnership gives metaphorical birth to the mulata as flesh-hewn synecdoche for racial democracy. While the duo’s interracial bonding frames the basis for the elimination of Brazilian racism, if not race altogether, the mulata only exists in their shared desire for her whitened subjectivity and, hence, for each other. Queer feminist theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick conceives this heteronormative triangle of homosociality as a means in which men maintain intense bonds with other men and express their desire for each other through their desire for women.⁹⁴ In the movie poster for *Barnabé, Tu És Meu*, both Grande Otelô and Oscarito behold a mulatized Fada Santoro, formulating an ocular triangle that invites the moviegoer into their Orientalized racial democracy. Yet, Oscarito is the only one permitted to touch and caress her despite her angular withdrawal (Figure 6). Returning to Cortez’s comic book covers, now Grande Otelô, excited by the attention of the mulata domestic, gushes his eruptive pleasures onto Oscarito’s stupefied face. Within the discursive construction of a mixed-race female

prototype in Latin America like the mulata, the *mestiça/mestiza*, or the *morena*, there still remains potential for queer gestures within hetero-nationalist cultural essentialisms.⁹⁵

Perhaps the mulata, in her accessible performance for white women as sex symbol in chanchada production, is resultant of Grande Otelo and Oscarito's own gesturing toward queer miscegenation in the age of racial democracy's discursive birth. Calling national yearning for the mulata foundational to Brazil's "amorous lyricism" in *Casa-grande & senzala*,⁹⁶ Freyre, in his next volume, *Sobrados e mucambos* considers the mulata/o to be, according to Alfredo Cesar Melo, "the most finished product of Brazilian miscegenation ... Plastic by excellence, [they] could just as much Frenchify themselves or raise themselves to nobility through education, living in a mansion, as they could Africanize themselves into a pariah, an inhabitant of a shanty."⁹⁷ In Freyre's mind, as it would be in the racial ideology of the authoritarian dictatorship that established itself in 1964 as we will see in the following chapter, the mixed-race subject could serve as an expedient fulcrum between a saudade for a simpler past and a more modern future.

In an interview given to the Rio de Janeiro Museum of Image and Sound in 1968, Oscarito commented on the chanchadas saying, "We gave the public what the public wanted... The public wanted more or less those gestures that I would do while, at the same time, they never really laughed at what I said..."⁹⁸ Grande Otelo added in 1985, stating, "Up until that time, there was a legend that the Brazilian way of speaking was not made for film dialogue. Truly, the pretenses of the 'serious films' were so dull, so abominable, that the dialogue was unbearable. The public violently rejected it, and it was the chanchada that gave that sort of popular fluency and made a direct connection with the public."⁹⁹ Even in their own views, it is through the interracial comedy duo's gestures, both literal and symbolic, that the nation came to see itself on the silver screen. While *A Dupla do Barulho* was the film closest to Grande Otelo's lived experience as constant supporting actor who struggled with fame and alcoholism, the film's flop at the box offices itself became a gesture in the nation's anxiety toward black men and women articulating their own struggle on-screen. Through acts of inclusion of the subaltern, outwardly perceived as benevolent, Gilberto Freyre, Getúlio Vargas, and the Atlântida studio, in particular, reconstituted the *casa-grande* of whiteness and its muzzles as the epicenter of Brazilian cultural production. These histories of race and sex in the chanchadas were, thus, so captivatingly choreographed that they might appear to be merely an illusion.

Freyre's most notable works like *Casa-grande & senzala* and *Sobrados e mucambos* were published well before Grande Otelo and Oscarito became household names in the late 1940s. However, re-reading Freyre through the popular culture produced around the same time shows how his ideologies and their illustrative lyricism became embedded into the national ethos, particularly in comedy film. While some scholars of Brazilian cinema like Robert Stam and Luis Felipe Kojima Hirano have recognized Oscarito and Grande Otelo's synonymy with the chanchadas and explored the question of race therein, reading for the explicit and implicit enactment of sexuality and desire helps to show how race gets made here. Oscarito and Grande Otelo's on-screen escapades provide us with a clear and queer language to re-read Freyre and the pleasures he took in his own postulations of how Brazil came to racially and sexually be. While Freyre's *Casa-grande & senzala*, especially, argued the foundation of Brazilian miscegenation to be based in an egalitarian and pleasure-driven sadomasochism between the races, the chanchadas starring Grande Otelo and Oscarito project these same slapstick interracial relations onto the modern nation. A deeper examination of these colonial gestures, however, exposes that race- and nation-making in Brazil are not always contingent upon narratives of reproduction between white

men and women of color. In fact, the queerness inscribed into same-sex sociality across races proves all the more instructive to the national project.

¹ Gilberto Freyre, *Casa-grande & senzala* (São Paulo: Global, 2003 [1933]), 31, quoted text in original English, original emphasis.

² “Grande Otelo oral history interview conducted by Sylvia Regina Bahiense Naves, São Paulo, 1976-07-13,” from the Museu da Imagem e do Som - São Paulo, *Coleção Luzes Câmera*, compact disc (accessed October 24, 2018).

³ *Aviso aos navegantes*, directed by Watson Macedo (1951; Rio de Janeiro: Atlântida Cinematográfica).

⁴ Freyre, *Casa-grande & senzala*.

⁵ W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Dover, 1994 [1903]), v.

⁶ Freyre, *Casa-grande & senzala*, 31.

⁷ Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, trans. J. A. Underwood (New York: Penguin, 2008 [1935]).

⁸ William Solomon, *Slapstick Modernism: Chaplin to Kerouac to Iggy Pop* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2016).

⁹ Nilo Couret, *Mock Classicism: Latin American Film Comedy, 1930-1960* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018).

¹⁰ “Grande Otelo Reaparece Num Filme Carnavelsco da Atlântida,” *Diário Carioca* (Rio de Janeiro), Feb. 15, 1952, 7.

¹¹ Nancy Leys Stepan, *“The Hour of Eugenics”: Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 167-169.

¹² Thomas E. Skidmore, *Black into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993 [1974]), 188.

¹³ Paulina L. Alberto, *Terms of Inclusion: Black Intellectuals in Twentieth-Century Brazil* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 178-179.

¹⁴ Zita Nunes, *Cannibal Democracy: Race and Representation in the Americas* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 82-85.

¹⁵ Freyre, *Casa-grande & senzala*, 113, original emphasis.

¹⁶ Helena Bocayuva, *Erotismo à brasileira: o excess sexual na obra de Gilberto Freyre* (Rio de Janeiro: Garamond, 2001), 27-29.

¹⁷ Gilberto Freyre, “Como e porque escrevi *Casa-grande & senzala*,” in *Casa Grande & Senzala*, eds. Guillermo Giucci, Enrique Rodríguez Larreta, and Edson Nery da Fonseca (São Paulo: ALLCA XX, 2002 [1968]), 701-721.

¹⁸ Lamonte Aidoo, *Slavery Unseen: Sex, Power, and Violence in Brazilian History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018); Alexandre Almeida Marcussi, “Mestiçagem e perversão sexual em Gilberto Freyre e Arthur de Gobineau,” *Estudos Históricos* 26, no. 52 (2013): 284.

¹⁹ Freyre, “Como e porque...”, 705.

²⁰ Aidoo, *Slavery Unseen*, 28.

²¹ Ariane Cruz, *The Color of Kink: Black Women, BDSM, and Pornography* (New York: New York University Press, 2016).

²² *Ibid*, 3.

²³ Hortense Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book,” *Diacritics* 17, no. 12 (1987): 67.

²⁴ Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 21.

²⁵ Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 2.

²⁶ Aidoo, *Slavery Unseen*.

²⁷ Maite Conde, *Foundational Films: Early Cinema and Modernity in Brazil* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018), 62.

²⁸ Conde, *Foundational Films*, 71; Robert Stam, *Tropical Multiculturalism: A Comparative History of Race in Brazilian Cinema & Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997).

²⁹ Conde, *Foundational Films*, 71.

³⁰ Lisa Shaw, “Vargas on Film: From the Newsreel to the *chanchada*,” in *Vargas and Brazil: New Perspectives*, ed. Jens R. Hentschke (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 208.

³¹ Getúlio Vargas, “O cinema nacional: element de aproximação dos habitantes do país” in *A nova política do Brasil*, vol. 3 (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, n.d.) *apud* Shaw, “Vargas on Film,” 208.

- ³² Mônica Rugai Bastos, *Tristezas não pagam Dívidas: cinema e política nos anos da Atlântida* (São Paulo: Olho d'Água, 2001).
- ³³ Shaw, "Vargas on Film," 212-214.
- ³⁴ *90 Anos de Cinema: Uma Aventura Brasileira*, directed by Eduardo Escorel and Roberto Feith (Rio de Janeiro: Embrafilme, 1988).
- ³⁵ Stam, *Tropical Multiculturalism*, 83.
- ³⁶ Couret, *Mock Classicism*, 159.
- ³⁷ <https://www.cineplayers.com/filmes/carnaval-no-fogo>
- ³⁸ Cruz, *The Color of Kink*.
- ³⁹ Christen A. Smith, *Afro-Paradise: Blackness, Violence, and Performance in Brazil* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016).
- ⁴⁰ *Carnaval no Fogo*, directed by Watson Macedo (1949; Rio de Janeiro: Atlântida Cinematográfica).
- ⁴¹ Stam, *Tropical Multiculturalism*, 101.
- ⁴² "Grande Otelo oral history interview conducted by Sylvia Regina Bahiense Naves, São Paulo, 1976-07-13."
- ⁴³ Couret, *Mock Classicism*, 155.
- ⁴⁴ "Grande Otelo oral history interview conducted by Sylvia Regina Bahiense Naves, São Paulo, 1976-07-13."
- ⁴⁵ Bastos, *Tristezas não pagam Dívidas*, 80.
- ⁴⁶ Luis Felipe Kojima Hirano, "O imaginário da branquitude à luz da trajetória de Grande Otelo: Raça, *persona* e estereótipo em sua *performance* artística," *Afro-Ásia* 48 (2013): 98.
- ⁴⁷ "Vocês Darão Gostosas Gargalhadas," *Jornal do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro), Jan. 31, 1952, 8.
- ⁴⁸ "Barnabé Tu És Meu" Vai Ser o Maior!" *Revista do Diário Carioca* (Rio de Janeiro), Feb. 3, 1952, 10.
- ⁴⁹ *Barnabé, Tu És Meu*, directed by José Carlos Burle (1952; Rio de Janeiro: Atlântida Cinematográfica).
- ⁵⁰ Marcussi, "Mestiçagem e perversão sexual," 278.
- ⁵¹ Bocayuva, *Erotismo à brasileira*, 21.
- ⁵² Freyre, *Casa-grande & senzala*, 273.
- ⁵³ Alfredo Cesar Melo, "Os mundos misturados de Gilberto Freyre," *Luso-Brazilian Review* 43, no. 2 (2006): 29.
- ⁵⁴ Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (New York: Vintage, 1992), 36-37.
- ⁵⁵ Freyre, *Casa-grande & senzala*, 70, 168-169.
- ⁵⁶ Cruz, *The Color of Kink*, 217.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 218.
- ⁵⁸ "Barnabé Tu És Meu" Vai Ser o Maior!", 11.
- ⁵⁹ Freyre, *Casa-grande & senzala*, 298-299.
- ⁶⁰ Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 53.
- ⁶¹ Aidoo, *Slavery Unseen*, 57.
- ⁶² *Ibid*, 95.
- ⁶³ Freyre, *Casa-grande & senzala*, 399.
- ⁶⁴ Isfahani-Hammond, *White Negritude*, 150.
- ⁶⁵ Freyre, "Como e porque...", 713.
- ⁶⁶ Ianna Hawkins Owen, "Still, Nothing: Mammy and Black Asexual Possibility," *Feminist Review* 120, no. 1 (2018): 74.
- ⁶⁷ "Barnabé Tu És Meu" Vai Ser o Maior!", 10.
- ⁶⁸ Owen, "Still Nothing," 76.
- ⁶⁹ Guilherme Scarpa, "Troféu do Prêmio de Cinema Brasileiro homenageia centenário de Grande Otelo," *O Globo* (Rio de Janeiro), Jul. 28, 2015, <https://blogs.oglobo.globo.com/gente-boa/post/trofeu-do-premio-de-cinema-brasileiro-homenageia-centenario-de-grande-otelo.html>; "Estatueta Grande Otelo," https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grande_Pr%C3%AAmio_do_Cinema_Brasileiro#/media/Ficheiro:Premio_grande_otelo.jpg.
- ⁷⁰ Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, & Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films*, 4th ed. (New York: Continuum, 2001), 271-272.
- ⁷¹ bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End, 1992), 26.
- ⁷² Stam, *Tropical Multiculturalism*, 103.
- ⁷³ *A Dupla do Barulho*, directed by Carlos Manga (1953; Rio de Janeiro: Atlântida Cinematográfica).
- ⁷⁴ Aidoo, *Slavery Unseen*, 167-168.
- ⁷⁵ "Grande Otelo oral history interview, Rio de Janeiro, 1985-10-24," from the Museu da Imagem e do Som - Rio de Janeiro, *Coleção Depoimentos para Posteridade*, compact disc (accessed October 31, 2018).
- ⁷⁶ Sérgio Cabral, *Grande Otelo: Uma biografia* (São Paulo: Editora 34, 2007), 75.

-
- ⁷⁷ Freyre, *Casa-grande & senzala*, 505.
- ⁷⁸ Ibid, 37.
- ⁷⁹ Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, & Bucks*, 41.
- ⁸⁰ *Seminário Radar*, April 20, 1951 *apud* Hirano, “O imaginário da branquitude...”, 102.
- ⁸¹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008 [1953]), 119.
- ⁸² David Marriott, *On Black Men* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 67-70.
- ⁸³ ““A Dupla do Barulho” não é apenas um filme cômico!”, *Diário da Noite* (Rio de Janeiro), Jun. 24, 1953, 9.
- ⁸⁴ “Ficção e realidade, misturam-se em “Dupla do Barulho,”” *Correio Paulistano* (São Paulo), Jul. 18, 1953, 14.
- ⁸⁵ Pedro Lima, “Cine Diário: A Dupla do Barulho,” *Diário da Noite* (Rio de Janeiro), Aug. 18, 1953, 6.
- ⁸⁶ Nicole R. Fleetwood, *Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality, and Blackness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 10.
- ⁸⁷ *...E o mundo se diverte*, directed by Watson Macedo (1948; Rio de Janeiro: Atlântida Cinematográfica).
- ⁸⁸ Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 24, 110.
- ⁸⁹ Ibid, 88.
- ⁹⁰ Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 76.
- ⁹¹ Ibid, 53.
- ⁹² Freyre, *Casa-grande & senzala*, 535.
- ⁹³ Promotional poster for *Barnabé, Tu És Meu*, Atlântida Cinematográfica, from the Cinemateca Brasileira.
- ⁹⁴ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015 [1985]).
- ⁹⁵ Juana María Rodríguez, *Sexual Futures, Queer Gestures, and Other Latina Longings* (New York: New York University Press, 2014).
- ⁹⁶ Freyre, *Casa-grande & senzala*, 72.
- ⁹⁷ Melo, “Os mundos misturados de Gilberto Freyre,” 30.
- ⁹⁸ “Oscarito oral history interview, Rio de Janeiro, 1968-06-11,” from the Museu da Imagem e do Som - Rio de Janeiro, *Coleção Depoimentos para Posteridade*.
- ⁹⁹ “Grande Otelo oral history interview, Rio de Janeiro, 1985-10-24.”

Chapter 3

The Drag of Mestiça Nationalism: Performing Africanity in the Samba of Clara Nunes

*Dentro do samba eu nasci,
Me criei, me converti
E ninguém vai tombar a minha bandeira.*

In samba, I was born,
I was raised, I was converted
And nobody is going to topple my flag.

- Clara Nunes, "Guerreira," 1978¹

As one of the prominent thinkers of the Négritude movement in the mid-twentieth century, Senegalese poet Senegal Léopold Senghor asserted Africanity (*Africanité*) as an ontology of blackness, as a shared racial essence and experience inherent to all Afrodescendants across the diaspora.² In 1964, at the beginning of the military dictatorship in Brazil that lasted until 1985, Senghor, then-President of Senegal, traveled to Brazil for diplomatic talks on the growing refugee crisis caused by Lusophone African colonies' wars for independence from Portugal. Seeking a cutting of ties between the authoritarian regimes of Brazil and Portugal in support of pan-African freedom, Senghor invoked Francophone Africa's shared Latinness (*Latinité*) with Brazil, both having been colonized by 'Latin' countries, that is, France and Portugal, respectively. However, as Jerry Dávila shows, Senghor emphasized that Brazil's and Senegal's shared experience of colonization was foundationally circumscribed in the history and continued transnational cultural ties of the African diaspora.³ While the Brazilian state under dictator Getúlio Vargas in the 1930s and 40s began to recognize the centrality of folkloric blackness to the nation's past and its culture, Senghor's visit and his invocation of Brazil as an extension of the African continent serves as an emblematic example of how the junta in the 1960s and 70s would come to simultaneously institutionalize the rhetoric of racial democracy while seeking stronger ties with African nations. The dictatorship demanded that citizens see themselves as the perfect amalgamation of the European, African, and Native races transformed through biological and cultural miscegenation into one national Brazilian race while still clearly privileging whiteness in government, civil society, and culture. In turn, the state not only regulated but also favored cultural production that continued to proffer these nostalgic, revisionist myths, especially in popular music with singers like Clara Nunes.

At the end of the 1960s, Clara Nunes (1942-1983) took her first steps into the world of samba after recording three albums of romantic boleros that failed to garner her acclaim. While Nunes sought a sound more authentic to Brazil, she converted to the religion of Umbanda that mixes Spiritist, Catholic, and Native Brazilian beliefs with, most prominently, African Ifá faith practices. The very roots of samba are founded in the rhythms of Afro-Brazilian religions like Candomblé and Umbanda, and the lived experience of slavery and the favelas of Rio de Janeiro in the wake of abolition at the end of the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, since its first recording in the mid-1910s, the genre's metamorphosis over time has been heavily shaped by the state and, predominantly, white musicians, radio engineers, and record label executives.⁴ The sonic blackness of everyday life in samba became filtered through white mediation as an unchanging, ahistorical black aesthetic. Nunes tapped into this discourse of musical authenticity by singing about and presenting herself through Africanity. Such a shift allowed Nunes to refashion herself

in the eyes of the public. Not only in her sound but also her outward image, she straddled Brazil's complicated racial spectrum at a time of incredible social repression brought on by the military dictatorship. Moreover, this early career move permitted her, although with some difficulties, to later branch out beyond samba into regional musical genres mostly from the predominantly black Northeast to call herself a singer of *música popular brasileira*, or MPB. After her initial struggles to successfully enter the music market, Nunes would become one of the most powerful female voices in samba and MPB. Regularly topping the charts from the mid-1970s on, she was the first Brazilian woman to sell over 100,000 records, with approximately 4.4 million records sold during her short national career from 1966 until her death in 1983.⁵

Beyond her music, Clara Nunes is most widely remembered for her iconic appearance in the five years before her early death from anaphylactic shock during a minor surgical procedure to remove varicose veins. Her audiovisual aesthetic was informed by her own Afro-Brazilian religious practices, frequently wearing off-the-shoulder, ankle-length white flare dresses, adorning herself in bangles of silver and gold, several *guias* and *balagandãs*ⁱ, with bright red lipstick and bronzer. Preferring to wear white as mandated by her faith, she would often only perform in a different color as it corresponded to the day of the week belonging to a particular *orixá*, or Afro-diasporic spiritual deity.⁶ In the final years of her career, she became most known for her auburn-dyed hair that fanned outward in undulating kinks resultant of a chemical perm and, at times, topped by a crown of flowers or an *adê*ⁱⁱ made of seashells. Embodying *mestiçagem* within her oeuvre and her white or light-skinned body that performed mixed race-ness circumscribed by Africanity, Clara became regarded by the press and the broader public as a quintessentially Brazilian singer.⁷ Nunes' identity as a *mestiça*—in Brazil, a woman of an ambiguous mixture of European, African, and indigenous heritage—was by no means fixed fact. Rather, as Stuart Hall points out regarding cultural identity, especially within the context of hybridity, it was a “production, which [was] never complete, always in process, and always within, not outside, representation.”⁸ Using her music to re-tell Brazilian history without an attention to time, she pulled from Afro-diasporic cultural frameworks in often essentialist ways. Nunes used national longings, or *saudades*, characterized by the desires of whiteness to give her romanticized iteration of *mestiçagem* an authenticity that was rarely, if ever, challenged. Further, Nunes managed to shape *mestiçagem* into an extension of the African diaspora, proudly marking Brazil as an African nation through her gestures to folklore. Although her racial identification remains up for debate, Clara Nunes came to be seen as a Brazilian of pure breed because of the mixed-race roots of her performance and body, thus, begging an analysis of embodiment, of embodied desires, national affects and their legacies in popular culture.

Unlike previous research done on Clara Nunes, I read her performances and legacy through a queer lens in order to attend to and put up for debate the multidirectional desires, coded references, and subjugated knowledges that continue to surround her. A queer reading may better ascertain to the racial pleasures achieved during her career and, for others, since her early death in

ⁱ *Guias*, or *contas*, are beaded necklaces with deep significance in the Afro-Brazilian religions of Candomblé and Umbanda; each *conta* whose color scheme is attributed to a corresponding *orixá* is worn often by those who are initiated—“feito/a” or made—with those *orixás* as spiritual fathers and/or mothers. They are washed and blessed by religious leaders and several can be worn at one time. *Balangandãs* are metal or wooden amulets worn, often around the neck or wrists, that are meant to protect the individual.

ⁱⁱ An *adê* is a crown worn by those in trance under an *orixá*, often adorned with cowrie shells, beads, copper, and straw. An *adê* of seashells is most frequently attributed to Iemanjá, the *orixá* of the sea who is often syncretized in Catholicism with the Virgin Mary.

1983 within the heteropatriarchal utopian ideal of racial democracy that Nunes performed. Despite my own desire to describe Nunes as white, especially informed by my own consciousness of Brazil's recent reckoning to more clearly name and call out whiteness, I instead find her ambiguity—racial, religious, and regional—rich for analysis. In an interview with the nationally syndicated newspaper *Jornal do Brasil* about her 1981 show *Clara Mestiça*, the singer described her ethnic background in spite of her white skin and her kinky permed hair: “I’m the granddaughter of a Portuguese man by way of my father. And on my mother’s side, I have black and Indian blood. So much so that I have relatives with green eyes. And then, all of a sudden, others have hair just like mine (she laughs, bobbing her head).”⁹ The singer’s very name and its almost readymade racial associations to whiteness or the ability to pass as white, further exposes the ironies of these deliberate racial assemblages. As an adjective in Portuguese, *clara* means “light” or “clear” as in color or hue, here changed to accommodate a woman’s gender. That lightness found flesh in Clara Nunes as an improvement on blackness and Afro-Brazilian culture denotes a predisposed desirability for whiteness by the Brazilian nation and, at the time, the dictatorship that regularly marketed itself to the rest of the world through sexualized representations of mixed-race women, in particular, the *mulata*.¹⁰ For these purposes, my own categorizations of Nunes will often oscillate between whiteness and mixed race-ness—as a *mestiça*, *mulata*, *morena*, and sometimes *baiana*—while closely analyzing her manufactured racial performances and the desires they elicit.

Clara Nunes’ transition into samba tapped into the cultural nationalism of the military dictatorship that spanned her career. Having won several competitions at music festivals early on, the white ingénue with long, flowing brown hair initially tried to make it singing bolero and the Jovem Guarda’s *iê-iê-iê* while avoiding the intellectual and highly politicized music of the Tropicália movement.^{11,iii} Demure in genre, politics, and glamour, the album art for Nunes’ first three LPs demonstrate a singer trying to fit in with what was expected of her by her producers at her lifelong record label, Odeon (Figure 1). With her straight, dark brown hair sitting in a 60s-style beehive or streaming over her shoulders, her pallid white skin, long-sleeved blouses, parted, pursed, or open lips and wide-eyed gaze beckon the listener to trust the “adorable” or “loveable” factor of her voice, as suggested by the title of her first album. More concisely, these albums projected chaste white womanhood.¹² However, by 1968, having some minor success with his melodramatic, classical strings-laden samba “Você Passa e Eu Acho Graça” (“You Move On and I Find Grace”) on her second album by the same name, famed samba singer-songwriter Ataulfo Alves helped Clara to convince Odeon to let her test out more samba. In 1969, she recorded “Guerreiro de Oxalá” (“Oxalá’s Warrior”) by Carlos Imperial on her upcoming album *A Beleza Que Canta (The Beauty That Sings, 1969)* and a single by Alves titled “Mandinga” (“Hex”) featuring the root *batuque*^{iv} sound.¹³ Regarded as failures on record store shelves, these initial musical gestures reflected the singer’s own early flirtations with Afro-Brazilian faith systems like

ⁱⁱⁱ The Jovem Guarda, or Young Guard, sought to meld rock n’ roll, à la British invasion’s ‘yeah-yeah-yeah’ (in Portuguese, *iê-iê-iê*), with the cool, stripped down sounds of bossa nova, itself a derivation of samba stemming from the white middle- and upper-class neighborhoods of Rio de Janeiro in the 1950s and 60s. Singers like Roberto Carlos, Erasmo Carlos, Wanderléa, and Vanusa avoided commenting on Brazil’s political situation, much less writing music critical of the dictatorship. On the other hand, Tropicália and its artists like Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil, Nara Leão, Torquato Neto, and Gal Costa saw themselves as a pillar of Brazil’s counter-culture, melding samba with rock, psychedelic pop, and regional sounds like *afoxé*, *frevo*, and *baião* to express dissent through lyrical wordplay, inversion, and satire.

^{iv} *Batuque* is the beating of, usually, conga drums characteristic of samba and Afro-Brazilian religions, itself being the name of iterations of Candomblé and Umbanda in southern Brazil as well as a rhythm and dance stemming from West Central Africa through the slave trade.

Umbanda and Candomblé as much as they foregrounded a drastic shift in her sound and overall self-presentation.



Figure 1: Album covers from Clara Nunes' first three albums, from left to right, *A Voz Adorável de Clara Nunes* (1966), *Você Passa e Eu Acho Graça* (1968), and *A Beleza Que Canta* (1969).¹⁴

By the early 1970s, Clara Nunes draped her audiovisual aesthetic in the symbolism of Afro-Brazilian religions, triggering her transformation into racial ambiguity. Especially after her very public conversion to Umbanda, reported widely in the press, Nunes came to persistently cite her faith in her lyrics, dress, and interviews. Nonetheless, the songstress proved herself a savvy businesswoman and artist in her ability to perceive and successfully fill a void in the national music market by promoting her style as quintessentially Brazilian. Her meticulously detailed performances of Umbanda myths, folklore, and national and regional music genres at home and abroad sought to reinforce the ideals of *mestiçagem*. Doing so marked her often as a mixed-race woman exoticized for her religious practices in the international press but also within Brazil in the face of their criminalization despite their ubiquity and centrality to Brazilian national identity. Such exoticization was fueled by the sexual deviance imputed onto blackness and Afro-Brazilian religions with which her act was deeply entangled. Long regulated and prohibited by the state well up until the mid-1970s, religions like Candomblé and Umbanda served as a space of expression and power especially for black women and queers. The exoticization of Clara Nunes as a light-skinned Brazilian performing Africanity and mixed race-ness, however, is not an isolated phenomenon. While many before and after her have profited off of racialized performance, including of Afro-Brazilian religious myths and folklore, the scope of Nunes' range remains nearly unmatched in its translatability across race, region, and sound. The drastic nature and flamboyance of her changes over her career gave the singer a diva status that, after her early death, made her especially alluring to black women singers and drag queens following in her footsteps.

Clara Nunes' performances asserted an African ethos innate to all Brazilians with increasing camp as her star continued to rise. Her flamboyant renderings of race and gender enact what I am calling *mestiça nationalism*, that is, the aesthetic of seduction necessary to racial democracy's imagined fulfillment through mixture, particularly that of a woman's body. Focusing mostly on Nunes' metamorphosis within the framework of mixed-race womanhood from 1971 to her death in 1983, in this chapter, I conduct a close reading of her song lyrics, album art, music videos, and interviews and appearances in national and international media. With her embodiment of *mestiçagem* and the racial democracy it allegedly spawned, the final section engages the singer's legacy as recited by predominantly black women and queer and trans performers.

Due to the aesthetic choices Nunes made in her life and those who have emulated her since, my analysis of this performance of Brazilian *mestiçagem* is, in part, related to what Micol Seigel describes as ‘nation drag.’ I depart, however, from Seigel’s framework as a tool for U.S. black performers to pass as indiscriminately configured tropical subjects. Instead, through the drag of *mestiça* nationalism, I argue that Clara Nunes, as a non-black woman, wielded folkloric blackness and sexuality integral to Brazilian national identity in order to reinforce beliefs in racial democracy at home and abroad. A queer reading here magnifies the camp of Nunes’ performances of race, gender, and religion as an illusion of and allusion to the Brazilian nation’s possibilities within a single body. While drag is traditionally thought to reinforce yet transgress the gender binary through camp excess, it is through the racialization of this excess as black and its indispensability to a refined *mestiçagem* via Clara Nunes that she is reconciled as a pure Brazilian artist. Fixating on Clara’s exaggerated transfiguration thus allows for such a reading of drag to be carried out despite she never performed as a man or used her characterizations to extract humor. As my own reading of nation drag offered her “tools with which to renegotiate the valence of black popular performance” to the Brazilian public as integral to hers and their identity, her body and voice became an audiovisual billboard for the potential of racial democracy.¹⁵

While not herself identified as lesbian or bisexual, Clara Nunes and her legacy offer an example of queer miscegenation’s possibilities or, perhaps even, its offspring in the flesh. In reading such a beloved figure in the Brazilian vernacular such as Nunes through a queer lens, I am actively nudging a collective reconsideration not only of the singer’s incredible talent and audiovisual aesthetic, but about the racial and sexual undertones of what it means to be, or at least achieve, mixed-race identity through a well-choreographed performance. These stagings are what lead me to find the language of drag, especially of Brazilian national identity, to be so fruitful. In *Bodies That Matter*, Judith Butler defines drag as a “site of certain ambivalence, one that reflects the more general situation of being implicated in the regimes of power by which one is constituted and, hence, of being implicated in the very regimes of power that one opposes.”¹⁶ That is to say, in Clara Nunes’ self-stylings in racial democracy as a nationalist aesthetic, the language of drag provides for the potential to critique structures of oppression like racism, misogyny, and, in her case, discrimination against Afro-Brazilian religions while also risking their reification. A queer framework affords us, then, with a new understanding of the racial-sexual tropes of mixed-race women in Brazilian popular culture as, themselves, inherently queer constructions vis-à-vis heteropatriarchal national frameworks that center whiteness.

My queer reading of Clara Nunes gestures more broadly toward the fallacy of not only Brazilian racial democracy’s distancing from sex and sexuality in everyday discourse but that, when discussed, albeit uncommon, it remains within the bounds of the heterosexual reproduction of a mixed-race subject. Instead, racial democracy as a narrative structure still tinged by Brazil’s whitening campaigns permits whiteness to lay claim to blackness and black popular culture through a language of inheritance by way of cultural or biological *mestiçagem*. This laying of claims reveals how the figure of the mixed-race woman, as emblematic myth and reproducer of the nation, comes to exist through a sensorial economy of desire that associates her, especially the *mulata*, with sexual pleasure and excess. Queerness here thus represents one’s fraught relationship to the bio-cultural reproduction of the nation and its traditions while also leaving room for the mixed-race woman’s resistance against socially constructed taxonomies of her race, gender, and sexuality. However, as pointed out in previous chapters, the asymptotic utopian projects of *mestiçagem* and racial democracy remain incomplete such that biological and cultural miscegenation are more visibly fueled by the asymmetry of racialized power relations in Brazil.

Nadia Ellis' dialectical thesis linking Stuart Hall's black 'diasporic elsewhere' to José Esteban Muñoz's 'queer utopia' guides my thinking here. Ellis, by way of Muñoz, envisions the nonfulfillment of queer utopia as radical possibility for queers of color beyond the limits of race, sexuality, and nation. In the case of Clara Nunes, however, the pleasure of Brazilian *mestiçagem* lies in her flirtations with these limits. Whereby the pleasure of *mestiçagem* lies in the stickiness of its nonfulfillment, the careful curation of Nunes' *mestiça*-ness through genre and her visual appearance potentially expose her authenticity as formulaic and rehearsed. In the space of her work as at once material as it is imagined, she seeks to resolve this suspension, this 'territory of soul' that urgently desires an elsewhere beyond the nation and its spatial and historical strictures, relying on folkloric notions of transatlantic African spirituality for a sensation of diasporic fulfillment.¹⁷ While race and sexuality are constantly made and re-made through these tropes, however, Nunes tapped into the *mulata* figure's stereotyped hypersexuality, reframing it through respectability with her own experiences in Umbanda as a *mestiça*. Using Afro-diasporic spiritual frameworks as a mode of ethno-racial transcendence toward national unity, she would come to refine the *mestiça* into a tangible figure of the nation.

Playing to Precedent: Carmen Miranda and Becoming the Baiana

Born Clara Francisca Gonçalves in 1942 in the rural town of Paraopeba, Minas Gerais, the girl who would become Clara Nunes was the youngest of six children. Before reaching age five, her parents died, leaving her to be raised by her older siblings. From a devout Catholic home, she worked as a child in the Cedro textile mill before moving to the state capital of Belo Horizonte with one of her sisters after her brother killed her ex-boyfriend who had been bragging around town to have allegedly taken Clara's virginity. Fleeing family crisis and rumors of her deflowering, she worked in Belo Horizonte as a weaver for another textile factory whose garments she often modeled quite successfully. In the city, she began to attend Kardecian Spiritist meetings with her sister while, on her days off, she attained some initial success regularly singing on local radio. With some newfound connections from her entrée in local Mineira^v media and her winning of multiple state-wide song competitions, she moved to Rio de Janeiro in 1965 in pursuit of a national singing career.

By the time Clara Nunes recorded her first samba album in 1971, samba as a musical genre and tool for nation-making had undergone an immense transformation. From a subaltern black^{vi} past in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro to the mixed-race and often predominantly white mainstream on the national stage, samba sustained its own long process of *embranquecimento*. Starting with heavy state regulation in the early twentieth century, lawmakers and the elite derided samba as too black and socially risqué due to its associations with licentious behavior, drunken debauchery, and Afro-Brazilian religions like Candomblé and, later, Umbanda. Despite its earlier prohibitions, dictator Getúlio Vargas saw samba's potential with its humble and black origins to transform Carioca^{vii} popular culture into a national Brazilian sound across class and racial barriers now centralized in the nation's capital of Rio de Janeiro.¹⁸ The Vargas regime began to coopt and nationalize samba in the 1930s and, by the 1940s and 50s, the genre became mass produced on the

^v Mineiro/a is a demonym that refers to someone or something from the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais.

^{vi} 'Black' here is very capacious in that these peripheral urban spaces encompassed not only *negros* but also *mulatos* and *pardos*, or brown-skinned individuals, often kept to the favelas due to urban development practices of renewal, sanitation, and policing due to the belief that these groups shared a common stain of blackness via African heritage.

^{vii} Carioca is a demonym that refers to someone or something from the city of Rio de Janeiro.

radio. Most notably, in Vargas' legalization of samba—yet continued censorship of certain song lyrics by his Department of Press and Propaganda—he envisioned the genre as a vehicle to create loyal citizens by requiring that songs written for the annual samba school competition during carnival “dramatize historical, didactic, or patriotic themes.”¹⁹ By the 1940s and 50s, radio stations in Rio de Janeiro transmitted samba across Brazil, preferring white stars as they were thought to be more affable to the broader public.²⁰ The few singers of color given access to the airwaves were predominantly mixed-race women, like Dalva de Oliveira, Ângela Maria, and Emilinha Borba, and, prominently, two black women, Elizeth Cardoso and Carmen Costa. Clara Nunes would come to idolize each of them in her youth and later seek to emulate their sound.²¹ No one, however, had a greater effect on samba and its trajectory within Brazil and abroad than the Portuguese-born Brazilian singer, dancer, and actress Carmen Miranda. Her queer legacy and broader influence on Clara Nunes remain immeasurable and, for this, it becomes necessary to dedicate to her substantial attention.

Some years before U.S. audiences would salivate over Carmen Miranda's coquettish tutti-frutti affectation in movies like Busby Berkeley's *The Gang's All Here* (1943), she made a name for herself singing in numerous *chanchadas* and Rio de Janeiro's nightclub scene, most notably the exclusive Cassino da Urca. Her performance of sambista Dorival Caymmi's “O que é que a baiana tem?” (“What is it that the baiana has?”) in the film *Banana-da-terra* (1939) launched what would become her iconic screen image as the baiana. In Rio de Janeiro's revue theatre of the 1890s well into the 1930s, the baiana quickly became a cultural catch-all for highly sexualized performances of mixed-race womanhood on stage often by European and Euro-Brazilian women performers. The baiana was and continues to be based on the *quintandeiras* and *quituteiras*, or enslaved and free black women of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries who sold produce and their homemade foods in the street to earn a living wage. Similar to the U.S. figure of the mammy, literary and visual representations of the baianas from the late 1800s to now continue to imagine them as dark-skinned, fat, asexual, happy women yet with the strength and gruffness of a man. However, a baiana often simultaneously refers to a *mãe-de-santo*, or priestess of Candomblé or Umbanda, these religions being closely tied to the creation of samba and Carnival culture. Meanwhile, white women like Greek soprano Ana Menarezzi, Spanish film star Pepa Ruiz, and Italian-Brazilian actress Margarida Max became famous for their performances as baianas. Their whiteness reconfigured the baiana as mixed-race, ironically transforming her lack of sexual allure into one made excessive by her newfound mulata-ness.²² With nineteenth-century literary representations of the mulata from romantic and naturalist literature beginning to conjoin with stage performances of the baiana, Lisa Shaw shows how the two tropes became synonymous, at least for a time. While these white women wrapped their hair, adorned themselves with hoop earrings, jangling metallic bracelets, layers of *guias*, *balangandãs*, flowing white skirts, and often balanced trays on their head while singing and dancing, they themselves became blackened in the eyes of the Brazilian public and media. In the end, they helped to produce a global image of Brazil where blackness can be universally accessible for performative pleasures.²³ The baiana thus came to constitute the excess of Brazil in color, spirit, and abject gender and sexuality.

In *Banana-da-terra*, Miranda caricatured the baiana for the first time in her film career, however in sensualized, glitzy dress.²⁴ In a metallic skirt and shawl, showing her bare midriff, Miranda appears bedecked in gold necklaces, bangles, and fruit atop her head, albeit less than for what she would be later known (Figure 2). As she enters the second verse asking, “What is it that the baiana has?”, the white male chorus members begin to approach her one at a time singing about and fondling her *guias*, *balangandãs*, skirt, and shawl as an extension of her body. Even the

colonial-style homes of the historic Pelourinho neighborhood of Salvador, Bahia have eyes painted on their windows that gawk at her tightly gyrating hips. What the baiana has to offer, then, is her flesh and the timeless folklore attached to it. By tapping into national desires via the two-dimensional stereotypes inscribed onto her body, Carmen Miranda's whiteness balanced out her sensual, excessive performances of samba—still a very black musical genre at the time. Her charisma combined with Caymmi's well-researched lyrics instantly tied her to Afro-Brazilian folklore, "most notably [the word] *balangandãs*," as Bryan McCann points out. "The term was archaic even in Bahia, and in the rest of the country virtually unknown. Its sudden dissemination throughout Brazil in a popular film set off flurries of scholarly etymological inquiries into its origins and significance," which Clara Nunes would later revive.²⁵ Miranda's whiteness, like several staged baianas and mulatas portrayed by European female performers before her on the revue theatre and cabaret circuit, did not take away from the folklore enacted onscreen. In essence, Miranda mish-mashed the baiana's visual lexicon with the erotic performance of the sexually available mulata. As a Luso-Brazilian woman singing blackness, Miranda would serve as a model for national race mixture in Brazil that still aspired toward whiteness.



Figure 2: Photograph on set from Sonofilmes' *Banana-da-terra* (1939) with Carmen Miranda, center, while the chorus and the houses gaze at her. Courtesy of Museu Carmen Miranda.

Beyond her flashy appearance, Carmen Miranda became known for singing tremendously difficult compositions whose tongue twisters and interval jumps required exact diction and nimble vocal cords. Her musical inflections shaped the audiovisual expressions of samba music on screen while countless white Brazilian women unsuccessfully attempted to emulate her in the *chanchadas* after she left for the U.S. in 1939. Meanwhile, her heavily accented European Portuguese continued to racially mark her as foreign. In conjunction with her wardrobe, half-open smile, heavily made-up face, twirling wrists, and swaying hips, the uncanniness of Miranda's voice readily tapped into this tradition of the myth of both the baiana and the mulata as performed by white women. For Roland Barthes, the essence of the voice is its "grain," that is, "the materiality of the body speaking its mother tongue."²⁶ While Hiram Perez explains how race hides the flesh's secret, "the throat is the secret's flesh. ... If the skin, literally or symbolically, is the most prevalent organ of the raced body, the throat is the secret's organ."²⁷ The throat represents a very queer organ in both Barthes' and Perez's respective constructions which manifest clearly in Miranda's and, later, Nunes' repertoire. The mixed maternity of one's mother tongue at once secret and then

expelled: the black mother of the mulata child—or the black mammy of the white master’s child—that taught her to speak, to sing. Yet, Miranda’s Old-World accent activates the Lusotropicalism described and advocated by Gilberto Freyre. With the subtle reminders in her closed vowels, rolled Rs, and quick aspirations that effectively underscore her linguistic dexterity, her voice becomes an embodied reminder that the Portuguese were the European colonizers thought to be the most versatile and, in all sexual and sadistic senses of the word, loving. At once colonizer and colonized, Miranda’s throat performs a double-speak making her lurid stylizations the blueprint for white Brazilian women’s nation drag.

Such a vocal and visual parody of the baiana and the mulata proved successful overall for Miranda, despite ridicule from the Brazilian press. Her camp performance made her synonymous with the Brazilian carnivalesque, an international icon, and incredibly rich. Her flamboyance in color, sound, and heavy accessorizing fashioned a transracial performance especially popular among predominantly gay white men who reproduced “Miranda’s own appropriation of the baiana, that is, the imitation of an imitation” in drag. James Green states, however, that such queer mimicry “usually end[ed] up erasing the Afro-Brazilian elements in the performance” that had already been diluted by Miranda herself.²⁸ Miranda’s sudden death in 1955 at age 46, however, made her queer capital skyrocket as the (un)closeted nature of her Afro-Brazilian masquerade performance left a cultural vacuum to be filled by impersonators, wannabes, and drag queens especially during the carnival season. As cultural studies scholar and Carmen Miranda biographer Kathryn Bishop-Sanchez points out, particularly in the 1960s when Clara Nunes was entering the national music scene, these “Miranda interpretations on stage and screen, regardless of the sex of the performer, exploded the gender divide, often playing off one another as they cemented a Miranda drag vogue.”²⁹ To tap into the memory of Miranda, queered by her ostentatious theatricality especially in Hollywood film and regular drag impersonations from the time of her death to this day, immediately activates a queer archive founded in racial, gender, and sexual ambiguities.

The Rio de Janeiro newspaper *O Globo* hastily predicted that Brazilian popular music and its nods to black folklore would disappear after Miranda’s early death.³⁰ Meanwhile, with the start of the military dictatorship less than ten years later, the regime sought to institutionalize racial democracy while also silence black dissent. As Paulina Alberto exhaustively shows, after passing Institutional Act Number Five (AI-5) in December 1968 that dissolved the national and state legislatures, suspended judicial review and habeas corpus, and put into place strict censorship laws, the dictatorship carefully chose cultural objects of blackness thought to be non-threatening to include in their menagerie of national folklore. By 1969, the dictatorship’s level of repression grew under General Emílio Garrastazu Médici. Alberto reveals that it was the same year that “the National Security Council declared it an act of ‘leftist subversion,’ aimed at ‘provok[ing] new sources of dissatisfaction against the regime and ... the duly constituted authorities,’ to write or speak about the issue of racial discrimination.”³¹ To speak of racial difference was to be un-Brazilian. However, inscribed in figures like Carmen Miranda and her legacy of camp was what Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham calls a ‘metalanguage of race,’ or a discourse of relationality between race and other social structures like gender, sexuality, and class where the “overdeterminacy” of race obscures or explodes these structures.³² Miranda becomes her own racially queer and queerly racial signifier such that race is not only a social construct but also a semiotic one heavily informed by sex and gender performance in Brazil’s cultural productions. For these purposes, one could argue through the multiple dilutions from actual baiana to Miranda’s baiana to queer impersonations of Miranda’s baiana, the transmogrification of signs makes the slippages between race and culture all the more prominent. While still rife with racial undertones,

per Green's observations, later evocations of Miranda come to be seen not so much as ones of blackness and the racial politics of the mid-twentieth century, but, instead, of the timelessness of Afro-Brazilian folklore to the national project and its queer potentials.

As Clara Nunes failed to gain much national attention, her new management under the popular radio producer Adelzon Alves at the turn of the 1970s directly addressed the cultural vacuum left by Carmen Miranda's passing. In several interviews, Alves remarked that no other female artist had attempted to fill Miranda's shoes by building a career based on Afro-Brazilian cultural expressions. For Clara Nunes to benefit, she would have to refashion herself, figuratively and literally. For that, Alves sought to take advantage of her exposure to the rhythms in Umbanda ritual music and Afro-Brazilian spirituality more broadly.³³ He believed, as quoted in Rachel Bakke,

It had to be a well-planned career and that it had to have as its foundation the Afro-Brazilian image created by Carmen Miranda. I took [Clara] to [the samba composer] Candeia's house but I also took her to the house of Vovó Maria Joana Rezadeira, who was an [Umbanda] priestess at Império Serrano [samba school]. She was an icon. ...Then, her career went in that direction so that she could be carried over to the samba side and already be friends with people connected to Umbanda...³⁴

Nunes began to build her image and sound off of Miranda's legacy as a *baiana*, but under the terms of what would be her own experiences in Umbanda as well as the influence of Alves. Despite Afro-Brazilian religions like Candomblé and Umbanda becoming more mainstream during the 1960s and 70s, especially through white artists' tapping into the diluted folkloric renderings of the *orixás*, it was still rare at the time for an artist to repeatedly declare themselves a practitioner, to experience them as religion and belief rather than merely folklore and art.

Candomblé and Umbanda were officially prohibited until 1974, having been derided as un-Christian and anti-modern devil worship. Those that practiced it were regularly reported and harassed by the police.³⁵ Nonetheless, as Stefania Capone points out, while Candomblé often sought an African purity and, for that, received the brunt of state repression, Umbanda's beginnings from predominantly white Kardecian Spiritist dissidents in the 1920s to a gradual incorporation of indigenous Brazilian and Afro-diasporic beliefs—including the *orixás*—into a spiritual *mestiçagem*, over time, offered it some protection. As the Roman Catholic Church offered a safe haven for the political left during the dictatorship of the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, Umbanda became more legitimized, especially as many in the military were counted among its members.³⁶ Roger Bastide, however, a gay white French anthropologist and practitioner of Candomblé in Bahia, famously described Umbanda in the cities of the Southeast like Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo as “cultural mulattoism” due to transculturation with poor whites who had polluted African belief systems. He derided their “cultural disorganization” or “degeneration,” while praising the resistance of Bahian Candomblé's purely African traditions that, instead, turned whites—like him—into Africans.³⁷ Despite Bastide's critiques, Umbanda, as well as Candomblé, has offered spaces of resistance for disenfranchised black women and queer Brazilians since the nineteenth century. This became even more so the case during the dictatorship with the global rise of black consciousness, women's, and gay and lesbian rights movements and their suppression in Brazil. While these religious spaces had long been derided as dangerously black, matriarchal, and queer, they became the first sites of anthropological studies on homosexuality and black women's

empowerment and leadership in Brazil.^{38,viii} Nunes took it upon herself to represent and, perhaps, rectify Umbanda's place in Brazilian popular culture. With her faith making her popular with queer fans and practitioners of Umbanda and Candomblé, Clara Nunes' incorporation of black spiritual aesthetics and folklore into her repertoire thus echoes calls for a queer reading of her artistry.



Figure 3: Album covers for *Clara Nunes* (1971) and *Clara Clarice Clara* (1972).³⁹

The starkness of the cover for Nunes' 1971 album, *Clara Nunes*, marks the artist's dramatic shift from singing boleros to samba as well as an aesthetic shift, in part, influenced by her conversion to Umbanda (Figure 3). With her somber expression into the viewer-listener's eyes, the album's black-and-white art resembles a mugshot. With her hair cropped short giving her an almost boyish appearance and the photograph's overexposure, the LP marks Nunes' rebirth into the world as a sambista, her re-introduction insinuated also by the label's use of her name for the album's title. Denoting her very public conversion to Umbanda, the album remains not only sonically but visually divergent from her previous works. This becomes even clearer on her 1972 album, *Clara Clarice Clara*, where the singer, now with a red-dyed, wavy perm stands barefoot outside the wrought iron door of a colonial church riddled with half-melted candles as part of an *ebó*, or offering common in both Umbanda and Candomblé. Donning a long white tunic, she stares daringly into the camera, the film's saturation visibly darkening the exposed flesh of her face, hands, and feet. On Nunes' incorporation of Afro-Brazilian spirituality, Adelzon Alves writes in the liner notes to *Clara Nunes*, "She brings her message with songs, sounds, and expressions from Candomblé . . . connected to the economic, religious, and artistic life of Bahia (to its folklore), that play a part in the new audiovisual image that the singer has shown in her shows, television appearances, etc. This image takes advantage of the shapes, colors, sounds, rhythms, etc. and such from Brazilian popular culture."⁴⁰ When this album was released, the northeastern state of Bahia, as Patricia Pinho illustrates, was undergoing a massive cultural campaign of re-Africanization from both state agencies and local black musicians and Candomblé leaders.⁴¹ Since the late nineteenth century, Bahia has served as a somewhat contained, regional symbol of blackness to the rest of Brazil due to its African cultural holdovers in food, religion, music, dress, hairstyles, and lore stemming from the transatlantic slave trade. Similarly to Petra Rivera-Rideau's comments on

^{viii} For more on these studies, see Raimundo Nina Rodrigues, *Os africanos no Brasil* (São Paulo: Cia. Ed. Nacional, 1932); Arthur Ramos, *O negro brasileiro* (Recife: Fundação Joaquim Nabuco/Editora Massangana, 1988 [1932]); Ruth Landes, *The City of Women* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006 [1947]); and Edison Carneiro, *Candomblés da Bahia* (Salvador, Brazil: Conquista, 1961 [1948]).

Loíza, Puerto Rico, by way of Isar Godreau's work, Bahia's cultural and policy shifts in the 1970s made it so "blackness exemplifies the 'folklorization' process . . . during which blackness is subject to 'spatial/temporal distancing' that fosters 'nostalgia' for African-based traditions assumed to exist exclusively in the past and within very specific geographic boundaries."⁴² It is no coincidence that Bahia is mentioned in four of this album's tracks marking it as reliant on folkloric blackness despite the singer's not yet achieved black visual aesthetic.

Her biggest hit on the album, "Ê Baiana" ("Hey Baiana"), composed by Fabrício da Silva, Baianinho, Ênio Santos Ribeiro, and Miguel Pancrácio shot her to national stardom. While samba was quintessentially a genre centered in Rio de Janeiro, the hit track "Ê Baiana" gestures not only to Bahian batuque as foundational to the samba sound but also to the representational "importance of Baianas in nourishing the genre's growth," including the album's inspiration, Carmen Miranda.⁴³ Undoubtedly, too, this song's difficult jumps gesture deferentially to the vocal skills of Carmen Miranda. To syncopated claps from the chorus in call-and-response, Clara belts out quickly like Carmen, "*Toca a viola/Que ela quer sambar./Ela gosta de samba,/Ela quer rebolar./Ê baiana!*" ("Play the guitar/Because she wants to samba./She likes samba./She wants to shake her hips./Hey baiana!").⁴⁴ In the music video, she sings and sambas alone on a hillside barefoot, in a flowy white dress and her hair long and wavy down over her shoulders. This is crosscut with footage of Rio de Janeiro samba school baianas, all black women, spinning slow-motion in full garb at a pre-carnival show.^{ix} As they twirl their giant hoop skirts with hats made to look like they are balancing on their heads their *tabuleiros*, or trays, of delicacies to sell, Nunes places her fists on her waist and shimmies her hips on the grassy knoll, between palm trees and other tropical flora. Nunes' youth, flowing hair, thinness, and clear skin in the natural light of day cast her as a type of dressed-down baiana, a desirable mulata in contrast to the dark-skinned, older, portly black women spinning in their heavily accessorized skirts and head-wraps in the poorly lit theater. Quite similar to Brazilian tropes on stage and screen, Melissa Borelli's genealogical analysis of the mulata's body in Cuban film in the same period argues that, in fact, "as a substitute, the *mulata* disguises the white male desire for black women," that this "fetish for blackness" in both folklore and everyday life "seems less of a vice when that same blackness pixilates around the *mulata* and her hips."⁴⁵ This cross-cutting between the light-skinned Clara and the dark-skinned samba school baianas puts into practice Borelli's concept of the fetishization of black women onscreen for the sake of the national good. While the mulata's sex sculpted her Brazilianness, the pleasures of nation-making in Nunes' performance are funneled through the cosmologies of her Umbanda as cosmologies of the Brazilian nation. Her spirit was her sound and her sound was characteristically Brazilian.

Despite being a Mineira by birth, this album and song—and many of her songs that would preach Afro-diasporic spiritual beliefs—caused confusion on her origin. One 1975 report in *Última Hora* newspaper reads, "Her taste for necklaces and *balangandãs* comes from afar and it makes many people assume that Clara Nunes is a baiana. But she is a Mineira and she's going to end up owning all of Minas Gerais."⁴⁶ Due to Bahia's place in the Brazilian national imagination as the cradle of Africanity and Afro-Brazilian spirituality, Nunes was often mistaken as a baiana in the

^{ix} Due to the popularization of the baiana on the Rio de Janeiro stage, she became an integral component to the Carioca carnival parades. In addition to intricately designed floats, percussionists (*ritimistas*), and samba dancers (*passistas*), every samba school presentation in Rio's Carnival requires a section, or *ala*, of baianas. Wearing hoop-skirt dresses with hand-stitched patterns, jewels, and feathers in addition to lofty headdresses or wigs, the bourgeoisization of the poor black *quituteiras* and *quitandeiras* of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries satirizes the elite with their excessive size and color à la Marie Antoinette. Often older black and mixed-race women, the baianas customarily spin as they dance samba to make their skirts rise off the ground showing their feet.

first years after her shift into samba. The confusion would grow as Nunes recorded her own successful cover of Dorival Caymmi's "O que é que a baiana tem?" on her 1974 album, *Alvorecer*, also produced by Adelzon Alves. With the associations between her *baianidade*, or Bahian-ness, and her faith, this surely only strengthened the singer's image as a woman who may have looked closer to whiteness but, in her soul, was black. For these reasons, in the confusions over her *baianidade*, the press in the early to mid-1970s often joked while also seriously questioned whether or not Nunes was, herself, a *mãe-de-santo* and could cast a curse on anyone who mocked or criticized her.⁴⁷ Enthralled by her mysticism, the Brazilian public quickly began to pay closer attention to the singer who hailed from Minas Gerais, epitomized Bahia, but sang like a Carioca.

Searching for Mestiçagem in Spirit, Sound, and Gesture

The image of the sexualized mulata inundated national media in Brazil throughout the 1960s and 70s. Airlines, travel agencies, and advertisements readily printed images of lower-lip-biting, thong-bikini-wearing mixed-race women on the beach, dancing samba, or enjoying carnival. Self-described "mulatologist" Osvaldo Sargentelli ran world-famous *mulata shows* in Rio de Janeiro cabarets like Oba-Oba and Sucata with his semi-nude samba dancers bedazzled in just the right places. José Abelardo Barbosa de Medeiros, better known as Chacrinha, hosted his weekly free-for-all television extravaganzas featuring his "Chacretes," scantily clad female dancers and stage assistants from all colors of the Brazilian rainbow. Apart from her regular appearances on Chacrinha's programs alongside the Chacretes, Clara Nunes' tapping into the archive of mixed-race womanhood, of the mulata and mestiça in her lighter-skinned audiovisual representations of *baianidade* and the Afro-diasporic spiritualities associated with it, piqued a sexual interest in the uncanny of her performance. Nonetheless, Clara Nunes' musical repertoire and her body became a conduit through which Brazil would come to see itself at home and abroad.

As Clara Nunes began to tour outside Brazil, she saw her style as inspired by her faith to be an asset. During her participation at the Marché International du Disque et de l'Édition Musicale (Midem) annual music tradeshow in Cannes in 1974, she recorded a special for French television on the beach of the Côte d'Azur singing a *ponto*, or traditional Umbanda hymn, to Iansã, her orixá mother and the woman warrior of wind and fire. With her *guias*, *balangandãs*, and her hair wrapped tightly in an ivory headscarf, she said after to a reporter, "My typical Brazilian clothing is very appealing. [The French] think it's different. And it's a part of my audiovisual background."⁴⁸ Much like her antecedent, Carmen Miranda, Nunes' wish to sow international interest in Brazilian music via an alleged sonic and visual authenticity remained at the forefront throughout her career, becoming a pillar to her evocation of mestiça nationalism. Just three months prior to her success in Cannes, Clara recorded a New Year's Eve special in Stockholm for Swedish television. There, she told a reporter for *O Globo*, "I do not intend to limit my style to Brazil. I want to have a well-defined spot in my country and, afterward, show everyone here abroad what we transmit in music... I want to achieve a different, profoundly Brazilian form, straight out from our roots, for my repertoire. Hence, the folklore... that was missing after [the passing of] Carmen Miranda. I think I am on my way."⁴⁹ As Clara would later become repeatedly celebrated and then memorialized as *uma artista muito brasileira*—or, a very Brazilian artist—her push for purity "from our roots" becomes the foundation for that which is, at its core, Brazilian. For her, these roots stemmed from biological, cultural, and spiritual miscegenation, often discursively favoring African contributions via her prioritization of Afro-Brazilian spiritual aesthetics in song and physical appearance. As Micol Seigel notes, audiences, largely from the Global North had long

“gobbled up the music and dance of colonized places, homogenized and ill distinguished, reveling in their supposed primitiveness, spirituality, and sensuality.”⁵⁰ Elite white Brazilians, too, gorged themselves on these colonial fantasies from which Nunes profited, the photographic archive showing several instances of her performing in folkloric dress in front of all-white audiences at private clubs. Steeped in a discourse of authenticity, of ‘realness,’ the illusion that she created appears closer to what we might call drag as she donned these imperial desires for a racial, spiritual, and sexual darkness on her body and in her vocal choices. Bringing into the mainstream these once taboo, opaque, and illegal belief systems, the purity of her *mestiça*-ness with its clearly manufactured characteristics through the use of folklore in broad, often camp-like strokes exposes the inherent racial and sexual ruptures that underscore Brazilian national identity.

After her music, Clara Nunes’ faith remained the most commented topic in the Brazilian press throughout her career. As previously stated, these observations, too, held potentially aberrant sexual undertones. In the *Diário de São Paulo* newspaper’s gossip column in October 1973, Clara was said to have gone to the gay nightclub and cabaret Medieval in São Paulo to enjoy the “transvestite show.” It quipped that, “between one number and the next, she explained to curious people how her extravagant dresses always had a purpose: one for each saint^x of the day...”⁵¹ Insinuating Clara herself to be a drag queen in her regular ‘costume changes’ related to her Umbanda faith, the press and the public’s understanding of her over time as racially and religiously ambiguous gestures to her potential for queer engagement. While the intermediary nature of the *mulata* figure, according to Jasmine Mitchell, fosters her to be a comfortable and easily accessible space for the “containment” of blackness, so too does she hold with her abject sexual desires and attractions. Mitchell adds that it is through her “naturalization, commodification, and exotification”—and I would add ridicule—that the heteropatriarchy of *mestiçagem* celebrates while also eroticizes the *mulata*.⁵² Writing about the U.S. *mulatta* heroine’s emergence in African American women’s literature, Hazel Carby describes the literary function of this figure as “a narrative device of mediation.” Her purpose is two-fold: her character is “a vehicle for an exploration of the relationship between the races and, at the same time, an expression of the relationship between the races.”⁵³ For this reason, Carby’s *mulatta* never reaches full realization and, thus, represents a subjectivity in contestation while disposed for resistance. In the context of Brazil’s rhetoric of racial democracy institutionalized by the dictatorship, Clara Nunes’ mediation as a *mulata* or *baiana*, and eventually a *mestiça*, not only performed Brazilian interracial relationality but offered her up for racialized, gendered, and sexual scrutiny. This became even clearer through the transposition of her voice and her body to a lower, blacker register.

Clara Nunes’ mysticism sprang not only from her visual aesthetic but also her changing sound. As the voice constitutes interiority expelled, a return to Hiram Perez’s notion of the throat’s queer secrets fleshes out Nunes’ vocal ambivalence over the course of her career. As she transitioned from boleros and ballads to samba, the operatic mezzo soprano over violins, trumpets, and the occasional batuque took on the assertiveness of the black woman’s liturgical voice found in her Umbanda priestesses. In a 1973 television performance of “Tributo aos Orixás” (“Tribute to the Orixás”), composed by Mauro Duarte, Noca, and Rubem Tavares, we hear the grain of the newfound black voice, in its deeper, exclamatory, almost speech-like contralto utterances. She starts the performance by chanting in Yoruba to the accompaniment of perpetual beating of a *tamborim* and high picks of the *cavaquinho*’s strings in F minor. Requesting first that Exu, the messenger orixá, open up the path for mortals to be in communion with the divine, Nunes then

^x *Santo*, or saint, can often denote an Afro-Brazilian orixá and not just a Catholic saint, as it does so in this case. This crossover in lexicon is likely due to Catholicism’s long-term imposition over Candomblé and Umbanda.

asks for a blessing from the sovereign father of the holy city of Ifé in present-day Nigeria, chanting, “*Agô iê, agô iê, agô!! Mutumbá, mutumbá/Pai maior, oni babá!*”⁵⁴ The folklorization of these Yoruba and Bantu words that have crept into the national vernacular through samba freezes them in an obscure past of the Brazilian nation. The gestures of Clara Nunes’ body, her voice, and the spiritual archive she taps into make the metalanguage of this racial/raceless discourse all the more booming and concomitant to its drag-like illusions. In this line of thinking, Juana María Rodríguez makes it imperative that we read into gesture when considering the ambivalence of racial and sexual identities that exceed the bounds of identification, especially in the context of queer Latinidad and the heteronormative *mestizaje/mestiçagem* that frames it.⁵⁵ Singing of how the enslaved carried their orixás with them to Brazil, their suffering is timeless and is funneled through the gestures of Nunes’ voice and mixed-race body. Wearing multiple yellow *guias* that sway with her hips, the singer dances her *afoxé*, a popular Bahian rhythm originating from Candomblé and Umbanda ceremonies. She whirls from side to side and she then begins to rock forward and back in a trance-like state, singing as her hair falls over her face. She invokes the orixás in cadenced song as her body lurches, wrapping the microphone cord around her while she uses her right hand to make gestures specific to each orixá, greeting them in Yoruba. Her body emulates a bow and arrow for Oxóssi and her hands criss-cross for Ogum. She descends into a deep bow for Nanã, waves her outstretched arm for Iansã, and rows in the rivers for Oxum. Then, she makes offerings from her chest for Xangô, and runs her fingers through her hair for Iemanjá. Nunes ends her salutations by tapping the front and back of her head, crouching down and touching the floor with her hand out of the camera’s view for Obaluayê.

It is only when singing of the enslaved that she looks into the camera and points her finger at the viewer: “*Os negros escravos/Que entre gemidos e lamentos de dor/Traziam em seus corações sofridos/Seus orixás de fé*” (“The black slaves/Who between moans and cries of pain/Brought in their suffering hearts/The orixás of their faith”). It is notable that, here, she smiles as she recounts historical trauma to create a festive tribute, the music itself modulating into a cheerful E major. This performance of pleasure through pain shows how Nunes sounded out national racial formations but glossed over their historical nuances in an effort to placate audiences. Her invocation in voice and body therefore makes salient Africanity within Brazilian *mestiçagem*. At the same time, however, these Afro-diasporic spiritual gestures from her non-black body with little regard for time beyond a past made distant, encourage *mestiçagem*’s possibilities of achieving racelessness. Borrowing from Walter Benjamin’s theory of the dialectical image, that is, the oft-recited moment that the nation sees itself through the historian’s rendering of the past and its underlying tensions^{xi}, these utterances and accompanying gestures take on the form of a materialist historical commodity. Nunes re-engineers them into a dialectical sound, taken from the Umbanda and Candomblé temples and, through her performance as a white-skinned *mestiça*, made more widely accessible and acceptable. A common facet of folklorization, Nunes’ ahistoricism in recounting transatlantic African spiritual histories attempts to awaken a collective Brazilian subjectivity from what Benjamin calls a “dream consciousness” that continues on loop.⁵⁶ These Afro-diasporic spiritual recitations from Clara Nunes’ non-black body, in effect, encourage *mestiçagem*’s possibilities of achieving racelessness where Nunes proves to be the product of Luso-Afro-Brazilian spiritual miscegenation.

The chaotic choreographies on display at this point in Nunes’ career as an out-and-out sambista make her body appear unpredictable as it disobeys the gaze of the camera and viewer.

^{xi} Benjamin calls this the “recognizability of the now” to further describe the never-ending conflict between the temporal planes of past, present, and future.

Following Borelli's research on the *mulata* in Cuban visual culture, Nunes' dancing could "still be coded as dark and underclass." Nonetheless, it "gained a certain respectability when performed by a lighter skinned body, accentuating the erotics of the *mulata* while diluting or rendering impotent the perceived overt sexual antics of black bodies."⁵⁷ This 'mulata-ness' in the case of Clara Nunes, however, merely adds to the multiple readings of her then and now as a performer of the mixed-race nation; not as any resolution of the blackness of her performances vis-à-vis Africanity. If anything, the "coding" of Nunes as soulfully black—and, physically black in national memory, as I discuss later—through a staging of *mestiçagem* entices us to read this as potentially another version of drag. For example, in a 1975 live performance of "A Deusa dos Orixás" ("The Goddess of the Orixás"), composed by Romildo and Toninho Nascimento, Clara opens with an incantation to her orixá mother, Iansã, repeatedly asking where Ogum, her orixá father, has been: "*Iansã, cadê Ogum?*" She stands on a lit platform downstage with her band, Nosso Samba, on steps flanking her from above. As she chants to her orixás, she raises her hand against the background, seemingly gracing the seal of a geometrical outline of the Brazilian flag in flashing lights (Figure 4). While pledging allegiance to her orixás, her astute positioning marks her body and her religious beliefs as undeniably Brazilian. Yet, throughout the performance, the cameras, catching her from lateral and forward positions in medium shots and close-ups, have to constantly readjust to her moving body, zooming in and out, and panning. In contrast to her performance of "Tributo aos Orixás" three years prior, she looks passionately into the camera almost the entire time. Even as her body turns, her face remains forward. Clutching the microphone in her left hand, she uses the right in the rhythm of her *afoxé* to warn the camera, gently pushing the viewer away while drawing the gaze closer to her face with her shoulders rippling up and down. In her sequined white dress with cut-outs and her feathered russet hair, Nunes arranges herself on stage as the most Brazilian of all things. Off-set by Nosso Samba's composition of all black men dressed in brown suits beating drums and strumming strings around her, the patriotic lights twinkling, the singer's positioning marks her mediation clearly as a mixed-race woman. And this performance, between Clara, her band, and the camera is a seduction over which she remains in complete control. At one point, she jumps up and ducks out of the camera's view as she crescendos on her orixá's name, "*Iansã!*" which echoes across the stage. In immediate response, a band member shouts the Yoruba salutation to Nunes' orixá, "*Eparrey!*" that echoes for two full seconds consecrating the presence of the divine as well as one of Clara's nicknames as the *Deusa dos Orixás*.

The audiovisual blocking of Nunes' body vis-à-vis her band and the stage suggest a tension between whiteness and blackness as she is placed at its middle ground, this pattern often repeating itself throughout her career. As she sways, lunges, and crouches, following Borelli's own suggestion in the examples of Cuban film, this tension makes it "as if her body both craves and rejects the power of African rhythms while its ancestral ties belie the need to demur and negotiate acceptable (read: sanitized, whitened) ways of being."⁵⁸ The echoes of the call-and-response give Brazilian *saudade*, or racial-sexual longings, its sound with the sonic's immediacy emerging suddenly and then disappearing. With its ability to be recorded and played over and over yet interpreted differently each time, this dialectical sound brings the past and present into intricately disputed acc(h)ordance over the materiality of Afro-Brazilian folklore to be studied or discarded in the future. The phenomenon of racial democracy in Clara Nunes' music with the support of the dictatorship enacts an authoritarian *saudade* and has the potential to be understood and saved for cultural memory.⁵⁹ The echo of the sonic via Nunes might be taken to signify the elaboration of a new mode of registering cultural memory, especially through the accompanied gestures of her racially ambiguous body. In fact, where *saudade* itself may be considered the dialectical sound of

race and sex in this instance, it might best be envisioned through the corporeality of the mixed-race woman, including her voice. According to Maria Brazette, the essence of *saudade* is “the capacity to interiorize objects,” to cannibalize them, and then “evoke their positive” attributes.⁶⁰ While Clara Nunes’ performance could appear as progressive, her consumption of Afro-Brazilian aesthetics and their recitation through a discourse of watered-down, ahistorical folklore upheld the racial order of a dictatorship that believed miscegenation during slavery had already provided for enough equality post-abolition.



Figure 4: Film stills from Clara Nunes’ edited live performance for television of “A Deusa dos Orixás” in 1975.⁶¹

Clara Nunes transformed herself into the de facto griot of Brazilian history put to music. Perhaps her most well-known song to this day, especially for its hypnotic echoes and chorus, is “Canto das Três Raças” (“Song of the Three Races”), composed by her husband Paulo César Pinheiro and Mauro Duarte. A Brazilian standard with patriotic undertones still widely recited, the title track of her 1976 album by the same name weaves the songs of indigenous, black, and white Brazilians’ struggles into a melancholic samba.

Ninguém ouviu
Um soluçar de dor
No canto do Brasil.
Um lamento triste
Sempre ecoou
Desde que o índio guerreiro
Foi pro cativoiro,
E de lá cantou.
Negro entoou
Um canto de revolta pelos ares
No Quilombo dos Palmares
Onde se refugiou.
Fora a luta dos Inconfidentes
Pela quebra das correntes.
Nada adiantou.
E de guerra em paz,
De paz em guerra,
Todo o povo dessa terra,
Quando pode cantar
Canta de dor.
Ô, ô, ô, ô, ô, ô...

No one heard
The sobbing of pain
In Brazil’s song.
A sad lament
Always echoed
Since the Indian warrior
Was put into bondage,
And from there he sang.
The black man sounded
A song of revolt in the air
In the Quilombo dos Palmares
Where he took refuge.
A blunder the Inconfidentes’ fight
To break the chains.
Nothing worked.
And from war to peace,
And from peace to war,
All of the people in this land,
When they can sing
They sing of pain.
Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh oh...⁶²

In the television recording of her performance for the weekly *Fantástico* program in 1976, Clara opens by looking into the camera, a rose stage light shining on her wavy chestnut hair. With her white face off-set by the ruby red lipstick, the singer bashfully smiles, saying, “My song is what I have to give. My song, my ballad, my smile, my laugh...”⁶³ A gentle pulse of a single *atabaque* begins followed by the strums and plucks of a lone Portuguese guitar. Clara, alone on stage with her band nowhere to be found, dances her *afoxé*. Her *guias* and *balangandãs* sway to the beat while the African percussion and the Portuguese melody meld into her dancing body. As her voice rings the first “*Ninguém ouviu*,” it echoes out through the blackness of the empty studio lit by a single gold light. Beginning with “Nobody heard,” Nunes is at once vigilantly aware of the struggles Brazil has faced while also marking herself as the font of history: “[her] song, [her] ballad” is Brazil’s and it’s all that she “ha[s] to give.” With the song’s revelatory purpose, this samba in a minor key takes on a didactic tone as she looks directly into the camera singing the chorus that opens the song. Mentioning the indigenous struggle, the Native Brazilian *clavas* begin to click and, narrating black resistance in the most well-known maroon community, Quilombo dos Palmares, her right arm raises into a clenched fist that opens in peace as the camera focuses. She then sings of the white Inconfidentes in Minas Gerais who led an unsuccessful revolt for independence against the Portuguese in the eighteenth century, reminding the listener that resistance runs through her as well as a Mineira.

Unlike Clara’s other performances and music videos, this rendition of “Canto das Três Raças” is shot almost entirely in a close-up on her face. Limited medium shots better illustrate the gyrations of the singer’s *afoxé*, the microphone cord in a constant state of raveling and unraveling around her as she appears to float above the stage. Typical to earlier performances, this choreography gestures toward the potential for or realization of being in a trance state. Nadia Ellis posits spiritual possession as a cite of uncertainty and suspension ripe for queering:

One belongs, under a spirit’s possession, neither to oneself strictly, nor to any one particular moment or place in time. Rather, for an eternal moment, a moment during which nothing but paradox reigns, a subject may be both *here* and *there*; may be, or rather will of necessity be, at once in the current moment, wherein she can be perceived by others, and in another time altogether, perceived only minimally. She will be in place—perhaps spinning—but she will float above that place in a way that enables a perception of expansiveness and travel. She will give herself over to another power; and yet that other power will work with her, alongside her, so that she may feel differently empowered—possessed of knowledge and understanding that she does not usually own.⁶⁴

While the singer’s Umbanda faith is not directly cited in the lyrics of the somber samba, her aesthetic choices in dress and choreography connote its performance. Beyond her *guias*, *balangandãs*, and white semi-sweetheart top, it is Clara’s spins, small hops, head jerks, and her intent stare and gazes off in the distance that anchor the lore of the nation in gestures of Afro-diasporic spirituality. In several instances, her billowing hair covers her shoulders and the spaghetti straps of her white top such that the close-ups of her face almost suggest a nakedness. As her body and voice seek to mediate the cacophony of instruments into a singular melody then reproduced by a chorus of male voices, the performance of “Canto” suggests not only the birth of Brazil and of samba, but of the mixed-race subject herself stripped of all but her spiritual essence. To this point, Osmundo Pinho argues, “To produce the nation and national culture in diverse iterations of a miscegenated mysticism is to have sex. But the subject of this sexuality . . . is the white heterosexual man who is represented as the erotic civilizer.”⁶⁵ However, it is the audiovisual birth of the (whitened) *mestiça* that de-centers white men; she is now the bard, and ultimate “erotic

civilizer,” of Brazil. Clara Nunes’ “Canto das Três Raças,” as an origins anthem, implicates its sound as a by-product of queer miscegenation in the fusing of the songs of struggle of three male-identified figures—the *índio*, the *negro*, the *Inconfidente*—yet told through her mixed-race female body. Remembering Hazel Carby, Nunes’ visual and sonic embodiment of mixed race-ness becomes at once the mediator of these national pleasures as she is born from them. The synthesis of various racialized experiences into one common canto gives Nunes’ voice the power to wield quixotic longings for history as a chisel to sculpt Brazilian identity.

Feeding on these woeful *saudades*, the haunting recitation of the “oh”s that “always echoed” since colonization posit miscegenation as ongoing while she spins in and out of superimposed shots. Possibly the most recognizable sound of Clara Nunes’ entire songbook, the disquieting “oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, ohhh” brings to the fore Benjamin’s ‘recognizability of the now’ as the echoes of her voice and the all-male chorus are strengthened by the surge of instruments halfway through the song: the guitar, *atabaque*, and *clavas* are now joined by the rattles and clicks of the *xquerê* and the *reco-reco*, the squeaks of the *cuíca*, and the monstrous thumps of the *surdo*. Through its repetition in zigzagged thirds climbing the minor scale the sambista’s wails over the percussion and chorus, conjure up a folkloric past that jumps in circles around history. These circles replicate themselves in her spins that leave trails of light into a series of fades. Such an audiovisual echo establishes Nunes’ *mestiçagem* as the conduit of pleasures that can be derived from pain and colonial violence.

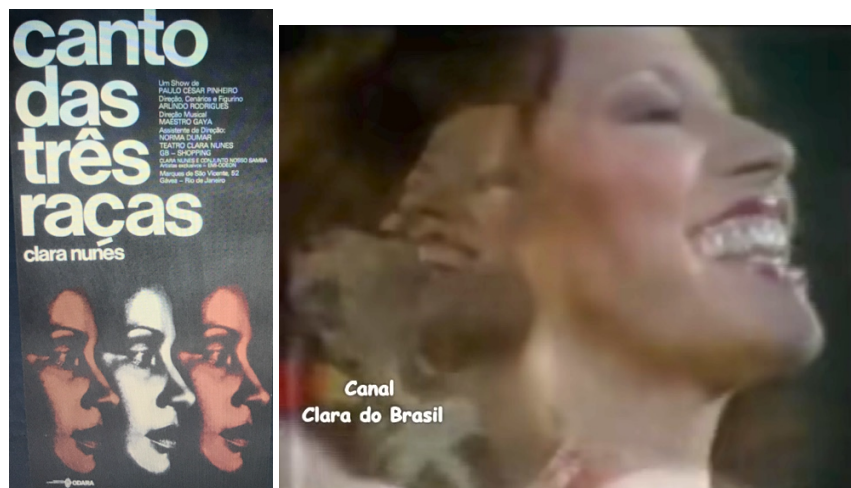


Figure 5: Promotional poster for the show *Canto das Três Raças*, 1977, courtesy of Instituto Clara Nunes⁶⁶; one of many overlaid shots of Clara Nunes singing “Canto das Três Raças” for *Fantástico*, 1976.⁶⁷

Although typical of 1970s cinematography, as the performance continues, one takes closer note of the editing with the camera’s repetitive fades. Overlaid with one another, they create a cyclical silhouette of Clara Nunes’ likeness that refuses to sit still. Most striking in this constant movement is her visible joy juxtaposed to the song’s message of suffering along racial lines—a pain that allegedly remains contained to a distant past. Despite her recounting the history of Brazil in black, white, and red to communicate the structure of Brazil’s social history and its music, Nunes takes pleasure in evoking an in-between, a state yet realized, in transition. This conundrum becomes increasingly clear when we compare this performance and its edited close-up shots to the promotional poster for her 1977 show, *Canto das Três Raças*, in which this song took center stage

as the final number (Figure 5).^{xii} Mirroring the video's palimpsest of fades, Clara's profile appears in a triptych whose exaggerated racial colorings of umber, bone, and clay heighten the inflexibility of racial categories in need of resolution. Riffing on Higginbotham, these racial categories of black, white, and indigenous, are "strategically necessary for the functioning of power in countless institutional and ideological forms both explicit and subtle." While "perceived as "natural" and "appropriate"" in the context of Brazil like many places in Latin America, their maintenance is vital so that they may be perpetually destroyed through the enactment of romanticized narratives of race mixture.⁶⁸ Much the same could be said as well about drag and its assemblages of gender necessary for their very annihilation.

Beyond the didactic message of Nunes' lyrics, perhaps most notable in Nunes' performance is that, throughout this melancholic song made possible through historical trauma, the singer smiles. On her last major international tour in Japan in 1982, on a special for NHK television, she described "*Canto das Três Raças*" saying, "It sums up the entire formation of *música popular brasileira*, which was the joining of the three races: the *índio*, the *negro*, and the *branco* who became the *brasileiro*. . . It is about this feeling of love and happiness."⁶⁹ This counterintuitive explanation and overall performance of pleasure through pain shows how Nunes sounded out national racial formations but glossed over their historical nuances in an effort to placate audiences at home and abroad, especially to those who were potentially not open to a more realistic analysis of race in Brazil, or that perhaps Nunes could not substantially provide. Be it through "oh"s, spins, her gaze, an unanticipated smile, or the work of the camera and the vinyl, these gestures tap into this metalanguage and "can register what cannot or should not be expressed in words," as Rodríguez puts it.⁷⁰ Going into the final stage of her career, Clara Nunes' superimposed racial selves and gestures would come to more heavily flirt with camp renderings of Brazilian folklore expanding the possibilities of a reading beyond the bounds of racial, gender, and sexual normativity in Brazil.

African Roots, Routes, and Becoming the Guerreira

By the late 1970s, the blackening of Clara Nunes' audiovisual aesthetic became even more striking. Tapping into a black and mixed-race Brazilian archive imagined by the state and her record label Odeon, the singer maintained a sensuality often playing into the mulata trope while asserting her image as a strong woman in her faith and her ability to sing across popular Brazilian genres. To do this, she created a character that became easily identifiable to her public, moored in the resolve of Afro-Brazilian womanhood: the *Guerreira*, or 'Warrior,' gendered as a woman. Clara Nunes had long used her Umbanda faith to advocate her own identity rooted in samba's Africanity. Now, as the *Guerreira*, she began to actively extend the discourse of African roots across multiple genres of music beyond samba. While she sought to transform samba into yet another genre of MPB—for which her close friend and famed samba singer Alcione credits her to this day⁷¹—what Clara as the *Guerreira*, in fact, did was offer Africanity as not only a cultural but genealogical identifier for all Brazilians. She understood Brazil to be, in effect, plural and multifaceted. Each of these 'Brazils' offered an additional node to the African diaspora, furthering

^{xii} While it received mixed reviews, the show *Canto das Três Raças* that featured some of Clara Nunes' hits interwoven with poetic verse is remembered as the program that inaugurated Clara Nunes' theater, the Teatro Clara Nunes, in the upper-class neighborhood of Gávea in Rio de Janeiro in May 1977. By this point, she was accruing massive amounts of wealth from her music and decided to invest in a performance space for herself as well as to host other musical performances and plays. Notably, Nunes became the first female performer in Brazil to own her own theater.

Brazil and Nunes' own identity as inherently African. Nevertheless, as Paul Gilroy warns, "the fragmentation and subdivision of black music into an ever-increasing proliferation of styles and genres has also contributed" to the currency of authenticity as something "highly charged and bitterly contested."⁷² Inspired by Nadia Ellis, my close reading shows how these claims to African authenticity in Nunes' later music ring of diasporic hauntings, often with queer timbres whose dissonance never quite resolves or reaches a full point of completion. Her creation of the Guerreira figure, with its camp stylings of multimodal and often competing Africanities through colonial heritage, therefore epitomizes the singer's own enactment of drag-like illusions for the sake of Brazilian *mestiçagem* and, ultimately, the fortification of racial democracy.

Nunes' self-describing samba, "Guerreira," launches the new identification and offers herself as a blueprint for every Brazilian. Further, common with other female performers in the late 70s, she uses the song to establish herself as a female singer in a male-dominated market whose success came through struggle against sexism despite being quoted in a 1980 newspaper article as never "considering herself a feminist."⁷³ Composed by João Nogueira and Paulo César Pinheiro, the title track on her 1978 album, *Guerreira*, defends her position in samba as a Mineira as well as celebrates the strength she finds in her Umbanda faith.^{xiii} Mirroring the unification of the races in "Canto das Três Raças," "Guerreira" opens with four measures of a resounding *batuque* and the African vibraslap hitting on four. After a single strum of the Portuguese *cavaquinho*, Clara enters on two, "*Se vocês querem saber quem eu sou/Eu sou a tal mineira./Filha de Angola, de Ketu e Nagô,/Não sou de brincadeira*" ("If you all want to know who I am/I'm that certain Mineira./Daughter of Angola, of Ketu and Nagô,/I am not a kidder.") She constructs her Brazilian identity as one rooted in multiple sects or *nações* (nations) of Candomblé and Umbanda from the African continent, Angola, Ketu, and Yoruba (Nagô). Despite calling herself "that certain Mineira" to mark her outsider status in the Rio samba scene, her voice flies high above the melody establishing herself to be of all sects and nations through a discourse of spiritual diaspora, defined by Ellis as "being formed at that border between the nation and the imagination, landedness and dispossession, materiality and immateriality."⁷⁴ As the opening verse continues, Clara sings, "*Dentro do samba, eu nasci,/Me criei, me converti./E ninguém vai tombar a minha bandeira*" ("In samba I was born,/I was raised, I converted./And nobody is going to topple my flag").⁷⁵ As she is to represent all of Brazil, her one true *nação*, her "flag," is samba.

The serious invocation of Clara's faith underscores the innate mysticism to Brazilian ethnogenesis, of its very rooted transatlantic origins now routed through Nunes herself. As her own calling up of an Afro-Brazilian mythos often blurred the distinct lines between Candomblé and Umbanda and she would come to find refuge in both, I argue that the sambista's forceful and, in-part, masculine self-presentation as a protector of these faiths marks her as a musical and spiritual *ogã*. While early scholars of Candomblé like Raimundo Nina Rodrigues and Arthur Ramos observed in the first half of the twentieth century that these roles were "almost always a white *senhor*, who black people respect," and for this reason "are given compensation of the title and all of the honors of *ogãs*" for their protection from the state⁷⁶, the role of the *ogã* continues to this day as one who assumes responsibility over and leads the songs of the congregation, knowing

^{xiii} According to Clara Nunes' biographer, Vagner Fernandes, the Odeon record company believed that there was room for only one female sambista in their lineup. Having picked Nunes in the early 70s, two other famous Carioca (and white) sambistas, Beth Carvalho and Simone Bittencourt de Oliveira a.k.a. Simone, felt slighted by Odeon for going with a Mineira instead of a singer from Rio de Janeiro where samba was believed to have been born. This set off a rivalry between Nunes, Carvalho, and Simone that the press often exploited as a cat fight for much of the rest of Nunes' career despite having generally good rapport with both.

the wishes of each orixá. With the advent of the Guerreira persona and her unambiguous control over the song's direction and changes in tone and timbre, especially as she later calls the saints and orixás by name, Clara Nunes' carefully crafted mixed race-ness and Brazilian cultural nationalism are thus transposed to a different register.

As Clara enters the only verse, it becomes apparent that the Guerreira, despite a marked difference in sound and appearance, continues to make subtle gestures to the muse of her aesthetic shift that earned her success. She sings, "*Bole com samba que eu caio e balanço o balaio no som dos tantãs./Rebolo, que deito e que rolo, me embalo e me embolo nos balangandãs./Bambeia de lá que eu bambeio nesse bamboleio/Que eu som bam-bam-bam*" (roughly translated as "Come up with a samba and I'll fall for the beat and shake my hips to the sound of the tom-toms./I'll shimmy so much that I'll lay down and roll around, rocking myself to sleep and tangled up in my *balangandãs*./Saunter from over there and I'll shake in this shuffle/Because I'm bam-bam-bam). As the inflection of her voice playfully bounces and her tongue wraps itself around the onslaught of alliterative wordplay and compact rhyme structure, the Guerreira *ogã* clearly conjures up Carmen Miranda with her own unforgettable squeaks, spitfire enunciations, and unstable ostentations of gender. Clara would repeat this association in her 1979 hit "Mulata do Balaio" ("Mulata with the Swinging Hips"), squeaking her own voice in tight verse about a voluptuous *balangandã*-laden mulata who sold fruit in the street, like a Bahian *quitandeira*.⁷⁷ The fruit in question: bananas. Reminiscing with Miranda's legacy per Busby Berkeley's priapic plantain stylings, her echoes through Nunes in "Guerreira" insinuate a possession of sorts. Miranda's ghost briefly takes hold while Nunes mimics Miranda's trademarked vocal and visual effervescence but also her assertive control over every bar of music she sang. "Guerreira" thus elicits a necessary reading of its camp due to the queer underpinnings of its racial and gender performances. The flamboyant visual gestures in the music video, in fact, prove worthy accompaniment to Nunes' change in vocal registers from the dignified chorus to the playful verse to the commanding syncretic salutations.

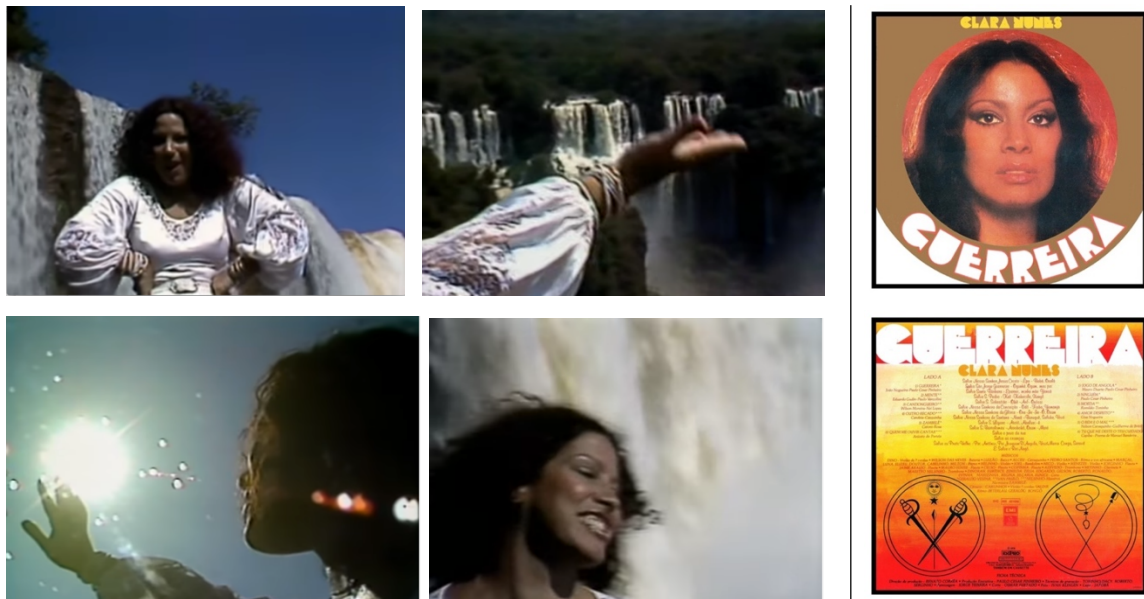


Figure 6: On the left, film stills from the video for "Guerreira" (1978) by Clara Nunes at Iguazu Falls⁷⁸; on the right, the front and back covers to Clara Nunes' 1978 album *Guerreira*.⁷⁹

A motif throughout Nunes' career were music videos shot in nature, like "Ê Baiana" (1971), "O Mar Serenou" ("The Sea Serenaded," 1975), and "Banho de Manjeriçã" ("Basil Bath," 1979), among several others. Like these, the video for "Guerreira," with its high-production values, projects Nunes' faith as an expression of her mestiça identity onto Brazilian nature. Shot at the wondrous Iguazu Falls on the Brazil-Argentina border, we see Nunes and the surrounding topography from an array of vantage points. She rides in a helicopter above the cataracts, sambas with them in the distance, stands in front of and beside them surrounded by mist and rainbows. With her silhouette from below, her hand shoots out towards the sun as she shouts the names of Catholic saints and their corresponding orixás with their greetings in Yoruba, asking for their blessing in rapid spoken verse: "*Salve o Nosso Senhor Jesus Cristo! Epa babá, Oxalá! Salve São Jorge Guerreiro, Ogum, Ogunhê, meu pai!*" and so forth (Figure 6). As she bounces around the falls and then, during much of the salutations, disappears altogether, her voice booming over the backup singers in the chorus, "Guerreira" insinuates a spiritual possession of Nunes through the pantheon of orixás and their African blessing of Brazil vicariously through her outstretched arms facing nature. Ellis suggests that this oneness with the African divine in Brazilian nature "enables a perception of expansiveness and travel." Nunes, here, gives herself "over to another power; and yet that other power will work with her, alongside her, so that she may feel differently empowered—possessed of knowledge and understanding that she does not usually own."⁸⁰ As Nunes soars from point to point, this possession makes distinct changes to the state of her body. While she begins with her coiffed, straight cherry brown hair that waves down to her shoulders in open curls, Iguazu's vapor crinkles it upward. Passing through the air and approaching closer and closer to the falls, her hair unravels itself again, the mystic tight curls reflected against the water droplets on the camera lens. Her skin becomes sun-kissed, appearing progressively darker and wetter in other shots after a day of filming. As these shots are pieced together out of order in the final edit, Nunes confuses the viewer not only in space but also time as she shuffles between a dry, well-manicured whiteness and soaking, wild brownness. Through her invocations and gestures toward possession—of her spirit but also of her musical skill as informed by her faith—it is not Nunes who traverses the dimensions. Rather, it is Iguazu as metonym for a Brazilian mythos, in air, sun, and spray, that spiritually passes through her. The result: the roots of blackness emerge, without any particular history, in the form of a sensuous, glistening mulata swinging her hips in the middle of the semi-tropical jungle.

By the mid-1970s, Clara's claims to ethnic Africanness became ever-present on her album covers. On *Guerreira*, its inclusion is overt through symbols associated with Umbanda and the salutations to the saints and orixás listed on the back cover (Figure 6). On the front, Clara's skin begins to melt into the red hues as her shape-shifting racial ambiguity makes her adaptable to any white or black space, be it an album cover or social milieu. While the singer would often go back and forth between presenting in straight or wavy hair throughout the 1970s, by 1980 with the release of the most successful album of her career, *Brasil Mestiço*, she almost exclusively appeared on stage and in the press with kinky hair. Guilherme Pereira, Clara's makeup artist and hair stylist who worked with several of the great white divas of Brazilian music and television, suggested a tighter perm in order to give her, according to her biographer, a defining "Afro-Brazilian look" to accompany her *Guerreira* stage persona.⁸¹ Not ironically, as this would be Nunes' final look before her death in 1983, it remained imprinted on national memory and in numerous covers and impersonations by other artists that progressively became more camp.

Clara Nunes' 1980 album, *Brasil Mestiço*, in name and content evinces the apex of the singer's embodiment of mestiçagem. By this point, she sought to more vehemently shed the label

as just a ‘sambista’ and a singer of Afro-Brazilian spirituality. Her long-held wish was to be considered a singer of *música popular brasileira*, including not just samba, but *forró*, *baião*, *ijexá*, *jongo*, *choro*, *frevó* and numerous other regional and national genres. In 1980, Nunes stated in an interview, “Now, I sing everything. . . . When I interpreted only Candomblé songs and, after, only sambas, I ran the risk of being labeled according to those preferences.”⁸² By avoiding being pigeonholed, Clara could not only constantly update her repertoire across genres but market herself as the be-all and end-all of Brazilian folklore, making whatever perceived whiteness itinerant and undetectable. A year prior, Clara was reported saying, “I sing all that is ours, whatever rhythm it may be, I just am more attached to the Nagô style of my religion, of my family. People like to hear me because every Brazilian is Catholic and Spiritist^{xiv} at the same time. It was the gap that needed filling.”⁸³ In her creation of an ideal hybrid, she believed herself to be the most capable provider of authentic Brazilian culture for Brazilians, founded in her “Nagô” roots in song and on her body with her newfound hair and spiritual accoutrement. It was not, however, until after a trip to Angola in May 1980 as part of the Kalunga Project with singer-songwriter Chico Buarque in the company of 62 other Brazilian musicians that Clara would make this final shift in self-presentation.

Beyond just her hair, what would be Clara Nunes’ second trip to Angola made a profound impact on her. Unlike her first visit in 1970 to the Portuguese colony, helping to spur her conversion to Umbanda, she arrived ten years later to a newly independent nation, amidst a violent civil war between the communist Angolan People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola (or MPLA) and the anti-communist National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (or UNITA). In an interview later that year, Nunes managed to re-signify the brutality attributed to the Angolan civil war in the international press by using her self-fashioned image as the *Guerreira* in relation to the Angolan people’s tenacity and their hospitality: “I was always very much so a *guerreira*. And that is the basis of my connection with Angola: the Angolan is also very much so a *guerreiro*. We are descendants of Angola. . . . When I arrived, I thought: this is my home.”⁸⁴ For Clara, the Kalunga Project, initiated by the MPLA and led by Chico Buarque, in some regard felt like a homecoming and an affirmation of her, and Brazil’s, African roots. The group of Brazilian musicians sought to make cultural connections across the South Atlantic, helping the MPLA’s war effort on the cultural front while ticket sales from the shows all went toward the construction of a local hospital. Despite the Brazilian dictatorship’s condemnation of the trip, it did not punish the artists for fear of instigating already heated protests across several sectors of Brazilian civil society in the late 70s and early 80s demanding democratic elections. Furthermore, as Paulina Alberto points out, these transatlantic collaborations more often than not reinforced the “regime’s cultural policies [that] leaned on select aspects of Brazil’s African heritage . . . to illustrate Brazil’s racial harmony” and were, by and large, nonthreatening to the dictatorship let alone to the myth of racial democracy.⁸⁵ If anything, for Clara Nunes, her time in Angola fortified her performance as a racially ambiguous woman but with heightened camp renderings of African and Afro-Brazilian folklore that would remain the most vivid in the nation’s collective memory of the singer.

Despite having already settled on the repertoire for her album, Nunes was inspired by local cultural performances in Benguela and asked Chico Buarque to compose a song for her that honored their time on the continent. “I asked him that it be very authentic. We had arrived ten days prior from Angola. And I did not want to lose that sound,” she said, after *Brasil Mestiço* debuted

^{xiv} Not uncommon among practitioners of Umbanda is to fuse it with Spiritism in everyday speech. Likely not the case of Clara Nunes, this is often done to avoid anti-black stigmas held against Afro-Brazilian belief systems. Umbanda’s initial advent in the 1920s by Spiritists who wanted to include some of Candomblé’s iconography, however, makes this lexical gesture logical.

in August 1980.⁸⁶ Enamored with the ‘authentic’ flair of Buarque’s *ijexá*^{xv}, “Morena de Angola” (“Morena from Angola”) became the opening track and, soon after, a new nickname for Clara Nunes herself under the guise of the Guerreira stage persona. As a *morena*, Clara maintained her racial ambiguity, the term dating back to the nearly 800-year Moorish occupation of the Iberian Peninsula that could describe a woman as anywhere from ‘brunette,’ ‘olive-skinned,’ ‘swarthy,’ ‘tan,’ to even ‘black.’ Even more so, as the Morena de Angola, she signaled an inherent ethnic Africanness that, through her performance, was predisposed to folklorization despite the fact that Lusophone Africa was undergoing hasty economic, political, and cultural change related to decolonization. Notwithstanding, “Morena de Angola” would be the high point of Nunes’ own career, a single track that represented the broader cultural movement in the 1970s to ‘re-Africanize’ Brazil, especially in the artistic scenes of Salvador and Rio de Janeiro. As mentioned earlier, re-Africanization constituted a reestablishment of cultural ties to real and imagined expressions of Africanity in music, art, dance, and fashion. However, these often unsurprisingly depended on static representations of the African continent as it was undergoing hasty economic, political, and social change.⁸⁷

A reference to both Angolan women of the MPLA as well as Nunes, the appellation of Morena de Angola gestures toward Brazil’s own cultural and economic imperialist desires in Lusophone Africa after the crumbling of Portuguese colonial rule. Clara Nunes’ interpretation of Buarque’s song offers an addendum to his “Fado Tropical” (“Tropical Fado,” co-written with Ruy Guerra), the most recent composition by Buarque previously recorded by Nunes as the closing track on her 1977 album, *As Forças da Natureza* (*The Forces of Nature*). Buarque composed the Portuguese fado^{xvi} for his 1973 play *Calabar: o Elogio da Traição* (Calabar: The Compliment of Treason) that satirized the authoritarian dictatorship under the façade of Portuguese colonial rule over Brazil in the seventeenth century. While the regime censored *Calabar* until 1980, Nunes recorded “Fado Tropical,” albeit without the crucial context of the play’s broader political critique. Her recording at once rescued the composition from censorship while it strengthened her artistic relationship with Chico.⁸⁸ In the song, Nunes reminisces with Lusotropicalist saudades for colonial rule over Brazil in the form of bodies and terrains miscegenated into one transatlantic empire: “*Ai, esta terra ainda vai cumprir seu ideal, ainda vai/Tornar-se um imenso Portugal*” (“Oh, this land is still going to achieve its ultimate aim, it is still going/To become one immense Portugal”).⁸⁹ Emulating a Portuguese accent with rolled Rs and jumbled vowels, Nunes’ voice floats melancholically over the swaying melody of the accordion and the 12-string guitar. Her caricature places Portugal on her body, echoing Carmen Miranda as her nation drag exceeds the bounds of Brazil in a dreamlike colonial seduction. With a paternalistic tenderness, she expels from her throat the ultimatum of imperialism’s violent affections: “*Ô, não sê tão ingrata, não esquece quem te amou*” (“Oh, don’t be so ungrateful, don’t forget who loved you”). As a prelude to the sensual anti-colonialism of “Morena de Angola,” Nunes’ rendition of “Fado Tropical” haunts decolonization in Lusophone Africa, where, to cite Nadia Ellis, “one imagines the moribund colonial nation undead and roving while the architects of postcolonial and revolutionary nationalism attempt, often futilely, to get on with their business.”⁹⁰ It seems perhaps fitting, then, that Nunes would make a musical return to the colonial Fatherland as she began to dedicate equal portions of her repertoire to *ijexá*, *baião*, and other regional and Luso-Atlantic genres alongside samba.

^{xv} *Ijexá* is a genre of music rooted in the Candomblé temples of Bahia and a foundational rhythm to *afoxé*.

^{xvi} Fado is considered the national music of Portugal, a melancholic and often melodramatic genre whose renditions commonly detail loss, destitution, and ill fate. It is regularly distinguished as *saudade* put to music.

With its back-and-forth wordplay, “Morena de Angola” asks all that the morena can do while wearing her *chocalhos*, or rattles customarily tied to the shins or ankles only for the occasion of traditional dance. The *ijexá*, however, makes the instrument an extension of the morena’s body, asking whether she jangles while cooking, working, and making love. As Buarque regularly injected politics into his songwriting, he asks also about the morena’s participation in the MPLA on the warfront and whether she rattles there too: “*Será que no meio da mata, na moita a morena ainda chocalha?/Será que ela não fica afoita pra dançar na chama da batalha?*” (“Can it be that in the middle of the forest, in the bush/The morena still rattles?/Can it be that she doesn’t become afraid/To dance in the flames of battle?”).⁹¹ The morena’s intrinsic musical rhythm and fearlessness as tied to her sexuality speaks to the longstanding folklorization of African womanhood in Clara Nunes’ songbook as accessible and gratifying, for her audience and for herself. With this readymade association between blackness and hypersexuality, Buarque’s composition and Clara’s performance render the morena—at once African as she is Brazilian—a *guerreira* whose rattling rhythm is too indulgent, even for herself. “*Será que ela ’tá na cozinha guisando a galinha à cabidela?/Será que esqueceu da galinha e ficou batucando na panela?*” (“Can it be that she’s in the kitchen stewing the *cabidela* chicken?/Can it be that she forgot about the chicken and beat instead a rhythm on the pot?”). Brimming with camp, the song’s bounces in pitch and playful possibilities center the morena’s desirability as the root source and rhythm of pleasure in transnational cultural exchange and even war.

Recorded in a Brazilian sugarcane field, the music video opens with black women walking down a beaten clay road wearing colorful printed *panos* and strands upon strands of *guias*. Their *chocalhos* tied to their ankles clack to the rhythm of the band’s own *chocalho* and the strumming of the double-bass. Often set on the ground, the camera looks up from a low angle focusing directly on the bell-laden ankles of these ‘Angolan’ women, cutting between their feet and Clara as she struts, dances her *afoxé*, and sings in the canebrake. In other shots, the camera pans up from the black women’s feet to their hips, then to their faces as they dance the samba. A long shot from below shows the women holding decorated sticks, spinning, and feigning battle. Clara stands out as a diving force, wearing an off-the-shoulder white dress with a fringe of long braided ropes, *guias* of wood and bone, her typical metal bangles, and a stylized white *contraegum*^{xvii} on her arm. As the Afro-Bahian *ijexá* portrays a constructed image of traditional Angola casting out colonialism and extractive capitalism with sensuous joy, the palimpsest of Luso-Atlantic empire reveals its appropriations through sweeping transculturation. While the use of *chocalhos* is customary to some traditional dances in Angola’s Benguela province where the Kalunga Project spent most of its time, the dance of the morena here is, in fact, not particularly Angolan at all. Rather, it is a cross with a *moçambique*, often called a *congada*, the relative interchangeability of their names calling up the long history of Portuguese colonialism in Congo, Angola, and Mozambique and the trading of captives to Brazil. Originating in black Catholic brotherhoods of free and enslaved men of the Brazilian Northeast, the *congada* or *moçambique* are, to this day, all-male processions of bands and dancers that sing in unison with bells tied to their ankles and simulate battle with wooden swords and sticks in celebration of two black saints, St. Benedict the

^{xvii} Associated with the orixá Obaluayê, the protector of the body and land from pestilence, a *contraegum* is a rope made of braided *palha-da-costa*, or raffia palm straw, that is tied around the upper arm to ward off disembodied spirits from Candomblé and Umbanda practitioners while they fulfill spiritual duties.

Moor and Our Lady of the Black People's Rosary.^{92,xviii} As Nunes' performance blends the Brazilian congadas with the morenas de Angola dancing moçambique, she effectively establishes new traditions made to look timeless, reorienting the discourse of the nation and its deliverance from colonialism around a celebratory song dedicated to warrior women, to "*minha camarada do MPLA*" ("my female comrade from the MPLA"). As Paul Gilroy writes of the African diaspora, these "new "traditions" are invented in the jaws of modern experience, and new conceptions of modernity are produced in the long shadow of our enduring traditions."⁹³ Herself also the Guerreira to be commemorated, Clara's search for African authenticity to undergird Brazilian modernity proves extremely fragile in its essentialisms. "Tradition thus becomes the means to demonstrate the contiguity of selected contemporary phenomena with an African past that shaped them," Gilroy later writes, "but which they no longer recognise and only slightly resemble."⁹⁴ Despite, perhaps, the futility of her pursuit, Clara's sounding out and visualization of various nations and transnational colonial histories through her body turns this creation of tradition into one imbued with camp possibility.



Figure 7: On the left: film stills from the video for "Morena de Angola" by Clara Nunes (1980)⁹⁵; on the right: a shot from a promotional photo shoot by Wilton Montenegro for Clara Nunes' album *Brasil Mestiço* (1980) as the 'Guerreira.'

^{xviii} Most prominent today in the smaller towns of the Southeastern states of Minas Gerais, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Espírito Santo, the congada rituals prove important also for Umbanda practitioners, as St. Benedict is syncretized with Ossanha, or Ossain in Candomblé, the orixá of sacred plants and cures.

The drag of mestiça nationalism that I consider to characterize much of Clara Nunes' career is founded in the colonial exaggerations of tradition and its seductions. In the video for "Morena de Angola," the marked contrast between the singer's appearance with the black women and their dancing feet comes to a head most clearly in the way that tradition is at once established and then eroticized through the way she commands the camera (Figure 7). Reprising her lure of the gaze, in various shots, Nunes uses her hair and religious accessories to convey the sensuality and spiritual essence of African womanhood, even mid-civil war. She wags her kinky hair from side to side and lets it fall over her face. In one shot, she takes noticeable pleasure in running her hands through its fresh perm as she beams with the late-afternoon light flushing her heavily bronzed face. Her arms slice upward in her *afoxé* in the field, showing off her *contraegum*, *balangandãs*, and her bangles that catch the light, the fringe ropes on her dress swinging with her steps. Following Jennifer Spruill's work on drag in post-apartheid South Africa, Nunes' performance shows how her nation drag gestures also to "traditional drag," as she not only fashions herself as African but directs her performance toward the "political and cultural struggles prompted by new mobilizations of ethnic nationalism . . . that sexualize" African and Afro-Brazilian "identity and "ethnicity" like decolonization in Lusophone Africa.⁹⁶ Becoming the Morena de Angola, Clara's seduction of the viewer commands the gaze of war when she sings, "*Morena de Angola/Que leva o chocalho na canela,/Passando pelo regimento,/Ela faz requebrar a sentinela*" ("Morena from Angola/That walks with a rattle on her shin,/Passing by the regiment/She makes the lookout shimmy"). Conflict is eroticized, evoking the joy Nunes had earlier projected onto the brutality of Brazil's beginnings in her "Canto das Três Raças." The morena's swinging hips distract the sentinel bewitching him into dance. Clara then lets out an "*ui, ui*" four times while the band begins a syncopated clap on the track. With each interjection, the camera cuts between the black woman's stomping feet and zooms in on and out from Clara's face at hyper speed as she jerks her head over her shoulder. With her hair jostling back and forth, her intense stare into the zooming lens visualizes the interjection. According to Clara, this sound is something Angolans naturally do, commenting in an interview, "When they are dancing merengue [semba], they take a few steps and scream, 'Ui, ui.' When I saw that, I thought it was so cool. I grabbed an Angolan man and said to him, 'Teach me to do that.' And I included it in the song because I thought it was sensational."⁹⁷ Clara's intention is to claim a sexual and cultural authenticity, using the idea of being in touch with her roots in order to recast diaspora in her own image. Reorienting the discourse of anti-colonial Angolan nationalism through a Luso-Atlantic mestiçagem, her song for the warrior women of the MPLA softens them for a more palatable consumption, routing their war-hardened black Africanness through her light-skinned body. Clara Nunes' quest for all that is authentic, be it as a Brazilian or as an Angolan, seeks to legitimize the illusion of mestiçagem as, in effect, an artifice more reminiscent of drag.

If anything, Clara's portrayal as the Morena de Angola solidified her position in the archive of Brazilian popular culture as a figure who protected national traditions but who was also an expert shape-shifter. Speaking on how her trip to Angola influenced her 1981 show *Clara Mestiça*^{xix}, Nunes remarked, "I am very African, and I enjoyed seeing this huge identity that exists

^{xix} The 1981 production of *Clara Mestiça* joined together repertoire from Clara Nunes' album *Brasil Mestiço*, some of her greatest hits, in addition to other folkloric songs that she had never recorded, including a chant from the Krahô indigenous nation. The show sought to celebrate the diversity of regional rhythms that make up a national Brazilian sound, with Brazilian cinema royalty Bibi Ferreira directing and Clara's husband, Paulo César Pinheiro, writing. In remembering working with Clara, Ferreira remarked in the program for the show, "Clara is one of the most malleable, easiest people to work with on stage. She has an incredible ability to adapt," further insinuating the singer's ability to transform her look, sound, and gesture. Playing for seven months in Rio de Janeiro at Nunes' own theater, Teatro

between us. Everything came from them. On my trips, I became very pleased to be able to verify that we preserved many original aspects.”⁹⁸ With tremendous diva aesthetic, her iconic look was memorialized in promotional black-and-white photographs for the *Brasil Mestiço* album where she shows off her *contraegum*, bangles, and a fan of trimmed *galinha d’Angola* feathers and cowrie shells (Figure 7). Here, the kinky dark hair descends over her naked shoulders while the fan covers her chest, sensuously leaving the viewer to wonder if her breasts, too, are uncovered. An *adé* of conch and cowrie shells adorns her head, strings of shells dangling down past her chin. A necklace of scallop and clam shells tightly hugs her collar descending into her cleavage, the marine accessories tying Clara to Iemanjá, the orixá of the sea, as she straddles Africa and Brazil. As both the “Mestiça do Brasil” and the “Morena de Angola,” as one newspaper article put it, she traversed an Atlantic Ocean of symbolisms as she embodied several entities, mortal and divine, at once.⁹⁹ Despite Osmundo Pinho’s description of the mestiço as “an indeterminate object, incapable of offering itself as a subject,” it was, in fact, the shifts in Nunes’ career where she often overlapped and tangled folkloric constructions of racialized Brazilian popular culture that she gave flesh to mestiçagem.¹⁰⁰ From her white appearance singing boleros, to her dedication to samba through Afro-Brazilian spiritual frameworks, followed by her expansion into genres both specifically placed in regions of Brazil to across the Luso-Atlantic world, Clara’s mestiça offered a living, breathing subjectivity through which Brazil happily projected itself to the outside world. As these changes in sound and appearance took hold, her final aesthetic as the mestiça and African *guerreira* from 1980 onward remains the one most remembered. This glamourization of traditions that she projected onto and from her body, combined with her unexpected death in 1983, intensified the desire to mythologize her as a symbol of the nation. As this task has largely been taken up by black women singers and drag queens, their reinterpretations thus contribute to how Brazilians remember Clara Nunes.

Transposing Mestiça Nationalism: A Black and Queer Legacy

After Clara Nunes went into cardiac arrest from anaphylaxis, she remained on life support in a coma for four weeks. The religious motif of most of her career mobilized fans and celebrity friends to amass daily at the doors of the São Vicente Clinic in Rio de Janeiro praying for her recovery. Various priests and priestesses of Umbanda, Candomblé, Spiritism, and the Catholic Church offered healing rituals with believers bringing oils, holy water, feathers, tinctures, powders, crucifixes, cards with saints and handwritten prayers, mounting a spiritual urgency for a miracle—but to no avail.¹⁰¹ Clara Nunes died in the early hours of Holy Saturday, April 2, 1983 at age 40. With over 50,000 people attending her funeral, the wake of her death saw the pouring in of tributes, many of which continue to this day and have intensified with each passing anniversary of her departure. Numerous posthumous collections released by her record label, television specials, musical plays, sambas, and whole cover albums dedicated to her career have arguably contributed to the collective memory of Clara Nunes as the embodiment of mestiçagem in Brazilian popular culture. With the incredible vacuum left upon her death, the legacy of her music and her visual aesthetic needed to be passed on. No better woman could take up Clara’s flag and attempt to maintain her sound than her intimate friend and fellow ‘Queen of Samba’ Alcione (1947-).

As one of the judges on Flávio Cavalcanti’s televised talent show *A Grande Chance* in the mid-1970s, Clara Nunes gave Alcione’s performance as a contestant a perfect score and began to

Clara Nunes, and another two in São Paulo, the show was a massive success and received high praise from the press. Sadly, no video recordings of the show have been found in existence.

mentor her informally. By the time Alcione released her first album in 1975, *A Voz do Samba* (The Voice of Samba), she was among the few black women performers making regular television appearances and she quickly became a national samba sensation. Echoing Clara Nunes' own experience as a Mineira singing samba, Alcione grew up in the Northeast, in the state of Maranhão, before moving to Rio to pursue fame. Unlike Clara, however, she was happy to be pigeonholed as a sambista, dedicating herself to samba for her still-vibrant career. In light of Alcione's musical authenticity to the genre, shortly after Clara died, Clara's widower, Paulo César Pinheiro, asked Alcione as friend of the family to record the samba that he, João Nogueira, and Mauro Duarte composed to honor his wife's life. "Um Ser de Luz" ("A Being of Light"), with its somber yet uplifting cyclical verses that imagine the singer as a nostalgic *sabiá*^{xx} who flew to the stars to brighten the sky until dawn, became an instant success in 1983 and remains one of Alcione's most recited numbers in her songbook.¹⁰² Alcione would continue to allude to her sisterhood in samba with Clara Nunes—and still does to this day—as one of her inspirations, making her, for many years, the principal arbiter of Clara's musical legacy.



Figure 8: From left to right, two posthumous albums of greatest hits *Clara Morena* (1983) and *Clara Nunes: A Deusa dos Orixás* (The Goddess of the Orixás, 1984), followed by Alcione's album *Claridade* (Clarity, 1999), Mariene de Castro's album *Ser de Luz* (Being of Light, 2013), Carla Visi's album *Pura Claridade* (Pure Clarity, 2013), and Margareth Menezes' album *Autêntica* (Authentic, 2019).¹⁰³

In 1983 and 1984, Odeon released two posthumous albums compiling Clara Nunes' greatest hits. While others from Odeon would come over the years, the most recent being in 2005,

^{xx} *Sabiá*, or the rufous-bellied thrush in English, is a songbird native to Brazil that sings in the afternoon and evening until dawn. As part of both folklore and high culture, the *sabiá* is often associated with melancholy or nostalgia, particularly a nostalgia for home as associated with the 1968 song written by Chico Buarque and Tom Jobim, "Sabiá," a veiled critique of the military dictatorship who had forced countless activists, artists, and scholars into exile. As a singer of folklore, one of Clara Nunes' nicknames was *sabiá*, the bird itself as the central figure on the front cover of her 1981 album *Clara*.

these two sold together almost one million copies in Brazil. The massive success of these commemorative collections sealed Nunes as a national treasure in memoriam, not to mention began to shift memory of the singer as not only a *mestiça* but also a black woman. The title of the first collection, *Clara Morena* (1983), plays on her 1981 show *Clara Mestiça* and her song “Morena de Angola.”¹⁰⁴ However, her very name modifies the *morena*: the album’s title translates to “light morena,” gesturing at once to Clara’s whiteness while also the inherent inextricability of mixture, of blackness. Referring to her 1975 song by the same name, the second collection, *Clara Nunes: A Deusa dos Orixás* (Goddess of the Orixás, 1984), re-signifies the song’s title in reference to her Umbanda faith.¹⁰⁵ With her unexpected death at such a young age, and at the height of her career, as Silvia Brügger writes, “her dimension of holiness was enhanced and became more explicit. If she envisioned her work and her career as a mission and gave the image of a *mãe-de-santo* on stage, after her death, it can be said that she went through a process of ‘popular beatification.’”¹⁰⁶ The cover art for both albums makes this exceptionally clear, as she is adorned with a crown of wildflowers and daisies in *Clara Morena*; in *A Deusa dos Orixás*, she wears her well-remembered *adé* of seashells (Figure 8). Beyond the darkening of her skin and the bright red-painted lip on both albums covers, the everchanging mystery that was her hair denotes the roots of blackness, or at least their chemical creation. In line with *clara morena* aesthetics, her hair sits in undulated waves under the flower crown while, for *Deusa*, her hair, now kinky, fans out behind the Afro-diasporic spiritual assemblage of conchs and cowries. Meanwhile, these commemorative albums and Alcione’s ushering of Clara’s legacy serve as artifacts that accompanied the political shifts back to democracy toward the end of the military dictatorship. With them, came an even more vocal black consciousness movement as Brazil approached the centennial of the abolition of slavery in 1988 and the writing of a new constitution. Among its broader goals, the black movement sought to reject the myth of racial democracy outright while persuading those who previously identified as *morena/o*, *mulata/o*, *mestiça/o*, among other capacious terms, to assert their blackness as a *negro/a* and to claim black cultural referents.

Considering her appearance, her sound, and her faith, by the late 1990s, the claims of Clara Nunes’ cultural blackness by way of Africanity began to shift more to a skinned blackness. Starting with none other than Alcione, black women singers began to perform and record covers of her music, especially as they took a firmer hold on the national music market. To sing Clara Nunes was to sing Brazil, thus offering a broader legibility for a group of performers who had, for far too long, been passed over for their white female counterparts. Their recitation of Nunes’ folkloric Africanity, as black women, in turn seemingly offered her songs not only cultural but racial authenticity. The foundations of her music in folklore and its celebration of Brazilian *mestiçagem* became more attuned to the everyday black experience for newer generations now that these words and melodies were transposed into the voices of women who vehemently identified as *negras* and *pretas*. On Alcione’s 1999 album, *Claridade*—a long-held nickname for Nunes by Alcione and others that translates to “lightness” or “clarity”—Alcione covers some of Nunes’ most well-known songs, bringing to them a levity by speeding them up and adding instruments like the occasional trumpet, saxophone, clarinet, and violin. Her most notable cover is “Canto das Três Raças” that starts with a fever pitch *batuque* reminiscent of Candomblé and Umbanda drumming and an *adagio* chorus of baritone voices starting the song not at the original “*Ninguém ouviu*” but, instead, the middle of the verse, “*Negro entoou/Um canto de revolta pelos ares/No Quilombo dos Palmares*” (“The black man sounded/A song of revolt in the air/In the Quilombo dos Palmares”).¹⁰⁷ Centering the sounds and struggles of blackness first in Brazil’s sobbing song of pain, Alcione then rushes in with an *allegro* “*Ninguém ouviu*” accompanied by the guitar and *cavaquinho*. Throughout, her

voice jumps from her lower to upper registers and back, with intermittent shouts and speech-like, breath-filled enunciations. As her voice cascades, she wavers in and out of key, adding to the already haunting effect of Clara's echoes in the chorus' oh-oh-oh's. A few years later, on the two-volume cover album *Um Ser de Luz – Saudação a Clara Nunes (A Being of Light – Salute to Clara Nunes)*, 2003) that brought together 28 all-star singers to commemorate 20 years since Nunes' death, Elza Soares' rendition of "Canto das Três Raças" made moves similar to Alcione's, standing out as the star track. Beginning with the batuque, guitar, *cavaquinho*, and a chorus of male voices singing the echoed oh's, Elza enters with her iconic husky timbre.¹⁰⁸ As her voice loiters around the notes, she forces the music to accommodate her, to wrap itself around her rasp as she commands the surging anthem. With her hissed Ss, biting Rs, and twanged vowels, her wailing throughout—most notably, her "Nêêêêgro ento-o-ouuu"—make the pain of race felt in the flesh, echoing her hit re-recording of Seu Jorge's "A Carne" ("The Meat") from the previous year with its recurrent shriek against anti-black violence, "*A carne mais barata do mercado é a carne negra!*" ("The cheapest meat at the market is black meat!").¹⁰⁹

From seasoned singers like Alcione and Elza Soares to amateurs on more recent television talent shows like *The Voice Brasil* (2012-) and *Canta Comigo* (2018-), black women of all ages have sought to master Clara Nunes' repertoire, especially "Canto das Três Raças." Her music's use of Afro-Brazilian and African folklore, as well as the shifting racial politics over the decades that have more widely rejected the myth of racial democracy, suggests the need for her music to be performed by black women, despite Nunes' constructed racial ambiguity. However, not only her music, but Clara's visual presentation itself offers a treasure-trove of signs often tapped into, sometimes even without referring to the singer or her music. Bahian sambistas Mariene de Castro and Carla Visi made tribute albums of Clara Nunes covers and emulated her style of dress, accessorizing, and poses in their album art, de Castro twirling her white lace dress in a crown of flowers in front of a blue paneled background of Nunes' face, her eyes gazing on de Castro.¹¹⁰ More recently, while Margareth Menezes' comeback album *Autêntica (Authentic)*, 2019) makes no musical reference to Nunes, she has counted Nunes among her musical influences since childhood and this is most striking in the album art. Menezes distinctly gestures to Nunes' lasting look. An *adé* of black, white, and gold clam shells knotted together with black string sits atop her forehead, her bundles of black and gold curls undulating underneath and down to her bare shoulders.¹¹¹ Alcione's 1999 album shows her gazing into a shining crystal ball, a *cigana* (gypsy) whose important role in Umbanda echoes the orixá Exu, to open the spiritual pathways for safe passage, while she foretells the future in hopes of 'clarity.' If anything, these countless references to Nunes by black women artists intensified her status as a singer of *muita raça*, as purely Brazilian, as *autêntica* in her mixedness, perhaps even her blackness.

Speaking in São Paulo in October 2019 on the occasion of her autobiography's translation into Portuguese, U.S. black feminist activist and scholar Angela Davis commended the "vibrant tradition" of Brazil's music, especially its "powerful black women's voices: Clara Nunes, for example, and Margareth Menezes," also listing Elza Soares. Davis, too, may have been convinced of Nunes' blackness due to the singer's more recent associations with other black women covering her music. However, Davis' observations of artists doing the work of "dreaming for us" speaks to Nunes' artistry in finding pleasure in the pains of *mestiçagem*, in spite of its very mythification. As such, her music creates "occasions for us to recognize what it feels like. . . to experience a collective joy. And that allows us to experience what the future might bring."¹¹² To this effect, Teresa Cristina, one of the black sambistas most known for covering and continuing a rigorous tradition of studying Clara Nunes' songs since the mid-2000s commented, "Clara was a diva, in

the best of ways. She had so much concentrated energy that, when you see an image of her singing, it's like she is still alive. And even singing sad songs, Clara brought enthusiasm. Maybe that is what we miss: her voice giving us affection."¹¹³ Despite the centering of loss common to the memorialization of Clara Nunes, the collective imagining of potential futures through her artistry, especially for historically disenfranchised Brazilians like black women, queers, and practitioners of Umbanda and Candomblé, has proven a long-held tradition since her death. Riffing on Teresa Cristina, I believe it is not only in replaying and covering Nunes' music that she is felt to be alive but in how this memory is tweaked through Nunes' precise refashioning as a diva, especially through drag.

When a diva like Clara Nunes dies, her passing as a feminine icon triggers a collective mourning of the nation. Capricious or courteous, biting or benevolent, virtuous or vulgar, the diva figure rarely sits comfortably on either side of these binaries. Instead, she collapses them. Due to the perceived complexities and traumas of her private life expelled and put into her artistry, her persona is one that could only be described as enigmatic. Her death transforms her and her womanhood into a mystical figure to be replayed, re-watched, and revered. These recitations, however, often modify the star's essence through careful curation, embellishment, and caricature, even more so when her death came earlier than expected, perhaps at the height of her career or amidst a redemption for the spotlight. Judy Garland, Marilyn Monroe, Whitney Houston, Selena Quintanilla, Aaliyah, La Lupe, Amy Winehouse, Elis Regina, Carmen Miranda, Clara Nunes. These women's performance of gender with flamboyant gestures of color, humor, sensuality, and impropriety made them into canonical figures of the drag archive. The diva's implosion of gender, of femininity that is always already made by race, facilitates queer parody and (ir)reverence if not, at the very least, a fervent gay following. Moreover, their untimely death speaks to the very precarity of queerness, especially queers of color, their tragedy becoming an allure for memorialization. When a diva's performance of race, or the uncertainty of their very racial identity like Carmen Miranda and Clara Nunes, provided for extra drama, Hiram Perez explains how this "hails queer of color spectators" who "are prepared to assume [the mulata diva's] torment because we love them, and, finally, we love ourselves in them, if only in the fleeting moments of melotraumatic self-shattering."¹¹⁴ As drag queens of color, especially from the Brazilian Northeast, continue to use Clara Nunes' silhouettes and gestures to make statements or, simply, for their own pleasure, they increase her star power and how the nation chooses to remember her. In short, a diva is often only born through a drag queen and the case of Clara Nunes is no different.

Mirroring the trajectory of Carmen Miranda, her original muse, Clara Nunes' star fell too soon. As gay men in Brazil and around the world began to parody Miranda in drag in the 1960s and 70s, I have shown how Clara's own elaborate assemblage of mixed-race womanhood and its propagation of Brazil's *mestiçagem* and myth of racial democracy became itself reminiscent of drag. Dying at the peak of her career where her look and sound could be described, in many ways, as flirtatious with camp, Nunes' aesthetic primed her for parody in the drag world like her artist foremother. The longing felt for Nunes and the promise of *mestiçagem* offers what Perez terms "nostalgia as queer temporality." He describes this as a "camping of trauma" with which especially queers of color "may come to a complex self-awareness and knowledge about the world through overidentification with the spectacular mulata diva."¹¹⁵ This is incredibly salient, particularly in how the pain of abjection, brought on by the liminality of racial and sexual taxonomies fixed by whiteness, can become productive spaces of subaltern identification within and against the nation. For black women and queers of color, the legacy of Clara Nunes and the 'camping of trauma' around her early death seemingly provide a space of racial and sexual respite. However, as

blackness and queerness in Brazil remain marked by constant violence and a proximity to death, Nunes' memorialization through drag thus becomes a conduit for queers of color' and black women's futurity, one based in collective mourning and celebration. While the archive registers very little in the years immediately following Nunes' death, drag productions in the twenty-first century would bend Nunes' persona into more outright flamboyance.

In 2003, the 27th Annual Miss Brasil Gay beauty pageant paid homage to Clara Nunes, making her the event's overarching theme in commemoration of the 20 years since her death. In a large production with folkloric and Afro-Brazilian dance, the *transformistas* were asked to celebrate Nunes' career while representing their home state. Whereby *transformista*, or 'drag queen' in English, etymologically designates one's professional capacity to transform, it is not a stretch to consider Nunes herself, with the ongoing shifts in sound and appearance, also a type of *transformista*. In line with this, Clara Nunes' career in samba and MPB reiterates Marcia Ochoa's discussion of both the mainstream *miss* beauty pageant in Venezuela and its *transformista* iterations as a cultural product used to "negotiate power and marginality" in everyday life and in the creation of an industry that brings national pride.¹¹⁶ While the pageant is "produced through a process that erases class and race as discourses, and yet embodies the disciplinary project for both discourses," much like Clara Nunes' use of discrete racial categories while herself representing mixed race-ness, "we can trace some of the ways this icon came to represent the paragon of modernity in a place marked by long and public struggles over modernity—a place that can be both hypermodern and antimodern at the same time."¹¹⁷ Thus, the veneration and adoption of Clara Nunes as a mystical stand-in object of the nation by queers of color and black women allows them to manipulate the promise of racial democracy. In the 30th Annual Miss Brasil Gay in 2006, for example, Layla Ken, a black trans woman *transformista* representing the state of Bahia emerged on the runway for the first time dressed as a sensual Tupinambá *pajé* to the tune of Nunes' "Morena de Angola." With an elaborate feather headdress and staff indicative of the indigenous *pajés*, or shamans, of the Brazilian Northeast's original people before initial contact with the Portuguese, Ken marked her blackness as native to Brazil and, through Clara Nunes' song, African. The *transformista*'s queer construction of black and indigenous womanhood enacts the colonial miscegenation narrative of the *morena* to root blackness on both sides of the Atlantic. Layla Ken's premiere with Nunes' sounds of folkloric Africanity set the tone for the pageant that she eventually won, this look being cited as what gave her the edge.¹¹⁸ Choosing to either confirm, contradict, or invert racial democracy, nationalist productions like the Miss Brasil Gay beauty pageant and Nunes' broader audiovisual adaptation by popular drag queens pull queerness and blackness from the margins of national identity to the center of twenty-first-century Brazilian modernity.

Black and mixed-race drag queens, like black women singers' cover albums, continue to tap into the collective memory of Clara Nunes to create belonging in a nation that has long excluded them for their race, sexuality, and gender performance. Like the *transformistas* that Marcia Ochoa describes in Venezuela, glamour serves as a foundational gesture to drag queens' legitimacy as arbiters of beauty and femininity. "Glamour as a way of reordering space and time—if temporarily—around one's self for the purposes of enchanting" is applied to resuscitate Clara Nunes back from the dead, bringing the past to the present to create queer futures amidst the life-or-death violence of homophobia, transphobia, and anti-blackness.¹¹⁹ Drag queens especially from the Northeast like Andrezza Lamarck and Scarleth Sangalo from the state of Bahia, and Isis Nunes from the state of Pernambuco, have revived Clara Nunes' camp look from her "Morena de Angola" days yet recasting her as a hybrid *baiana*. Using the billowing lace skirts, the occasional white knitted shawl, *guias*, bangles, and *balangandãs* typical to the *baiana* figure, like Nunes' own

folkloric concoction of overlaid Africanities, they add a crown of shells or flowers under a wig kinked out brimming with hairspray in order to mark their self-styling as undoubtedly Clara Nunes. Performing in night clubs and gay pride parades like Lamarck and Sangalo, or recording pastoral lip-sync videos in the countryside and on the coast like Isis Nunes, all drag impersonations of Clara must reenact and refer to Nunes' faith. Doing so ensures an extra touch of glut to these *transformistas*' mestiça glamour.

The short documentary titled *A Tal Guerreira (That Certain Guerreira, 2013)* makes the linkages between Afro-Brazilian religions and queerness as one of glamorous excess inextricably clear, specifically in how it pertains to Nunes' memory. The film cuts back and forth between two storylines. First is the devotion to Clara Nunes' spirit at the Templo Espírita de Umbanda Clara Nunes (Clara Nunes Spiritist Umbanda Temple) in the interior of São Paulo led by *pai-de-santo*, or priest, Marco de Oxum. These are interspersed with interviews and performances of Michelly Summer, a mixed-race trans woman from the Northeastern state of Pernambuco, on her many years of performing as Nunes in drag. Both Marco de Oxum and Michelly Summer seek to honor Clara Nunes in over-the-top ways, often driven by the lasting image of Nunes as an opulent goddess. "When you talk about Clara Nunes, you think of a spectacular wardrobe, don't you?" Summer says in one of the interviews. "She entered [onstage] to truly give a show. It's not a criticism, but many singers today do a show with the same clothes they wear to the mall. And that makes me super sad because a bit of the glamour has been lost."¹²⁰ Marco de Oxum sits in front of countless statuettes of the orixás, gypsies, sambistas, *pretos velhos*—souls of the enslaved—and images of Clara in frames and a television screen with her music videos on loop. "For us in Umbanda, Clara is an orixá, she is an Iansã orixá," he says, as the film cuts back and forth between him and Summer while she puts on her makeup in preparation for a performance. Marco continues, "A year after Clara's disembodiment, many people, including Umbandists and Spiritists began to say that they were falling into trance under Clara's spirit." Meanwhile, Summer progressively turns into a baiana-like Clara Nunes before a performance at Blue Space, a gay nightclub in São Paulo, her talking overlaid with Marco de Oxum and his congregants swaying in trance. Wearing a quasi-hoop skirt of white lace and a crown of white roses, she sits on a platform throwing her arms into the air as she salutes each orixá in her performance to Nunes' "Guerreira" as male dancers dressed as the orixás Oxalá, Oxum, Ogum, and Iansã surround her. To recuperate the singer's essence as a glamorous diva, both storylines converge in an ostentatious presentation of zeal in celebration of what Clara Nunes' legacy can offer queer of color Brazilians and practitioners of Afro-Brazilian religions.

Black and mixed-race drag performers continue to tap into the Clara Nunes archive in hopes of extending the Brazilian national project beyond whiteness and heteronormativity. Beyond just her glamour, like Michelly Summer reveals through her interviews and performance, Clara Nunes' music offers an avenue to seek redress from prejudice against Afro-Brazilian religions which frequently comes in the form of anti-blackness and homophobia. In the case of Andrezza Lamarck, one of Salvador, Bahia's most well-known drag queens, she was lauded for "resurrecting among us [gays] the immortal figure of Clara Nunes" and came to be nicknamed "The Clara Nunes of Bahia." Her impassioned performance as Nunes made the singer accessible to queers through her flashy drag bedecked in countless *guias*, bangles, *balangandãs*, and a flower crown that sought to venerate the orixás. Asked what Nunes meant to her, Andrezza responded, "Clara Nunes represents a living page of our history. . . Clara came to be, for me, a sort of teacher who I seek guidance from, in terms of culture, in terms of belief and faith," mentioning also a pride in blackness.¹²¹ Choosing to interpret Nunes' mestiçagem, like other *transformistas* in her

overlapping Africanities in the “Morena de Angola” days, Andrezza Lamarck’s stage name harkens back to white Brazilian naturalists and eugenicists who saw promise in Jean-Baptiste Lamarck’s genetic theories of race: mutable by changes in the social and environmental milieu such that ‘preventative measures’ could be taken to weed out threats to the nation like hygiene, crime, and other behaviors framed as degenerate—like homosexuality—the onus of which was most frequently projected onto blackness.¹²² As Andrezza’s stage name finds a reverberation in the archive of late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century racial science and policy in Brazil, intentional or not, her regular performance as Clara Nunes in Bahia gestures to her own optimism for racial and sexual belonging through the singer’s embodiment of *mestiça* nationalism. Following Juana María Rodríguez, these queer gestures of Clara Nunes drag used to advocate for inclusion, however, “invariably risk producing an absence of understood intention, and an excess of ascribed significance.”¹²³ While Nunes’ image is wielded ever so slightly as a tool of resistance that may diversify and rework the folkloric representations of blackness and *mestiçagem*, these performances also risk the reification of Afro-Brazilian culture in Nunes’ likeness. Her shifts within the racial ambiguities of Brazil as a *mulata*, *mestiça*, and *morena* anchored in her spiritual beliefs made her a site of fantasy, of perceived possibilities within and beyond the normativities of Brazilian cultural identity.

While Clara Nunes’ audiovisual performances seemingly offer substantive latitudes for otherwise marginalized subjects to imagine a space of legitimacy and belonging within Brazil, I remain wary. As Marcia Ochoa attests, “Glamour is not redemptive; it will not save you.”¹²⁴ In early May 2015, after performing a show, Andrezza Lamarck was shot and killed outside of a bar in Salvador, Bahia. She was 46. As stated in her obituary by the Grupo Gay da Bahia, her friends “would call her ‘diva’” for her interpretations of Clara Nunes in her shows.¹²⁵ Despite her murder not being ruled a hate crime, the evidence points to her specific targeting, her passing ultimately reciting the early deaths of Clara Nunes and Carmen Miranda, as well as their exaltation as divas in public memory. We must therefore recognize the limits more broadly of Clara Nunes’ legacy as a salve for the everyday racial, gender, and sexual violence in Brazil, especially against black women and queer and trans people. These reinterpretations of Nunes not only celebrate her artistry but they also reveal the tremendous instability in her performances of Africanity and folklore, even when legitimately informed by her faith. The transition in her outward audiovisual image from whiteness to mixed race-ness to, finally, a black cultural reference in national memory elucidates the privileges and pleasures of whiteness in reframing one’s racial identity within Brazilian racial democracy and its sexual underpinnings. Becoming the ideal *mestiça* who herself could be a *mulata*, *morena*, and sometimes *baiana*, Clara Nunes embodied exotic, resilient, and joyous womanhood through a nostalgic language of cultural birthright to Brazil, encouraging others to follow in her footsteps.

The choreographies of Clara Nunes ultimately expose the queerness inherent to Brazilian *mestiçagem* as one of several national narratives of race mixture in Latin America and the Caribbean. My readings chip away at Brazil’s exceptionalism as a racial and sexual paradise, contributing to a critique on race, gender, and sexuality in Brazil crafted most incisively in recent years by interdisciplinary black feminist, performance, and queer studies scholars. In not treating these ideologies as static but as living, breathing beings that take form in specific bodies while not in others, this school of thought lays bare their performativity. In the wake of Nunes’ death and re-democratization, representation has proven to be a volatile site of contestation over who has or does not have the right to blackness, of who can wield and shape it. As racial democracy often omits the historical violence inherent to *mestiçagem*, the condition of blackness and Africanness

in Brazil remains one of a commodity made accessible through mixture and its enticements inscribed onto repeating sounds and images. The seductions enacted in Brazilian popular culture fashion an aesthetic of modernity that must repackage and sell subaltern ontologies as exoticized folklore to ensure national progress. In that regard, Clara Nunes serves as an exemplary case of how we need to re-think the articulation of racial democracy and race-making more broadly in Brazil. The sexual underpinnings of her racial performance gesture to the imperative of queer reading so that we may more effectively gauge national affects of desire and their recitation in Brazilian and Luso-Atlantic popular culture. The staging of these national narratives turns race, gender, and sexuality into spectacle, one whose pleasures hold memory in its very repetition. Thus, the pleasures of racial democracy, like those in the music of Clara Nunes, lie in its sensations: of a continued tradition, of a collective gesture, of a national fulfillment.

¹ Clara Nunes, “Guerreira,” recorded in 1978, track 1 on *Guerreira*, Odeon, vinyl LP.

² Malesela John Lamola, “Senghor, globalism, and Africanity,” *Phronimon* 17, no. 2 (2016): 51-67.

³ Jerry Dávila, *Hotel Trópico: Brazil and the Challenge of African Decolonization, 1950-1980* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010): 117-140.

⁴ Bryan McCann, *Hello, Hello Brazil: Popular Music in the Marking of Modern Brazil* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

⁵ Vagner Fernandes, *Clara Nunes: Guerreira da Utopia* (Rio de Janeiro: Ediouro, 2007).

⁶ Ibid; Rachel Rua Baptista Bakke, “Tem Orixá no Samba: Clara Nunes e a presença do candomblé e da umbanda na música popular brasileira,” *Religião e Sociedade* 27, no. 2 (2007): 85-113; Silvia Maria Jardim Brügger, “Mestiçagem e afro-descendência na música de Clara Nunes,” (presentation, Ninth Confernece of the Brazilian Studies Association (BRASA IX), New Orleans, March 27-29, 2008, http://www.brasa.org/wordpress/Documents/BRASA_IX/Silvia-Brugger.pdf.

⁷ Margarida Autran, “Clara, uma cantora de muita raça,” *O Globo* (Rio de Janeiro), May 18, 1977, n.p.

⁸ Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, edited by Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), 222-237.

⁹ Maria E. Alves de Souza, “Clara Mestiça: Os vários sons da música brasileira,” *Jornal do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro), Jan. 12, 1981, n.p.

¹⁰ Jasmine Mitchell, *Imagining the Mulatta: Blackness in U.S. and Brazilian Media* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2020), 52; Erica Lorraine Williams, *Sex Tourism in Bahia: Ambiguous Entanglements* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 48-50; Kia Lilly Caldwell, *Negras in Brazil: Re-envisioning Black Women, Citizenship, and the Politics of Identity* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 58.

¹¹ Fernandes, *Clara Nunes*, 111.

¹² Clara Nunes, *A Voz Adorável de Clara Nunes*, recorded 1966, Odeon, vinyl LP; Clara Nunes, *Você Passa e Eu Acho Graça*, recorded 1968, Odeon, vinyl LP; Clara Nunes, *A Beleza Que Canta*, recorded 1969, Odeon, vinyl LP.

¹³ Bakke, “Tem Orixá no Samba,” 86-87; Silvia Maria Jardim Brügger, “Clara Nunes: o canto como missão,” *Revista Eletrônica de Comunicação, Informação e Inovação em Saúde* 4, no. 3 (2010): 108.

¹⁴ Nunes, *A Voz Adorável de Clara Nunes*; Nunes, *Você Passa e Eu Acho Graça*; Nunes, *A Beleza Que Canta*.

¹⁵ Micol Seigel, *Uneven Encounters: Making Race and Nation in Brazil and the United States* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 140.

¹⁶ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Psychology Press, 1993), 125.

¹⁷ Nadia Ellis, *Territories of the Soul: Queered Belonging in the Black Diaspora* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015).

¹⁸ McCann, *Hello, Hello Brazil*, 42.

¹⁹ Hermano Vianna, *The Mystery of Samba: Popular Music and National Identity in Brazil*, trans. John Charles Chasteen (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999 [1995]), 90.

²⁰ McCann, *Hello, Hello Brazil*; Vianna, *The Mystery of Samba*.

²¹ Fernandes, *Clara Nunes*, 101.

²² Micol Seigel and Tiago de Melo Gomes, “Sabina das laranjas: raça, gênero e nação na trajetória de um símbolo popular, 1889-1930,” *Revista Brasileira da História* 22, no. 43 (2002): 181.

²³ Lisa Shaw, *Tropical Travels: Brazilian Popular Performance, Transnational Encounters, and the Construction of Race* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018): 118-123.

-
- ²⁴ *Banana-da-terra*, directed by João de Barros (1939; Rio de Janeiro: Sonofilmes).
- ²⁵ McCann, *Hello, Hello Brazil*, 107.
- ²⁶ Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 182.
- ²⁷ Hiram Perez, "Two or Three Spectacular Mulatas and the Queer Pleasures of Overidentification," *Camera Obscura* (67) 23, no. 1 (2008): 116.
- ²⁸ James N. Green, *Beyond Carnival: Male Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century Brazil* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 204-205.
- ²⁹ Kathryn Bishop-Sanchez, *Creating Carmen Miranda: Race, Camp, and Transnational Stardom* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2016), 171.
- ³⁰ *Ibid*, 206.
- ³¹ Paulina L. Alberto, *Terms of Inclusion: Black Intellectuals and the Politics of Belonging in Twentieth-century Brazil* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 249.
- ³² Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race," *Signs* 17, no. 2 (1992): 255.
- ³³ Fernandes, *Clara Nunes*, 118.
- ³⁴ Bakke, "Tem Orixá no Samba," 87.
- ³⁵ Alberto, *Terms of Inclusion*, 189-190.
- ³⁶ Stefania Capone, *Searching for Africa in Brazil: Power and Tradition in Candomblé*, trans. Lucy Lyall Grant (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 104-105.
- ³⁷ Roger Bastide, *The African Religions of Brazil: Toward a Sociology of the Interpenetration of Civilizations*, trans. Helen Sebba (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978 [1960]), 300-303.
- ³⁸ J. Lorand Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 188-223.
- ³⁹ Clara Nunes, *Clara Nunes*, recorded 1971, Odeon, vinyl LP; Clara Nunes, *Clara Clarice Clara*, recorded 1972, Odeon, vinyl LP.
- ⁴⁰ Clara Nunes, *Clara Nunes*.
- ⁴¹ Patricia de Santana Pinho, *Mama Africa: Reinventing Blackness in Bahia*, trans. Elena Langdon (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).
- ⁴² Petra Rivera-Rideau, "From Carolina to Loíza: race, place, and Puerto Rican racial democracy," *Global Studies in Culture and Power* 20, no. 5 (2013): 618.
- ⁴³ McCann, *Hello, Hello Brazil*, 106.
- ⁴⁴ Clara Nunes, "Ê Baiana," recorded 1971, track 4 on *Clara Nunes*, Odeon, vinyl LP.
- ⁴⁵ Melissa Blanco Borelli, *She Is Cuba: A Genealogy of the Mulata Body* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 15.
- ⁴⁶ Hildegard Angel, "Clara Nunes: Iansã das Gerais," *Última Hora* (Rio de Janeiro), Oct. 18, 1975, 2.
- ⁴⁷ Fernandes, *Clara Nunes*, 124.
- ⁴⁸ Francisco Mascarenhas, "Clara Nunes," *Manchete* (Rio de Janeiro), Feb. 9, 1974, 36.
- ⁴⁹ Nina Chavs, "Clara Nunes: Pássaro branco no céu cinzento da Suécia," *O Globo* (Rio de Janeiro), Dec. 22, 1973, n.p.
- ⁵⁰ Seigel, *Uneven Encounters*, 138.
- ⁵¹ Carlos Soh, *Diário de São Paulo* (São Paulo), Oct. 25, 1973, n.p.
- ⁵² Mitchell, *Imagining the Mulatta*, 49.
- ⁵³ Hazel Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 89.
- ⁵⁴ Clara Nunes, "Tributo aos Orixás," recorded in 1972, track 9 on *Clara Clarice Clara*, Odeon, vinyl LP.
- ⁵⁵ Juana María Rodríguez, *Sexual Futures, Queer Gestures, and Other Latina Longings*, (New York: New York University Press, 2014), p. 4.
- ⁵⁶ Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2002 [1982]), 463-464.
- ⁵⁷ Borelli, *She Is Cuba*, 10.
- ⁵⁸ Borelli, *She Is Cuba*, 112.
- ⁵⁹ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 473.
- ⁶⁰ Maria Manuela Brazette, "Saudade normal e patológica," *Análise Psicológica* 7, no. 4 (1989): 534.
- ⁶¹ claradobrasil, "A DEUSA DOS ORIXÁS - JUÍZO FINAL - CLARA NUNES," YouTube video, 4:17, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d-F8xrfMXM4>.
- ⁶² Clara Nunes, "Canto das Três Raças," track 1 on *Canto das Três Raças*, Odeon, vinyl LP.

- ⁶³ claradobrasil, "CANTO DAS TRÊS RAÇAS - CLARA NUNES," YouTube video, 4:28, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dcVKb2ht6BE>.
- ⁶⁴ Ellis, *Territories of the Soul*, 147.
- ⁶⁵ Osmundo de Araujo Pinho, "O efeito do sexo: políticas de raça, gênero e miscigenação," *Cadernos Pagu* 23, (2004): 101-102.
- ⁶⁶ Promotional poster for *Canto das Três Raças*, Promoções e Produções Ltda. Odara, from the Memorial Clara Nunes, Pôster 2.106.
- ⁶⁷ claradobrasil, "CANTO DAS TRÊS RAÇAS - CLARA NUNES," YouTube.
- ⁶⁸ Higginbotham, "African-American Women's History...", 253-254.
- ⁶⁹ CLARA NUNES GUERREIRA, "Especial Clara Nunes no Japão - 1982 COMPLETO" YouTube video, 45:16, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=27onZ7giWro>.
- ⁷⁰ Rodríguez, *Sexual Futures*, 4.
- ⁷¹ Fernandes, *Clara Nunes*, 212.
- ⁷² Paul Gilroy, "Sounds Authentic: Black Music, Ethnicity, and the Challenge of a 'Changing' Same," *Black Music Research Journal* 11, no. 2 (1991): 122.
- ⁷³ "Clara Nunes: Uma Morena que veio de Angola," *Última Hora* (Rio de Janeiro), Aug. 30, 1980, 1; Fernandes, *Clara Nunes*, 204.
- ⁷⁴ Ellis, *Territories of the Soul*, 150.
- ⁷⁵ Clara Nunes, "Guerreira."
- ⁷⁶ Arthur Ramos, *O negro brasileiro* (Recife: Fundação Joaquim Nabuco/Editora Massangana, 1988 [1932]), 51; Raimundo Nina Rodrigues, *O animismo fetichista dos negros baianos* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1975 [1900]), 70.
- ⁷⁷ Clara Nunes, "Mulata do Balaio," recorded 1979, track 11 on *Esperança*, Odeon, vinyl LP.
- ⁷⁸ ClaraNunesVEVO, "Clara Nunes – Guerreira," YouTube video, 2:14, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ok9bDC_S0_o.
- ⁷⁹ Clara Nunes, *Guerreira*, recorded 1978, Odeon, vinyl LP.
- ⁸⁰ Ellis, *Territories of the Soul*, 147.
- ⁸¹ Fernandes, *Clara Nunes*, 224.
- ⁸² "Clara Nunes: Uma Morena que veio de Angola," 1.
- ⁸³ Miriam Teresa Passos, "Clara Nunes: Homenagear as crianças era indispensável!", *Sétimo Céu* (Rio de Janeiro), Sept. 1979, 92.
- ⁸⁴ Lúcio Aguiar, "Clara Nunes: Mestiça do Brasil ou Morena de Angola," *O Prelo* (Rio de Janeiro), Sept. 15-21, 1980, 15.
- ⁸⁵ Alberto, *Terms of Inclusion*, 245.
- ⁸⁶ Aguiar, "Clara Nunes: Mestiça do Brasil...", 14.
- ⁸⁷ Pinho, *Mama Africa*.
- ⁸⁸ Fernandes, *Clara Nunes*, 201.
- ⁸⁹ Clara Nunes, "Fado Tropical," recorded 1977, track 12 on *As Forças da Natureza*, Odeon, vinyl LP.
- ⁹⁰ Ellis, *Territories of the Soul*, 154.
- ⁹¹ Clara Nunes, "Morena de Angola," recorded 1980, track 1 on *Brasil Mestiço*, Odeon, vinyl LP.
- ⁹² Marina de Mello e Souza, *Reis negros no Brasil escravista: história da festa de coroação de rei congo* (Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG, 2002).
- ⁹³ Paul Gilroy, "Sounds Authentic," 126.
- ⁹⁴ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 191.
- ⁹⁵ CLARA NUNES GUERREIRA, "Vídeo Show Relembra clipe de 'Morena de Angola', de Clara Nunes," YouTube video, 2:29, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kEkiDp4qZeA>.
- ⁹⁶ Jennifer Spruill, "Ad/Dressing the Nation: Drag and Authenticity in Post-Apartheid South Africa," *Journal of Homosexuality* 46, no. 3/4 (2004): 100-101.
- ⁹⁷ Aguiar, "Clara Nunes: Mestiça do Brasil...", 15.
- ⁹⁸ "Clara: Agora Mestiça."
- ⁹⁹ Aguiar, "Clara Nunes: Mestiça do Brasil ou Morena de Angola," 15-16.
- ¹⁰⁰ Pinho, "O efeito do sexo," 104.
- ¹⁰¹ Bakke, "Tem Orixá no Samba," 106.
- ¹⁰² Alcione, "Um Ser de Luz," recorded 1983, track 1 on *Almas e corações*, RCA Victor, vinyl LP.

- ¹⁰³ Clara Nunes, *Clara Morena*, compiled 1983, Odeon, vinyl LP; Clara Nunes, *Clara Nunes: A Deusa dos Orixás*, compiled 1984, Odeon, vinyl LP; Alcione, *Claridade*, recorded 1999, Globo Universal, compact disc; Mariene de Castro, *Ser de Luz*, recorded 2013, Fácil Brasil, compact disc; Carla Visi, *Pura Claridade*, recorded 2013, Sony, compact disc; Margareth Menezes, *Autêntica*, recorded 2019, Natura Musical, compact disc.
- ¹⁰⁴ Nunes, *Clara Morena*.
- ¹⁰⁵ Nunes, *Clara Nunes: A Deusa dos Orixás*.
- ¹⁰⁶ Brügger, “Clara Nunes: o canto como missão,” 115.
- ¹⁰⁷ Alcione, “Canto das Três Raças,” recorded 1999, track 5 on *Claridade*, Globo Universal, compact disc.
- ¹⁰⁸ Elza Soares, “Canto das Três Raças,” recorded 2003, track 14 on *Um Ser de Luz - Saudação a Clara Nunes*, vol. I, Deckdisc, compact disc.
- ¹⁰⁹ Elza Soares, “A Carne,” recorded 2002, track 6 on *Do Coccix Até o Pescoço*, Maianga, compact disc.
- ¹¹⁰ de Castro, *Ser de Luz*; Visi, *Pura Claridade*.
- ¹¹¹ Menezes, *Autêntica*.
- ¹¹² clara.claridade, “Video of Angela Davis Speaking in São Paulo,” *Instagram*, Oct. 24, 2019, accessed Oct. 30, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/p/B4BaOySlaCNZ325PEVzBoIYXvFmsWWGBBJRqY0/>.
- ¹¹³ “Teresa Cristina se apresenta em Brasília e homenageia Clara Nunes,” *Correio Braziliense* (Brasília), Jan. 14, 2012. https://www.correiobraziliense.com.br/app/noticia/diversao-e-arte/2012/01/14/interna_diversao_arte,286299/teresa-cristina-se-apresenta-em-brasilia-e-homenageia-clara-nunes.shtml.
- ¹¹⁴ Perez, “Two or Three Spectacular Mulatas...,” 130.
- ¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, 118, 123.
- ¹¹⁶ Marcia Ochoa, *Queen for a Day: Transformistas, Beauty Queens, and the Performance of Femininity in Venezuela* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 6.
- ¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, 46.
- ¹¹⁸ Fernanda Leonel, “Entrevista: Layla Kenn, a nova Miss Brasil Gay,” *Acessa.com*, Aug. 27, 2006, <https://www.acessa.com/zonapink/2006/materias/vencedoras/entrevista.php>.
- ¹¹⁹ Ochoa, *Queen for a Day*, 88.
- ¹²⁰ *A Tal Guerreira*, directed by Marcelo Caetano (2013; São Paulo: PaleoTV & Plateau Produções).
- ¹²¹ oveirobaixo, “A super Andreza Lamarck em foco: A cover da Clara!”, *DailyMotion*, 2008, <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x4yi2o>.
- ¹²² Nancy Leys Stepan, “*The Hour of Eugenics*”: *Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 73.
- ¹²³ Rodríguez, *Sexual Futures*, 6.
- ¹²⁴ Ochoa, *Queen for a Day*, 92.
- ¹²⁵ “Amigos choram morte de transformista Andreza Lamarck,” *Grupo Gay da Bahia*, May 9, 2015, <http://grupogaydabahia.com.br/2015/05/09/amigos-choram-morte-de-transformista-andreza-lamarck/>

Chapter 4

Slavery's Seductions: Reproducibility and Queer Consumptions in *Xica da Silva*

"You all can make yourselves at home and eat whatever you like because, here in my home, my food is good and plenty because I'm rich and because I can do what I want."

- Xica da Silva

Along with soccer and carnival, the military dictatorship in Brazil that would only end in 1985 saw television as the principal medium through which it could bolster national identity. As John Sinclair and Joseph Straubhaar show, the authoritarian government's overhaul of the telecoms infrastructure in the 1970s made access to television entertainment and news more affordable and accessible, thus allowing for state-sanctioned programming to expand its reach. For the regime, the purpose of television was "to reinforce linguistic, cultural, and political loyalty" and to fashion a more homogenized "nationalistic, consumer oriented" citizenry via the small screen.¹ Much of this marketing was trafficked through white and mixed-race women's bodies featured in commercial advertisements and telenovelas, or soap operas. The popular telenovelas underwent minimal censorship despite suggestive content with occasional nudity on open-access television, especially in those aired on TV Globo. Yet, the government feared the Globo network was getting too powerful for its own good despite its generally conservative reporting, a tendency to self-censor, and broad support of the regime's policies. In the early 1980s, the dictatorship gave more contracts for other networks to compete, such as RecordTV, Sistema Brasileiro de Televisão (SBT), and TV Manchete. While Globo remains renowned the world over for its films and television programming, TV Manchete provided a perfect foil in testing the limits of what the public wanted and could withstand. Despite its short-lived existence from 1983 to 1999, Manchete came to be known for its racy programming that took full advantage of the return to democracy and the lessening of strict censorship laws.

As the most prominent challenger to Globo, Manchete offered well-produced telenovelas that pushed the limits of moral conservatism where Globo was often unwilling to go. The risqué imagery inscribed onto women's bodies emblematic to the dictatorship's media often became more explicit on the Manchete network after 1985. Many of these novelas like *Dona Beija* (1986), *Carmem* (1987-1988), *Pantanal* (1990), and *Amazônia* (1991-1992) used sex and regional histories to challenge while also reaffirm the bygone dictatorship's goal of a unified national culture. The soap opera *Xica da Silva* (1996-1997) marked the final years of TV Manchete, exploring the desires and violence of race and sex set against the backdrop of eighteenth-century Minas Gerais. Echoing the dictatorship's use of mixed-race women's sensuality to foment national desires, *Xica da Silva* is very loosely based on the history of Francisca da Silva de Oliveira, or Chica da Silvaⁱ, an enslaved woman of mixed heritage and how she used her sexuality to gain her freedom and become one of the most powerful women in the colonial period. However, in the

ⁱ Chica and Xica are both pronounced the same in Portuguese (SHEE-ka). Not an original re-stylization of her name by neither the telenovela's director, Walter Avancini, nor its writer, Walcy Carrasco, they merely tap into a tradition started by black samba rock singer-songwriter Jorge Ben and white filmmaker Carlos Diegues whose respective song and film from 1976, "Xica da Silva" and *Xica da Silva*, insinuate Chica's/Xica's sexual prowess. Furthermore, when I use 'Chica' here, I am referring to the historical person that we have come to know through the historical archive. With an X, Xica denotes the mythification of the historical figure and representations of her in popular culture, namely the soap opera.

months leading up to the novela's debut, its director, Walter Avancini, stated his intentions in the press to paint its protagonist as a more "conscious" and "politically correct" symbol of black resistance and less about making her "a sexual object."² Nonetheless, authenticity was not Avancini's strong suit as *Xica da Silva* dripped with camp excess. The often violent and highly erotic distortions of Chica da Silva's life and colonial Minas Gerais frustrated historians from what could have been a partial rectification of her historical legacy. Uncommon to this day that at least one novela in the prime-time lineup does not depict a Brazil prior to the abolition of slavery, *Xica da Silva* navigated a terrain whose perceived distance in historical time permitted a more shocking, violent exploration of race relations and desire while also a reliably popular topic with the viewing public.

Following more than a century of Chica da Silva's mythification as black anti-hero, feminist heroine, and national symbol in literature, sambas, and film, the telenovela became but yet another, if not one of the most impactful recitations of her life with millions of viewers during its 11-month broadcast and its syndication across more than 20 countries. While such an extraordinary hit in Brazil and beyond, surprisingly few scholars have chosen to critically analyze the telenovela. Although Carlos Diegues' 1976 film, *Xica da Silva*, has received dozens of journal articles and book chapters in Portuguese, English, Spanish, French, Italian, and beyond, the telenovela generally receives no more than an ancillary paragraph, sometimes a sentence, and often nothing at all. Even researcher and filmmaker Joel Zito Araújo's smash 2000 documentary and accompanying book, *A negação do Brasil: O negro na telenovela brasileira* (Denying Brazil: Blacks in the Brazilian Telenovela), that takes meticulous inventory of black people's participation in telenovelas in Brazil from the 1950s to the late 1990s, fails to mention *Xica da Silva* beyond a few scant words.³ This lack of attention to *Xica da Silva* in its telenovela form by scholars of race, gender, and television in Latin America continues to be a confounding one that this chapter aims to directly address, especially considering the novela's status as the first to star a black protagonist that was transmitted widely across the region.ⁱⁱ With a young Taís Araújo in the leading role, the novela would continue Chica da Silva's mythification in the campiest, most erotic ways possible, rarely sticking to the script of her life as registered in the historical archive.

Chica da Silva was born into slavery sometime between 1731 and 1735 in the diamond-mining district of the captaincy of Minas Gerais. A child of Maria da Costa, an enslaved African woman, and Maria's master, Antônio Caetano de Sá, Chica was considered a *parda*, or brown-skinned *mulata*, both due to her race and her illegitimacy. She would, however, gain her freedom and incredible wealth through her relationship with her third master, João Fernandes de Oliveira. With the influx of enslaved labor to feed the gold and diamond mines of Minas Gerais, it was quite ordinary—although a sin according to Church doctrine—for white men in the district to keep black or mixed-race concubines as lovers or even common-law wives.⁴ As several scholars have shown like Júnia Ferreira Furtado and Lisa Ze Winters, concubinage provided a route through which

ⁱⁱ Despite *Xica da Silva* is often credited as the first telenovela in Latin America to feature a black protagonist, others preceded it in Brazil on the national level. In 1965, Iolanda Braga starred as Clotilde in *A Cor da Sua Pele* (The Color of Your Skin) on TV Tupi but it was never aired outside Brazil. From 1969 to 1970, Ruth de Souza played Cloé, Uncle Tom's wife, in *A Cabana de Pai Tomás*, an adaptation of Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 anti-slavery novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. She was co-billed alongside Sérgio Cardoso, a white man who played Uncle Tom in blackface. Despite Cardoso's blackface, audiences and several of de Souza's white female co-stars did not identify with her role and the writers consistently lessened her screen time. With a diminished role, the producers eventually moved her name after that of her white co-stars in the credits effectively silencing her. *Xica da Silva*, on the other hand, was the first soap opera shown across Latin America to feature a black lead protagonist. For more on Ruth de Souza's early career, see Joel Zito Araújo's *A negação do Brasil: O negro na televisão brasileira* (São Paulo: Editora Senac, 2000).

many black and mixed-race women sought manumission and a modicum of wealth for themselves and their children across the Americas since interracial marriage was often prohibited under Catholic and civil law.⁵ In 1753, João Fernandes arrived to the district's seat of Arraial do Tijuco—now known as Diamantina—to fulfill his duty as the new diamond contractor named by the Crown. Shortly thereafter, he purchased Chica from her previous master, Manuel Pires Sardinha, by whom she already had her first son, Simão. João Fernandes freed her as a Christmas gift and lived with her as his common-law wife for 17 years. In 1770, João Fernandes was recalled to Portugal by the omnipotent Marquis of Pombal, where he later fell ill and died in 1779, never returning to see Chica. Together, Chica and João Fernandes had 13 children, many of her sons becoming noblemen in the Portuguese Court and her daughters, who she maintained in Tijuco, becoming educated in the nearby Macaúbas Convent. Despite we have lost her will, research in local baptismal, marriage, and death records shows that Chica enslaved at least 104 people, only manumitting one.⁶ A devout Catholic who donated millions of réis to white, mixed-race, and black Catholic brotherhoods where she often also served on the board, Chica da Silva died in 1796 and was buried in Arraial do Tijuco's Saint Francis of Assisi Church, an honor held only for wealthy white parishioners.

Despite the context provided, my concern here is not to stay true to Chica da Silva's life nor is it to critique the novela for taking artistic license. Rather, it is the queer excess of *Xica da Silva* as a cultural product representative of the racial and sexual politics of the mid- to late-1990s—and ever since in its various syndications—that interest me most. Originally airing from September 16, 1996 to August 18, 1997 every night of the week except Sundays, the novela was complete with intricate colonial battle scenes, blood-sucking witches, self-flagellating priests, burnings at the stake, returns from the dead, snake dances, pestilence, rape, incest, crucifixion, cannibalism, full frontal female nudity, and wigs and gowns whose hues ran the gamut of the rainbow. These shock-and-awe embellishments to the novela's direction encircle the interracial romance between Xica and João Fernandes that drives the plot. As a *forra*, or a woman freed from bondage, Chica in her life and Xica in the soap opera both sought physical and financial security by way of her relationship to a powerful white man. The accrual of property, including the enslavement of other black and mixed-race people, and the assurance of the status of her children with João Fernandes by way of race mixture, provided a convenient, retroactive prototype to the potentials of Brazil's racial democracy in the twentieth century. Despite the commonplace practice of concubinage in Arraial do Tijuco of numerous other black and mixed-race enslaved and free(d) women seeking social ascension, historians and critics, most notably Júnia Ferreira Furtado, have pointed out that Chica/Xica's story is made to appear singular.⁷ The mythification and repetition of this messy but admirable 'exception' over the long twentieth century in popular culture has the potential to be reproduced, metaphorically and literally in the flesh, as the rule. On the use of Chica da Silva's body and memory, Furtado denounces the soap opera as a "perversion" that violates "the limits of the erotic" and has extraordinarily "bad taste" in its dismissal of historical authenticity and the nuances of Chica da Silva's life before, with, and after João Fernandes.⁸ I therefore ask what we might glean from *Xica da Silva* about slavery and its perversions of race and sex as represented on screen beyond and, yet, perhaps because of the telenovela's adulteration of the historical archive.

Per the work of black feminist and black queer studies scholars thinking across the African diaspora, slavery was an institution bound by sexual violence and perversion.⁹ Following Ariane Cruz's lead, I ask how a 'politics of perversion' might be used here to allow Xica and other characters in the soap opera to account for their past while at the same time allow them to take pleasure in the inversion of—or the literal and figurative fucking with—their traumas in bondage.¹⁰

The same could be said for white characters and, at times, their own liminal relationship to captivity that reproduces racial hierarchies and desires. How do these perversions of race and sex at the interpersonal and also national level establish what Furtado considers to be beyond the “limits of the erotic”? How might a close and queer reading of one of many recitations of the myths surrounding Chica da Silva actually explode these limits altogether and, instead, prove the erotic to be a space of *reproducibility*? I am offering reproducibility in this chapter as twofold. First, it accounts for other forms of same-sex interracial desire used to pursue national belonging, particularly through acts and affects of revenge, hunger, and morality. Second, I envision reproducibility through Kimberly Juanita Brown’s explorations of slavery’s afterimages and their resonances in contemporary popular culture such that racial democracy, as a product of ‘distance’ from Brazil’s past, itself gets reproduced. Reproducibility thus encompasses the repetitions, recitations, and attempts at redress through visuality whereby the seeing and reproduction of images, gestures, and choreographies of slavery “ente[r] a collective consciousness and remai[n] within—seen, though distorted—and therefore remaining unknown.”¹¹ In my close reading of *Xica da Silva*, reproducibility also relies heavily on Saidiya Hartman’s pivotal theory of fungibility. The commodification of the black body under slavery allows for different meanings, performances, and desires to be imputed upon it. For these reasons, Hartman writes, the “abstractness and immateriality” of fungibility allows for blackness to “serve as the vehicle of white self-exploration, renunciation, and enjoyment.”¹² *Xica da Silva* hovers in this uneasy territory, making light of slavery’s violences through comedy and camp as a mode of pleasure enacted through and on the bodies of its black characters. Although Furtado, in her critique of the novela, considers this to be “bad taste,” the public devoured it. Taste, nevertheless, does not only intimate a moral discernment here on the part of the novela’s creators. In my reading, taste also refers to the literal and metaphorical palate of consumption of slavery’s queer delectations and discontents that makes them reproducible. The embodied practices—if not the bodies themselves—of the enslaved as fungible are seasoned, chewed, swallowed, and digested to make a newer, more refined Brazilian taste moving forward. The mostly white elite of Arraial do Tijuco on screen and the Brazilian public thus find nourishment in the imagery of slavery made unremarkable through its repetition and, still yet, imperative to imagining national progress.

As a re-imagined past that is prologue to racial democracy, *Xica da Silva* offers the viewer a palimpsest of colonial time and sensual silhouettes cast onto Brazil in the first decade of re-democratization. Instead of focusing on the social taboos of interraciality in the colonial period, I aim to show in this chapter, through close reading and notes around the novela’s production and syndication that the transgressions of racial binaries and the pleasures of these transgressions are often informed by the violation of heteronormative desires. With the novela’s common description in national and international press as analogous to softcore pornography, the romantic and sexual contraventions typical to the telenovela form across Latin America made it exceptionally taboo yet gratifying. As Ariane Cruz writes on interracial pornography, we might imagine that *Xica da Silva*’s tremendous success stems from “traversing the binary of black and white [which] are also often informed by the pleasures of crossing and recrossing the borders of heterosexual and homosexual.”¹³ Although racial democracy rhetoric normalizes this history of miscegenation in order to explode the racial binary, the reminder of interracial desire’s historical proscription, a type of “crossing,” makes its repetition, or “recrossing,” through the telenovela help to further mark these race mixtures as queer. Most blatantly, anal sex and sodomy serve as a fulcrum of power and pleasure for whiteness in *Xica da Silva*. However, at a deeper level, these enact an affect of hunger for blackness as necessary victuals for white morality such that these queer consumptions become

foundational to racial democracy as imagined in the 1990s. This becomes especially true in the case of several on-screen relationships who, despite their queer modalities, eventually birth children. With the eventual procreative success of these relationships, often by unconventional means, *Xica da Silva*'s purpose is to reinforce that interraciality, while seen as taboo and sexually perverse in Brazil's colonial past, is actually productive in the present and guarantees racial democracy's future.

Xica's Fungibility and Black Anality

The opening theme to each episode of *Xica da Silva* immediately gestures to the camp that is to come. Opening to the peals of church bells and Gregorian chant in Latin, a full choir and orchestra trumpets in baroque chords, "*Glória, glória à rainha! Glória, Xica da Silva!*" ("Glory, glory to the Queen! Glory, Xica da Silva!"). Painted on a church ceiling, white and mulato cherubs with distorted faces and shifting eyes play instruments and flutter about carrying roses and scrolls featuring the names of the cast and crew. In voiceover, a chorus of women sing, "*Anjo, diabo, mulher, / Negro diamante, / Sou Xica da Silva. / Mas para o meu senhor amado / Meu amor é ouro no cascalho.*" ("Angel, devil, woman, / Black diamond, / I am Xica da Silva / But for my beloved master / My love is raw gold.") As the scene pans down into the heavens, Taís Araújo's Xica emerges looking innocently into the camera with her hands clasped in prayer. Dressed as the Virgin Mary, she is adorned in a satin royal blue mantle trimmed with gold, a white and red tunic, and a gilded hood as rays of sunshine beam out from behind her onto the clouds. A mischievous cherub quickly dips down and distracts her while a white hand emerges from off-screen to pull down her tunic exposing her bare shoulder. Xica coyly grins and pulls the mantle up over herself without fixing her tunic. As the camera zooms out onto the painting of her assumption as celestial queen, she reassumes her prayerful position.

Re-appropriating the imagery of the nave of the Saint Francis of Assisi Church in Ouro Preto, Minas Gerais, the novela's opening theme turns into caricature colonial Brazil's most recognizable painted church ceiling (Figure 1). Albeit composed several years after Chica da Silva's death, the artist Manoel da Costa Ataíde envisioned the Virgin as a mulata, in addition to many of the cherubs surrounding her. The creators of the novela's theme build upon this characteristically Brazilian tradition of miscegenation as Brazil's holy destiny. Xica in the flesh substitutes Mary in order to further complicate the divide between the mortal and the divine ("Angel, devil"), the whore and the virgin ("woman"), and the history and legend of Chica/Xica da Silva ("Black diamond"). Despite the theme's testing the limits of blasphemy in its sensualityⁱⁱⁱ, it etches the mythification of Xica as a well-known historical figure while positioning her as divine mother to Brazil and the racial and sexual contradictions of its questionable paternity.

Night after night, the repetition of the opening theme taps into the long tradition of the mulata as a national body representative of Brazil. As Xica is anachronistically swapped for

ⁱⁱⁱ The Catholic Church and Christian groups issued several complaints to TV Manchete for its blasphemy throughout the novela's broadcast. The most notable case was that of an episode slated to air on Good Friday, March 28, 1997 in which seven novitiates were put under a sexual spell by Fausta (Lu Grimaldi), one of Tijuco's witches. Crazy for sex, they were to show their legs and breasts to all the men, attempting to sleep with them. Brought to the Civil Court of Rio de Janeiro by a conservative religious group, the judged censored the scenes, mandating the episode's editing. Manchete ordered a reluctant Avancini to change the scenes to an insinuation, which he reluctantly did, and delayed the episode to the following Monday. Ironically, in the place of *Xica da Silva*, Manchete decided to show a U.S. film on the Passion of Christ. (Daniel Castro, "Justiça suspende cenas de novela," *Folha de São Paulo* (São Paulo), Mar. 28, 1997.)

Ataíde's browned Virgin Mary, the mulata and her improved blackness that teeter between slavery and freedom are made fungible. She provides recognizable pleasures in the sexual desire that has long circumscribed her body since Brazil's establishment as a crucial node in the transatlantic slave trade in the mid-sixteenth century. As we only know of Chica—who thus becomes Xica with an X and the sexual undertones of the letter change—due to her involvement with the richest and most powerful man in Brazil in the 1700s, her body and its representations even two centuries later demonstrate the expansion of João Fernandes as “master subject through his embodiment in external objects and persons.”¹⁴ As Saidiya Hartman's key thesis in her *Scenes of Subjection*, Xica's fungibility offers a fertile plain to re-constitute racial democracy after the military dictatorship through longings for an imagined colonial past of undying, interracial love between masters and their enslaved property. “Put differently,” she writes, “the fungibility of the commodity makes the captive body an abstract and empty vessel vulnerable to the projection of others' feelings, ideas, desires, and values; and, as property, the dispossessed body of the enslaved is the surrogate for the master's body since it guarantees his disembodied universality and acts as the sign of his power and dominion.”¹⁵ Xica's fungibility as captive, concubine, mistress, and ghost allow for simple gestures made on- and off-screen, from the hand pulling down her tunic to her entire relationship with João Fernandes, to echo the archive of slavery and its sexual violences for an audience who never witnessed them in real time.

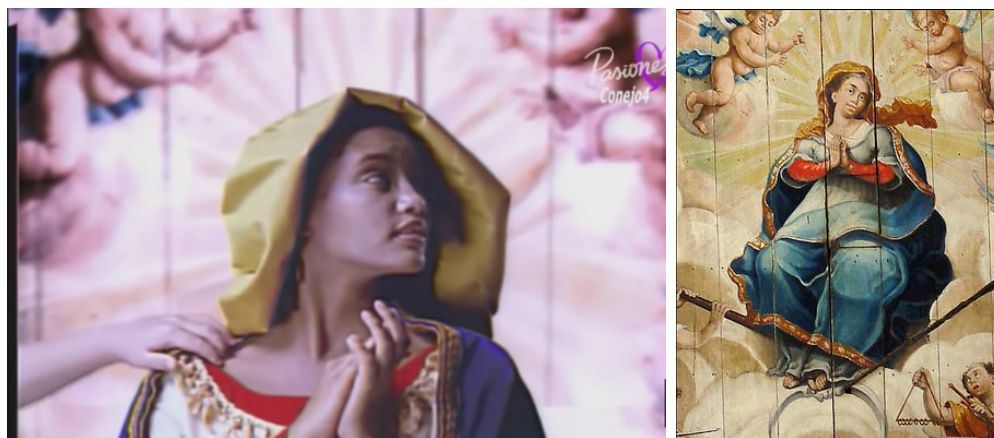


Figure 1: A film still (left) from the opening theme of *Xica da Silva* (1996-1997, TV Manchete) and the central figure of Manoel da Costa Ataíde's *Glorificação da Virgem Maria* (The Glorification of the Virgin Mary, 1812) on the nave ceiling of the Saint Francis of Assisi Church in Ouro Preto, Minas Gerais, Brazil.

Xica da Silva rarely spares the viewer in its extreme violence, nudity, and humiliation. However, an early scene depicting Xica's rape and its aftermath sets the tone for the entire novela through slightly more subtle gestures that merit close reading. After Xica is sold to her tempestuous second master, Sergeant Major Cabral (Carlos Alberto), his daughter and the novela's villain, Violante (Drica Moraes), sends Xica to the stables to deliver her father some food. Violante remains fully aware that the Sergeant Major purchased Xica as his concubine. It was at the public auction for Xica and her mother, Maria (Zezé Motta), alongside a collection of livestock, that Violante, in fact, had told her stepmother, Micaela (Teresa Sequerra), who is ashamed of the Sergeant Major's purchase, “A wife must understand that a man has his needs.” Once Xica arrives with the Sergeant Major's food, seductively shimmying her shoulders, he knocks it out of her hands, grabs her blouse, and throws her down on the straw in one of the stalls. As he removes his military coat and hat, she rises to flee. He slaps Xica down but she gets up again. Once the Sergeant

Major throws her against the wall, the camera cuts to a quick shot of a white horse and a black horse playing. The next shot shows Xica holding her chin high and raising her skirt as she wades in the river, bright red blood running down her legs. As she sits to splash water on her thighs, the flamboyant white innkeeper, José Maria (Guilherme Piva) emerges on the bank in a light pink suit and hat. He is often derided as Zé Mulher, or ‘Joe Woman,’ for feeling like he “was born in the wrong place” and in the wrong body, as he states in an earlier episode. He consoles Xica who appears more shocked at his effeminate behavior and fashion than her own rape. As he crosses his arms twirling his red curls with one hand and a side-eye grin, he insinuates that he, too, might have been violated before but that it is part of man’s nature: “A hot-blooded man turns into an animal. He hurts you. I know what that mistreatment is like.” As Xica returns to town walking up the cobblestone street, the camera slowly pans down her body in a medium shot showing that the Sergeant Major tore her skirt in the back. As Xica ponders running away, she is told by Mandinga (Edson Montenegro), an enslaved cook, healer, and Candomblé priest that the orixás recommend she stay in Tijuco, for this violation and suffering are but a step to her becoming the queen of Arraial do Tijuco.

Despite the orchestra’s melancholic swells as Xica washes away the stain of her debasement and returns to town, the novela’s mise-en-scène treats her rape as mundane violence and, yet, a metaphor for her racial and sexual abjection from society. The violation of an enslaved mulata girl by her white septuagenarian master is diminished to mere horseplay between equally matched beasts of burden brought on by Xica’s own voluptuous sensuality. As the press noted Taís Araújo’s unmistakable shoulder movements throughout the novela that added both to Xica’s sass and sexiness, the actress discussed in a 2017 interview how Avancini directed her to excessively shimmy her shoulders. In addition to making Xica a character of persistent sensuality, she stated that he also wanted to distract the audience from, what he called, the “deception,” or disappointment of her inexperienced acting.¹⁶ In the thinking of Hartman, Avancini by way of Araújo consequently “obfuscates the primacy and extremity of violence in master-slave relations” by exploiting slavery’s discourse of seduction. “Seduction,” Hartman goes on to write, “makes recourse to the idea of reciprocal and collusive relations and engenders a precipitating construction of black female sexuality in which rape is unimaginable. As the enslaved is legally unable to give consent or offer resistance, she is presumed to be always willing.”¹⁷ The repetition of such seductions, in slavery and freedom by Xica and other characters, conceals or ‘deceives’ the inherent inequalities along the lines of race, gender, class, and freedom status such that all parties involved are painted with a broad brush of immorality. Nevertheless, calling on Dariéck Scott’s principal question in *Extravagant Abjection* about racialization made “through domination and abjection and humiliation,” might we ask if there is “anything of value or to be learned from the experience of being defeated, humiliated, abjected?”¹⁸ As Xica casts herself out from society to wash her wounds, it is on the river bank that she begins what will be a life-long friendship with José Maria, himself a pariah for his perceived queerness.^{iv} Their relationship, in turn, offers a confluence between blackness and queerness as Xica and José Maria seek to respectively whiten and straighten themselves through marriage.

^{iv} I use ‘queer’ and ‘queerness’ here to describe José Maria in both sexual and gendered terms. Despite his use by *Xica da Silva*’s creators to expose the viewing public to broader discussions on current issues in Brazilian society—here being homosexuality—and as comic relief, José Maria’s repeated admission of not belonging or feeling comfortable in his own body as well as little to no sexual desire leaves him teetering between a combination of transness and asexuality while he, at times, expresses desires for same-sex romance.

With Xica's skirt torn in the rear and José Maria's empathy for her abuse through his own pains at the hands of other men, the scene alludes to the potential that Xica's rape was not necessarily vaginal. In the following episode, in Micaela's desperation to feel the touch of the Sergeant Major, she tells her elderly husband, "I know very well how slave women are used. They allow certain acts that a lady cannot mention. But I... I wait for you every night, my husband. I would like you to touch me and treat me as if I were a slave." Without much need for imagination, Micaela's plea uncovers that the "certain acts" that her husband has consummated with Xica might, in fact, be anal intercourse. Further, Xica is believed to have had the agency to "allow" them and, subsequently, desire them. It is the revelation of the wholesome Micaela's own alleged perversion out of desperation to pleasure her husband that black women's prospects for personhood, respectability, and perhaps even spiritual salvation in Tijuco and colonial Brazil more broadly are denied by an inherent proclivity to anal sex.

These early black anal encounters between Xica and the Sergeant Major, Xica and José Maria, and Micaela and the Sergeant Major offer a window into the racial-sexual configurations that buttress desire among the novela's characters and the colonial longings of Brazilian audiences in black and mixed-race women's bodies. This "black anality," as Jennifer C. Nash terms it, allows us to see how "black women's anuses become representational passageways ... through which viewers are allowed access to racially marked spaces."¹⁹ While black feminist theory has long derided the ass-oriented excess projected onto black sexualities, Nash's focus on the anus allows us to envision how anality, while limiting black sexual freedom, may engender delight in blackness itself, if not at the minimum a site where race and sexuality are made and represented together. Much later in the novela after Xica and João Fernandes have well-established their relationship and had their first son, João Fernandes asks Xica for "proof of her love." He whispers in her ear and she reacts, shocked and disgusted, throwing pillows at him as he dashes out of the bedroom grinning. The next episode, while lying in bed half-naked, he repeats his request. Xica replies, "João Fernandes, what you are saying is a proof of my love is one of the most shameless acts that exists. Give up. Now, come here and help make our daughter." These thinly veiled appeals for anal sex with Xica provide further comedy, even camp as her refusals are laced with coquettish smiles and feigned surprise. The anality of black sexuality, according to Nash, is made to be "nonproductive and nonreproductive," while Xica's anus and its imagined pleasures become "a site that allows black sexualities to be produced and reproduced as comically nonnormative not because of excess but because of sheer silliness."²⁰ Xica, however, flips the script in her denial. In Xica's cajoling João Fernandes to channel his lust toward helping procreate the couple's second child, black anality provides humor while it also becomes reproductive. In the end, it is Xica's anus as racial and sexual space through which racial democracy is fantasized and figuratively and biologically reproduced in the soap opera.

In the press, Xica's refusal of João Fernandes amplified an argument on set between Taís Araújo and Walter Avancini. Instead of refusing João Fernandes, Avancini and the writers were originally to have Araújo on her hands and knees, the actress making a face mixed with pain and pleasure as she yields to the diamond contractor's desires.²¹ Araújo refused to do the scene, with Avancini giving a statement in an interview saying,

"It was just the insinuation of anal sex, but the problem with Taís is not that. Despite she is a good actress, she is unable to understand that she needed to do a more adult, more daring Xica who broke all of the rules of moral behavior and traditions of her time. ... She doesn't have the résumé to argue with me. From the start of the novela, I have repeatedly mentioned that Xica's sensuality had to be present even while eating breakfast. I thought she would get over her initial inhibitions, but she was unable to do so. She kisses the contractor like a little girl."²²

Avancini claims full control over the lead actress' black body as a fungible commodity such that his desires should become the character's. As Xica pursues her freedom and love through João Fernandes, and Araújo her acting chops and fame through Avancini, this encounter on screen and on set resonates with the patriarchal power structures inscribed into the slavery archive echoed well into the 1990s. As Marisa Fuentes offers us in her work on black women in the colonial Caribbean, "Discussions of black women, free(d) and enslaved, using white men as an avenue to freedom often erase the reality of coercion and violence, and the complicated place of black women in this system of domination."²³ For these reasons, I agree with Fuentes in that the agency of both Xica and Araújo is fraught by the white men that command them, despite their freedom on paper. For the Sergeant Major and João Fernandes, it is their money, power, and brute strength that manipulate Xica; for Avancini, his résumé and public insults. In demanding sensuality at all times, Avancini's direction of Araújo seeks to strip Xica of her three-dimensionality, reducing her to a silhouette of herself in fulfilling each of her masters' respective desires. Regarding such puppeteering, Lisa Ze Winters writes of the mulata concubine in the slavery archive, "Rather than a diasporic subject, she appears more readily as a colonial object and trope produced not by African or black agency but rather by European desire and domination."²⁴ Xica's coercion, submission, and refusal thus become a conduit for the possibilities of Brazil's racial improvement through whitening and its failures. After all, it was her own flirtations with João Fernandes while still enslaved under the Sergeant Major that seduced the diamond contractor to buy her, free her, and live with her as his consort.

Xica's seductions on screen marked her as entirely agential to her own domination—something that is often repeated, at least in part, by the historical archive itself. According to Kimberly Juanita Brown in her own writings on Xica in Diegues' 1976 film, Xica's "violation becomes [the] volition" of her masters, making her "a mechanism of cultural necessity and therefore subject to the whims of collective desire."²⁵ Xica's purportedly free decision to submit to or rebuff João Fernandes' most intimate cravings, in turn, fulfills the colonial fantasies of black and mixed-race women's seductions in the age of racial democracy. Xica's lording her agency over her masters exculpates, in part, white masters' and mistresses' transgressions against the bodies of the enslaved. Memories of colonial interraciality are, therefore, funneled through the illusion of seduction and its consenting reciprocity. In sharing the burden of colonial violence, sodomy in *Xica da Silva* becomes more so an on-screen folly and metaphor used by black and white, free and enslaved than as a mode of pleasure and sexual control that litters the historical archive.

Sodomy's Racial Gestures

Lamonte Aidoo's far-reaching study on same-sex sexual violence in the Inquisition records explores the multiple meanings of sodomy and its prosecution by the Church during Brazil's colonial period. Anti-sodomy law determined the offense to include any act lacking intent of procreation such as "anal and oral sex between a man and a woman or between two men, masturbation, the penetration or stimulation of a woman with the hands by either gender, sex between women, and sex or sexual stimulation using objects."²⁶ Echoing Foucault's work in nineteenth-century Europe, Aidoo and other historians of sexuality in the Americas like Pete Sigal explain how Europeans grouped together sodomy with cannibalism and human sacrifice in their encounters with indigenous populations in the New World and the arrival of enslaved Africans. Sigal shows how these "represented both the abominable degradation of many indigenous peoples"

for European observers “and the extent to which the devil had tricked the people into the most horrific and gruesome acts.”²⁷ The Inquisition’s higher prevalence to prosecute sodomy among black, indigenous, and mixed-race men, enslaved and free, in Brazil and across Latin America further exposes the racialization of sodomy as a non-white sexual practice but which could be spread through institutions like the Jesuit missions, *encomiendas*, and chattel slavery. By categorizing sodomy alongside spiritual and carnal consumptions of the flesh, as Vincent Woodard has shown in the U.S., we can read queerness within and beyond same-sex intercourse in representations of colonial history in *Xica da Silva*.²⁸ Such an abstraction of sodomy extends the potential for queer reading to demarcate the interpolation of race and desire with gendered respectability. Further, sodomy can and should be seen not only as a means to explore pleasure, or even love, but also power in its use as a tool of subjugation and shame.

In *Xica da Silva*, while the majority of sexual desire is trafficked through Xica’s body or in consequence to a plan she has masterminded, sodomy itself is discussed almost exclusively through the character of José Maria. With Xica’s rise to power through her master-turned-consort, she is ridiculed by Violante and the rest of Tijuco’s white aristocracy while José Maria is there to teach her how to dress, walk, speak, and eat like a respectable white mistress. The close friendship between José Maria and Xica does not disconcert João Fernandes who sees no threat in José Maria since “he is not a man,” but an alleged “sodomite” who proves useful to getting what both Xica and João Fernandes want. For example, when the governor’s emissary, Dom Evaristo, and his wife, Amélia, arrive to João Fernandes’ home to inspect the diamond mining operations, their reputed fetish for sex with black women and men precedes them. Amélia openly says that “the blacker a man, the more he appetizes [her],” later having an orgy in the river with five enslaved men who we might imagine, beyond the camera’s framing, also engage with each other. However, Xica and José Maria attempt to observe Evaristo through a hole in the wall at night having sex with Xica’s *mucamas*, her enslaved lady’s maids. Instead, they witness the emissary’s white valet to be the one doing the fucking. Dressed in the corner, Evaristo merely watches. A simulacrum of their own social exclusion, the shared marginality of Xica and José Maria brought on by sexual violation—and their friendship because of it—permits them a powerful view from the periphery. By concluding that Evaristo himself must be a “sodomite” with a sham marriage, they use this information to protect João Fernandes’ sovereignty over Arraial do Tijuco and, in turn, his wealth. Despite her influence, others in town ridicule Amélia’s predilections as excessive, as concomitant to sodomy, due to her sexual associations with black men. The upper echelons of colonial aristocracy thus hypocritically flout Catholic morality for their own gratification, including Xica.

One of the most consequential plot developments in the novela, Xica repays José Maria’s careful tutoring of her and her entourage of *mucamas* by ordering him his own *mucamo*, who becomes a symbol of their friendship on the fringes of high society. Timidly attracted to Paulo (Déo Garcez), the man to be his enslaved valet, José Maria asks why he needs a *mucamo* to which Xica cunningly insinuates, “He’s your gift... for whatever you like... for your enjoyment.” Paulo, a muscular mulato, shuffles back and forth throughout the novela between full colonial gentlemen’s garb—high stockings, a waistcoat, a white wig, and patent leather shoes—and nakedness. In varying states of camp (un)dress, Paulo regularly bathes José Maria in a large washtub. At first, Paulo feels revolted but later falls in love with his master, begging to bathe him. Paulo clearly becomes José Maria’s favorite slave—and the only one we know of—as José Maria’s flirtations make the *mucamo* uncomfortable, at least initially. As Woodard shows, “black men [as a favorite slave] had to negotiate feelings of affection, hatred, shame, sexual degradation, and arousal toward white men.”²⁹ In Violante’s countless attempts to jettison Xica so that she can have

João Fernandes for herself, she exploits Paulo's discontent by paying him enough money to buy his freedom if he will confirm that he and José Maria committed sodomy. Not that exceptional in the Inquisition archives across Spanish and Portuguese America, Zeb Tortorici explains how, in colonial Mexico, for example, "it became increasingly common to use the charge of sodomy to smear the reputation of one's personal or political rivals."³⁰ In her slandering of José Maria's character through Paulo's moral and likely physical annihilation, she aims to implicate Xica as accessory to sodomy through Xica's purchase of the mucamo. Simultaneously, Violante anticipates that such a denunciation will boost her social standing with the diamond contractor as a proper candidate to be his wife.

While Violante presses on, Paulo remains reluctant, echoing the "unbelievability or unspeakability" of sexual violence against enslaved black and mulatto men in Brazil described by Aidoo.³¹ Violante reassures him that he will be believed because José Maria's effeminate mannerisms give away the innkeeper's affinity for sodomy. Like Aidoo, Darieck Scott explores black male rape in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* as a concept of the "unspeakable," where fears of "what is being described [as] too inconceivable, too absurd to believe, . . . will fail to bear the weight of close examination" might yet constitute a space for freedom-making in abjection.³² It is through making speakable his own violation—which never happened due to José Maria's timidity and lack of physical desire—that Paulo might, in fact, be bribed with manumission papers. Scott's premise of black men achieving freedom, or a sense of it, through their sexual objectification and debasement illustrates how *Xica da Silva*, while keeping a wide berth from historical accuracy, inverts the slavery archive and make abjection a currency of power in the late twentieth century.

Leading up to Paulo's testimony against his master for sodomy, Violante hides Paulo in an abandoned slave cabin to ensure his testimony. Xica dispatches Jacinto (Haroldo de Oliveira), her enslaved bodyguard and assassin, in search of Paulo in order to save José Maria and, by association, herself and João Fernandes who presides over the trial as Tijuco's highest ranking royal official. When Paulo arrives under a hood, João Fernandes interrogates Paulo whether José Maria committed sodomy with him. As the hood is removed for Paulo to speak, it is revealed that his mouth has been sewn shut with wire, to Violante's shock and Xica's delight. José Maria is soon acquitted due to a lack of eyewitness testimony and Paulo is released back into his master's custody. While Aidoo's revelation that testimonies of male rape victims to the Inquisition were "little more than a pornographic display in which the slave related his violation and humiliation," Paulo's forced silence by metal stitching denies him of his manumission yet, despite a purported victim, saves him from his own burning at the stake.^{33,v} In fact, Paulo's mouth as a rhetorical and potentially sexual site of enunciated abjection later confirms his own homoerotic desires for his master. In his pursuit of José Maria's renewed trust, Paulo falls for his master and asks to kiss José Maria who quickly rejects him because of his previous disloyalty. Paulo's debasement, at the hands of Xica and by his own volition, adheres to Scott's and Woodard's respective explorations of the black man's mouth in enslavement as a "sexual receptacle."³⁴ While he may speak of freedom in labor and in love, he may be forced to eat his words, or much more, as a consequence.

^v As Aidoo, Tortorici, and other history of sexuality scholars show, it was often the 'bottoms' or passive recipients of sodomy in all of its forms who received the harshest of sentencing from Inquisitors, including public flogging, imprisonment, and execution, despite capital punishment for sodomy in Latin America began to diminish in the mid-eighteenth century.

Racial Mortifications of the Flesh: White Women's Manipulation of Queer Desire

José Maria's trial for sodomy and the suffering of Paulo serve more broadly as symbolic gestures of social control over sexuality and erotic desire. The state by way of João Fernandes does nothing except preside over a quarrel between Violante, José Maria, and Xica, with Paulo as a sacrifice in pleasure and power. The state's aims create a "panoptic effect," that is, "minimal exertion of power with maximum subjective effect," as Juana María Rodríguez demonstrates, such that anti-sodomy laws use the fear of shame and repression in order to shepherd sexual subjects into heteronormativity.³⁵ More pointedly, she says, queers like José Maria and women of color like Xica da Silva "have been instructed that in order to enter the fold of collectivity," they "must first be liberated of [their] sexual deviance and [their] politically incorrect desires."³⁶ As a condition of his acquittal and social and sexual correction, José Maria is forced by João Fernandes to marry his friend, Elvira (Giovanna Antonelli), a white prostitute, who comes to his defense and expresses her love for him at his trial. Revealed soon after that he will become the sole heir of his long-lost grandfather, the Count of Barca, José Maria must first produce a son with Elvira in order to inherit the count's title and fortune. The laws delineating Portuguese peerage bring Elvira to concoct plans of inducing José Maria to a state of arousal to have sex with her. She threatens Paulo to express *saudades*, or longings, to José Maria for the days when his master liked him in order to inspire José Maria's erection for Elvira's use. In one of the many scenes where Paulo bathes his master, José Maria smirks remembering how the soap would slip out of his *mucamo's* hand and he would grope around the tub looking for it. Paulo then drops the soap for an aghast José Maria who finds himself sexually awakened (Figure 2). He tells Paulo to immediately call Elvira who arrives in a fluster, unwilling to have sex. As she comes back regretting her outburst, José Maria explains that in the split second she left the room, he lost his erection. In short, Elvira assumes the role assigned to her by the state with the end goal of making a functionally heteronormative life with José Maria, albeit through queer arousals.



Figure 2: José Maria (right) feigns shock to hide his arousal when Paulo purposefully drops the soap into the tub.

With José Maria's failure to ever actually commit sodomy, it is white women, in fact, who remain a stronger driving force behind the act and its metaphors in *Xica da Silva*. For example, among other failed attempts at biologically reproducing an heir with José Maria, Elvira suggests that she will stuff her belly with pillows while she "will discreetly search out a girl that had lost her way or a mulata slave that is pregnant by her master because, in those cases, ... the child is born almost white." José Maria agrees but shudders at the nauseating thought of having to explain to other men how he went about impregnating his wife as she parades around town in maternal

disguise. In one of the rare texts analyzing the telenovela, O. Hugo Benavides writes how this sexual milieu in the novela is imbued with “a carnivalesque ethos that almost creates a free-for-all aura. At one level, this repudiates the status quo and justifies daily existence; at another, it leaves the structure intact and makes explicit the real forces (both external/national and internal/psychological) that are at play.”³⁷ Elvira’s desire to become a mother by any means necessary in order to climb the social ladder through her queer husband’s future title denudes the inner workings of the colonial narratives of miscegenation and the shadows they cast in the late twentieth century. At first glance, Elvira’s actions offer a deconstruction of the alleged racial and moral purity of Brazil’s white elite in producing an heir either sired by a queer man and a down-trodden prostitute or from the womb made illegitimate by its status as unmarried or chattel property. To complicate this further, Xica suggests that José Maria and Elvira use Paulo as a third in the bedroom whereby a ménage à trois might produce an heir. The last episode of the novela counters the many sexual failures between José Maria and Elvira by proving Xica’s suggestion fruitful. Meeting Xica’s eldest son returning to Tijuco from his education in Rio de Janeiro for his sister’s wedding 20 years later, José Maria, Elvira, and Paulo appear outside the inn with their seven children ranging from pale white to dark brown-skinned. Their eldest son and heir to the title of Count of Barca is himself a mulato, undoubtedly the child of Elvira and Paulo, who remains enslaved. Stained by her past as a sex worker and her sex-less marriage, Elvira’s body triumphs through queer miscegenation to regenerate the line of nobility. It is puppeteered into reproductivity by Xica’s sexual knowledge, rooted in the seductions that circumscribe her identity as a mulata in colonial mythology. Elvira’s plans to establish a semblance of heteronormativity that eventually succeed through queerness reveal the lengthy investitures made in whiteness by women—white, black, and mixed-race—as a redemption from their gender, class, and freedom status in order to negotiate their own lack of power in heteropatriarchy in the colonial period and its representations on prime-time television.

White women’s weaponization of race to establish sexual morality does not always require a corresponding black character, per se, in *Xica da Silva*. A prominent secondary character in the novela’s mid-way slump^{vi}, Veridiana (Glória Portella) is a white Catholic nun whose religious fervor demonstrates a devotion to the racial and sexual morality of white heteropatriarchy. She arrives to Tijuco to stay in the prison cell with Das Dores (Carla Regina), the army captain’s eldest daughter who everyone believes to be possessed by Satan and carrying the devil’s child. Das Dores had become pregnant by her lover, Martim, the son of a disgraced elite white family, before they could be wed in secret. Demonic suspicions arise, however, as Das Dores allegedly comes back from the dead and skips town with Martim. Discovered in a house on the outskirts of town, Das Dores is put into prison—and later under house arrest—until she gives birth. Veridiana arrives to Tijuco with the sole purpose of saving Das Dores’ soul and to make sure that the newborn does not have “the mark of the devil” as many believe to be the case. Veridiana’s supposed salvation of Das Dores, however, is to be achieved through the mortification of her flesh, that is, her torture by an array of objects, starvation, and unrelenting prayer.

Mimicking Inquisition records across Latin America in the trials against men and women in religious orders for acting on their sexual temptations, the novela’s director has Veridiana seemingly reach spiritual and sexual climax through the forced subjugation of Das Dores, albeit in

^{vi} As telenovela writers in Brazil develop the script in response to ongoing press reviews and audience ratings, it is normal for the show’s plot and viewership to lull in the middle third as they test new storylines and characters, many of whom they often ‘kill off’ or simply disappear once they have served their purpose of helping to further suss out the main characters’ inner emotions, fears, and backstories. Veridiana in *Xica da Silva* was a classic example of this.

the name of Christ. Through the mortification of Das Dores and, at one point, herself, Veridiana offers the viewer a glimpse into the “ascetic practices and castigatory disciplines ... considered an important accessory to the spiritual relief and penance offered by confession” that were accepted by the Church at the time, as Inquisition historian Zeb Tortorici writes.³⁸ However, Veridiana’s gratification in sadomasochism against another white woman whose child is believed to likely be born with a stain, a blemish of dark melanin somewhere on its body due to the devil’s paternity, adds a nuanced racial element to their encounter that spans several episodes. First, the possibility of the child coming out with a birthmark, or even darker-skinned in general, echoes a modern-day tenet of Brazilian racial democracy that blackness is inherent to all Brazilians, including those who look white, like Das Dores and her lover, Martim. That such a mark on the baby’s body—which we later come to find out he has on his back—comes to exist through pre-marital sex further aligns the racial stains of blackness to sexual transgressions against white purity. It is crucial to understand that only through Veridiana’s own carnal sins do we see how race—blackness, specifically—makes itself known in sexual gestures between two white women. Veridiana’s torture of Das Dores that mimics sodomy exposes the hypocrisies of white women’s use of sex and violence to achieve a social and spiritual currency both in *Xica da Silva* and within the myth of racial democracy that the novela helps to uphold.



Figure 3: Veridiana tortures Das Dores by dripping hot wax on her back (top row); Veridiana tortures Das Dores by pricking holes in her back with a thorn (bottom row)

Glória Portella, who played Veridiana, stated in the television network’s magazine, *Manchete*, “Avancini gave me this present and asked that I construct a character with some ingredients of anthropophagy, mixing pleasure and pain. It is a little sadomasochistic, but I don’t believe that Veridiana is gay.”³⁹ Yet, as the most uttered word by the nun is, in fact, “*carne*” (flesh), Veridiana’s visual, spiritual, and to some degree physical consumption of Das Dores’ body underscores a distinct homoeroticism marked by jarring insinuations of sodomy. With the intention to “mortify the flesh in order to expel temptation,” Veridiana caresses and adulates Das Dores’ thighs, breasts, and face. Whipping Das Dores’ bare back several times and threatening to cut out her child from her womb as punishment for her sins, the torture Veridiana performs demonstrates her skilled wielding of the phallus, imagined and inanimate in the form of a whip, a knife, a candle, and a thorn. In one of the most creatively edited scenes in the entire novela, Veridiana kneels Das

Dores on the cell's floor and strips off her shirt. As melodramatic strings begin to play in a minor key, Veridiana takes a lit candle and instructs Das Dores to "pray that the Devil leave your body" with "every drop of wax." Cross-cutting between close-ups of Das Dores' face pained in prayer, the dripping candle, Veridiana's curled mouth, and quivering naked shoulders that amass a puddle of creamy white wax, we no longer hear Das Dores' repeated recitations of the Hail Mary. The swelling music drowns out her voice after "Blessed art Thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of Thy womb..." as a shot from below of Das Dores' wincing eyes and Veridiana standing behind her commence the sequence of the candle's seminal drip in slow motion that reveals a cross made of hardened wax (Figure 3). In a later scene, Veridiana kneels behind Das Dores and punctures her back with a long thorn, citing Jesus' crown during his crucifixion and telling her to "feel the pain of the thorn entering your flesh" as she drags the blood in the form of various Xs. The use of these objects, Veridiana's regular position behind Das Dores, and the liquid marks she leaves on the young girl's back intimate a sodomy in which the "fruit of Thy womb" is not Christ but a non-reproductive waste of life-giving fluids—semen and blood—shared "among women." That the scenes of Das Dores' torture by Veridiana are interspersed with José Maria's trial for sodomy as well as public derision and delectation around Elvira's decision to be the town's only white prostitute further substantiate a reading of sodomy. While generally inconsequential to the main storyline around Xica's difficulties to secure a sense of regard from Arraial do Tijuco's white elite, Veridiana and Das Dores bring to light and yet risk upsetting the telos of race-making narratives for the nation. Despite audiences' late-twentieth-century conventions that likely see Veridiana's beliefs as ludicrous and extreme that align the Inquisition with the torture of dissidents during the much more recent military dictatorship, this montage taps into a spiritual destiny that mythologizes mixed-race reproduction, even between a white man and woman like Martim and Das Dores. Nevertheless, its same-sex contortions through Veridiana's intervention expose how white women could brandish sex as a weapon, including against other women. Exposing the hypocrisy of sexual morality propped up by Church doctrine, *Xica da Silva* finds the greatest gratification in scorned white women's manipulation of sex made possible through spiritual and economic power that seeks to protect whiteness at all costs.

Probably no other character emulates the manipulation of sex and morality better than the telenovela's villain, Violante. While Violante's hatred of Xica lies in her rival's illegitimate marriage with João Fernandes, Violante is often triangulated as a vengeful voyeur in nearly all sexual encounters in the novela. The bitterness that eats away at her is rooted in her status as a twice-jilted spinster: first by her fiancé, Amadeu, who abandons her and later hangs for diamond contraband and, second, by João Fernandes, her short-lived second fiancé who chooses Violante's mucama, Xica, for his lover instead. In her fury to reconquer João Fernandes by ridding Arraial do Tijuco of Xica and the sexual immoralities she embodies, Violante achieves a sort of carnal pleasure in her hunger over witnessing Xica's downfall. Violante satiates her fixation on the diamond contractor's lover by besetting enslaved women and men she has paid to seduce and inform on the powerful couple. This is what, in essence, constitutes the white womanhood of Violante. As Toni Morrison writes on white womanhood in literature, we might imagine Violante as "a troubled, disappointed woman confined to the prison of her defeated flesh, whose social pedestal rests on the sturdy spine of racial degradation; whose privileged gender has nothing that elevates it except color, and whose moral posture collapses without a whimper before the greater necessity of self-esteem, even though the source of that esteem is a delusion."⁴⁰ As Vincent Woodard shows in his analysis of white mistresses, Violante's sordid and sorted exploitation of black and mixed-race men and women in bondage cultivates her as an "epicure" of "erotic

hungers” that slavery inherently enticed in white slave owners.⁴¹ Feeding on the potential pleasures wrought from revenge, Violante’s specialty is to bribe the enslaved with freedom on the condition of their sexual debasement for her own moral and social gain.

Like Veridiana, Violante’s hungers masculinize her. She often has the final say in her father’s home as well as between prominent political and religious male figures in Arraial do Tijuco. Notably, she threatens people in town, especially Xica, with her Catholic zeal and the power to discover and expose secrets, often by corrupting informants with money, favors, or in the case of several enslaved characters, their manumission papers. Besides Xica, however, Violante holds the deepest animosity toward her stepmother, Micaela. A once destitute woman, Micaela suffers through the abuses of her husband, Sergeant Major Cabral, but secretly falls in love with her stepson and Violante’s older brother, Luís Felipe. Once it is revealed to the town that Luís Felipe killed his father to be with Micaela, he is imprisoned while Violante persuades the authorities to allow her to keep Micaela at home under house arrest. There, Violante tells Micaela that she will be kept in the slave quarters, to be “chained up so [she] cannot run away” and “treated worse than a black woman.” Violante visits the slave trader asking for a “very manly” slave who is a “good reproducer.” Purchasing Eustáquio who never utters a single word, she tells him, “In this house, you do not have to do anything except punish a wretched woman.” Violante takes him to the slave quarters where Micaela is chained up, telling him, “She is the slave, . . . she is yours” and explains to Micaela that she is to be “used however many times per day, to be used with pain, with brutality” to “pay for the pleasure [she] felt” with Luís Felipe. With a brutal rape scene that ensues, Micaela’s social degeneration into blackness as chattel and Violante’s extension of herself through Eustáquio expose the slipperiness of whiteness in the novela; a flux underscored by sex and violence.

On the one hand, Violante conceives enslavement and forced miscegenation as Micaela’s ultimate disgrace. This lies in ideological counter to Elvira’s wish to establish a line of noble succession by any means necessary even if not from her own body. On the other hand, Violante wields Eustáquio as a living phallus, similar to Veridiana’s sadistic employ of phallic objects in *Das Dores*’ torture, forcing the viewer to bear witness to white women’s maneuvering of their race at the expense of marginalized others to negotiate their own gendered and sexual domination. Their very names emphasize the interstices of this vignette: the unusual name of Violante loosely translates into English as “violator” or “violating” while Eustáquio, or Eustace, from the Greek, means “fecund,” “fruitful,” or “abundant in seed.” Heterosexual interracial reproduction here poses as ironic counter to heteronormativity in its violence and the exchange of suitable partners in Brazilian and, more broadly, Latin American ideologies of *mestiçagem* and *mestizaje*. Instead of the familiar, romanticized narrative of white men reproducing the nation with black, indigenous, and mixed-race women, a white woman is made chattel by her own moral ruin at the hands of a black man who is himself manipulated by another white woman into the racial-sexual trope of the black brute. As this revenge narrative is laced with bondage, domination, and sadomasochism, Ariane Cruz offers us a path to read queerness into Violante’s assembly of interracial BDSM. By “erecting and transgressing the eroticized boundaries of race” through Eustáquio’s body, Violante extends of her own via property.⁴² While not directly bearing witness to Micaela’s rape, Violante makes the viewer a consumer of the pornography she conjures, as we remember throughout the soap opera her face of relish at every successful plan or incident that boosts her standing with João Fernandes and broader society.

Beyond Violante, the fulfillment of what Cruz calls the ““Mandingo” archetype of black masculinity” via Eustáquio is “less an incarnation of white female desire of a threat to the cult of

white womanhood” that Violante exploits for her own gain. Instead, it is more “a product of white and black male desire and the insecurity of white heteropatriarchal mononormativity.”⁴³ While Eustáquio’s agency is questionable, the director, Walter Avancini, and the writer Walcyr Carrasco—both white men—feed white women’s hungers for power and pleasure in an effort to quench their own white male gaze. Mining the diasporic trope of the black rapist, Eustáquio is reduced to a phallus, stiff and mute. Given this, it is perhaps predictable, albeit egregious, that the actor is unattributed in the telenovela’s credits and eludes archival record. Similarly, as Veridiana pours hot wax onto her own nipple in one scene, she exclaims in ecstasy to Das Dores, “Ah, look at how it does the body well, how it extinguishes the desires of the flesh!” In the mortification of her own body and her hunger for Das Dores’ “sweet, such sweet flesh,” as she says in several instances, Veridiana—who is not necessarily ‘gay,’ according to Portella by way of Avancini’s direction—shows how white men behind the camera seek to construct morality through white women’s queer gestures and the machinations of racial tropes fashioned in slavery and its reproductions in popular culture. Yet, like Paulo, Eustáquio, and several others, the bodies of enslaved women and men in *Xica da Silva*, including Xica herself despite her freedom, become the greatest source of sustenance to satiate the white elite’s violent appetites. This is perhaps no truer than in the soap opera’s most memorable scene of Xica’s feijoada.

Meat-aphors of Hunger

Part of *Xica da Silva*’s lure beyond its campness and carnal pleasures is its attempts to represent Afro-Brazilian history and culture on the small screen. In the wedding ceremony for José Maria and Elvira hosted by Xica outside her home, she serves multiple types of African-derived foods presented by those she enslaves, dancing with wide smiles as they balance abundantly filled terra cotta pots and bowls. Most prominently featured is feijoada which Xica explains to João Fernandes as a stew of beans made by the enslaved using the parts of the pig thought undesirable by the master. While the sight of these African dishes presented disgusts many of the white guests, the feijoada’s transformation into Brazil’s present-day national dish serves as a metaphor for the racial melting pot of the modern-day nation and its nostalgic cultural memory.

Eating Africanity both figuratively and literally becomes a key avenue in *Xica da Silva* to safeguard whiteness’ very survival. Writing on the need for publicly owned television that more equally and positively represents Brazil’s black population, black feminist activist and founder of Geledés, Sueli Carneiro, criticizes how “the cultural manifestations of black, indigenous, and poor people offer the exotic brushstrokes necessary to affirm national identity in television production but under the aegis of a white aesthetic that reworks [television] in order to endow it with *a certain vision of adequate “quality” for its taste.*”⁴⁴ The folklorization of blackness continues well into the twenty-first century as an oft-recited gesture made across media to nourish national Brazilian identity. Yet, aesthetic gestures of nation-making often quite plainly begin within and between bodies, in their most organic site of enunciation. For telenovelas like *Xica da Silva* that reenact slavery and riddle its seductions with spectacles of melodrama and comic relief, the “grotesque bodily acts like rolling eyes, lolling tongues, obscene gestures, shuffling, and the like” of performances of blackness, as noted by Hartman, “animated the body [while] blows invested it with meaning.” Used to evoke the audience’s empathy and laughter, these “beatings, blows, and brawls reestablished the identity of those who defied the boundaries of race and status.”⁴⁵ This all comes down to a question of ‘taste’—the sensations of consumption and perceptions of being couth—and its potentials of delectation to be repeated for the sake of sustaining national progress.

Blackness as an embodied and yet imagined condition is rendered fungible and therefore reproducible in its re-productions made pleasurable for mass consumption.

Damião, a middle-aged black cook that Xica purchases to help in the kitchen, comes to most explicitly incarnate the metaphors of black fungibility in his minstrelsy and, later, his demise. Joel Zito Araújo's study of black representation in Brazilian telenovelas reveals the heavy reliance of the medium on black stereotypes made popular in U.S. literature, film, and television. Beginning with the adaptation of Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 anti-slavery novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as *A Cabana de Pai Tomás* on the Globo network in 1969, Araújo heavily cites Donald Bogle's influential *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, & Bucks* on black stereotypes in U.S. film culture. According to Araújo, similar tropes pervade Brazilian prime-time well into the 1990s.⁴⁶ *Xica da Silva*, including Xica herself, is not immune by any standard to these trends. Played by Romeu Evaristo, Damião is a cardboard cutout of the 'sambo' and 'coon' stereotype most memorably portrayed in Brazil by Grande Otelo in the chanchada films and on television. Perhaps an homage to Grande Otelo as the father of black actors in Brazil and who died less than three years before the production of *Xica da Silva*, Evaristo's performance loudly echoes Grande Otelo's classic choreography. Damião slouches with his lips puffed out and trips over his tongue as he talks loudly in, at times, incoherent Portuguese. To Xica's face, he grins from ear to ear while badmouthing her behind her back and regularly eavesdropping on her conversations. Initially, he refuses to cook for Xica and asks to be sold because, he says, "I don't cook for black people like me." Xica overhears and calls Jacinto to give Damião ten lashes for his insolence. When Rosa, the other cook, questions her mistress' peculiar anti-blackness, Xica responds, "Something I've learned is that there are good white people and bad white people. And there are good black people and bad black people too. Damião is being punished because he spat on somebody black like him." Going well over ten lashes at the whipping post, Xica strikes fear into Damião and molds him into a reliable tool to later gain gossip about her enemies. Simultaneously, she maintains a colorblind sense of good and evil while giving a sermon on black solidarity made hollow in its hypocrisy as Damião's screams are heard off-camera. Xica cites this initial reprimand when discussing with José Maria Damião's dim-witted disposition as profitable for her bidding: "Good thing I seasoned Damião." Her 'seasoning'^{vii}, that is, her disciplining Damião into submission, comes to mean something totally different toward the end of the novela. Like she did with Paulo against José Maria, Violante later pays Damião to betray Xica and spy on her in exchange for his freedom.

Upon discovery of Damião's treachery, Xica takes over his preparation of a feijoada for a feast the next day. Xica orders Jacinto to take Damião away to rest "before butchering the pig," herself having worked as a cook in Violante's home before João Fernandes purchased her. The next day, Xica welcomes Tijuco's elite, telling Violante and others, "You all can make yourselves at home and eat whatever you like because, here in my home, my food is good and plenty because I'm rich and because I can do what I want." With several commenting on how surprisingly delectable the feijoada is, Violante disparages the dish for its "dark appearance" before being convinced by her brother, Xavier (Matheus Petinatti), to have a plate. Violante eats with her hands,

^{vii} The seasoning of the enslaved—in the telenovela, Xica uses the term *temperar*—denotes the violent practices of sale and assimilation enacted on newly arrived Africans to their site of enslavement. By washing, oiling, and powdering captives' bodies prior to auction, the seasoning of African flesh took on its most literal and 'appetizing' meaning for the visual and tactile consumption by prospective buyers. Following this, seasoning entailed captives' renaming, forced conversion to Christianity, a change in diet, language, family and social structures, climate, and regular acts of physical, psychological, and sexual violence in order to ensure submission and lessen the likelihood of their attempt to escape.

licking her fingers and telling Xavier, “Mmm, it’s a sin how delicious this is. Such flavor! What soft meat!” Xica arrives and asks to speak with her rival alone.

Violante: “What is it? Do you want to ruin my appetite?”

Xica: “How are you liking the feijoada?”

Violante: “It’s very tasty. Delicious. But it’s a slave’s food, right?”

Xica: “I made it. ... But for you, the feijoada has a special flavor.”

Violante: “Yes, I believe everyone is enjoying it. Maybe you’ll go back to the kitchen that you never should have come out of.”

Xica: “Do you like the meat?”

Violante: “Very good, tasty, even a little sweet.”

Xica: “It’s Damião, your informant, the traitor who told you everything that went on in this house.”

As Xica spills the beans, Violante faints flabbergasted, the plate of black feijoada tumbling onto the floor (Figure 4). Nevertheless, Violante’s disgust does not remain solely in the fact that she ingested human flesh. Mocking before the feijoada’s darkness and its prevalence as a food of the enslaved—not to mention her interminable repugnance toward blackness and racial equality throughout the novela—she returns to consciousness nauseated that the flesh she ate was, in fact, black. Between Violante’s bouts of vomiting and dizziness, Xavier tells her, “If you were married, I would say that you are with child.” Meanwhile, Xica deters João Fernandes as he is poised to take his first bite of the feijoada, saying that it was not meant for him.



Figure 4: Xica (left) tells a shocked Violante what is in the feijoada, seconds before Violante faints.

Slave narratives from across the African diaspora acknowledge a common fear among the enslaved that they were to be cannibalized by white slave traders, sailors, and their eventual masters. As Vincent Woodard points out, Olaudah Equiano, Harriet Jacobs, and Mary Prince, among others, have each described slavery as an institution driven by consumption, sometimes quite literally with Mary Prince making “constant reference to slavery as a process of butchery and to slaves as butchered meat.”⁴⁷ *Xica da Silva*, however, turns metaphor into reality, or meat-aphor, for the sake of comic relief because she is “rich” and “can do whatever” she wants with her food and her property. Further, Damião’s feijoada taps directly into Brazil’s own longstanding tradition of cannibalism as allegory for transculturation starting in Brazilian modernism (1922-1945). First appearing in Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz’s 1940 essay, *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y azúcar* (Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar), the term ‘transculturation’ feeds off of Gilberto Freyre’s own description of racial democracy in *Casa-grande & senzala* and serves as the imagined method to its creation. Through the romanticization of sugar and tobacco production as racialized cultural artifacts that change through their manipulation by European civilization in Cuba, so too the feijoada of the enslaved in *Xica da Silva*—and more broadly in Brazilian culture—

undergoes a process of nationalization and whitening.⁴⁸ As Ortiz, like Freyre, strips away much of the physical and sexual violence of plantation economies in Latin America, Damião's slaughter is not only made amusing as a comedic scheme of revenge. More so, his meat as sustenance for Arraial do Tijuco's white elite makes both the feijoada and the physical black body interchangeable commodities cooked and reduced down for the production of national identity.

Zita Nunes explores further these metaphors of anthropophagy in Brazil and the U.S. during the Inter-War period, albeit only in the figurative sense. Avant-garde artists and writers like Tarisa do Amaral, Oswald de Andrade, and Mário de Andrade, envisioned the encounter of the Portuguese with Native Brazilians rumored to practice cannibalism as a metaphor to mitigate European and U.S. influences on Brazil in the 1920s and 30s. By figuratively eating and digesting popular culture from the West, as well as indigenous and black folklore, "the model of cannibalism provided the means to create (if only in theory and deferred to the future) a homogenous and stable national identity" that could compete on the modern world stage as a purported racial democracy due to transculturation.⁴⁹ Damião, however, is not merely metaphor. A flattened minstrel caricature of blackness is quite literally cooked, chewed, and swallowed by an insatiable white elite, many of whom return for seconds. Blackness is digested, even appreciated but, in the end, its eaters in the novela maintain their white form. While *Xica da Silva*'s entire purpose serves to rework Brazil's historical and cultural roots, this scene becomes metonym to the entire series. Despite the verbal anti-blackness spewed nightly, the communal eating of Damião, not least as a feijoada, signals the eventual making of a hybrid white subject who can claim Africanity through shared national culture. As morbid and absurd as the scene is, this collective eating of blackness on open-access television in the 1990s regurgitates previous cultural movements imagined that worked to unify a disjointed Brazil. Coming out of the dictatorship and tremendous economic turmoil in the years that followed, the pageantry and horror of *Xica da Silva* was far from arbitrary. Scenes like these gesture to the various affects of interracial desire and the potential to reproduce culturally mixed subjects over history through consumption.

Aside from nourishment, Damião's feijoada contorts the notions of Brazilian modernism by making this cannibalism appear reproductive. With Xavier's insinuation that Violante is pregnant, her purported morning sickness doubles down on the reproducibility of the nation's racial ideologies via cultural cannibalism. Her belly becomes not only a space of absorption and revulsion where the repetition of folklorized blackness is personified through her retching, but one of sexual procreation, or at least its impression. Echoing Woodard's argument, the eating of Damião should thus be understood as an erotic endeavor as much as it is a gastrointestinal one.⁵⁰ A 'meat-aphor' for transculturation that supposedly gives way to racial democracy, as Nunes states, "the construction of an identity through a process of assimilation" still yet "presupposed a remainder, a residue. While this remainder can be deferred into the future as unresolvable, or repressed as a past to merge as a threat to the desired stability and integrity of the repeatable present, the indigestible residue prevents a sense of completion and haunts the discourse on/of national unity, undermining the ideology of racial democracy, even as it makes it visible."⁵¹ We must consequently account for, then, Damião's incorporation into white flesh and also his decomposition into shit. Damião's blackness disappears into whiteness and, yet, returns to the debasement of blackness, a remainder of social excess and excrement that is to be abjected. As Damião and the blackness he represents are imagined to disappear through consumption, a vestige remains to haunt the project of cannibalism's transculturation.

After the party, Xica gleefully explains to a curious João Fernandes why she prohibited him from eating the feijoada. She tells him with pride that it was she "who seasoned it," now

confirming the double-meaning spoken much earlier in the soap opera about her breaking Damião. Instead of worried or shocked, João Fernandes chuckles, “Damião in the feijoada... and all of the guests went back for seconds.” A key word, however, is lost in translation here. In Portuguese, he states that everyone “*repetiram*,” loosely translated as ‘had another portion’ but, literally, ‘repeated.’ The repetitions of folklorized blackness in the minstrel flatness of Damião’s character, his ‘seasoning,’ Violante’s bouts of vomiting him up, and the other guests’ second helpings gesture to the failed and yet pleasurable attempts at re-producing racial democracy through queer consumptions. Repetition, as Hartman points out, “structures practice” in the attempts at recuperating that which was lost through enslavement’s stripping of black subjectivity. While repetition “enables the recognition of the self and points to that which can never be fully recollected,” these attempts’ going to shit—here, quite literally—cyclically compels their re-enunciation, revealing “the impossibility of restoring that which has been breached.”⁵² Xica’s butchering and serving Damião as revenge against the white elite who snub her because of her blackness is but one of several efforts to redress the failures of her own social ascension and whitening with wigs, makeup, and wealth by way of violence.

A common motif, Xica sees the prospect of torture and the innuendo of cannibalism as a means to hold fast to João Fernandes. With his own ravenous libido, three women separately try to seduce the diamond contractor for themselves, or because Violante paid them. Upon discovering João Fernandes’ indiscretions, Xica brutally deals with the women one by one, having their teeth pulled, ears sliced off, and lips removed. In each instance, Xica has their body parts served to João Fernandes on silver platters in order to shock him into realizing her own power. Following each of these bloody spectacles, João Fernandes is propelled back into Xica’s arms, his terror melting into captivation as the couple passionately kisses and has sex. Despite this pattern, Xica dissuades João Fernandes from the feijoada, denying him a bite of Damião. After her revelation, he lovingly kisses her and tells her, “Only one thing is missing to make my night complete.” Insinuating again his desire for anal sex, she teases, “Get away from me or I’ll make a feijoada out of you too.” Black anality thus returns to the fore tying Xica’s deferral to Damião’s destiny: her anus as the site of hedonistic excess while Damião is its debasement. The overindulgences of Xica’s body that offer us a mode of reading racialized pleasures through non-reproductivity—her anality—is circumscribed by scat. As the novela’s black minstrel, Damião’s dual transformation into sustenance and shit demarcates the longings and corporeal fulfilments of whiteness in black anality. Despite her objection, Xica’s glut for erotic violence in the cannibalism of sexual and social threats against her household prohibits her own escape from objectification, be it by João Fernandes or the viewer. To this regard, Rodríguez writes that “when a female-bodied femme of color actively asserts the subject position of sexual servant, a sexual role that is precisely what is expected of her by dominant society, it is the force and articulation of her agency that mark her subjectivity as queer.”⁵³ Xica’s submission to João Fernandes as a once-enslaved mulata is inscribed in her very racialization. The enthusiasm of her sexual consent and also her refusal straddles the border between enslavement and freedom made sticky by love; the mulata concubine is therefore always already queer as she herself strives toward subjectivity.

The consumption of Damião and, more figuratively, every other black and mixed-race person in *Xica da Silva* becomes a question of overcoming the painful reminders of Brazil’s violent past through a repetitious romanticism in the present. In fact, Woodard asks, “What better way to annihilate the threat of one’s terror ... than through consumption, a permanent taking in of that which horrifies, that which embodies the threat of self- and communal annihilation?”⁵⁴ Little feared, Damião is served as a macabre amuse-bouche, a bizarre distraction albeit enticing finale

for an unlikable character. His eating by others proves an Afro-disiac for João Fernandes, inciting him to ask Xica one last time for her most forbidden yet fantasized orifice. For Violante, her inability to digest Damião proves her unyielding anti-blackness to be reflexive and reactionary. On the one hand, she becomes consumed with the fear of her own destruction at the hands of Xica; on the other, she is nourished by fantasies of Xica's ruin, most frequently, through sexual seductions. In spite of that, Xica's sweet tooth for the carnage of those who wrong her, both white and black, is fashioned to be more comical than melodramatic, ensuring her own social ascension amidst playful indulgences in whiteness and its violent licenses. Nevertheless, it is Xica herself in the end who the soap opera's creators serve up as the main course to Brazil and the rest of the world.

National Bodies for Export

The telenovela *Xica da Silva* fomented the trope of the mulata as a wanton spitfire, an enigma, and, above all, a foundational figure to Brazilianness in both the colonial period and democratic Brazil in the 1990s. On this very point, Jasmine Mitchell's work on mixed-race women in Brazilian and U.S. media shows how the figure of the mulata "ruptures linear progress narratives and reveals the suturing of colonial legacies" to the new millennium.⁵⁵ While the main character, Xica da Silva, and Taís Araújo who interprets her became stand-ins for the novela in the press and its international syndication, both fell into a long-standing pattern of the mulata's mass consumption in Brazil and across the African diaspora. Ideally a figure that collapses the racial binary and gives birth to the ideology of racial democracy, Mitchell shows how, on the contrary, the mulata serves as a body for the "containment" of blackness while also "manifesting racial hierarchies" through "fantasies of racial desire."⁵⁶ As the most mythicized mulata prior to abolition, Xica—and Araújo—serves as flesh made fungible for the reproduction of racial democracy dreams. The mulata thus allegedly provides evidence of Brazil's progress from an anti-black past that favors white heteropatriarchy as it is transformed into a national body in the present.

The white male gaze in *Xica da Silva* becomes pedagogical, especially as the mulata is sold, dubbed, and transmitted abroad. Her racial in-between-ness designates her as at once primal and available due to her blackness and its association to chattel slavery while also softened and potentially civilized from her European parentage and her re-sale to the rest of the world. It is no surprise, then, that the newspapers widely reported the sale of *Xica da Silva*'s syndication rights to Portuguese television one month after its start in Brazil in 1996. In an article on the sale, called "Escrava vira 'produto exportação'" (Slave woman becomes 'export product'), the widely circulated newspaper, *Folha de São Paulo*, was quick to point out that the first time Brazil sold a soap opera abroad was *Escrava Isaura*, another slavery telenovela, in 1976-1977 that coincidentally also went to Portugal.⁵⁷ While routine for television networks to sell syndication rights abroad—especially Hollywood-produced series and Latin American soap operas—the sale of *Xica da Silva* takes on a different tone as it becomes emblematic of slavery's afterlives. This registers quite clear in the discussions around Araújo's nudity on screen and the success that both the novela and she, as an actress, acclaimed abroad.

With no reservations, conversations in the media during the first few months of *Xica da Silva* centered on Taís Araújo's breasts. In Avancini's sweeping search for his Xica, he dropped Luzia Avelar, originally slated to play the lead, because she protested at the obligation that she appear nude on screen, in addition to the expected sex scenes. It was revealed concurrently that a relatively unknown 17-year-old Araújo would be taking the part of Xica, proving ironic

considering her own dissent with Avancini down the line as explored earlier.⁵⁸ Doubts emerged, nonetheless, because Avancini would be unable to film Araújo naked until she turned 18 on November 25, 1996 proving an incredible frustration to his vision. In analyzing the press coverage of *Xica da Silva* up until December 1996, about half discussed the novela's filming and plot development while the other half was dedicated almost fanatically to catching a glimpse of Araújo's naked body. The anticipation of a naked Xica made her disrobing the single most valuable currency of the novela toward the rescue of the floundering Manchete network and its mediocre financials.

Much of the excitement surrounding Taís Araújo's nudity came to a head with her eighteenth birthday. For weeks, the press counted down the days. To commemorate the occasion, Manchete threw Araújo an enormous birthday party at the studio's headquarters in Rio de Janeiro, packing it with reporters and photographers. The purpose of the party, stated in one report and heavily insinuated in others, was not to celebrate Araújo's birthday as much as it was to, soon thereafter, "show Taís naked" on screen.⁵⁹ On the date, TV Manchete took out a quarter-page ad in the national newspaper *Jornal do Brasil* with Araújo's face dressed as Xica to wish her a happy birthday and to market the impending revelation. Under the photo and with the novela's motto "From slave to queen," the ad transparently insinuates, "Today, Taís Araujo [sic], Xica da Silva, turns 18 years old. And, finally, you will be able to see why João Fernandes fell in love with Brazil." Araújo's equivalency with the nation and the racial democracy she allegedly represented was by no means a stretch of the imagination, especially with how successful the novela would be, perhaps even more so internationally.



Figure 5: From the November 30, 1996 issue of *Manchete* magazine: Taís Araújo on the cover (left) and a photo of Zezé Motta, Taís Araújo, and Walter Avancini (right) at Taís Araújo's eighteenth birthday party.

The party transformed into a sort of re-birth for Taís Araújo, so much so that the November 30, 1996 issue of the Manchete network's weekly magazine put her on the cover with a caption that read "Nasce uma estrela" ("A star is born"). In the cover shot, she stands naked, barely swaddled in a white bedsheet that just conceals her breasts and dangles over her crotch, signaling her birth into fame and adult sexuality (Figure 5).⁶⁰ As several magazines eagerly placed Araújo on their cover in November of that year, *Manchete* printed photos from the young star's birthday party, often using her name and that of Xica's interchangeably. In one image from the cover story, Araújo beams while holding a stuffed Sylvester the Cat flanked by co-star Zezé Motta and director Walter Avancini.⁶¹ The photo's joy is underscored by the fact that Motta herself played Xica in Carlos Diegues' film 20 years earlier, an oft-commented topic of interview for Motta in the press throughout the soap opera's broadcast. In the telenovela, a now-older Motta plays Xica's mother,

Maria, who Araújo often saw as a maternal figure on set in addition to her actual mother, Mercedes, who had to be present for filming due to her status as a minor. On the other side of Araújo, Avancini appears paternal, it is presumed having gifted her the stuffed cartoon character. Despite the rift that would develop between them later on, Araújo regularly showed gratitude in the press toward Avancini for having made her into an actress, giving her her first role ever in the soap opera *Tocaia Grande* (Showdown, 1995-1996), quickly followed by *Xica da Silva*. Nevertheless, the photo's mise-en-scène, as in several other images throughout the article, recites the miscegenation narratives lauded by *Xica da Silva* and racial democracy. With her biological parents nowhere to be found in the article, the photo's blocking and the legacy of the novela on and off camera depict Araújo as the daughter of Avancini with Motta. The birth of a star between one of Brazil's most infamous and creative directors and one of its most celebrated black actresses marks hers—and Xica's—arrival at “*maioridade*,” or legal age, as the cover story mentions. This arrival into *maioridade*, however, recalls the real Chica da Silva's own entry into legitimacy and the historical and legal archive of Minas Gerais through the fruits of racial capitalism and its inheritances. It is her wealth, by way of João Fernandes—and Araújo's fame by way of Avancini—that enable our knowing Chica and her subsequent mythification with an X that launched the careers of at least two prominent black Brazilian actresses.

On December 2, one week after Taís Araújo's entry into adulthood, TV Manchete aired Araújo's long-awaited exposure. In a drawn-out scene where João Fernandes fantasizes about the first time he ever saw Xica, Araújo bathes in a waterfall, rife with splashing, twirling, and the sun glimmering off her breasts and buttocks in exaggerated slow motion to capture every bounce. Xica's full frontal (un)coverage had commenced. While the ratings were not as high as initially hoped, they continued in a strong second place behind TV Globo. Interest in the novela continued relatively steady, helping Manchete to stay afloat for another two years while Araújo's nudity became a hit beyond Brazil's borders. The national *El Tiempo* newspaper in Bogotá, Colombia salivated over the actress, writing, “Taís is a breathtaking mulata beauty, a delicacy that drives one mad.”⁶² The actress was quickly considered a sex symbol across Brazil and, later, Latin America, a clear onus for the actress in the anticipation of her disrobing. On the occasion of her eighteenth birthday, Araújo stated to the press, “The one who has the label of sex symbol is Xica. I think I'm a normal person. Neither the most horrific, nor the prettiest. I still feel like such a child. On camera, believe me, I am a letdown.”⁶³ Offering a glimpse into the psychological yoke that Xica by way of Avancini placed on her, Araújo at the time and for many years after chose to defer national desires for her own body to that of Xica's and the racial and sexual myths surrounding the eighteenth-century icon. For many months after the waterfall scene and other nude shots, these national desires around Araújo's body coalesced in her receipt of multiple offers to pose naked for the magazines. Not believing it respectable for her at the time, the repeated hounding made her recognize that monetizing her body could make her rich if she wanted it.⁶⁴ Ironically, Victor Wagner, who plays João Fernandes, posed nude in various states of arousal for the gay men's *G Magazine* in 1999 and again in 2005, but with little fanfare in the press. With his career struggling soon after *Xica da Silva*, he decided to show off “his big talent”—to quote the first magazine cover he shot—in order to pay off debts.⁶⁵ While Wagner never appeared fully naked in *Xica da Silva*, the fantasy of Araújo's mulata nakedness proved a more valuable asset in the long run.

Araújo's demur of sex symbol status further unveils the ongoing adultification of black girls' bodies in Brazil and across the world since slavery. Playing one of colonial Latin America's most legendary women of color, I echo Natasha Pravaz's work on the performance of mulata identity in Brazil, in that Araújo's mulata-ness became “burdened with the task of signifying the

desires of the audience's gaze, satisfying the scopophilic drives and masculinized fantasies of mastery of audiences that are seduced precisely by the visual intensity solicited in such spectacles."⁶⁶ As a racialized feminine figure created by globalization, the mulata's influence on the postcolonial world as a colonial specter proves that the old habits of liberalism die hard. The racial and sexual narratives of slavery were what, in essence, continue to make period telenovelas about the institution so marketable beyond Brazil. Much of this comes down to the trope of the mulata concubine herself as the symbol of slavery's paradoxes, where women like Chica/Xica are envisioned as, following Lisa Ze Winters, "both a historical actor and an African diasporic goddess." To read diaspora and its sexual underpinnings through the mulata, like Xica da Silva in the telenovela, Winters demonstrates how, "for African diasporic subjects, to imagine and experience freedom is to inhabit simultaneously multiple temporal and spatial geographies."⁶⁷ This could not be truer in *Xica da Silva*'s syndication and Taís Araújo's acclaim across the Americas and the Atlantic world. The desire to consume the mulata, to eat her flesh stripped bare—but even more, to produce her and export her—makes Araújo's position as a figurehead in racial democracy's refashioning in post-authoritarian Brazil all the riper for delectation.

When Manchete went bankrupt in 1999, it sold the rights of *Xica da Silva* to rival network SBT which re-ran the telenovela once in 2005. Meanwhile, it was syndicated in at least two dozen other countries alongside or right after its original broadcast in Brazil in 1996-1997 while, in other cases, it has aired more recently. Starting with Portugal and Angola in 1996-1997, the soap opera was soon after aired in Spain, Russia, Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Paraguay, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Panama, Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, and the U.S. More recently, in July 2014, the direct broadcast satellite television for the African continent, DSTV1, launched *Xica da Silva* to a mass following among paying subscribers in Lusophone African countries of Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, São Tomé and Príncipe, and, for the second time, Angola. It has re-run a second time more recently in Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela while it has aired three times in the U.S. on Spanish-language television: twice on Telemundo and once on Azteca América. Quite remarkably, the Dominican Republic has aired *Xica da Silva* a whopping four times. There, Taís Araújo remains synonymous with local royalty, having received a state visit complete with military escort and launching her own line of beauty products geared toward Afro-Dominican women. As the life of Chica da Silva has become a vernacular myth among the public enabled by her repeated use in Brazilian popular culture, the actresses who have played her like Taís Araújo and Zezé Motta, successful as they are, become a living testament to the possibilities of racial democracy in Brazil and abroad. Even as Araújo and Motta, among numerous other black women, have actively spoken out against their own exotification in Brazilian media, they recognize that it is through sex and sexual fantasies projected onto their bodies within the frameworks of racial democracy that they have gained visibility and celebrity while so many other talented black women continue to go unnoticed. Uncanny, perhaps not surprising, is how the lives of these actresses mirror that of Chica da Silva's. As one of countless other black and mixed-race women in colonial Minas Gerais trying to attain a modicum of freedom, Chica became known to us in the historical archive through her complex relationship to a powerful white man and the rancor that relationship engendered among other white elites in eighteenth-century Arraial do Tijuco. The journey of actresses like Araújo and Motta and their performances of Chica da Silva's life were seen as unique, singular, and intriguing cases that translated easily across Latin America and the Lusophone world within film and television. The soap opera adaptation of Chica's life, however, offered a nightly ritual of colonial reenactments that made it so blackness could appear to be

included in the mestiçagem and mestizaje of Latin American nations while still consigning blackness to a good for consumption.

As several scholars note, telenovelas continue to be one of Brazil's principal exports. Still, *Xica da Silva* offers an intriguing case in how the sale of the novela, not only in its lead character but also the queer ins and outs of its narratives of racial formation, semantically digs up ghosts of the past. Joel Zito Araújo points out that, until 1993, the most widely sold telenovelas abroad were *Escrava Isaura* (1976-1977) and *Sinhá Moça* (1986), from TV Globo, both depicting slavery and starring Lucélia Santos, a white actress, in the lead role.⁶⁸ But, unlike its popular predecessors, the fact that *Xica da Silva* starred a black woman and put her and other characters in racially and sexually indelicate positions made this piece, unlike other slavery novelas, "test the limits of the permissible" abroad, as stated in *Clarín*, an Argentine national newspaper.⁶⁹ As *Xica da Silva* pushed the bounds with local censors who removed scenes or blurred out nudity, as *El Comercio* wrote in Quito, this "only awoke more interest in the public."⁷⁰ And, while even the telenovela's steamiest seductions appeared impotent in grabbing the public's attention in Portugal, audiences in Colombia were livid that the novela passed hands three times between networks only to end in its cancellation midway for being too sexually explicit.^{71, viii}

The commodification typical of any television program was nonetheless re-inscribed onto blackness in varying states of un/freedom in *Xica da Silva*. For its syndication on Telemundo in the U.S. in 1999, with its own financial troubles in competition with Univisión, prominent national newspapers like *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, and *The New York Times* discussed how *Xica da Silva* "seduc[ed] executives at Hispanic advertising agencies."⁷² Receiving pressure from viewers over a longstanding lack of Afro-Latinx representation on screen, Telemundo saw *Xica da Silva* as a boon in the name of diversity and marketing, raising its bookings by over a quarter in 2000.⁷³ Embodying the telenovela that carried her name, Xica was auctioned off in television network boardrooms as executives foresaw the productive potentials of her body. Made reproducible in her repetition across historical contexts and borders, Xica's consumption exemplified the carnal delights made possible in slavery and its representation to a wider audience. The very rerunning of *Xica da Silva* in the same evening, as was the case in the Telemundo broadcasts, shows how repetition itself can be an erotic gesture. As Juana María Rodríguez notes, Telemundo reran the novela at midnight after it had already aired earlier the same evening, the advertisement's voiceover stating, "*Acuéstate con Xica, ahora todas las noches a las 12:00*" ("Go to bed with Xica, now every night at 12:00").⁷⁴ Brazilian racial democracy to the outside world was a seductive mulata teetering between enslavement and freedom, her very marginality marking her sexual availability. In its casting aside of historical authenticity, *Xica da Silva* repeated the past traumas of slavery with absurd comedy and vindictive interpersonal violence that allegedly surpassed the system's inherent cruelties and exploitations. A modern, now democratic Brazil could thus collectively view the no-holds-barred telenovela that featured a black woman protagonist and fondle its own past. Nevertheless, these practices on display in the novela were mere carry-overs from previous iterations that drew from and altered the life of Chica da Silva, magnified and, yet, more obscured over time. These dramatizations were nostalgic, projecting national desires onto the historical body of Chica da Silva to demonstrate the paradoxes and nuances of freedom during an incredibly repressive period in Brazilian history that were repeated onto the women who portrayed her.

^{viii} *Xica da Silva* would only be broadcast in full in Colombia in 2010 when it was re-run solely on the capital city of Bogotá's open-access network, Citytv, in the city and the surrounding department (state) of Cundinamarca.

Perhaps for these reasons, the most ardent stewards of Chica da Silva's legacy in the public sphere continue to be Taís Araújo and Zezé Motta who portrayed her on screen. In nationally televised interviews, including several together on the basis that they have shared this same role, each carry Chica with them in an attempt to, in the words of Saidiya Hartman, unburden her of the alleged individuality of her freedom.⁷⁵ Araújo and Motta have been quick to point out in nationally televised conversations that, like other enslaved women seeking manumission through sex, reproduction, perhaps even interracial love, Chica/Xica's agency was limited by the circumstances of her race, gender, and freedom status. More plainly, sex and seduction may have been her only way out all while remaining as property through marriage. As Saidiya Hartman writes about Harriet Jacobs who seeks freedom through her relationship with a local white man, so too does Chica da Silva, through João Fernandes, "reinscrib[ing] her status as property, even if figuratively property of another order, at the very moment in which she tries to undo and transform her status. ... This order of property, although markedly different from that of chattel slavery, essentially constructs the self as alienable and exchangeable, and notably sexuality is at the heart of this exchange."⁷⁶ Despite becoming a commanding figure in the diamond district of Minas Gerais, Chica da Silva's status as a freed mixed-race woman continued to be interposed by her sexual subjugation to João Fernandes as his common-law wife. As sex was the most crucial point of access to owning Chica in bondage and in freedom, it is through sex that the nation could unquestionably claim her, too, as property through patrimony over and over again. Chica's transformation into Xica served the purpose of at once illustrating while also dismissing the violences of the past, using representation through actresses like Araújo and Motta and their present-day success to demonstrate the nation's progress in racial, gender, and sexual equality. Through the lens of nostalgia, comparative racial progress in itself became the most pleasurable end result of *Xica da Silva*.

More flesh-hewn as a myth that crisscrosses the Atlantic world than as an actual person, the syndication of *Xica da Silva* demonstrates how the historical figure's re-imagining reproduce regimes of race and sex specific to Brazil yet made identifiable across Latin America's national narratives of race mixture. Following Lisa Ze Winters, Chica da Silva's historical and caricatured "presence at once epitomizes what it is to be in diaspora and lays bare the fragility of any notion of kinship shaped and haunted by slavery and its "afterlife."⁷⁷ By making Chica into an apparent exception in colonial Arraial do Tijuco, while, in fact, she was but one of many black and mixed-race women who sought a better life for themselves and their children through concubinage with white men, the symbolism created through her example weighs heavy on her memory as re-configured in popular culture.

While Chica da Silva and her representations with an X remain messy figures through whom we might struggle to fashion black, feminist, and/or queer liberation, she has been undoubtedly made into a commodity of consumption, re-produced over and over again, across time and media, for the pleasures of a nation in search of itself. Little explored previously, the telenovela depicting Xica's mythicized life advances a language in which we might speak about racial and sexual formations in colonial memory as queer, including through the actions of historical subjects traditionally excluded from the narratives of *mestiçagem* like white women and black and mixed-race men. However, the same could be said of Xica herself, a socially ascendant mulata who defies the strictures of bondage under which public memory in Brazil has traditionally kept black and mixed-race people. As a mulata whose seductions are exploited to conceal the terrors of desire forced upon her, this recitation of colonial longings on the small screen shows how racial democracy will not simply disappear from popular culture. Much to the contrary, *Xica*

da Silva exposes the slipperiness of nation-making and, with the expansive changes in media at the dawn of the digital age, signals the potential for critique from cultural consumers and producers in racial democracy's transfigurations.

¹ John Sinclair and Joseph Straubhaar, *Latin American Television Industries* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 70.

² Daniel Castro, "Avancini ressuscita 'Xica da Silva' em versão politicamente correta," *Folha de São Paulo* (São Paulo), Sept. 15, 1996, 3; *Xica da Silva*, directed by Carlos Diegues (Rio de Janeiro: Embrafilmes, 1976).

³ Joel Zito Araújo, *A negação do Brasil: O negro na telenovela brasileira* (São Paulo: Editora Senac, 2000).

⁴ Júnia Ferreira Furtado, *Chica da Silva e o contratador dos diamantes: O outro lado do mito* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2003), 43-46.

⁵ Ibid; Lisa Ze Winters, *The Mulatta Concubine: Terror, Intimacy, Freedom, and Desire in the Black Transatlantic* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2016).

⁶ Furtado, *Chica da Silva*, 143-155.

⁷ Ibid, 46.

⁸ Ibid, 283-284.

⁹ Jennifer L. Morgan, *Reckoning with Slavery: Gender, Kinship, and Capitalism in the Early Black Atlantic* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021); Jessica Marie Johnson, *Wicked Flesh: Black Women, Intimacy, and Freedom in the Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020); Stephanie E. Jones-Rogers, *They Were Her Property: White Women as Slave Owners in the American South* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020); Lamonte Aidoo, *Slavery Unseen: Sex, Power, and Violence in Brazilian History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018); Daina Ramey Berry and Leslie M. Harris, eds., *Sexuality & Slavery: Reclaiming Intimate Histories in the Americas* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2018); C. Riley Snorton, *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017); Ariane Cruz, *The Color of Kink: Black Women, BDSM, and Pornography* (New York: New York University Press, 2016); Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Winters, *The Mulatta Concubine*; Vincent Woodard, *The Delectable Negro: Human Consumption and Homoeroticism within U.S. Slave Culture*, edited by Justin A. Joyce and Dwight A. McBride (New York: New York University Press, 2014); Darieck Scott, *Extravagant Abjection: Blackness, Power, and Sexuality in the African American Literary Imagination* (New York: New York University Press, 2010); Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1999); Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-making in Nineteenth-century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Knopf, 1987); Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race, and Class* (New York: Random House, 1981); Gayl Jones, *Corregidora* (Boston: Beacon, 1975); Harriet A. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, written by herself*, edited by Jean Fagan Yellin (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2009 [1861]).

¹⁰ Cruz, *The Color of Kink*, 10-12.

¹¹ Kimberly Juanita Brown, *The Repeating Body: Slavery's Visual Resonance in the Contemporary* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 3.

¹² Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 26.

¹³ Cruz, *The Color of Kink*, 133.

¹⁴ Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 21.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ "Taís Araújo se emociona ao rever cenas de sua primeira protagonista na TV," *Meu Vídeo É Um Show* (Rio de Janeiro: Rede Globo), June 6, 2017, <https://gshow.globo.com/tv/noticia/tais-araujo-se-emociona-ao-rever-cenas-de-xica-da-silva-sua-primeira-protagonista-na-tv.ghtml>.

¹⁷ Ibid, 81.

¹⁸ Scott, *Extravagant Abjection*, 6.

¹⁹ Jennifer C. Nash, "Black Anality," *GLQ* 20, no. 4 (2014): 448.

²⁰ Ibid, 452, 443.

²¹ Ana Claudia Souza, "'Xica' vai além da conta," *Jornal do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro), May 21, 1997, 6.

²² Mônica Soares, "TV Globo quer Xica da Silva," *Jornal do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro), May 29, 1997, 6.

²³ Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, 50.

²⁴ Winters, *The Mulatta Concubine*, 12.

²⁵ Brown, *The Repeating Body*, 19.

²⁶ Aidoo, *Slavery Unseen*, 31.

²⁷ Sigal, *Infamous Desire*, 1.

-
- ²⁸ Woodard, *The Delectable Negro*.
- ²⁹ Ibid, 13-14.
- ³⁰ Zeb Tortorici, *Sins against Nature: Sex and Archives in Colonial New Spain* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 93.
- ³¹ Aidoo, *Slavery Unseen*, 5.
- ³² Scott, *Extravagant Abjection*, 133.
- ³³ Aidoo, *Slavery Unseen*, 33.
- ³⁴ Woodard, *The Delectable Negro*, 221.
- ³⁵ Juana María Rodríguez, *Sexual Futures, Queer Gestures, and Other Latina Longings* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 83.
- ³⁶ Ibid, 10.
- ³⁷ O. Hugo Benavides, *Drugs, Thugs, and Divas: Telenovelas and Narco-Dramas in Latin America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 44.
- ³⁸ Tortorici, *Sins against Nature*, 207.
- ³⁹ Ana Gaio, “Glória Portella: Uma freira entre Deus e o diabo,” *Manchete* (Rio de Janeiro), Jan. 25, 1997, 69.
- ⁴⁰ Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (New York: Vintage, 1992), 25-26.
- ⁴¹ Woodard, *The Delectable Negro*, 144.
- ⁴² Cruz, *The Color of Kink*, 135.
- ⁴³ Ibid, 142-143.
- ⁴⁴ Sueli Carneiro, “O negro na TV Pública – desconstruindo narrativas colonizadas,” in *O negro na TV pública*, ed. Joel Zito Araújo (Brasília: Fundação Cultural Palmares, 2012), 118, my emphasis.
- ⁴⁵ Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 30.
- ⁴⁶ Araújo, *A negação do Brasil*; Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, & Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films*, 4th ed. (New York: Continuum, 2001).
- ⁴⁷ Woodard, *The Delectable Negro*, 142.
- ⁴⁸ Fernando Ortiz, *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar* (Barcelona: Red, 2019 [1940]); Gilberto Freyre, *Casa-grande & senzala* (São Paulo: Global, 2003 [1933]).
- ⁴⁹ Zita Nunes, *Cannibal Democracy: Race and Representation in the Literature of the Americas* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 11.
- ⁵⁰ Woodard, *The Delectable Negro*.
- ⁵¹ Nunes, *Cannibal Democracy*, 13.
- ⁵² Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 76.
- ⁵³ Rodríguez, *Sexual Futures*, 133.
- ⁵⁴ Woodard, *The Delectable Negro*, 93.
- ⁵⁵ Jasmine Mitchell, *Imagining the Mulatta: Blackness in U.S. and Brazilian Media* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2020), 4.
- ⁵⁶ Mitchell, *Imagining the Mulatta*, 4.
- ⁵⁷ “Escrava vira ‘produto exportação,’” *Folha de São Paulo* (São Paulo), Oct. 30, 1996, 1.
- ⁵⁸ Maria Lucia Rangel, “Nudez cria problemas em ‘Xica da Silva,’” *Folha de São Paulo* (São Paulo), Jul. 20, 1996, 6.
- ⁵⁹ Marcus Barros Pinto, “Medo da nudez anunciada,” *Jornal do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro), Nov. 27, 1996, 8.
- ⁶⁰ *Manchete* (Rio de Janeiro), Nov. 30, 1996, 1.
- ⁶¹ Tão Gomes Pinto, “A maioria de Xica,” *Manchete* (Rio de Janeiro), Nov. 30, 1996, 12.
- ⁶² “Belleza de ébano conquista a Brasil,” *El Tiempo* (Bogotá), Apr. 19, 1997.
- ⁶³ Pinto, “A maioria de Xica,” 12.
- ⁶⁴ Adriana Moreira, “Maioridade entre a TV e o condomínio,” *Jornal do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro), Dec. 12, 1996, 6.
- ⁶⁵ *G Magazine* (Santo André), March 1999, 1.
- ⁶⁶ Natasha Pravaz, “Performing Mulata-ness: The Politics of Cultural Authenticity and Sexuality among Carioca Samba Dancers,” *Latin American Perspectives* 39, no. 2 (2011): 127.
- ⁶⁷ Winters, *The Mulatta Concubine*, 2-3.
- ⁶⁸ Araújo, *A negação do Brasil*, 191.
- ⁶⁹ “La telenovela del escándalo,” *Clarín* (Buenos Aires), Aug. 16, 1997.
- ⁷⁰ “Las telenovelas brasileñas son otro producto de exportación,” *El Comercio* (Quito), Oct. 3, 2006.
- ⁷¹ Mônica Torres Maia, “‘Xica da Silva’ não agrada espectadores de além-mar,” *O Globo* (Rio de Janeiro), Jan. 12, 1997, 10; “El misterio de Xica da Silva,” *El Tiempo* (Bogotá), May 31, 2000.

⁷² Eduardo Porter, "A Steamy Brazilian Soap Opera Gives Needed Boost to Telemundo," *The Wall Street Journal* (New York), Aug. 30, 2000.

⁷³ Ibid; Michael A. Fletcher, "Spanish-language television accused of racism," *The Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.), Aug. 4, 2000; Larry Rhoter, "Brazil Builds Bigger and Better Telenovelas," *The New York Times* (New York), Aug. 27, 2000, 21.

⁷⁴ Juana María Rodríguez, *Queer Latinidad: Identity Practices, Discursive Spaces* (New York: New York University Press, 2003): 166, note 19.

⁷⁵ Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 121.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 112.

⁷⁷ Winters, *The Mulatta Concubine*, 14.

Conclusion

Modern Blackness and the Limits of Popular Culture

Racial democracy is more than just a myth to be dismissed as *passé*. It remains tightly woven into the fabric of Brazilian national identity and its disentanglement will take time. Neither the swings of the political pendulum nor policy changes, media innovation, or social movements will likely make it disappear from the national lexicon or its memory in the near future. Despite countless studies in the social sciences in Brazil and abroad on the effects of racial democracy, racial democracy as a narrative was itself first concocted through cultural production. In that regard, it continues to lack more critical study in the humanities. Further, much of this work still revolves heavily around the writings of Gilberto Freyre if not serves as a direct response to his work. However, racial democracy has most convincingly and steadfastly dreamt itself through the whimsy of literature, film, television, music, and other forms of popular culture. State policy that affirmed Brazil as a racial democracy in the twentieth century could only come to exist through the popular culture that birthed and sustained it as an ideological pillar of public discourse and regional and national identities. At the same time that the state and cultural production re-imagine the past as a utopian project of futurity, racial democracy comes to life through the recitation and consumption of these histories that supposedly engendered it. The repetitions necessary to popular culture and its representational pasts and futures make racial democracy, in the present, an everyday act of race- and nation-making that lives through the people who make and consume it.

Scholars of Latin American culture and racial formations often use terms like *nation-making* and *race-making* in their writing on twists and turns of policy, cultural production, and social movements, particularly as it relates to national narratives of race mixture, inequality, and resistance. However, they rarely consider the grammatical modes of the *making*, of that participle that anchors them and how sex and desire are its very linchpin. Used in the present progressive but also as a noun, *making* signals here the ongoing, repetitive shaping and changing necessary to put race and nation into existence and the sex and desire required for their very reproduction. As I have shown through a few select examples over the course of a century, the performance of national narratives of race mixture like *mestiçagem* turns race, gender, and sexuality into a spectacle that repeats and reconfigures itself over time, media, and genre. The grammar of ‘making race’ and ‘making nation’ marches forward, a linear progress anchored in subjunctive re-orderings of the past and its sexual frameworks. Given this, in racial democracy regimes, to make race is to make nation. Queering racial democracy nevertheless exposes this to be a false equivalency as it offers us a methodology to unravel the erotic desires that espouse it.

While this project has its limitations, it offers a clearer lens to understand the enduring discussion of race, sex, and popular culture in Brazil, including in the contemporary digital moment. As the internet has become fertile ground for a cacophony of competing voices that have been long-excluded, it has undoubtedly chipped away at the power of white-controlled cultural production, namely television and news media. Black, indigenous, and queer and trans activists and media producers kept out of conversations on television, radio, and in the papers began to use the internet to more effectively organize. While some have created content that has brought millions of Brazilians who may not have identified previously as *negro/a* or *preto/a* into black consciousness, or to give them a language to more critically explore their own gender and sexuality, activists and everyday users also look to the internet as a source of humor, entertainment, and self-exploration. Countless meme trends satirize the actions of prominent names in Brazilian

politics, culture, media, and sport, while their lampooning makes cultural production in the digital realm a space of more immediate contestation. Digital pornography and sex work allow for the empowerment and exploration of pleasures felt in and beyond narratives of race mixture. Meanwhile, anti-black, misogynist, homophobic, and transphobic violence is exposed, denounced, and used as a rallying cry to both politically organize and educate others. These digital platforms thus provide countless outlets for racial and sexual politics to be enacted and discussed, be it through humor, rage, grief, or sexual gratification. While there are still myriad ways for white supremacy to creep in between the likes, shares, and comments, the digital cultural production of everyday life in Brazil offers a critical breach where freedom might be created and felt beyond racial democracy.

Fueled by disappointment from racial democracy's broken promises of equality and inclusion, this new, 'modern blackness' expressed online in the 2010s has come to stand toe-to-toe with the adages of racial democracy commonly reiterated by both right- and left-wing personalities in the public sphere. Anthropologist Deborah Thomas' work on what she calls "modern blackness" amongst the black working class in contrast to creole nationalism in Jamaica provides a window into how Brazilians have engaged racial democracy online, as these structures constantly compete for the upper hand. However, we must also recognize that modern blackness is not necessarily 'new' or resultant of Western technologies like the internet. In Brazil, modern blackness has been developed among working-class black Brazilians for decades, starting with the Candomblé terreiros and samba gatherings of the nineteenth century. As a "subaltern aesthetic and politics from which to make claims upon the earlier forms of nationalism that gained state power," modern blackness in Brazil has persistently pushed against nationalist rhetoric like racial democracy. However, in cultural production at the national level, modern blackness has often been excluded due to lack of access brought on by discrimination and disenfranchisement.¹

The digital milieu of social media undoubtedly allows for a more obvious and transparent example of this clash between racial democracy and modern blackness. This dissertation nonetheless aimed to explore the interstices between the two in earlier analog cultural production whose control defaulted to whiteness. This became most apparent in the black characters, historical figures, and their interpreters explored here like Amaro, João Cândido, Grande Otelo, Chica/Xica da Silva, and Taís Araújo who struggled against the racial and sexual systems of their creation, narration, and labor. While queer reading deconstructed the erotic nature of their racialization, it allows for us to conceive how they created their own sense of modernity through, or in spite of, racial democracy. Although imperfect, these queer gestures of defiance, often considered violent, perverse, insolent, or humorous, not only help their narrators establish their own whiteness but lay the blueprint for a politic and aesthetic of resistance within the limitations of cultural objects. They are nevertheless challenging to break through and their repetition risks exhuming histories of harm.

In her pointed discussion of the performative gestures and scenarios of anti-black police violence in Bahia, Christen Smith describes the familiarity that these performances summon as "palimpsestic embodiment." As "recited sketches, plots, scenes, and narratives that emerge and reemerge," the body becomes "a repository of temporal and spatial information" that "interlock[s] present, past, and future."² Literally and figuratively ill-proportioned—like Amaro's extra-broad shoulders, João Cândido's minstrel-like features in the press, Grande Otelo's skin tone and tiny stature that challenge the technologies of early film, and Xica's lack of refinement—embodied blackness becomes both the site of pleasure and terror for the Brazilian nation. Whiteness, in the form of Adolfo Caminha, Aleixo, Gilberto Freyre, Oscarito, Clara Nunes, Walter Avancini, João Fernandes, Violante, among others, is encouraged to consume these bodies, emulate their gestures,

and plant their own seed at the very same site of subjugation. From it, a new form, a national body sprouts and feeds subsequent generations with a narrative re-fashioned in the image of whiteness with elements of blackness made accessible through mixture and consumption. Following Smith's indictment of Brazil's racial utopia that dismisses if not outright conceals anti-black violence, I have shown in my analysis how re-centering sexuality in racial democracy discourse identifies and picks apart the paradox between consumption and destruction, the stain or scar of which always remains behind and cannot be erased.

In the eyes of the Brazilian nation, it is the failure of blackness as self-sufficient, (re)productive, and sovereign that pushes not only its consumption and commodification but its devaluation to static folklore and annihilation. This duality is, in fact, what keeps racial democracy discourse alive: the use of a folklore marked as black, Afro, or African in the face of the pathologization of blackness, anti-black violence, and black death that work hand-in-hand to keep whiteness at the pinnacle of the national project. Black folklore and many other black cultural expressions are unreservedly interwoven into the Brazilian national project because they do not put into jeopardy the power of whiteness within the rhetoric of racial democracy. In fact, due to this integration whose libidinal qualities suggest a sexual accessibility to blackness and histories of miscegenation, whiteness in Brazil is obscured, allegedly not meeting the standards of white purity as defined by the Global North. This tightrope act outlines the litmus test of the inclusion/exclusion of blackness and, by extension, black people in the cultural objects I explore here. The failure to pass into the dictums of racial democracy destines one's exclusion in everyday life while, in literature and popular culture, provides vague parameters on how to seek inclusion. At times, like in the cases of Amaro and Xica da Silva, this can lead to the imagining of queer ways of belonging to the nation, even if at the risk of imminent failure. Meanwhile, it is the witnessing of this failure to conform that offers some of the most gratifying pleasures in the everyday consumption of popular culture.

As I have shown, this failure of blackness to assimilate through the prescribed method of heterosexual miscegenation marks it as queer to the national project. While the abjection of blackness in Brazil rests uneasy in the very ways that it is included, at least in the folkloric sense, the alleged implosion of binaries of race, gender, and social status by *mestiçagem* and racial democracy are complicated by Brazilian popular culture. Amaro is neither an enslaved black man, nor is he fully free as a sailor in the imperial navy. Xica da Silva is neither entirely freed through concubinage nor is she desirable and completely agential beyond her sexuality. Grande Otelo was neither a helpless actor, nor was he able to escape the roles and stereotypes to which the Atlântida studio system had chained him. Clara Nunes' performance of *mestiçagem* was neither history-less nor was it historical. Yet, the opacity of popular culture's recitation of narratives of affable, loving race mixture strip blackness of any modernity while many of these cultural texts, such as the music of Clara Nunes, are passed off as black popular culture. Doing so masks the very failures of racial democracy itself in the inequities of everyday life with utopian longings.

The cultural objects I explore in this dissertation have each provided a means through which to study narratives of race, sex, and desire and their changes over time. These narratives proved gratifying tools to build the Brazilian nation and imagine its progress despite the slippages in who could and could not be included in them. Each cultural object discussed was produced and circumscribed within a very specific context as related to place, time, medium, and genre, all of which I have strived to weave into my analysis. Nonetheless, the queer and close readings I provide are gauged differently in the face of what is made obvious or obscure on the page, screen, or vinyl. Texts like *Bom-Crioulo* and *Xica da Silva* quite clearly engage queerness, in its many forms, as

the driving force in their narrative arc; others, such as the chanchadas featuring Oscarito and Grande Otelo and the musical career of Clara Nunes, are only seen queerly through the readings that I assemble. While there is notable scholarship that engages *Bom-Crioulo*, my queer reading of same-sex interracial desire works within and beyond the narrative itself: I interpreted Adolfo Caminha's own ruminations on the possibilities beholden to biological miscegenation and the exclusion of black men from Brazilian progress as abject social actors through a close reading of Amaro's own internal struggles for freedom, agency, and integration into the nation. That he sought belonging through same-sex desire and domesticity—both inherent within his own racial and social conditioning in the navy—revealed miscegenation, heterosexual or otherwise, an already fraught framework for national progress. Further, this analysis offered a script to re-read the history of the Revolt of the Lash, the figure of João Cândido, and the insinuations of sexual perversion and homoerotic desire by the press surrounding the black and mixed-race mutineers in the wake of *Bom-Crioulo*'s salacious success. Queer miscegenation, as it is imagined through these texts, allows for us to read along with and against the grain of nation-making rhetoric bound by the fears and fantasies surrounding race and sex at the turn of the twentieth century.

Likewise, in *Xica da Silva*, the sexual desire, intimacy, and violence that makes the slavery period piece soap opera so famous lends itself to these methods. Nonetheless, of the little scholarship that exists on the soap opera, queerness is entirely restricted to Xica's flamboyant white confidant, José Maria. Drawing on work in black queer and black feminist studies that discuss slavery within a historical context as well as its afterlives in cultural production, it became clear that Xica herself, as well as several other characters, white and black, demanded a more properly queer reading. Xica's body—and Taís Araújo's by extension in the press—was choreographed in such a way that, within the perversions of slavery as an institution in colonial Brazil, she could never be entirely heteronormative. This became further impacted by how white characters themselves interpolated, projected, and puppeteered blackness for the sake of sating their own erotic desires and justified these choreographies on moral grounds. In doing so, in the latter part of the twentieth century post-dictatorship, racial democracy was propagated through sexual fantasies of slavery on TV as distant intimacies that Brazil had allegedly left far behind.

While the chanchadas featuring Oscarito and Grande Otelo have numerous sexual innuendo to heighten their role as comedic relief, my queer reading was facilitated by Gilberto Freyre's writings while also re-centering sexuality in my use of Freyre. Although Freyre wrote *Casa-grande & senzala* in a very specific context of early modern Northeastern Brazil, his text gestures throughout how these structures of patriarchy and racial harmony during slavery serve as the basis of a nation-wide racial democracy in the twentieth century. Taken up by the Vargas regime and the governments following, Freyre's arguments had a tremendous influence on popular culture and what passed as authentically Brazilian. By focusing on sex and desire in Freyre's writings—such as the homoerotic play between the master's white son and an enslaved black boy, among other examples—it became clear how these colonial gestures echoed between Oscarito and Grande Otelo as a type of 'race play' that was extremely popular with audiences. Their repetition in Freyre, on screen, and through mass consumption point to how recitations of the colonial past, its proclivities and its violences, are meant to propel the nation into modernity.

In turn, my queering of Clara Nunes is based largely on my experience with her legacy through drag. As I dug more deeply into her own transformations in look and sound, it became apparent how much of her success in samba and popular Brazilian music was due to a drag-like aesthetic. Influenced by Carmen Miranda whose void she was explicitly trying to fill, this Brazilian nation drag consisted of reconfiguring black popular cultural forms and projecting them onto her

white body in a performance made more palatable for the broader public through its categorization as national folklore. Nunes' aesthetic transformation was largely grounded in her very public conversion to Umbanda whose harmonious amalgamation of African Ifá, indigenous Brazilian, and Catholic spiritual traditions helped her to appear more quintessentially Brazilian as mixed-race and supported a discourse of racial democracy. That Afro-Brazilian religions like Umbanda and Candomblé were some of the few social spaces that also affirmed black women and queer people further facilitated my queer reading. Over time, however, as black women samba singers and black drag queens payed homage to Nunes in the wake of her death, she has often been remembered as a black woman. With her racial ambiguity over time and her legacy as a consistently recited musical influence on the Brazilian songbook, my analysis of Nunes and her career points to a dragability of Brazilianness. Based significantly on the folklorization of black popular culture, performances like Nunes' depended on the seductive eroticism of race-making narratives to stimulate mass consumption and bring people into the national project.

In the twenty-first century, more and more Brazilians are pushing up against these seductive notions found in racial democracy discourse. Digital cultural production, for example, illustrates a deeper awareness of historical contexts and possibilities for blackness while simultaneously recognizing the sociopolitical limitations in which Brazilian blackness finds itself. However, this is far from saying that racial democracy, as a discourse, is dead, especially as the Bolsonaro government continuously relies on these adages today to offset critiques from activists for the state's anti-blackness, misogyny, homophobia, anti-indigenous actions, and general disdain for the poor. As the far-right government of Bolsonaro flounders, these failures test the limits of narratives like racial democracy where such failure encourages new readings, using them as a guide to undo narratives of white heteropatriarchy's realization and the embodiment of resistance. As Jack Halberstam shows, failure provides "modes of unbeing and unbecoming" whose "host of negative affects, such as disappointment, disillusionment, and despair" give us a chance "to poke holes in the toxic positivity" of narratives like racial democracy constructed through a heteronormativity that favors whiteness and whitening.³ While longing, nostalgia, and *saudade* are slippery affects that eventually always come to produce failure, when delimited to the flesh, often as desire, they offer ephemeral pleasures in nation-making and spaces of critique.

While longing connotes an ultimately unattainable goal, its embodiment as a palpable desire makes it appear possible. Centering desire allows us to think about carnal allowances and their circulations across time and space through popular culture and everyday life, unfastening the subjective from the allegedly objective consciousness of national projects like racial democracy. Despite the hypocrisy of Brazil's attempts to re-order bodies and their representations for the sake of progress starting in the late-nineteenth century, ideologies like racial democracy have ironically still left enough wiggle room at the margins of citizenship for desire as an affect of becoming and belonging to provide subaltern subjects with the pleasure of themselves, the pleasure of self-discovery. As a praxis of desire, the stickiness of racial and sexual formations of the Brazilian nation in popular culture allows for modernity to yet be persuaded and revised. However, this only happens when we re-center the subjective and re-read at the margins, often of that which has already been enjoyed many times over.

¹ Deborah A. Thomas, *Modern Blackness: Nationalism, Globalization, and the Politics of Culture in Jamaica* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 13.

² Christen A. Smith, *Afro-Paradise: Blackness, Violence, and Performance in Brazil* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016), 165.

³ Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 23, 3.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Literature

Botelho, Abel. *O Barão de Lavos*. Uberlândia: O Sexo da Palavra, 2020 [1891].

Caminha, Adolfo. *Bom-Crioulo*. Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca Carioca, 1895,
http://www.rio.rj.gov.br/dlstatic/10112/4204210/4101368/bom_crioulo.pdf

Ferreira Leal, Lourenço. *Um homem gasto*. Uberlândia: O Sexo da Palavra, 2019 [1885].

Pompéia, Raul. *O Ateneu*, 4th ed. São Paulo: Martin Claret, 2013 [1888].

Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly*. Boston: John P. Jewitt & Co, 1852.

Musical Albums

Alcione. *Claridade*. Recorded 1999. Globo Universal, compact disc.

_____. *Almas e corações*. Recorded 1983. RCA Victor, vinyl LP.

Castro, Mariene de. *Ser de Luz*. Recorded 2013. Fácil Brasil, compact disc.

Jor, Jorge Ben. *África Brasil*. Recorded 1976. PolyGram, vinyl LP.

Menezes, Margareth. *Autêntica*. Recorded 2019. Natura Musical, compact disc.

Nunes, Clara. *A Voz Adorável de Clara Nunes*. Recorded 1966. Odeon, vinyl LP.

_____. *Você Passa e Eu Acho Graça*. Recorded 1968. Odeon, vinyl LP.

_____. *A Beleza Que Canta*. Recorded 1969. Odeon, vinyl LP.

_____. *Clara Nunes*. Recorded 1971. Odeon, vinyl LP.

_____. *Clara Clarice Clara*. Recorded 1972. Odeon, vinyl LP.

_____. *Canto das Três Raças*. Recorded 1976. Odeon, vinyl LP.

_____. *As Forças da Natureza*. Recorded 1977. Odeon, vinyl LP.

_____. *Guerreira*. Recorded 1978. Odeon, vinyl LP.

_____. *Esperança*. Recorded 1979. Odeon, vinyl LP.

_____. *Brasil Mestiço*. Recorded 1980. Odeon, vinyl LP.

_____. *Clara Morena*. Compiled 1983. Odeon, vinyl LP.

_____. *Clara Nunes: A Deusa dos Orixás*. Compiled 1984. Odeon, vinyl LP.

Soares, Elza. *Do Coccix Até o Pescoço*. Recorded 2002. Maianga, compact disc.

Various artists. *Um Ser de Luz - Saudação a Clara Nunes, vol. 1*. Recorded 2003. Deckdisc, compact disc.

Visi, Carla. *Pura Claridade*. Recorded 2013. Sony, compact disc.

Films

Aïnouz, Karim, dir. *Madame Satã*. Rio de Janeiro and Paris: Videofilmes and Lumière, 2003.

Araújo, Joel Zito. *A negação do Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: Casa de Criação, 2000.

Babenco, Héctor, dir. *Carandiru*. Rio de Janeiro: Globofilmes, 2002.

Barros, João de, dir. *Banana-da-terra*. Rio de Janeiro: Sonofilmes, 1939.

Burle, José Carlos, dir. *Barnabé, Tu És Meu*. Rio de Janeiro: Atlântida Cinematográfica, 1952.

Caetano, Marcelo, dir. *Corpo Elétrico*. Rio de Janeiro: Vitrine Filmes, 2017.

_____. *A Tal Guerreira*. São Paulo: PaleoTV & Plateau Produções, 2013.

Cummings, Irving, dir. *That Night in Rio*. Los Angeles: 20th Century Fox, 1941.

Diegues, Carlos, dir. *Xica da Silva*. Rio de Janeiro: Embrafilme, 1976.

Escorel, Eduardo and Roberto Feith, dirs. *90 Anos de Cinema: Uma Aventura Brasileira*. Rio de Janeiro: Embrafilme, 1988.

Gardenberg, Monique, dir. *Ó Paí, Ó*. Rio de Janeiro: Dueto Filmes, 2007.

Goifman, Kiko and Claudia Priscilla, dirs. *Bixa Travesty*. São Paulo: Paleo TV, 2018.

Macedo, Watson, dir. *Aviso aos navegantes*. Rio de Janeiro: Atlântida Cinematográfica, 1951.

_____. *Carnaval no fogo*. Rio de Janeiro : Atlântida Cinematográfica, 1949.

_____. *...E o mundo se diverte*. Rio de Janeiro: Atlântida Cinematográfica: 1948.

Manga, Carlos, dir. *A Dupla do Barulho*. Rio de Janeiro: Atlântida Cinematográfica, 1953.

Moratto, Alexandre, dir. *Sócrates*. São Paulo: O2 Filmes, 2018.

Photographs

Malta, Augusto. *João Cândido e seu Secretário*. Photograph. Rio de Janeiro, November 23, 1910. From Museu da Imagem e do Som – Rio de Janeiro: *Coleção Augusto Malta*.

Montenegro, Wilton. *Clara Nunes*. Photograph, Rio de Janeiro, 1980. From Instituto Clara Nunes.

Unknown. *Carmen Miranda e Bando da Lua no filme Banana da Terra*. Photograph. Rio de Janeiro, 1938. From Museu Carmen Miranda.

Television

A Cabana do Pai Tomás. Written by Hede Maia, Glória Magadan, and Walther Negrão, directed by Fábio Sabag, featuring Sérgio Cardoso, Ruth de Souza, and Paulo Goulart. Aired July 7, 1969 to February 28, 1970, in broadcast syndication, Rede Globo.

A Cor da Sua Pele. Written by Walter George Durst, directed by Wanda Kosmo, featuring Iolanda Braga and Leonardo Villar. Aired July 27, 1965 to October 20, 1965, in broadcast syndication, TV Tupi.

Escrava Isaura. Written by Gilberto Braga, directed by Herval Rossano, featuring Lucélia Santos, Rubens de Falco, and Léa Garcia. Aired October 11, 1976 to February 5, 1977, in broadcast syndication, Rede Globo.

Sinhá Moça. Written by Benedito Ruy Barbosa, directed by Reynaldo Boury and Jayme Monjardim, featuring Lucélia Santos, Marcos Paulo, and Rubens de Falco. Aired April 28, 1986 to November 14, 1986, in broadcast syndication, Rede Globo.

Xica da Silva. Written by Walcy Carrasco, directed by Walter Avancini, featuring Taís Araújo, Victor Wagner, and Drica Moraes. Aired September 16, 1996 to August 18, 1997, in broadcast syndication, TV Manchete.

Videos

clara.claridade. "Video of Angela Davis Speaking in São Paulo." *Instagram*, Oct. 24, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/p/B4BaOySlaCNZ325PEVzBolYXvFmsWWGBBJRqY0/>.

claradobrasil. "A DEUSA DOS ORIXÁS - JUÍZO FINAL - CLARA NUNES." YouTube video, 4:17, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d-F8xrfMXM4>.

_____. "CANTO DAS TRÊS RAÇAS - CLARA NUNES." YouTube video, 4:28, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dcVKb2ht6BE>.

ClaraNunesVEVO. "Clara Nunes – Guerreira." YouTube video, 2:14, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ok9bDC_S0_o.

CLARA NUNES GUERREIRA. "Especial Clara Nunes no Japão - 1982 COMPLETO." YouTube video, 45:16, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=27onZ7giWro>.

_____. “Vídeo Show Relembre clipe de ‘Morena de Angola’, de Clara Nunes.” YouTube video, 2:29, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kEkiDp4qZeA>.

Oral Histories

“Grande Otelo oral history interview, Rio de Janeiro, 1985-10-24.” From the Museu da Imagem e do Som - Rio de Janeiro, *Coleção Depoimentos para Posteridade*.

“Grande Otelo oral history interview conducted by Sylvia Regina Bahiense Naves, São Paulo, 1976-07-13.” From the Museu da Imagem e do Som - São Paulo, *Coleção Luzes Câmera*.

“João Cândido Felisberto oral history interview conducted by Hélio Silva, Rio de Janeiro, 1968-03-20.” From the Museu da Imagem e do Som - Rio de Janeiro, *Coleção Depoimentos para Posteridade*.

“Oscarito oral history interview, Rio de Janeiro, 1968-06-11.” From the Museu da Imagem e do Som - Rio de Janeiro, *Coleção Depoimentos para Posteridade*.

Other Archival Documents & Ephemera

Marinheiros, *Declaração ao Presidente Hermes da Fonseca, 22 de novembro, 1910*. Letter. From Arquivo da Marinha Brasileira, *Acervo João Cândido*.

Oscarito e Grande Otelo comic book covers. La Selva, 1957-1959. From *Guia dos Quadrinhos*, <http://www.guiadosquadrinhos.com/capas/selecoes-juvenis/se050100>.

Promotional poster for *Barnabé, Tu És Meu*, Atlântida Cinematográfica, from the Cinemateca Brasileira.

Promotional poster for *Canto das Três Raças*. Promoções e Produções Ltda. Odara, 1976. From Memorial Clara Nunes, Pôster 2.106.

Secondary Sources

Scholarly Publications

Aidoo, Lamonte. *Slavery Unseen: Sex, Power, and Violence in Brazilian History*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018.

_____. “Predatory Perversions: Homosexuality and the Erotics of Brazilian History in Adolfo Caminha’s Bom-Crioulo.” *Brasil/Brazil: A Journal of Brazilian Literature* 31, no. 57 (2018): 1-23.

Alberto, Paulina L. *Terms of Inclusion: Black Intellectuals in Twentieth-Century Brazil*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011.

Amim, Valéria. “Candomblé e mitologia: a sexualidade no rito, no corpo e na dança.” *Língua & Literatura* 35, no. 20 (2018): 119-130.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and the Spread of Nationalism*. New York: Verso, 1992.

Araújo, Joel Zito, ed. *O negro na TV pública*. Brasília: Fundação Cultural Palmares, 2012.

_____. "A força de um desejo: a persistência da branquitude como padrão estético audiovisual." *Revista USP*, no. 69 (2006): 72-79.

_____. *A negação do Brasil: O negro na telenovela brasileira*. São Paulo: Senac, 2000.

Arroyo, Jossiana. "Brazilian Homoerotics: Cultural Subjectivity and Representation in the Fiction of Gilberto Freyre." In *Lusosex: Gender and Sexuality in the Portuguese-Speaking World*, edited by Susan Canty Quinlan and Fernando Arenas, 57-83. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics*. Translated by Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984 [1963].

Bakke, Rachel Rua Baptista. "Tem Orixá no Samba: Clara Nunes e a presença do candomblé e da umbanda na música popular brasileira." *Religião e Sociedade* 27, no. 2 (2007): 85-113.

Barthes, Roland. *Image, Music, Text*. Translated by Stephen Heath. New York: Hill and Wang, 1977.

Bastide, Roger. *The African Religions of Brazil: Toward a Sociology of the Interpenetration of Civilizations*. Translated by Helen Sebba. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978 [1960].

Bastos, Mônica Rugai. *Tristeza não paga Dívidas: cinema e política nos anos da Atlântida*. São Paulo: Olho d'Água, 2001.

Beattie, Peter M. *The Tribute of Blood: Army, Honor, Race, and Nation in Brazil, 1864-1945*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001.

Benavides, O. Hugo. *Drugs, Thugs, and Divas: Telenovelas and Narco-Dramas in Latin America*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008.

Benjamin, Walter. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. Translated by J. A. Underwood. New York: Penguin, 2008 [1935].

_____. *The Arcades Project*. Translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2002 [1982].

Berry, Daina Ramey and Leslie M. Harris, eds. *Sexuality & Slavery: Reclaiming Intimate Histories in the Americas*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2018.

Bishop-Sanchez, Kathryn. *Creating Carmen Miranda: Race, Camp, and Transnational Stardom*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2016.

Bocayuva, Helena. *Erotismo à brasileira: o excess sexual na obra de Gilberto Freyre*. Rio de Janeiro: Garamond, 2001.

Bogle, Donald. *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, & Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films*, 4th ed. New York: Continuum, 2001.

Bora, Leonardo Augusto, Gabriel Haddad Gomes Porto, and Vinícius Ferreira Natal, “Candomblés e carnavais: corpos desfilantes de Joãozinho da Goméia,” *Periferia* 12, no. 3 (2020): 224-252.

Borelli, Melissa Blanco. *She Is Cuba: A Genealogy of the Mulata Body*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Braga-Pinto, César. “Othello’s Pathologies: Reading Adolfo Caminha with Lombroso.” *Comparative Literature* 66, no. 2 (2014): 149-172.

Brazette, Maria Manuela. “Saudade normal e patológica.” *Análise Psicológica* 7, no. 4 (1989): 533-536.

Brown, Kimberly Juanita. *The Repeating Body: Slavery’s Visual Resonance in the Contemporary*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015.

Bruce, La Marr Jurelle. *How to Go Mad Without Losing Your Mind: Madness and Black Radical Creativity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021.

Brügger, Silvia Maria Jardim. “Clara Nunes: o canto como missão.” *Revista Eletrônica de Comunicação, Informação e Inovação em Saúde* 4, no. 3 (2010): 103-117.

_____. “Mestiçagem e afro-descendência na música de Clara Nunes,” Paper presented at the Ninth Conference of the Brazilian Studies Association (BRASA IX), New Orleans, March 27-29, 2008, http://www.brasa.org/wordpress/Documents/BRASA_IX/Silvia-Brugger.pdf.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*. New York: Psychology Press, 1993.

Cabral, Sérgio. *Grande Otelo: Uma biografia*. São Paulo: Editora 34, 2007.

Caldwell, Kia Lilly. *Negras in Brazil: Re-envisioning Black Women, Citizenship, and the Politics of Identity*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007.

Capone, Stefania. *Searching for Africa in Brazil: Power and Tradition in Candomblé*. Translated by Lucy Lyall Grant. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010 [1999].

Carby, Hazel. *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Carneiro, Edison. *Candomblés da Bahia*. Salvador, Brazil: Conquista, 1961 [1948].

Carneiro, Sueli. "O negro na TV Pública – desconstruindo narrativas colonizadas." In *O negro na TV pública*, edited by Joel Zito Araújo, 113-122. Brasília: Fundação Cultural Palmares, 2012.

Carvalho, José Murilo de. "Os bordados de João Cândido." *História, Ciências, Saúde - Manguinhos* 2, no. 2 (1995): 68-84.

Chalhoub, Sidney. *Cidade febril: cortiços e epidemias na Corte imperial*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1996.

Colling, Leandro. "A emergência dos ativismos das dissidências sexuais e de gêneros no Brasil da atualidade." *Sala Preta* 18, no. 1 (2018): 153-167.

_____, ed. *Dissidências sexuais e de gênero*. Salvador, Brazil: EDUFBA, 2016.

Conde, Maite. *Foundational Films: Early Cinema and Modernity in Brazil*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2018.

Corossacz, Valeria Ribeiro. *White Middle-Class Men in Rio de Janeiro: The Making of a Dominant Subject*. Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2017.

Costal, Pablo Assumpção Barros. "Carnival in hell: kinetic dissidence and the new queer carnivalesque in contemporary Brazil." In *Performances that Change the Americas*, edited by Stuart A. Day, 59-78. New York: Routledge, 2022.

Couret, Nilo. *Mock Classicism: Latin American Film Comedy, 1930-1960*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2018.

Cruz, Ariane. *The Color of Kink: Black Women, BDSM, and Pornography*. New York: New York University Press, 2016.

DaMatta, Roberto. *Carnavais, malandros e heróis: Para uma sociologia do dilema brasileiro*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 1979.

Daniel, Yvonne. *Dancing Wisdom: Embodied Knowledge in Haitian Voudou, Cuban Yoruba, and Bahian Candomblé*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005.

Dávila, Jerry. *Hotel Trópico: Brazil and the Challenge of African Decolonization, 1950-1980*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010.

_____. *Diploma of Whiteness: Race and Social Policy in Brazil, 1917-1945*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003.

Davis, Angela Y. *Women, Race, and Class* (New York: Random House, 1981).

Dennison, Stephanie. "Cultura cinematográfica e identidades *queer* no Brasil contemporâneo." *Cadernos Pagu* 60 (2020): 1-26.

Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York: Dover, 1994 [1903].

Ellis, Nadia. *Territories of the Soul: Queered Belonging in the Black Diaspora*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015.

Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Translated by Richard Philcox. New York: Grove Press, 2008 [1953].

Ferguson, Roderick A. *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004.

Fernandes, Florestan. *A integração do negro na sociedade de classes, vol. I e II*. Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca Azul, 2008 [1964].

Fernandes, Vagner. *Clara Nunes: Guerreira da Utopia*. Rio de Janeiro: Ediouro, 2007.

Figari, Carlos. *Eróticas de la disidencia en América Latina: Brasil, siglos XVII al XX*. Buenos Aires: Fundación Centro de Integración, Comunicación, Cultura y Sociedad, 2009.

Fleetwood, Nicole R. *Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality, and Blackness*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.

Foster, David Williams. "Adolfo Caminha's Bom-Crioulo: A Founding Text of Brazilian Gay Literature." *Chasqui* 17, no. 2 (1988): 13-22.

Foucault, Michel. *History of Sexuality, volume 1: An Introduction*. Translated by Robert Hurley. New York: Pantheon, 1978 [1976].

Freitas, Ricardo Oliveira de. "Joãozinho da Goméia: rei do candomblé e rei da mídia," *Periferia* 12, no. 3 (2020): 94-128.

Freyre, Gilberto. *Ordem e progresso*, 6th ed. São Paulo: Global, 2004 [1957].

_____. *Sobrados e mucambos*, 15th ed. São Paulo: Global, 2004 [1936].

_____. *Casa-grande & senzala*, 51st ed. São Paulo: Global, 2003 [1933].

_____. "Como e porque escrevi *Casa-grande & senzala*." In *Casa Grande & Senzala*, edited by Guillermo Giucci, Enrique Rodríguez Larreta, and Edson Nery da Fonseca, 701-721. São Paulo: ALLCA XX, 2002 [1968].

Fuentes, Marisa J. *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.

Furtado, Júnia Ferreira. *Chica da Silva e o contratador dos diamantes: O outro lado do mito*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2003.

Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993.

_____. "Sounds Authentic: Black Music, Ethnicity, and the Challenge of a "Changing" Same." *Black Music Research Journal* 11, no. 2 (1991): 111-136.

Ginway, M. Elizabeth. "Nation Building and Heroic Undoing: Myth and Ideology in Bom-Crioulo." *Modern Language Studies* 28, no. 3-4 (1998): 45.

Godreau, Isar P. *Scripts of Blackness: Race, Cultural Nationalism, and U.S. Colonialism in Puerto Rico*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015.

Gonzalez, Lélia. "A categoria político-cultural de amefricanidade." *Tempo Brasileiro*, no. 92/93 (1988): 69-82.

_____. "Por um feminismo afrolatinoamericano." *Revista Isis Internacional* 8, (1988): 133-141.

Green, James N. *Beyond Carnival: Male Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century Brazil*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

Halberstam, Jack. *The Queer Art of Failure*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010.

Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." In *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, edited by Jonathan Rutherford, 222-237. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990.

Hartman, Saidiya V. Hartman. *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Higginbotham, Evelyn Brooks. "African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race," *Signs* 17, no. 2 (1992): 251-274.

Hirano, Luis Felipe Kojima. "O imaginário da branquitude à luz da trajetória de Grande Otelo: Raça, *persona* e estereótipo em sua *performance* artística." *Afro-Ásia* 48 (2013): 77-125.

hooks, bell. *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston: South End, 1992.

Howes, Robert. "Race and Transgressive Sexuality in Adolfo Caminha's *Bom-Crioulo*." *Luso-Brazilian Review* 38, no. 1 (2001): 41-62.

Isfahani-Hammond, Alexandra. *White Negritude: Race, Writing, and Brazilian Cultural Identity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Jacobs, Harriet A. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, written by herself*. Edited by Jean Fagan Yellin. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2009 [1861].

Johnson, Jessica Marie. *Wicked Flesh: Black Women, Intimacy, and Freedom in the Atlantic World*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020.

Jones, Gayl. *Corregidora*. Boston: Beacon, 1975.

Jones-Rogers, Stephanie E. *They Were Her Property: White Women as Slave Owners in the American South*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020.

Koutsoukos, Sandra Sofia Machado. “‘Amas mercenárias’: o discurso dos doutores em medicina e os retratos de amas - Brasil, segunda metade do século XIX.” *História, Ciências, Saúde - Manguinhos* 16, no. 2, (2009): 305-324.

Lamola, Malesela John. “Senghor, globalism, and Africanity.” *Phronimon* 17, no. 2 (2016): 51-67.

Landes, Ruth. *The City of Women*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006 [1947].

Marcussi, Alexandre Almeida. “Mestiçagem e perversão sexual em Gilberto Freyre e Arthur de Gobineau.” *Estudos Históricos* 26, no. 52 (2013): 275-293.

Marriott, David. *On Black Men*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.

Matory, J. Lorand. *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005.

McCann, Bryan. *Hello, Hello Brazil: Popular Music in the Marking of Modern Brazil*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004.

Melo, Alfredo Cesar. “Os mundos misturados de Gilberto Freyre.” *Luso-Brazilian Review* 43, no. 2 (2006): 27-44.

Mendes, Leonardo. “Naturalismo com aspas: ‘Bom-Crioulo’ de Adolfo Caminha, a homossexualidade e os desafios da criação literária.” *Gragoatá* 14 (2003): 29-44.

Ministério da Cultura. *João Cândido: A Luta pelos Direitos Humanos*. Rio de Janeiro: Associação Cultural do Arquivo Nacional, 2008.

Miskolci, Richard. *O desejo da nação: Masculinidade e branquitude no Brasil de fins do XIX*. São Paulo: Annablume, 2013.

Mitchell, Jasmine. *Imagining the Mulatta: Blackness in U.S. and Brazilian Media*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2020.

Morel, Edmar. *A Revolta da Chibata*. Rio de Janeiro: Pongetti, 1958.

Morgan, Jennifer L. *Reckoning with Slavery: Gender, Kinship, and Capitalism in the Early Black Atlantic*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021.

Morgan, Zachary R. *Legacy of the Lash: Race and Corporal Punishment in the Brazilian Navy*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2014.

Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. New York: Vintage, 1992.

_____. *Beloved*. New York: Knopf, 1987.

Mundell, John A. “Meninos diferentes: Construção e performance de masculinidades de homens negros gays em Salvador, Bahia.” Master’s thesis, Centro de Estudos Afro-Orientais, Universidade Federal da Bahia, 2014.

Murari, Lucas and Matues Nagime, eds. *New Queer Cinema: cinema, sexualidade e política*. São Paulo: Caixa Econômica Federal, 2015.

Nascimento, Abdias do. “Democracia racial: mito ou realidade?” Lecture given at the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture, Lagos, 1977.

Nash, Jennifer C. “Black Anality.” *GLQ* 20, no. 4 (2014): 439-460.

Neto, João Nemi. *Cannibalizing Queer: Brazilian Cinema from 1970 to 2015*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University, 2022.

Nina Rodrigues, Raimundo. *Os africanos no Brasil*. São Paulo: Cia. Ed. Nacional, 1932.

Nunes, Zita. *Cannibal Democracy: Race and Representation in the Literature of the Americas*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.

Ochoa, Marcia. *Queen for a Day: Transformistas, Beauty Queens, and the Performance of Femininity in Venezuela*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014.

Ortiz, Fernando. *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar*. Barcelona: Red, 2019 [1940].

Owen, Ianna Hawkins. “Still, Nothing: Mammy and Black Asexual Possibility.” *Feminist Review* 120, no. 1 (2018): 70-84.

Parker, Richard G. *Bodies, Pleasures, and Passions: Sexual Culture in Contemporary Brazil*, 2nd ed. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2009 [1991].

Patterson, Orlando. *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982.

Perez, Hiram. "Two or Three Spectacular Mulatas and the Queer Pleasures of Overidentification." *Camera Obscura* 23, no. 1 (2008): 113-143.

Piedra, José A. "Nationalizing Sissies." In *¿Entiendes?: Queer Readings, Hispanic Writings*, edited by Emilie L. Bergmann and Paul Julian Smith, 370-410. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995.

Pinho, Osmundo. "Race Fucker: representações raciais na pornografia gay." *Cadernos Pagu* 38 (2012): 159-195.

Pinho, Osmundo de Araújo. "O efeito do sexo: políticas de raça, gênero e miscigenação." *Cadernos Pagu* 23, (2004): 89-119.

Pinho, Patricia de Santana. "'A casa grande surta quando a senzala aprende a ler': Resistência antirracista e o desvendamento da branquitude injuriada no Brasil." *Confluente: Revista di Studi Iberoamericani* 13, no. 1 (2021): 32-55.

_____. *Mama Africa: Reinventing Blackness in Bahia*. Translated by Elena Langdon. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010 [2004].

Port, Mattijs van de. "Candomblé in pink, green, and black: Re-scripting the Afro-Brazilian religious heritage in the public sphere of Salvador, Bahia." *Social Anthropology* 13, no. 1 (2005): 3-26.

Pravaz, Natasha. "Performing Mulata-ness: The Politics of Cultural Authenticity and Sexuality among Carioca Samba Dancers," *Latin American Perspectives* 39, no. 2 (2011): 113-133.

Ramos, Arthur. *O negro brasileiro*. Recife: Fundação Joaquim Nabuco/Editora Massangana, 1988 [1932].

Ramos-Zayas, Ana Y. *Parenting Empires: Class, Whiteness, and the Moral Economy of Privilege in Latin America*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020.

Rio, João do. *A alma encantadora das ruas*. Rio de Janeiro: Virtualbooks, 2000 [1908], <http://bibliotecadigital.puc-campinas.edu.br/services/e-books/Joao%20do%20Rio-1.pdf>.

Rios, Luís Felipe. "O paradoxo dos prazeres: trabalho, homossexualidade e estilos de ser homem no candomblé queto fluminense." *Etnográfica* 16, no. 1 (2012): 53-74.

Rivera-Rideau, Petra. *Remixing Reggaetón: The Cultural Politics of Race in Puerto Rico*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015.

_____. "From Carolina to Loíza: race, place, and Puerto Rican racial democracy." *Global Studies in Culture and Power* 20, no. 5 (2013): 616-632.

Rodríguez, Juana María. *Sexual Futures, Queer Gestures, and Other Latina Longings*. New York: New York University Press, 2014.

_____. *Queer Latinidad: Identity Practices, Discursive Spaces*. New York: New York University Press, 2003.

Roth, Cassia. "Black Nurse, White Milk: Breastfeeding, Slavery, and Abolition in 19th-Century Brazil." *Journal of Human Lactation* 34, no. 4 (2018) 804-809.

_____. "Branquitude e poder: Revisitando o "medo branco" no século XXI." *Revista da Associação Brasileira de Pesquisadores Negros* 6, no. 3 (2014): 134-147.

Schwarcz, Lilia Moritz. *O espetáculo das raças: Cientistas, instituições e pensamento racial no Brasil, 1870-1930*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1993.

Scott, Darieck. *Extravagant Abjection: Blackness, Power, and Sexuality in the African American Literary Imagination*. New York: New York University Press, 2010.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015 [1985].

Seigel, Micol. *Uneven Encounters: Making Race and Nation in Brazil and the United States*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009.

Seigel, Micol and Tiago de Melo Gomes. "Sabina das laranjas: raça, gênero e nação na trajetória de um símbolo popular, 1889-1930." *Revista Brasileira da História* 22, no. 43 (2002): 171-193.

Shaw, Lisa. *Tropical Travels: Brazilian Popular Performance, Transnational Encounters, and the Construction of Race*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018.

_____. "Vargas on Film: From the Newsreel to the *chanchada*," In *Vargas and Brazil: New Perspectives*, edited by Jens R. Hentschke, 207-226. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

Sinclair, John and Joseph Straubhaar. *Latin American Television Industries*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Skidmore, Thomas E. *Black Into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993 [1974]).

Smith, Christen A. *Afro-Paradise: Blackness, Violence, and Performance in Brazil*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016.

Snorton, C. Riley. *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017.

Solomon, William. *Slapstick Modernism: Chaplin to Kerouac to Iggy Pop*. Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2016.

Somerville, Siobhan B. *Queering the Color Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in American Cultures*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000.

Sommer, Doris. *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America*. Oakland: University of California Press, 1991.

Souza, Marina de Mello e. *Reis negros no Brasil escravista: história da festa de coroação de rei congo*. Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG, 2002.

Spillers, Hortense. "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics* 17, no. 12 (1987): 64-81.

Spruill, Jennifer. "Ad/Dressing the Nation: Drag and Authenticity in Post-Apartheid South Africa." *Journal of Homosexuality* 46, no. 3/4 (2004): 91-111.

Stam, Robert. *Tropical Multiculturalism: A Comparative History of Race in Brazilian Cinema & Culture*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997.

Stepan, Nancy Leys. *"The Hours of Eugenics": Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991.

Stewart, Susan. *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993.

Strongman, Roberto. *Queering Black Atlantic Religions: Transcorporeality in Candomblé, Santería, and Vodou*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019.

Telles, Edward E. *Race in Another America: The Significance of Skin Color in Brazil*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Thomas, Deborah A. *Modern Blackness: Nationalism, Globalization, and the Politics of Culture in Jamaica*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004.

Tinsley, Omise'eke Natasha. "Black Atlantic, Queer Atlantic: Queer Imaginings of the Middle Passage." *GLQ* 14, no. 2 (2008): 191-215.

Tortorici, Zeb. *Sins against Nature: Sex and Archives in Colonial New Spain*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018.

Trevisan, João Silveiro. *Devassos no paraíso: a homossexualidade no Brasil, da colônia à atualidade*, 4th ed. Rio de Janeiro: Objetiva, 2018 [1986].

Vianna, Hermano. *The Mystery of Samba: Popular Music and National Identity in Brazil*. Translated by John Charles Chasteen. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999 [1995].

Weinstein, Barbara. *The Color of Modernity: São Paulo and the Making of Race and Nation in Modern Brazil*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015.

Wekker, Gloria. *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016.

White, Deborah Gray. *Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1999.

Williams, Erica Lorraine. *Sex Tourism in Bahia: Ambiguous Entanglements*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013.

Winters, Lisa Ze. *The Mulatta Concubine: Terror, Intimacy, Freedom, and Desire in the Black Transatlantic*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2016.

Woodard, Vincent. *The Delectable Negro: Human Consumption and Homoeroticism within U.S. Slave Culture*. Edited by Justin A. Joyce and Dwight A. McBride. New York: New York University Press, 2014.

Periodicals and Media

See notes for specific articles. Sources are drawn from:

Brazil

A nova revista (Rio de Janeiro)

A Notícia (Rio de Janeiro)

Acessa.com

Correio Braziliense (Brasília)

Correio Paulistano (São Paulo)

Diário Carioca (Rio de Janeiro)

Diário da Noite (Rio de Janeiro)

Diário de São Paulo (São Paulo)

Folha de São Paulo (São Paulo)

G Magazine (São Paulo)

Grupo Gay da Bahia (Salvador)

Hoje em Dia (Belo Horizonte)

Jornal do Brasil (Rio de Janeiro)

Jornal do Commercio (Rio de Janeiro)

Manchete (Rio de Janeiro)

O Globo (Rio de Janeiro)

O Malho (Rio de Janeiro)

O Paiz (Rio de Janeiro)

O Prelo (Rio de Janeiro)

Rede Globo (Rio de Janeiro)
Revista da Semana (Rio de Janeiro)
Revista do Diário Carioca (Rio de Janeiro)
Sétimo Céu (Rio de Janeiro)
Última Hora (Rio de Janeiro)

Other countries

Clarín (Buenos Aires, Argentina)
El Comercio (Quito, Ecuador)
El Tiempo (Bogotá, Colombia)
The New York Times (New York, U.S.A.)
Telemundo (Miami, U.S.A.)
The Wall Street Journal (New York, U.S.A.)
The Washington Post (Washington, D.C., U.S.A.)