

THE DIALOGUE ABOUT "RACIAL DEMOCRACY"
AMONG AFRICAN-AMERICAN AND AFRO-BRAZILIAN LITERATURES

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ABSTRACT

ISABEL CRISTINA RODRIGUES FERREIRA: The Dialogue about "Racial Democracy" among African-American and Afro-Brazilian Literatures
(Under the direction of Fred Clark)

This dissertation focuses on the "myth of racial democracy" in the works of African-American and Afro-Brazilian writers in the early and late twentieth and early twentieth-first centuries. Their novels, short stories, and a play dialogue among each other. The African-American novels Passing (1929) of Nella Larsen and Caucasia (1998) of Danzy Senna reflect on their perception of Brazilian reality of "racial democracy," which was related to their own racial realities. Both authors use Brazilian racial harmony as an option to their characters to experience a different racial relation that did not involve segregation in the 1920s or violent acts in the 1960s and 1970s. The Afro-Brazilian selection of stories reflects on the Brazilian reality for Afro-descendants, which presents no sign of racial harmony. The novels Vida e morte de M. J. Gonzaga de Sá (1919) and Clara dos Anjos (1923-24) of Lima Barreto, Malungos e milongas (1988) of Esmeralda Ribeiro and Ponciá Vicêncio (2003) of

Conceição Evaristo; the unpublished play Uma boneca no lixo of Cristiane Sobral; and short stories of Cuti, Márcio Barbosa, Éle Semog, Esmeralda Ribeiro, Oubi Inaê Kibuko, Conceição Evaristo, Lia Vieira and Cristiane Sobral show that Afro-Brazilian reality in the 1920s and in the late twentieth and early twentieth-first centuries is of discrimination, and prejudice, but they reflect on non-violent solutions to fight against their fate.

In Chapter One, I introduce the subject of racial democracy, which will be discussed in two African-American novels and some Afro-Brazilian literary works. Chapters Two and Three are overviews of Brazilian history, examining the role and perception of Afro-descendants by society, and Afro-Brazilian literature throughout the centuries, respectively. The former helps readers understand how important the “myth of racial democracy” was to maintain the order and power to those controlling the country’s economy and politics. Chapter Four examines African-American novels, relating them not only to their perception of Brazil, but also to their own history and racial relations. Chapter Five shows different racial issues discussed in some of the works. These interpretations of Brazilian racial reality can dismantle the discourse of the “myth of racial democracy.” The last Chapter is the conclusion

of what I presented and discussed in the previous chapters and some thoughts about future research topics.

To God, my mother, Benícia Rodrigues da Costa, and in memory of my father, Geraldo Magela Ferreira, for their guidance, support, love, encouragement and patience. Without these things this dissertation could not have been possible.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

[R]ace is a social and cultural construction and not a fact of nature or a primordial given.
(Fredrickson 3)

The present study aims to investigate the dialogue about “racial democracy” among selected literary texts of Afro-Brazilian and African-American literatures published since the 1920s. In the 1920s, African-Americans viewed Brazil as an alternative to escape segregation laws and violence based on scholars’ and travelers’ accounts about racial relations in Brazil. Only a few Afro-Brazilian writers would admit the condition of Afro-Brazilians being oppressed in this supposedly racial harmonious society. Then, in the 1960s and 1970s, African-American scholars and intellectuals viewed racial relations in Brazil more clearly. Their visits to the country led them to question its harmony and, at the same time, Brazilian Afro-descendants’ movements flourished, influenced by the ones in the United States. Two important goals of the Brazilian movements were to bring self-awareness

and a sense of identity to the Afro-Brazilian community and to deconstruct the "myth of racial democracy." Hence, I want to examine the way in which examples of twentieth-century African-American and Afro-Brazilian prose fiction perceive and critique the concept of "racial democracy" in Brazil. I hope to help my readers understand how blacks' personal exploration of race and identity, as seen through African-Americans and Afro-Brazilians' experiences, forge a new consciousness about themselves and Brazil.

In order to achieve the objectives of my dissertation I want to examine Brazilian history focusing on racial relations, which led to Gilberto Freyre's sociological theory of the "myth of racial democracy." This myth was based on the harmonious relationship established by slaves and their masters and was associated with the ideology of "whitening" the Brazilian population established by the government's immigration policy. This Brazilian project has been both defended and criticized by some scholars. The examination of some scholarly works is the theory on which I will base my analysis and my selection of African-Americans and Afro-Brazilians' literary works. The fact that Brazil has never practiced legal segregation and discrimination does not guarantee that it is a racially harmonious country. Brazilian society does not offer the same opportunities to all its

citizens nor does it treat them equally everywhere in the country.

Chapter Two focuses on the socio-historical background in which the “myth of racial democracy” was formulated in Brazil in 1933 by Gilberto Freyre in Casa-grande & senzala. This ideology is based on the slave holding structure that governed Brazil for centuries. Although their life was not easy, the slaves’ relationship with their master was perceived as cordial and friendly. They were allowed some freedom. Many offspring of sexual relationships between female slaves and their masters were manumitted after birth. Also, there were many opportunities for slaves to gain freedom, which created a large population of free blacks. These facts convinced many scholars including Freyre, that Brazil could not be a racist country. Miscegenation increased with the arrival of new European immigrants. The result was that Brazil was becoming “whiter” and that consolidated Freyre’s view of “racial democracy,” transforming it in a myth that lasted until the late twentieth century. To explain how this ideology crossed centuries, I decided to take the chronological approach and divide this chapter into the following historical periods: Colonial (1500–1822), Imperial (1822–1889), and Republican (1889–present).

These periods represent changes in the economic and political realms as well as in the social that shaped the formulation and maintenance of the myth. First, I will show how Brazil became a slaveholding society in the Colonial period and its consequences until the end of the Imperial period. After an unsuccessful attempt to use the indigenous population in the sugarcane production and its increasing demand for more workers, the colonizer imported slaves from Africa. Slave owners did not care for their slaves because it was cheap to replace them. The slaves were forced to work hard or they were punished. Punishments were severe and led to two forms of resistance: rebellions like the Revolta dos Escravos Malês in 1835 and passive resistance in the form of suicide, homicide of their newborns, or capoeira. Not all slaves worked in the field; some, mostly female, worked in the master's house. These female slaves were forced into sexual relations with their masters. The process of miscegenation, upon which Gilberto Freyre based his theory, began in the sixteenth century. When sugarcane production decreased, the whole slave holding system moved to the gold and diamond mining areas. Life did not become easier or better for the slaves; on the contrary, they had to face one other life-threatening factor: the poisonous substances used in the gold and diamond mining

industries. Slaves, however, could pay for their freedom more easily by finding a large amount of gold or a big diamond.

One year before the proclamation of the Republic, in 1888, slavery was abolished. Abolition, however, did not change the life of the slaves drastically. They still had no access to education, nor did they have the skills to compete with European immigrants who began to arrive in the beginning of the Republican period. Most traditional historians maintain that the European immigrants came to work in the coffee plantations. Other historians and scholars have argued, however, that their arrival was a government investment to "whiten" the country (Marger 429-31). As the Brazilian population was already mixed, it would not take long to erase any trace of "blackness" from it. Different from other societies, miscegenation was viewed by the Brazilian elite as a positive aspect because they believed that "whiteness" would prevail over "blackness." Without equal opportunities to compete, Afro-descendants were left with the jobs no one else wanted. As a consequence, they remained at the bottom of the social ladder. Society could now justify its inequality based on class/economic difference rather than on racism or discrimination.

During the Vargas Era (1930-1945) and the period of military dictatorship (1964-1985), Afro-Brazilians were

repressed as they tried to claim their identity and rights. Although Getúlio Vargas was a popular president because of his attempts to regulate employees' rights and to industrialize Brazil, he closed down a number of social or racial organizations in the name of national interests and unity. His actions reinforced and promoted through threats the theory of "racial democracy." Furthermore, to protect Brazil against communism, all the presidents during the military dictatorship used the ideology of "racial democracy" to make Brazilians believe they were all treated equal. The myth was strengthened by repression during this period. It was also used by the elite to justify its policy of inequality. As Williams da Silva Gonçalves stated, if Afro-descendants tried to advocate any racial or social cause, they were considered traitors of the country (Quoted in Santos, História 318). After the re-establishment of democracy in Brazil in 1985, black movements began to advocate against prejudice and to educate Afro-Brazilians about racism in the country.

Critics of the "myth of racial democracy" and to the ideology of "whitening" include intellectuals like Thomas Skidmore, Darién Davis, Carl Degler, and David Hellwig. These scholars have published many articles and books criticizing both concepts in the last four decades of the twentieth century. They maintain that racism and inequality exist in

Brazil, and one problem relates to the other. For them, by not having a clear definition of race in Brazil, racism and discrimination become difficult to identify. When Afro-Brazilian militants tried to make Brazilians aware of the racial problems in the country and to affirm their color, they found resistance especially among blacks. The latter have incorporated the "whitening" ideology in such a way that they are convinced that they can have a better chance in life if they deny their "blackness" and adopt white values.

Chapter Three presents an overview of the development of Afro-descendant's literature from the first writings up to the present day to show how some black authors contributed to the formation of the awareness of racism among Afro-descendants, and, at the same time, fought against the "myth of racial democracy" through their characters and themes. In order to discuss their contributions, I define what I consider to be Afro-descendant's literature. It can be determined by theme and/or one's self identification/image. I want to define it, however, in such way that it avoids stereotypical black characters and messages that reinforce prejudice or praise white values as superior. I would like for my definition to contribute to establishing positive messages about black values and traditions. With my definition established, I will show the contribution of individual authors in building the

Afro-Brazilian genre and also the contribution of groups in creating a network which made possible the publication of their work.

Afro-Brazilian literature began in the nineteenth century with the poet Luís Gonzaga Pinto da Gama. Most of what was written by Afro-descendants during that century was poetry, which expressed their position against slavery, criticized those mulattos who denied their African blood, discussed racial identity of people of mixed blood, and expressed their experiences as black men in a slaveholding society. They also wrote chronicles and articles. In 1859, the first Afro-Brazilian female writer, Maria Firmina dos Reis, published her only novel Úrsula. It follows the Romantic trend of a tragic end for those who deviate from social conventions of the patriarchal system. Its novelty lies in its discussion of the tragic end from the racial perspective.

In the twentieth century, a larger number of Afro-Brazilians writers emerged publishing more novels and short stories. Poetry, however, was still more popular. Afonso Henriques de Lima Barreto is a well-known writer of the beginning of the century. His concerns were the contradictions of his society in relation to social and racial problems. Other writers, like Solano Trindade, Carolina Maria de Jesus, Oswaldo de Camargo and Domício Proença Filho sought resistance

to “whiteness” through their work. They reflected on the concept of social assimilation. In the 1970s, Afro-descendants combined their efforts to call attention to racism in Brazil and to articulate the need of a collective consciousness to solve the problem. Among the writers who are involved in this cause was Abdias do Nascimento and Luiz Silva (Cutí). In the last two decades of the twentieth century, Afro-Brazilian literature began to increase in number due to a decision to publish their work in anthologies or collective publications. Maria Conceição Evaristo, Geni Mariano Guimarães, Paulo Colina, Miriam Alves, Jamu Minka, Oubi Inaê Kibuko, Esmeralda Ribeiro, Márcio Barbosa, Edimilson de Almeida Pereira, and Cristiane Sobral are some of the writers of the last two decades of the twentieth century and in the twentieth first century. Their themes are varied: the struggle for a positive black identity, racial prejudice and social inequality, resistance against oppression, marginalization, African traditions, abusive relationships, and depression. These writers present the dynamics of tensions and contradictions, and the social oppression Afro-Brazilians have faced throughout the history of the country.

In Chapter Four, I will focus on specific African-American literary works--Passing (1929) by Nella Larsen and Caucasia (1998) by Danzy Senna. Then, I will explain how and

when the concept of "racial democracy" arrived in the United States, and explore African-American reality at the time to understand why they needed to relate to a myth constructed in another country. Passing expresses the need of African-Americans of the 1920s to dream of a society which does not segregate and discriminate. The character Brian Redfield dreams about Brazil, as he dreams about a society where he and his sons can live freely. This dream is never fulfilled as his wife Irene does not accept the idea of leaving the United States. Legal segregation only ceased after American society triumphed after another difficult and violent moment in its history, the Civil Rights movement. African-Americans fought for the rights, which they thought Afro-descendants in Brazil had. This is the setting in which the characters in Caucasia begin to develop.

In this novel, a bi-racial family splits up and two members, Deck and Cole Lee (black father and daughter), move to experience Brazilian reality when the other two, Sandy and Birdie (white mother and light-skinned daughter) move to another State. Birdie, because of her appearance can "pass" and does. Father and daughter also want to experience the privileges of whiteness; they believe that Brazil is the only place where they can have this opportunity. As Senna states in an interview for Callaloo, Brazil is the "land of

miscegenation," and an idealized and exotic country (448). After some weeks in Brazil, the feeling of novelty passes and their view shifts with the reality they experience there. They realized that Afro-Brazilians do not enjoy equality, but rather a false idea of equality that was formulated and used to manipulate them according to the government's interests. They return, disappointed with their experience but certain that they have to fight in the United States for their rights and their opportunities. Deck notices that while the African-American's situation is not one of equality, they can transform their situation through union. This is not likely to happen in Brazil as most Afro-descendants accept the doctrine of "racial democracy." Race in Brazil is not clearly defined, and there was little organization that could help them fight for their rights and for a true "racial democracy."

African-Americans were led to believe in this ideology through Freyre's books, essays, and conferences. The propaganda was sent by the Brazilian government to convince people that in Brazil, all Afro-Brazilians have access to the privileges of whiteness. African-Americans hoped to go to this racial paradise, since it would be impossible for most of them to experience the privileges of whiteness in the United States. Yet, in the second half of the twentieth century, African-American intellectuals began to read Afro-Brazilian

militant speeches about racial relations and to visit the country. These visits made them confront a Brazilian reality of racial inequality that they were not expecting.

In Chapter Five I will analyze different Afro-Brazilian writers' perception of their own reality and of Brazil's "myth of racial democracy." I have selected the novels Vida e Morte de M. J. Gonzaga de Sá (1919) and Clara dos Anjos (1923-24) by Afonso Henriques de Lima Barreto, Malungos e milongas (1988) by Esmeralda Ribeiro, and Ponciá Vicêncio (2003) by Conceição Evaristo, the play Uma boneca no lixo (1998) by Cristiane Sobral, and short stories from Cuti's collection Quizila (1987) and Negros em contos (1996), and from Márcio Barbosa, Éle Semog, Esmeralda Ribeiro, Cristiane Sobral, Lia Vieira, Oubi Inaê Kibuko and Conceição Evaristo's short stories published from 1983 to 2003 in Cadernos negros. All of these literary texts were chosen also to coincide with the time period of the novels from Chapter Four.

Cadernos negros is one of Brazil's oldest publications devoted to Afro-Brazilian writers and their resistance against racism. Since 1978 it has published about thirty volumes, alternating between collections of poetry and short stories. From the beginning Cadernos negros interpreted the hopes and difficulties Afro-Brazilians faced all over the country. Organizers and writers have attempted to promote a black

awareness against racism among Brazilians, but it has been difficult to do so in a society that discriminates against blacks. Esmeralda Ribeiro and Márcio Barbosa, in the introduction to Cadernos negros, volume 26, state that Afro-Brazilian authors' texts are not complaints, but rather a hope for non-exclusion in Brazilian society (9-10). These Afro-Brazilian writers under study here are known in Brazil for their activism in racial issues. Their writings deal with the same questions analyzed in Senna's novel. Their characters have to face some kind of prejudice for being Afro-Brazilians which can be viewed as implicit, at first; but, in each case, the outcome of these conflicts are their decision to fight against white values and to claim their own identity and cultural traditions. They are challenged in terms of social mobility, ideal of beauty, self-esteem, racial identity, interracial relationships, and whiteness.

Some characters see themselves in situations which will permit social mobility, if they make some kind of concession that will break family or friendship bonds, or if they will deny it for racial reasons. The ideal of beauty forces black girls and women to change their physical appearance to fulfill the pattern imposed by a white society. Characters in these situations rebel against that dictatorship canonical of beauty and assume their blackness, because they have to be proud of

what they are. Characters fighting for a high self-esteem always encounter people who make them feel inferior. They may not be ready to respond to that insult properly or may cry over the problem, but they will not let it destroy them. They will prove to themselves, more than to anybody else, that they deserve to be respected as human beings. Racial identity is also an issue which Afro-Brazilians often deny. As Brazil is multiracial, people create certain categories to classify themselves and to avoid being labeled black. This may have an immediate benefit for the character, but it will not solve the problem, because people do not work in isolation, but need to come together as a group to claim their rights. On the topic of interracial relationships, society does not openly discriminate against them. It appears to be a question of someone taking advantage of the other. People typically see the Afro-descendant as taking advantage of the "poor" white person who is innocent about the former's real intentions of social ascension. To some people an interracial relationship cannot be based exclusively on feelings, but some characters manage to create situations in which they prove that what they feel for the other person is genuine and that there is not any other interest involved in that relationship. Finally, whiteness, a concept which considers the values of the white elite as superior, has been assimilated by the majority of

Afro-Brazilians. By adopting these values, however, the latter has become distant from their traditional values and their community. One solution adopted in the Colonial period, as I explained in the third chapter, was to incorporate their African values to the acquired white ones, thus transforming them into a hybrid value. The characters of the works analyzed in this chapter, however, deny that solution. They want to be true to their black traditions and values. They do not want to fake acceptance to survive in Brazilian society because they are proud of what they are and of what their customs represent.

In Ponciá Vicêncio, for example, Conceição Evaristo focuses on social mobility, racial identity, and whiteness. Ponciá, the protagonist, and her brother Luandi flee from a village to a city, and consequently from an almost enslaved life to a hope for a freer and successful one. They leave the village because they believe in the propaganda of "racial democracy." But the city does not give them what they were expecting. What they find there is disrespect, exploitation, and a feeling of loneliness and hopelessness. At the end, she, her brother, and her mother, who went to the city to find them, return to the village. Ponciá and Luandi realize that their place is in the village because there is where their roots and history are. In two of Cuti's stories, one will find

the themes of interracial relationships and the question of self-esteem. In "Namoro," for example, the white protagonist Maurício, takes his girlfriend, Bárbara, home to meet his parents. She is an Afro-Brazilian, and her father warns her about the prejudice she will encounter with this interracial relationship. Bárbara is disrespected in Maurício's house by his father who will not accept an Afro-descendant in the family. Ronaldo, in "Quizila," is a character who has a high self-esteem and who is focused on the cause of Afro-Brazilians. Ronaldo, however, uses his self-consciousness to lead a group of black Brazilians to advocate peacefully against violence. He believes that only organized groups can rescue the Afro-descendants from marginalization. In "Pixaim," Cristiane Sobral discusses the ideal of beauty. A little girl, the protagonist, is forced to straighten her hair because she is too beautiful to have African hair. For several years she undergoes this torture. As soon as she is old enough to rebel, she decides that beauty lies in assuming who she is, because there is beauty in all ethnic groups. She does not care about what people think; she is proud of her "blackness." In all of these examples, the characters face some kind of prejudice for being Afro-Brazilians. When they become aware of their racial and social challenges, however, they fight to assure their

values, identity and to establish a society which accepts them and their values for who they are.

Finally, after discussing these texts from both countries in relation to the "myth of racial democracy," I will conclude that the disillusionment about Brazil and Brazilians for those African-American characters is the result of high expectations built from false propaganda and the need to have some palpable place where their dreams and expectations are a reality. Afro-Brazilian intellectuals and writers, however, long ago, stopped believing in the "myth," and began to bring awareness to Afro-descendants through writings, social and political organizations, and cultural movements. This approach has slowly gained strength since the population as a whole began to question the "myth." Their characters, in ordinary situations, face different challenges that show how racist Brazil is. Their response is not to accept that treatment or discrimination, but rather to find ways to show they are not like they are perceived. They fight for their space as equal citizens in society.

CHAPTER TWO

AFRO-BRAZILIAN SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Despite the country's [Brazil] non-racialist laws and discourse, there are several social mechanisms and institutions that permit the functioning of racism as a system (Guimarães, "Race" 38)

Colonial Period (1500-1822)

Before extending its domain to and exploiting Brazil, the Portuguese Crown started its expansion in Africa and Asia. In the former, according to Joseph Smith and Francisco Vinhosa in History of Brazil, 1500-2000: Politics, Economy, Society, Diplomacy, "The most valuable items traded were gold, sugar and slaves," which constituted the colonizers only interest rather than settlement (2). After the Portuguese navigator Pedro Álvares Cabral reached the coast of Brazil, on April 22, 1500, and claimed it in the name of the Crown, the Portuguese established only fortified feitorias (trading posts) along the coastline. The feitorias were acquired by private individuals who agreed to pay the Crown a percentage of their profit with the extraction of natural sources: exotic animals, vegetal

oil, and the hard wood called pau-brasil (brazilwood), which gave the country its name. Pau-brasil was the most important Brazilian product during the beginning of the Colonial period (Burns 23, Smith 4). The Portuguese engaged, at first, in an informal trade with the indigenous population who extracted pau-brasil and traded it for tools and other objects. This relationship was easily established because, as Pero Vaz de Caminha described in his letter to the King of Portugal, the indigenous population was cordial and pleasant. As pau-brasil product seemed profitable and abundant, the Portuguese traders tried unsuccessfully to establish a mercantile system, similar to the one with Asia and Africa, with the indigenous population. For the Portuguese, that cordial behavior showed that the indigenous population was inferior to them and, therefore, could be enslaved (Meade 14-17).

By having only feitorias, the Portuguese Crown was not able to avoid frequent invasions by the French and other European explorers, who were also trading with the indigenous population. King D. João III, in 1530, decided to initiate the program of colonization with an expedition led by the nobleman Martim Afonso de Sousa to assert the Crown's control over Brazil. The king divided the Brazilian coastline into fifteen capitanias hereditárias (inherited captaincies), which would be used for agricultural purposes by twelve Portuguese

noblemen. Of the fifteen captaincies, only two succeeded: São Vicente and Pernambuco. The administrators, Martim Afonso de Sousa and Duarte Coelho, respectively, established successful sugar cane plantations, and the latter did it with the help of the indigenous population. In 1548, the king revoked most of the power of the capitánias hereditárias for their inefficiency and sent a governor-general, Tomé de Sousa, to Brazil. The governor-general's expedition organized a central government in the city of Salvador, capital of the colony, in the state of Bahia (Portugal 208, Smith 21-22).

According to Guilherme Pereira das Neves in História do Brasil: da terra ignota ao Brasil atual, after the success of the first sugar cane plantations in Brazil, the Portuguese Crown, became interested in developing an economy based on it and soon it became the most important exporting good during the Colonial period. This interest had two reasons: the product was highly valued in Europe, and the country's commerce with Asian goods lost its profit because of the Dutch competition (Quoted in Santos 45). The Portuguese had already developed the know-how from their experience cultivating sugar cane in other regions of the kingdom, namely Madeira, the Azores, and Cape Verde (Meade 13). The plantation system required a large number of laborers to work in the field. So it, first, exploited the indigenous population, and then

African slaves. Captivity and enslavement of the first group found objection from the Catholic Church and brought death to thousands of people from "[d]isease, overwork, brutality, destruction of their traditional life, and depression" (Meade 21-23). Moreover, the indigenous population only worked for subsistence, which turned out difficult to make them work on repetitive chores or for a long period of time (Caldeira 34). The decline of the number of inhabitants of the first group promoted the rise of the number of African slaves, who were involuntarily brought to Brazil to work on the plantations. The Africans were hard workers and strong, and had no one to protest against their enslavement or to protect them.

The first group of African slaves arrived in Brazil in 1538 but the Portuguese had been enslaving them "at least as early as 1433, and by the mid-sixteenth century the Portuguese were well acquainted with the West African coast and its inhabitants" (Burns 42). Slaves became a lucrative business, not only to slave traders but to the Portuguese Crown, which received taxes from the trade. The African slaves passed through harsh and subhuman conditions, causing a high mortality rate, before arriving on the plantation. First, they marched in chains for hundreds of miles to the African coast with little food or water, next, they were put on the *tumbeiros* (slave ships). The traders managed to pack between

300 to 400 slaves per vessel (Meade 31-34; Smith 23). Inside the tumbeiros, as the American slave Mahommah G. Baquaqua described,

The only food we had during the voyage [to Brazil in 1840] was corn soaked and boiled. ... We suffered very much for want of water, but was denied all we needed. A pint a day was all that was allowed, and no more; and a great many slaves died upon the passage. ... Some were thrown overboard before breath was out of their bodies; when it was thought any would not live, they were got rid of in that way. Only twice during the voyage were we allowed to go on deck to wash ourselves--once whilst at sea, and again just before going into port. (Documenting the American South 43-44)

Those who survived the middle passage were almost dead upon arrival. The traders, then, would give them "a short period of time to recuperate in Brazil in order to increase their value before being sold to owners, who again marched them off to distant plantations and [later to] mines" (Meade 31).

The arrival at the plantations was not the end of their ordeal. Many slaves did not survive spending eight to ten years of their adulthood as they would not resist the poor working conditions in the sugar cane plantations and the living conditions in the slave quarters, which included physical torture and psychological abuse (Arbex Jr. 49). On the plantation, the slaves "worked in all aspects of the production process from planting and harvesting the cane, to processing it in the mills ... under the watchful eyes of

overseers" (Meade 48). If anything happened, the overseers did not hesitate to whip them. Due to the harsh kind of work and living conditions, the senhores de engenho (plantation owners) preferred to buy men over women, which created a ratio of four to one. Besides the reduced number of women which made the natural increase in the number of slaves low, child mortality rates were high due to their poor living conditions, including lack of health care, and the decision of some female slave to kill their newborns, or to provoke abortion to avoid seeing their child a slave. The number of slaves, however, increased in the colony, as the plantation owners needed to buy new slaves from Africa. A slave was not very expensive, and each new acquisition would pay for his/her cost in about a year and a half of hard work. At the end of the sixteenth century, there were between thirty and forty thousand slaves working in Brazil (Berthel 82-3, Arbex Jr. 52, Meade 31).

The exploitation and mistreatment did not happen only in the sugar cane plantations or in the slave quarters. Some slaves, mostly women, who worked in the casa-grande (master's house), doing housework and taking care of his children were exploited in their work, and also sexually exploited by their owner and their sons. It was common that these men gave them sexually transmitted diseases, including syphilis, which was passed on to the young children through breast feeding, or

that they impregnated them. Both consequences were always blamed on the slaves' promiscuous life in the slave quarters, and the latter started the process of miscegenation between blacks and whites in Brazil. These children were living proof to the owner's wife of her husband's unfaithfulness and of the slaves' sexual and seductive power. The jealous wife sometimes demanded as punishment that the female slave's eyes or teeth be pulled out (Arbex Jr. 55-6; Skidmore, Brazil 23). Outside the plantation environment, exploitation was also directly related to profit, as slaves had no right to property, i.e., their master received all the profit of their work. The master

set up young slave women and even girls in the windows of makeshift brothels along the streets of districts well known for the sex trade in Rio [de Janeiro], Bahia, São Paulo, and other cities. Seminude, the slaves gestured and talked to passersby to build up their business. ... [Even when they got] very ill with syphilis yet still were required to sell their bodies for one milreis a turn and were whipped if they did not bring in 10 milreis a day. (Meade 50)

Other examples of exploitation are those slaves working with cattle breeding or leading herds to supply cities and villages with all sorts of goods, or those working on the streets as "vendedores ambulantes de miudezas e alimentos ... [ou] como carpinteiros, barbeiros, sapateiros e alfaiates" (Santos 89).

Although all slaves were exploited, there was a hierarchy according to the activities they performed: those slaves

working in the field were less valued and worked harder than those who worked inside the engenho (mill house) who were less valued than the ones in the Master's house. H. B. Johnson points out that "a hierarchy of colour was also recognized in which mulattoes received preferential treatment" (Quoted in Berthel 84). About this hierarchic system Skidmore added, mulattos also had "more freedom of movement and greater privileges" even though they were also abused ("Fact" 18).

The mistreatment of slaves led to various forms of resistance on their part, including assault or murder of their overseers or owners, revolts which were not very well-organized, quilombos, and also individual protest "such as feigning illness, non cooperation, sabotage of machinery, and in extreme cases by suicide" (Smith 35, Arbex Jr. 52). These actions resulted in severe punishment and reprisals by society, which was controlled by the whites. The punishment for some acts was justified by the idea that slaves were violent and anti-social beings or of the "natural laziness" of Africans (Arbex Jr. 52). Most slaves, however, preferred not to rebel: "optavam pelo caminho da bajulação, do 'jeitinho' e da malandragem como forma de tentar garantir a própria vida" (Arbex Jr. 57). Moreover, these people often spied on other slaves, telling the overseers details of plans to escape or of rebellion. Although escape was very difficult, some slaves

managed to flee captivity. These slaves formed the mocamos or quilombos, refugee areas for runaway slaves in inaccessible parts of the country, which were organized in ways similar to the African tribes. These communities were self-sufficient, with their own political hierarchy, economic system, moral codes, and religious rituals as means to resist enslavement and colonial society. All important decisions to the community were made at assemblies constituted by all adults living in the quilombo. Their codes were respected, and when rules were disobeyed the person was punished accordingly, paying with his/her own life if the crime was stealing, desertion, or murder (Berthel 86). In the quilombos, slaves' "religious and cultural practices flourished" (Meade 57). Even though these people were obligated to be baptized on their arrival in the country, and later to embrace Catholicism and receive the other sacraments, they adopted this religion "loosely and incorporated its outward ritual into their own system of African religion," while living in the slave quarters (Meade 55).

Language was a different matter; it was more difficult to find a common language among slaves who had come from different areas of Africa, than to adopt Portuguese (Silva, "Zumbi"). The quilombos survived for decades and existed all

over the country, resisting the plantation owners and colonial armies with weapons they bought or stole.

One quilombo made history for its leadership and power to resist. It was the Quilombo dos Palmares in Alagoas, in the Northeast of Brazil. In the forest that surrounded Palmares, people could find trees (palm trees and other species) from which to get leaves to cover their huts and fibers to make domestic utensils; and find nuts, to extract oil. They also "plant[ed] corn, manioc, vegetables, beans and sugar cane" and traded some products from their community in neighboring towns (Silva, "Zumbi"). This quilombo was founded at the end of the sixteenth century, but by around the 1670s achieved its maximum population, 20,000 inhabitants. Palmares earned legendary status not only for its size and sophisticated organization, but also for its defiance of those who sought to destroy it. After repeated attempts throughout the seventeenth century, the Portuguese finally wiped out Palmares in 1694. Zumbi, their last and most respected and powerful leader, was captured and executed on November 20, 1695 (Berthel 86; Arbex Jr. 57-9).

During this period Portugal and the plantation owners had to deal also with the fall of the price of sugar on the international market as the Antilles increased their production (Skidmore, Brazil 20). Not only did the planters

face the sugar price decline, but also a “worn-out soil, outdated machinery, and reliance on slave labor that had become far too costly to purchase and maintain” made competition in the international market nearly impossible (Meade 78). The plantations, which were designed almost exclusively to cultivate and refine sugar, and all other economical sectors, which worked in alliance with the plantation, went into a depression. Just as sugar in the Northeast was dragging down the region’s economy, gold was discovered in the state of Minas Gerais in 1693 (Meade 38-39).

The Portuguese had searched for gold and precious stones in Brazil since the beginning of the Colonial period. The precious metal and stones, however, were hidden in the interior of the country, which was unknown until the bandeirantes (ruthless pioneers) ventured there. The territorial expansion began in the 1590s and aimed, at that time, to capture and enslave the indigenous population, but found opposition from the Jesuits. As that plan did not work, the bandeirantes turned their attention into finding precious metals and stones. They discovered gold not only in Minas Gerais (1695), but also in the states of Mato Grosso (1719) and Goiás (1726). The gold rush brought thousands of Portuguese colonists and slaves to the interior of the

Southeast of Brazil, where settlements grew rapidly (Santos 74; Berthel 220).

The discovery of gold revitalized Brazil's economy, which had been stagnating since the decline of the sugar cane plantations in the second half of the seventeenth century. Those states soon became rich areas where the arts flourished, especially in Minas Gerais with its baroque churches, statues, and paintings. Unlike an economy based on agriculture, mines helped many people who were not aristocrats to become rich, but it also brought poverty to many. The Portuguese Crown grew rich from collecting its quinto (one-fifth share) of the gold mined in Brazil. The Brazilians and the Portuguese Crown profit from the gold mines, as did the British, who received a large part of it as payment for Portugal's debts. The British, in return, gave to Brazilian and Portuguese miners their know-how on mining technology through exporting "tools, chemicals, and expertise to run the mines" (Meade 29, 39). The economic expansion in the region grew with the discovery of diamonds in the states of Minas Gerais and Mato Grosso, in the 1730s. Gold and diamond mines, like the sugar cane plantations, depended heavily on the work of African slaves. Some of these were brought from the Northeast and others from Africa. The slave trade was no longer as profitable as it had been in the past. The price of the slaves had increased by the end of the

seventeenth century as a consequence of the competition for slaves with the British colonies of North America (Meade 35). Although there was a change in the setting and kind of labor, slaves were as oppressed and exploited as before: “[t]hey stood in water, panning for gold or diamonds all day, were given very little to eat, and suffered from constant fevers and lethargy resulting from mercury and other minerals used in the processing of gold and metals” (Meade 52). The slaves’ life had not changed during the mining boom, except for having better chances of becoming freemen if they found a reasonable amount of gold that could buy their freedom. Gold and diamond production rose dramatically until 1760, but “by the end of the eighteenth century all the most accessible gold and diamond deposits had been exhausted” (Macdonald 349).

Meanwhile, in 1755, Portugal abolished slavery. In response to the demand of doing the same in the colony, the Marquis of Pombal¹ negotiated some reforms, including encouragement of immigration, some autonomy for local business, and the creation of three companies to stimulate the country’s economic growth. These companies would give benefits to Portugal by creating “a larger market for the import of Portuguese manufactured goods” (Portugal 274, Smith 15). These

¹ The Marquis of Pombal, Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, served from 1750 to 1777 as foreign minister for King João V, and afterwards as the prime minister of King José I (Smith 14).

measures were well accepted, but, in 1788 when “the Crown intended to enforce the payment of all tax arrears,” society reacted and this resulted, in the Inconfidência Mineira (Minas Conspiracy) in 1789 (Smith 18). The Inconfidência Mineira was a movement against the Portuguese government’s high taxes and for the independence of Brazil. It involved some of the country’s elite as well as some military officers. The revolt failed, and the royal courts sentenced most of the conspirators to prison or exile. Five of them were convicted and sent to Angola in a trial held in Rio de Janeiro in 1791, but the leader, Joaquim José da Silva Xavier, known as Tiradentes (Toothpuller), became the scapegoat and “was hanged, drawn and quartered” and his head was “displayed on a pole in Ouro Preto” in 1792 (Silva, História 75-76; Smith 18). Another attempt towards independency occurred in Salvador in 1798. Different from the previous movement, the Inconfidência Baiana (Bahia Conspiracy) or Revolta dos Alfaiates (Revolt of the Tailors) aimed not only for independence, but also for the “abolition of slavery, an end to racial discrimination in employment, free trade with foreign countries, and the confiscation of church property” (Smith 19). Punishment for mulattos and blacks who participated in this revolt was harsher than that for whites. João de Deus and three other mulattos were condemned to public execution in 1799 as the

leaders. The movement did not appeal much to the white elite; they were afraid of a similar racial civil war as the one that had occurred in Haiti, in 1791, which led to the independence of that country.

Besides the increase of movements for independence, the presence of a corrupted and inefficient monarchy in Brazil, who fled Lisbon to escape the Napoleonic Wars (1799-1815), and the spirit of the French Revolution (1789-1799), the independence of the United States (1776) and the independence of the Spanish colonies in South America intensified republican sentiments. In 1820, the Portuguese army led a revolution which forced D. João VI to return to Portugal. Before leaving, however, he made his second son, D. Pedro, the regent of Brazil. D. Pedro, instead of repressing the growing independence movements and reestablishing order in the name of the Portuguese throne, assumed a leading role in the independence movement. Supported by the Brazilian aristocracy, he declared the independence of Brazil on September 7, 1822, becoming Brazil's first emperor as D. Pedro I.

Brazilian society, at the end of the Colonial period, was still divided hierarchically "according to gender, income, occupation and race" so, being a slave or a freeman was also criteria of division and discrimination (Smith 29). The lowest level of society consisted of slaves; the top were whites, who

could be European or Luso-Brazilians. In the middle, there were all the mixed race people, called pardos, including mulattos, cafuso (mixture of indigenous people and blacks) and mamelucos (mixture of indigenous people and European). At this time in history, there was a relatively large number of pardos. "Even though many pardos were livres (free by birth) or libertos (manumitted either as a gift from their owner or by purchase)," they frequently suffered some kind of discrimination or were forced to work by local businessmen or farmers (Smith 29). Society viewed them based only on the color of their skin, which immediately determined their inferiority in society specially if they were of African origin. Around 1808, the number of inhabitants in Brazil was around three million people, of which 63% were blacks or pardos, either slaves or free men (Smith 29, Meade 59).

Imperial Period (1822-1889)

Despite his leading role in the independence of Brazil, emperor D. Pedro I lost much of his popular support during the first year of his reign. Opposition to his decisions, and a possible involvement with Portuguese affairs led to a difficult situation that resulted in his abdication of the throne in favor of his five-year old son D. Pedro in 1831. He, then, returned to Portugal. While Brazil awaited D. Pedro's

eligibility to become the emperor, the country was governed by a council of regents chosen by D. Pedro I (Santos 128; Costa 47). This council of regents ruled Brazil throughout the following decade. It was formed by conservative and liberal politicians. Conservatives, on the one hand, wanted to maintain Portuguese values and traditions, a strong centralized monarchy, a slave economy, and the strong influence of the Catholic Church in politics. Liberals, on the other hand, wanted less influence of the Church in political issues, less power for the monarch, and an economy based on a free labor force (Costa 61-62). The strategy of having both groups in power, however, did not prevent rebellions against the government which occurred all over the country, and involved all socio-economic classes. The most important ones were: Cabanagem (1835-1836), Farroupilha (1835-1845), Sabinada (1837-1838), and Baianada (1838-1840). Dissatisfaction also resulted in a rebellion led by slaves called Revolta dos Escravos Malês² (Malês Slaves Revolt) in 1835 (Santos 139). Teresa A. Meade, in A Brief History of Brazil, mentions that between 1809 and 1835, in Bahia alone, there were more than twenty revolts led mainly by slaves or former slaves living in quilombos who "attacked neighboring towns and plantations"

² Malês were educated Muslim slaves who organized themselves in secret societies (Arbex Jr. 62).

(58). Other revolts took place in Minas Gerais and São Paulo, where hundreds of people were mobilized to fight for black's freedom (Costa 140).

The Revolta dos Escravos Malês, according to Humberto Fernandes Machado, was led by slaves in Salvador (Quoted in Santos 140). The rebellion was inspired by the Haitian Revolution (1791-1803), but was also stimulated by the ideas of the French Revolution (1789-1799), the independence of the United States (1776), and the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. The revolt only lasted four hours, but it represented a threat not only to the institution of slavery but also to the monarchy. Hundreds of slaves and free blacks took part in this revolt: seventy died, and more than 500 were punished by their masters and authorities. Their punishment was death, prison, perpetual forced labor, deportation, or whippings, depending on the degree of their participation in the action. The rebels protested against two oppressive forces: slavery and Catholicism (Santos 140; Arbex Jr. 61-62).

In addition to rebellions, runaways, suicides, and homicides mentioned earlier, blacks also resisted through capoeira, an Afro-Brazilian dance and martial art which prepared them to fight against armed men, and candomblé, an Afro-Brazilian religion which is a mixture of the Yoruba and Catholic religious systems. Capoeira became a common practice

among slaves and their descendants and caused some concern for the Church and political authorities. The practice of capoeira was prohibited during the first years of the Republican period (Arbex Jr. 60-61, Costa 138). Candomblé "was a response to official repression in Brazil," and it was a unique practice (Johnson 64). The Catholic Church, in counteract, to control and punish the slaves who admitted in confession practicing candomblé, used the discourse of obedience. The priests taught them that obedience was the only way to their salvation because of their fate of "condemned race" (Costa 138). These practices were born in the slave quarters, a diverse environment, where Yoruba, Bantu and other groups blended their religious rituals, culinary practices, and dances to create the foundation of the Afro-Brazilian culture. Capoeira, candomblé, and other practices helped to maintain the slaves' connection to their African traditions and identities, and, most importantly, to keep them united to the struggle against white oppression.

After these series of revolts, the Brazilian elite watched the slaves closely, because they could be a threat to the political and economic establishment if they became well organized. The elite became even more oppressive and "At the least rumor, severe measures were taken to prevent an uprising" (Costa 139). These measures, nevertheless, did not

ease the social tension, as the elite "lived in perpetual fear of slave insurrection" (Costa 139). Authorities prohibited slaves from gathering in shops, taverns or in any other public place. Besides blacks' forms of protest and resistance against slavery and its subhuman condition other Brazilians engaged in debates and manifests for a change. Only in the beginning of the nineteenth century did Brazilians become aware of other voices from Europe, North America, and other countries in Latin America who also questioned and debated these issues (Meade 60).

Punishment of disobedient slaves was a common practice since the Colonial period. The so called "moderate" punishments, including *palmatória* (ferule) and whipping, were allowed by law and administrated on the plantation by the master or his overseers. They were sometimes extremely cruel, causing permanent injury or death of the slaves. When that happened, masters "could be prosecuted and fined [by law], but it is important to recognize that for every prosecution that appears in the legal record, hundreds, maybe thousands, went unnoticed" as it was difficult to prove the cruelty of the master (Meade 53). For serious offenses, "such as running away, theft, hitting a superior or instigating a rebellion, the master would bring the slave to the police station and, upon his [the master's] word only, the slave would be punished

for a fee" (Meade 53); other punishments were lashes, "neck shackles, manacles, iron rings for squeezing fingers, brass masks, and imprisonment" (Costa 138). For runaways, it was three hundred lashes which were administered over several days. In the case of murder, "if the crime was carried out against the planter or his family," the slave would be executed and if it was against any other powerful or influential person, the slave would be put on chain gangs or in prison (Costa 138).

Because of the social turbulence, the council of regents proclaimed D. Pedro II emperor of Brazil, in 1840, four years before his eighteenth birthday. He proved to be one of the most capable monarchs during his nearly half century of ruling (Costa 67-68). The liberal and conservative parties continued to share power with the emperor acting as a moderator. The population and economy expanded at a high rate due to the emergence and expansion of coffee plantations in the 1840s throughout the states of Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, and São Paulo, making Brazil the world's biggest exporter. These states dominated not only the economy, but also the politics of the country. This situation upset politicians from other regions of the country, especially those from the Northeast who had been powerful during the Colonial period (Meade 80).

The coffee plantation demanded a high number of workers, which, in the beginning, consisted only of slaves. In the first half of the nineteenth century, planters bought 1.5 million slaves. That amount, added to the half million slaves imported in the seventeenth century and to the 1.5 million of the eighteenth century, transformed Brazil into one of the countries most dependent on slave labor in the world (Santos 166). More than 70% of the slaves worked in rural areas, mainly in the coffee fields, but also in the production of tobacco, rice, and cotton. They worked on large plantations and small farms, where they also cultivated "fruit, manioc, corn, beans, and other staple crops" (Meade 48) for the sustenance of everyone in the farm including their master and his family. Diversity and rotation in the plantations helped to avoid soil exhaustion. The other 30% of the slave population worked in the cities, where they sold agricultural goods, worked in small businesses or were carriers of cargo and people, mainly the Brazilian elite. Sometimes they were chained and "impelled on by overseers generous with the lash" as if they were literally animals that worked until exhaustion (Meade 49). The slave's diet differed from farm to farm, according to the economic situation of the planter and kind of plantations. If it was a rich plantation, they ate "beans, gruel, manioc flour, from time to time a piece of jerked beef

or salt pork, more rarely yams, cassava, pumpkins, or sweet potatoes" (Costa 132), whereas, on poor plantations, their diet "was reduced to beans and a little manioc flour" (Costa 132). The slaves' living conditions continued to be very poor, which made them suffer "from parasites, fevers, tuberculosis, and syphilis" or to catch "smallpox, cholera, and yellow fever that periodically swept the country" (Costa 132). Many slaves died young from these illnesses.

The work force was, before the end of slavery, a combination of slave and free labor. Free laborers, however, were former slaves, mulattos, poor whites, and immigrants. The latter were stimulated by the Brazilian government to come to Brazil to help planters improve technology and to experiment "with crop rotation, fertilizers, and innovative agronomy methods to increase production" which increased profit (Meade 81). The investment of the profits from coffee production developed the industrial sector. For those planters who could not afford free labors or innovation in production, they continued to use only slaves until the abolition of slavery. Immigrants would also help the government and the elite to accomplish their ideal of a "whiter" society.

The first immigrants arrived in Brazil from Switzerland, Germany, Portugal, and Belgium, between 1847 and 1857, to Nicolau de Campos Vergueiro's coffee plantation in São Paulo.

His initiative was imitated by other coffee planters throughout the country, in a different scale (Arbex Jr. 71). The results in production were good, but neither immigrants nor planters were satisfied with the sharecropping system in which owner and worker received 50% of the profit. Planters complained about the lack of means "to force them [immigrants] to comply ... with their contractual obligations" (Costa 103-04). The immigrants' claimed that their lots were not the most productive ones, these were left to the slaves. Planters were also often dishonest when calculating what immigrants owed and in measuring and weighing the coffee. The immigrants' work was not only what was in their contract; they often had other chores "like constructing and repairing roads or mending fences" (Costa 105). Therefore, as soon as they could, immigrants abandoned the coffee plantations and started their own farms. Another situation to be managed in the farm by landowners and overseers was the relationship between immigrants and the slaves. Although both groups shared the same work, they were treated differently, which caused conflict between the two groups (Meade 92; Arbex Jr. 71).

Around the time the first immigrants arrived, the slave trade was abolished after the pressure from England, but slavery remained legal in Brazil for more than thirty years. Some slave traders managed to keep their business going in the

country, but the price of slaves increased as the trade became riskier since ports were watched and inspected, and slave ships were intercepted on the high seas (Meade 75). This shortage did not affect some planters, but helped those who were in debt, especially the ones from the Northeast as they could sell their valuable properties for a high price (Costa 131-32). Hence, some slaves migrated from the Northeast or from the mining area in the Southeast to the coffee plantations in the Southeast, where "coffee prices reached their highest levels during the 1870s" (Costa 144-45). The increase in the price of slaves in this period, was also advantageous to the slave population as "slave owners became more concerned with keeping their slaves in good health" (Costa 144). Laws gradually freed groups of slaves until abolition was achieved. This gradual process started with the first law in 1869 forbidding married couples to be sold separately, family bonds were respected. In 1871, another law freed all children born of a slave mother after that date. The planter "would look after the child until the age of [eight] when he would receive financial compensation from the government" or, if the government did not pay, the child would "work until the age of [twenty-one]" for the planter (Smith 59). Abolitionists, mainly intellectuals and artists, and the growing bourgeoisie interested in the development of the

industrial economy, because of their dissatisfaction with the gradual process, helped, in the 1880s, to manumit some slaves and to incite others to run away. The ideas and debates defended by the abolitionists led the states of Ceará and Amazonas to anticipate the process and free all of their slaves in 1884. The rest of the country waited one more year to free slaves over sixty years of age; then, in 1888, Princess Regent Isabel³ signed the Lei Áurea (Golden Law) freeing all slaves (Smith 59, Arbex Jr. 65).

Important leaders of the abolitionist movement included Joaquim Nabuco, José do Patrocínio, André Rebouças, and Luís Gama (Burns 218). Nabuco published in 1883 the tract "O Abolicionismo (Abolitionism)" in which he "denounced slavery as an obstacle to progress and, notably, the health of the empire" in the Chamber of Deputies (Meade 85). He advocated against slavery's immoral nature. In addition to that argument against slavery, other abolitionists "argued that slave labor brought lower returns than free labor, retarded the process of industrialization, and cheapened the idea of work itself," which were impediments to the country's economic development and modernization (Costa 127). Even though they were against slavery many abolitionists were racists as they thought slavery "threatened national security, divided society into

³ Known by slaves as *Madama da Liberdade* (Madam of Liberty).

hostile groups, generated a regime of violence, degraded social customs, corrupted the family, and was responsible for the 'bastardization' of the Portuguese race" (Costa 127). Slaves, in other words, were morally, politically, and socially inferior to whites.

The unsuccessful European immigration experience led plantation owners to attempt to import Chinese workers in the 1870s. They could have been a solution to the shortage of workers on the coffee plantations since experience in some French and British colonies, parts of the United States, and some Latin American countries showed this practice to be successful because of the Chinese submissive behavior and cheap labor when compared to European immigrants (Costa 149). But the government did not honor the planters' request to allow Chinese to enter Brazil, because "Place of birth, civil status, wealth, legal status as free or slave, religious orthodoxy, and occupation" mattered as the government wanted to dilute the "black blood" through miscegenation (Meade 82). Therefore, "Brazil should only admit white Christians because they would 'improve' the race" as blacks and pardos were the majority of the Brazilian population at the end of the nineteenth century (Meade 114). The government in the 1880s, in cooperation with organizations from São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, promoted immigration to Brazil by distributing

"brochures in Europe advertising steady work at good wages. The organizations even offered free ship and train fares guaranteed by the Department of Agriculture for anyone willing to immigrate to Brazil's coffee fields" (Meade 110). The government subsidized almost three million immigrants from Italy, Spain, and Portugal in the Southeast and the South of Brazil between 1887 and 1914. Those, who came to work in the rural areas, did not come to work under the sharecropping system as it had proved to be inefficient; they, according to Emilia Viotti da Costa, were under a wage system (122, 160). Some of the immigrants, however, emigrated to work in the cities. They "were an important section of small businesses, shopkeepers, landlords, and city workers" forming "the backbone of the industrial working class" (Meade 112). The immigrants, particularly Italians, introduced new political ideologies from Europe, where workers and middle-class citizens were becoming active in politics. Many of these workers were frustrated by their lack of access to Brazil's political system (Santos, História 280-81). They were encouraged to come to Brazil not only to help the economy of the country, but rather to contribute to the "whitening" of society (Marger 430, Caldeira 232). According to Janer Cristaldo in "Afrobrazilianists: Such Arrogance!", the whitening process in Brazilian society presented by João

Batista de Lacerda, a Brazilian physician, in the I Universal Conference on Races, in London, in 1911, aspired that “the crossbreeding of blacks or their mestizos with whites [would dilute] the African blood, resulting in fair descendants” more likely to successfully enter the “white” ruling group (<http://www.brazzil.com/content/view/503/27/>). The advocates of the European immigration project argued that the population would naturally become “whiter” after “generations of racial mixture between white European immigrants” and blacks and pardos. This belief was based on the Herbert Spencer’s theory of Social Darwinism of the nineteenth century attributing and justifying racial discrimination and slavery to biological factors and differences. The supporters of the project argued that blacks were enslaved and marginalized, because they were biologically inferior, rather than because of their lack of “equal opportunity or social justice” (Meade 109-10). This theory perpetuated the distorted image that blacks were biologically fit to work in the fields and that they were born “‘malandro,’ [roguish] ‘ladrão,’ [thief] ‘feio,’ [ugly] ‘preguiçoso’ [lazy]” (Santos, Invenção 176). These assumptions were used to maintain and justify the distance between the world of privileges and rights of the whites and the world of deprivation and duties of the blacks. Furthermore, this theory argued that by nature’s design, the superior race, whites,

were genetically more fit for survival, while inferior ones, especially blacks, would disappear as a consequence of the natural process of selection and elimination (Carr 42; Skidmore, "Towards" 5-6).

After the abolition of slavery, former slaves and other people of color (blacks or pardos) thought that they would be able to "move easily into the free labor market" (Meade 91). Although Brazil did not have a "color line" law, society was racist and did not allow unlimited freedom, and the government did not give them the financial or material conditions to succeed. Many slaves remained in the rural areas working "as debt peons or sharecroppers;" they did not have any chance of leaving their miserable conditions, because the planters would not let them (Meade 118). Others, competing with immigrants as free labors, would get the lowest or no position at all, especially in industry, as the immigrants were selected because they had been trained to do the job. Instead of justifying the choice based on training and knowledge, some Brazilians preferred to believe they were biologically superior. Not only did immigrants take the black's chance to get a better job, they also occupied their areas of residence (Meade 92). Those Afro-Brazilians who had some access to education, were not considered as able as immigrants and "employment in professional and clerical posts was frequently

subject to a color bar," leaving them with little options besides agriculture (Smith 123). But, there was a number of "free people of color, who in many cases were born into families that had been emancipated for generations, owned property (including slaves), participated in local governments, served in the military, and held positions of influence in the commercial world" (Meade 91). They had shown that with equal opportunities and social justice, they were intellectually capable of working in any area and deserved to be respected by society. These people, however, were mostly light-skinned. There were opportunities, but only if the person's shade "combined with class status, position, and education" permitted. Racism in Brazil, in other words, is not based on ethnicity, but rather on color (Meade 91).

With the end of slavery, the end of the monarchy was inevitable. The last decade of the monarchy was marked by conflicts with different sectors calling for its end. As slavery ended, the monarchy collapsed along with its traditional political and economical support from the agricultural sector. D. Pedro II lost the little support he still had from landowners, the Church, and the Military. A small group of conspirators initiated a military revolt led by Marshal Manuel Deodoro da Fonseca who proclaimed the Republic on November 15, 1889 (Santos 209-10). D. Pedro II left to

Portugal. Although the political system had changed, economic and social power remained on the hands of the elite.

Republican Period (1889–present)

After the proclamation of the Republic, Marshal Manuel Deodoro da Fonseca was designated head of the provisional government. Some reforms were achieved at the beginning of the republican period, among them the separation of church and state, the establishment of an elected congress consisting of a house and a senate, and the establishment of an independent judiciary branch. Fonseca, then, was elected the first Brazilian president. Political turbulence, due to his lack of capacity for working with the congress, and a naval revolt, forced Fonseca to resign in favor of vice president Marshal Floriano Peixoto in 1891. Peixoto's government, characterized as a dictatorial regime, survived a military and naval rebellion (1893–1894) and a series of uprisings in the states of Rio Grande do Sul and Rio de Janeiro. In 1894, Peixoto passed the presidency to the first civilian president Prudente José de Morais e Barros (Almeida 229, 233–36).

Prudente de Morais, a politician from the state of São Paulo, governed the country according to the interests of the powerful coffee planters. He gradually restored order in the country. For over three decades following Prudente de Morais'

election, the states of São Paulo and Minas Gerais shared and controlled political power and economy which was popularly known "as [the politics of] 'coffee with milk'" (Smith 96). Coffee had been the most important of Brazil's exports since the Imperial period, consumed largely in Europe and in the United States. Moreover, its profits encouraged foreign investments improving transportation of the Brazilian coffee within the country and abroad, such as ports and railroads, and banking, which financed the expansion of local industries and business in cities, especially in São Paulo. The increasing production of coffee demanded more immigration and use of new technologies to produce more and better beans (Burns 260, Arbex Jr 75).

The next two presidents, Manuel Ferraz de Campos Salles and Francisco de Paula Rodrigues Alves, who governed Brazil from 1898 to 1906, were also from the state of São Paulo. During Campos Sales' administration, energetic measures were taken to rehabilitate the national economy, which suffered with the decrease of the price of coffee on the international market, through financing programs to protect coffee planters (Almeida 239-44). Rodrigues Alves "continued the [economic] policies of their [president and his finance minister] predecessors" (Burns 268). His candidate, Bernardino de Campos, also from São Paulo, did not gain a consensus, so

politicians from Minas Gerais indicated a candidate, Affonso Augusto Moreira Penna, who became president in 1906 (Smith 98-9). Between 1906 and 1910, the fall of coffee prices on the world market, due to a record production in 1906, severely impacted the national economy. Social and political manifestations against the government were widespread during the administration of Marshal Hermes Rodrigues da Fonseca (1910-1914), a conservative politician from the state of Rio Grande do Sul.

Wenceslau Braz Pereira Gomes, from the state of Minas Gerais, was elected president without opposition in 1914, and held office until 1918 (Almeida 250-52). After the outbreak of World War I in 1914, exports to Europe decreased as "coffee was not considered an essential commodity," but imports of manufactured goods from Europe, even though, decreased, still created a deficit, which aggravated the economic situation (Smith 115-16). Investments and development in Brazilian industries were taken to supply the gap left by the reduction of imports of consumer products, such as textiles, shoes, and food processing. In 1919, Epitácio Lindolfo da Silva Pessoa was elected president of Brazil, after the sudden death of president Rodrigues Alves, who had won election for a second term. Epitácio Pessoa "found it necessary to reinstitute the valorization of coffee in an attempt to strengthen the

mainstay of the nation's economy" (Burns 311-12). His successor Arthur da Silva Bernardes, from the state of Minas Gerais, was elected in 1921. He ran against Nilo Procópio Peçanha, the candidate from a coalition of politicians from the states of Bahia, Pernambuco, Rio de Janeiro, and Rio Grande do Sul opposing the political monopoly of São Paulo and Minas Gerais. Bernardes was strict with business, industry, and agriculture, especially after "his decision to withdraw federal financial support for the valorization of coffee and for the irrigation projects" initiated by his predecessor (Smith 106). Bernardes' successor, Washington Luís Pereira de Sousa, the last president from the "coffee and milk" arrangement, was elected without opposition in 1926.

Washington Luís initially kept the economy under control. When the world economy crashed in 1929, nevertheless, Brazilian coffee exportation decreased dramatically, creating an increase in the nation's foreign debts. Hence, the economic crisis deepened, causing numerous strikes and protests (Santos História 297). As his successor, Washington Luís named Júlio Prestes de Albuquerque, who would continue his economic policies and sustain the oligarchy in power. So, Luís' choice of a candidate from the state of São Paulo instead of Minas Gerais upset the "coffee and milk" arrangement. Thus, the governor of the state of Minas Gerais persuaded Getúlio

Dornelles Vargas to run against Prestes, as the candidate of an alliance formed by Rio Grande do Sul, Minas Gerais, and Paraíba. Vargas' platform included improvements in "health, education and welfare benefits." Nevertheless, Prestes won the election, which was said to have been fraudulent. Before Prestes' inauguration in 1930, a revolt led by Vargas "began simultaneously in Rio Grande do Sul, Minas Gerais, and Paraíba on October 3" to "'restore' liberal democracy and promote economic recovery" (Smith 108-09). After a month of fighting, the rebel troops marched into Rio de Janeiro and took over the government (Almeida 268-69).

During the first forty years of the republican period, Brazilian economic and social structures continued to reflect the pattern established in the Colonial period. A small dominant rural oligarchy controlled most of the country's wealth and power, while the majority of Brazilians, mostly blacks and Afro-descendants, lived in economic difficulties and social exclusion. Hence, no profound changes in Brazilian society after the abolition of slavery and the proclamation of the republic occurred as Brazilians expected. This socio-economic situation led many Brazilians to migrate from North to South in search of better living and working conditions in the urban sectors and industries, especially around the cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo (Smith 120; Almeida 260). Some

of the migrants ascended from the poor rural class to positions on the working class. Although, moving up did not change their access to power, they were able to organize themselves in labor unions and demand better treatment from employers and government. Moreover, the majority of workers, who had little or no skills to work in the factories, increased the number of urban poor who earned low wages and worked under poor conditions (Meade 131, Smith 125-26). These workers lived in the downtown area of the cities, where sanitation and public health conditions were precarious. Demolition, however, slowly took place in these areas, making the poor working class homeless, and transforming the city with architectural changes (Meade 125-26). These changes made the cities cleaner, but they also forced the city's poor to move to the distant suburbs, promoting social cleaning which was also associated to racial cleaning. This new urban setting made the Brazilian elite feel less racially and culturally inferior as its new neighbors were whiter, perpetuating the idea of racial supremacy (Smith 123; Meade 116).

Between the end of the nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth centuries, Social Darwinism's theory of biological inferiority found in Raimundo Nina Rodrigues, a doctor from the state of Bahia, a strong advocate. According to Nina Rodrigues, in addition to the socio-economic

inequality, mixed people should not be treated equally as white, because they had some "inferior" blood. Hence, this "problem" should be eliminated from Brazilian society through European immigration (Arbex Jr. 104). For Meade, 4.55 million immigrants came to Brazil from Italy, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Russia, Poland, some countries in the Middle East, and even Japan, which also increased the number of non-blacks in Brazil, creating a different perspective of Brazilian identity (111-12). The government, however, wanted to pursue its goal and eliminate blackness through a new action of forbidding any immigrant which "[the government] judged 'African' or 'Asian'" even when massive European immigration ended in the 1920s (Meade 116). This prohibition also kept out activists who could bring awareness about racial issues. The ideology of "whitening" Brazilian population transformed miscegenation, which was related to erasing inferiority into invisioning "the possibility of racial harmony and unity" (Telles Race 33).

After Getúlio Vargas took over in 1930, Brazilian politics abandoned the old mentality and sought new directions. From 1930 to 1934, Vargas ruled Brazil as the head of a provisional revolutionary government, and after 1934 as the elected president (Santos História 310). In 1937, with the approach of elections, Vargas dissolved the congress,

abolished all political parties, imposed censorship on the press, and proclaimed a new constitution, which gave him absolute and dictatorial powers. His Estado Novo (New State) lasted until 1945. He had the support of the military, the urban working and middle classes, and some politicians, who had been excluded from power for many years. The Brazilian elite, however, did not support him (Bennassar 345; Santos 317). The Vargas Era was marked by "a strong central government, ... investment in education, [and] economic development" (Skidmore, Brazil 115) through industrialization, especially in the areas of steel and petroleum, and agricultural expansion, raising the production of cotton, and politics of "integration of the lands to the west [such as the center and Amazon areas]" and by a project "to improve social welfare for urban workers" assuring benefits and regulating labor laws (Skidmore, Brazil 115). These measures transformed Vargas into a populist president. Vargas' populist platform included a nationalist movement, which fostered inclusion of all Brazilians, especially the marginalized and oppressed segments that had received no attention from other governments. According to Meade, there emerged "a new formulation of Brazilian identity" and an "intellectual discussion over the influence of Afro-Brazilian culture on the national culture" (145-46).

Vargas also promoted popular culture by supporting and regulating the creation of soccer and samba clubs, as well as decriminalizing capoeira (Smith 182-183; Guimarães, Race 8). The middle and working classes gained some power, which impacted decision-making, and claimed their rights in the political and cultural arena through trade unions, women groups, and Afro-Brazilian organizations. Therefore, Vargas repressed any kind of black mobilization closing the largest black cultural and political organization, the Frente Negra Brasileira in 1937 for denouncing prejudice against blacks in the job market and for seeking their rights and space in society (Francisco 140; Guimarães 8). Despite the influence of Afro-Brazilian movements, blacks in Brazil have not had "strong 'black power' ideologies and ... social movements based on Pan-Africanism" (Davis, Avoiding 260), but rather only marginal movements, which were not powerful enough to question discrimination or to demand the inclusion and respect of Afro-Brazilian in society. Allowing blacks or any minority group to organize and become conscious about their situation would have been a threat to Vargas's government and stability and to his nationalist politics, which "promoted the idea of a racially harmonious Brazilian national family" (Davis, Avoiding 260). Vargas, though, defended the ideology of the white superiority. In this context, Gilberto Freyre, a Northeastern

sociologist and anthropologist, published his books Casa-grande & senzala (The Masters and the Slaves) in 1933, Sobrados e mucambos (The Mansions and the Shanties) in 1936, and other writings, which propounded his belief that a "new race" of people originated after centuries of miscegenation and cultural fusion between the Portuguese settlers, the Indigenous population and the African slaves, i.e., that Brazil is an example of a "racial democracy," a racially harmonious society (Meade 153; Hanchard 98). After spending five years as a student in the United States, Freyre published his master's paper in 1923. His work, an interpretation of Brazilian social life in the nineteenth century, used American society as a model to analyze the Brazilian situation. Therefore, Freyre stressed Brazilian uniqueness as a healthy society because of its racial relations and miscegenation (Skidmore, "Illusion" 76-7). Since Brazilians separated race and culture, Brazil's nonwhite heritage is considered a blessing and "Brazilians had no need to feel themselves inferior to the inhabitants of other nations but should, in fact, recognize their own superiority" (Haberly 163) and "constituted the uniqueness of Brazilian 'national character'" (Penha-Lopes 814).

In Casa-grande & senzala, Freyre describes an idealized portrait of Brazilian slavery, free from racism. He points out

that the harmonious relationship between whites and blacks in Brazil has been the product of the economic system, which was based on a monoculture agriculture (sugar cane), patriarchal family, and slave labor. The presence of female slaves in the master's house facilitated miscegenation and acculturation (32). He explains that some female slaves were chosen to do some of the most delicate and intimate work in the house, such as feeding the master's children. For that job, the master or his wife would choose the cleanest, prettiest, and strongest female slaves to take to their house where they were treated as members of the house (Freyre 435-36). As young men matured, sexual experiences with female slaves were encouraged. The latter could not refuse as they had to obey orders, nothing else: "O que a negra da senzala fez foi facilitar a depravação com a sua docilidade de escrava; abrindo as pernas ao primeiro desejo do sinhô-moço. Desejo, não: ordem" (Freyre 456). Freyre stated that miscegenation and acculturation were possible because of racial tolerance of the Portuguese:

Foi misturando-se gostosamente com mulheres de cor logo ao primeiro contato e multiplicando-se em filhos mestiços que uns milhares apenas de machos atrevidos conseguiram firmar-se na posse de terras vastíssimas e competir com povos grandes e numerosos na extensão de domínio colonial e na eficácia da ação colonizadora. (70)

These relationships were based on power, the superior Portuguese and the inferior and submissive African and

indigenous population. Brazil, however, began to think about itself as a mixed civilization in which miscegenation is a positive national characteristic.

Racial harmony and white superiority are not conflictual concepts in Brazil if one thinks about the problem of Afro-Brazilians related to "class oppression ... not racial discrimination," i.e., blacks have been discriminated against not because of their color, rather because they are poor (Meade 149-50). Therefore, Vargas could defend the dominant racial ideology of white superiority, as he stated in 1938 that "o fortalecimento da raça branca [servirá] para assegurar a elevação cultural e a eugenia das futuras gerações" (Francisco 133). From that point of view, racial democracy selects a dominant race (white), which accepts miscegenation and admits some mobility between classes by the inferiors (Afro-descendants) (Francisco 135). Vargas' propaganda of national identity and inclusion maintained black Brazilians invisible as they were not seen for what they were, for their contribution to Brazilian socio-economic progress, or for what they had accomplished despite their difficulties. Hence, their options were to surrender to white superiority through marriage to a white or light-skinned person to become visible or to fight for Afro-Brazilian's visibility (Telles, Race 34). As a result, only 35.9% of the population in Brazil, in 1940,

classified itself as "browns" or "blacks" (Burns 317). This classification was questionable, because being "white" was not, after many years of miscegenation, defined as lack of black blood, but rather as a fluid definition based on skin color and one's own perception of oneself.

Vargas promised presidential elections in 1945, but fearing that he would change his mind, the army organized a coup in 1945 and forced him to resign (Santos, História 327). Elections were held in December of that year, and General Eurico Gaspar Dutra, won the presidency. Dutra was a conservative president who did not share Vargas' nationalist ideology. He suppressed the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB)'s rights as a political organization, because of its anti-democratic agenda (Smith 152-55; Burns 388-89). Getúlio Vargas returned to power as president in 1951 to complete the unfinished social and economic works he had begun during his dictatorship. Business interests, multinational corporations, and foreign governments viewed Vargas's alliance with the lower classes with suspicion, and came together to attack him in major newspapers and magazines, and on radio programs (Bennassar 369-70). By late 1954, Vargas had come to a political impasse which left him with two options: to resign or to be overthrown. Instead, he committed suicide at the presidential palace (Bennassar 372; Meade 158).

In 1955, the presidential election brought to power Juscelino Kubitschek de Oliveira and João Belchior Marques Goulart, a coalition of the Social Democratic Party (PSD) and the Brazilian Labor Party (PTB), respectively. Kubitschek's slogan was "cinquenta anos em cinco," which promised an economic development in five years to achieve fifty years of progress (Bennassar 374). To achieve his goals he promoted investments in heavy industries--iron, steel, and automobiles--and in Brazil's basic infrastructure--roads, communications, and construction. Kubitschek's most important legacy is Brasília, the new capital in the interior of Brazil, which was inaugurated in 1960 and would unite Brazil from North to South and from West to East (Burns 401-03; Caldeira 295). The consequences of all this development were high inflation and deficit (Skidmore 147). Kubitschek's successor was Jânio da Silva Quadros. Less than a year after his inauguration in 1961, Jânio Quadros suddenly and unexpectedly resigned the presidency (Meade 164). Military leaders, right-wing foreign and Brazilian politicians, and the elite were concerned about João Goulart's government as he was a communist sympathizer, therefore a threat to democracy and capitalism. Conspirators in the military planned for months to overthrow Goulart, to eradicate the left, and to rebuild the chaotic economy. On March 31, 1964, the army took control of the government.

Goulart fled the country to Uruguay and never returned.

General Humberto Castelo Branco, a moderate army officer, was made president (Caldeira 299-304). Hence, these years can be summarized as ones of economic nationalism, state-guided modernization, and political balance between populist and conservative forces.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, there were enormous social inequalities not only between different social classes in urban areas, but also between regions, and rural and urban areas. Urban areas in the Southern part of the country received a large number of migrants fleeing the poverty and drought of other regions, a number greater than the cities could hold. As a result of this flow, housing was not sufficient or affordable, so migrants started to build their homes on the cities' outskirts, forming the favelas (slums), where public services were poor or inexistent. Most of these people did not have much education or training. They, therefore, either worked in service sectors or on the informal economy. Even though their chances of mobility were few, they strove to improve their life. If they were black or Afro-descendants, their chances were even lower as they were in a strict hierarchical society and were viewed by the middle and upper classes as "dangerous," even though the former worked peacefully for the latter (Skidmore, Brazil 138-43). The fact

that Brazilian society created barriers according to socio-economic and racial differences, Congress and the elite continued affirming the inexistence of racial discrimination when black activists demanded laws against prejudice. The Congress and the elite justified their refusal in accepting racism in Brazilian society to the lack of "concrete cases" and to Afro-descendant's acknowledgement of "their place." Then, after some prominent African-Americans visiting Brazil suffered discrimination, the Congress approved in 1951 the Afonso Arino's law, which punishes with incarceration any act of racism.

Despite the growing inequality, Brazil by the 1950s had consolidated a reputation as a "racial democracy." In order to understand this paradox UNESCO sponsored a project led by sociologist Florestan Fernandes, with participation of Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Octávio Ianni from the Escola Paulista de Sociologia (São Paulo College of Sociology) who criticized this ideology by noting hostility and prejudice against blacks, on the one hand, and by Charles Wagley, Marvin Harris and Harry Hutchinson from Chicago University, on the other hand, who defended Freyre's concepts of Brazilian racial harmony. The first group examined racial relation in the Southeast of Brazil while the latter did it in the Northeast. Unlike Freyre and his followers, Fernandes argues that

inequality and exploitation are not the result of the abolition of slavery, but of racial discrimination since whites dominate Brazilian society in spite of miscegenation, interracial marriages and lack of open conflicts (Telles, Race 42-3). He claims that capitalism could be the solution to this problem as it could open equal opportunities for all Brazilians, including Afro-descendants. In the years between 1945 and 1964, however, those social and racial problems were overshadowed by the economic development and modernization promoted by populist politicians.

In 1964, Castelo Branco initiated the military program which promised that "Brazil would be modernized and reshaped by policies ensuring political stability, restoring social order and promoting economic recovery and development" (Smith 197). In the same year, a law was passed restricting civil liberties and increasing the power of the national government. In 1965, after demands by the hard-liners, Castelo Branco passed two additional laws establishing a congressional election for the president and vice president and a legislative election for governors (Bennassar 405; Smith 199). In 1967, Marshal Artur da Costa e Silva, candidate of the government's National Renovating Alliance Party (ARENA), succeeded Castelo Branco. During the electoral process, the only legal opposition party, Brazilian Democratic Movement

(MDB), refused to enter a candidate in protest against the political restrictions. A year later, several anti-government demonstrations took place, including workers' strikes and student protests. Moreover, some leftist groups adopted armed resistance and rebellious approach. Costa e Silva took immediate action through police violence and arrests to repress those rebellious movements. Furthermore, he created the Institutional Act No.5 (AI-5), which shut down the congress, and applied more restrictions to civil rights and censorship of the mass media (press, television, and radio) (Santos 376-77; Smith 201-02). In 1969, Costa e Silva was incapacitated by a series of strokes, and General Emílio Garrastazú Médici was elected president (Santos 381-82).

Between 1969 and 1974, Médici and the hard-liners used torture and repression to silence their opponents. Some leftists politicians, intellectuals, academics, and artists, however, managed to escape into exile to "reconstruct their lives outside Brazil" (Skidmore, Brazil 173). The years of repression coincided with what has been called the years of the "Brazilian miracle," when the economy grew faster than any other economy in the world--ten percent a year due to government financed projects in basic industry, infrastructure, and military hardware. The economy, nevertheless, was plagued by high energy costs, runaway

inflation, and a large deficit (Caldeiras 328-29; Meade 174-75). The crisis of petroleum in 1974 brought more social discontentment. The working class and the poor were falling deeper into poverty as they lived in an inflationary economy with static wages. The middle class, who initially supported the military government because of its profits with economic stability, started questioning it. The rich and the military, who profited the most with the economic miracle, grew richer. The growing internal discontentment, plus international pressure forced the military commanders to soften their policy, bringing General Ernesto Geisel to the presidency in 1974 (Meade 177-79).

In 1976, Geisel initiated the abertura (political opening), a series of reforms that gradually allowed some political and press freedom (Santos 393). His successor, João Baptista de Oliveira Figueiredo, inaugurated in 1979, completed the abertura with the transition between dictatorship to democracy. He began by giving general amnesty for political crimes and exiles, authorizing the formation of other political parties, and allowing, in 1982, direct elections of state governors and legislators, and federal legislators, and abolishing censorship (Santos 399-400; Burns 466-67). In 1982, Brazil entered a severe recession which completely discredited the military regime and brought to

power Brazil's first civilian president since 1964, Tancredo de Almeida Neves, candidate from the Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB) (Caldeiras 345-46).

During the dictatorial period (1964-1982), the military served the interests of the same elite that had long dominated Brazil. Such rule was maintained with repression [through brutal violence] but relatively little mass confrontation, consistent with the general pattern of Brazil's historical avoidance of conflict (Marx 171)

despite the deep and growing social inequalities between blacks and whites. Furthermore, the government justified its actions under the slogan of national security and nationalism, calling Brazilians to defend their country from subversive forces by denouncing any suspicious action. For the authoritarian rulers, any discussion about racial discrimination or any form of organized movement demanded action as they feared a racial conflict similar to the one in the United States (Francisco 137; Telles, Race 41). George R. Andrews adds: "criticism of racial democracy [was considered] as 'acts of subversion' carried out by 'leftists ... seeking to create new sources of tension and dissatisfaction with the régime and its duly constituted authorities'." (491). To maintain this threat away from future generations, they

disseminated the ideology of racial democracy in public schools, and Afro-Brazilians could not question it. Hence, "most sectors of Brazilian society would continue to believe in racial democracy throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s" (Telles, Race 44). Despite repression, racial consciousness and identity movements questioned and revolted against the status quo. They valued and demanded to have their African ancestral traditions respected, and desired to become an integral part of Brazilian society.

Before the beginning of the abertura, the Movimento Unificado contra a Discriminação Racial (United Movement against Racial Discrimination), later Movimento Negro Unificado (United Black Movement) (MNU) "protested incidents of veiled discrimination and demanded punishment of the alleged white offenders. They got considerable publicity, but had little political effect" (Skidmore, "Toward" 209). Instead of accepting their fate of not having their rights respected, black leaders, mostly young and often college-educated, decided to intensify their movement and actions towards awareness, self-identification and resistance in order to demystify racial democracy, build socio-economic, historic and cultural identity, and to demand a national plan of affirmative action (Francisco 143-45). Afro-Brazilians needed to become aware of their power as a group to demand their

rights: “as deformações introduzidas em suas pessoas pela escravidão limitavam sua capacidade de ajustamento à vida urbana, sob regime capitalista impedindo-os de tirar algum proveito relevante e duradouro, em escala grupal, das oportunidades novas” (Fernandes, negro 19-20) and to seek empowerment by “contesting the dominant values, submitting them to questioning through official politics and, more alternatively, through literature and music” as the concept of race is a social construction (Schwarcz 19). Race “is the result of particular historical processes which ... have their roots in the colonization by European peoples of other areas of the world,” not defined by biological processes as scientists believed earlier (Wade 13-14). These actions were also the strategy used by “blacks in Africa, the United States, and other regions of the Western Hemisphere” to become visible in societies that insisted for centuries in making them invisible (Kennedy 205).

This approach was very difficult to break in some communities, but black movement activists continued their work to bring awareness to all Afro-descendants through creating a positive meaning for the word negro so that blacks would not use other terms unrelated to race to escape prejudice. There are more than 100 terms, according to the results of a Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) census

from 1976 for blacks to refer to themselves, all of them characterizing different shades (Levine 386-90). After so many centuries of oppression, some blacks adopted, as a form of protection, the dominant ideology of racial integration; others, nevertheless, were skeptical that they could accomplish anything (Valente 67, 73). For believers, they would have a better chance in society if they denied being black and adopted white values. They believed that this was the ultimate solution for social acceptance in Brazilian society (Francisco 145). This reinforced the idea that not much had changed in Brazil since abolition in relation to blacks and whites. Mulattos still have not found much social mobility, but then they did not suffer the same kind of restrictions and discrimination blacks did (Skidmore, "Fact" 3).

Carlos Hasenbalg, a sociologist who has studied Brazilian racial relations since the end of the 1970s, believes that the problem is not only the lack of social mobility, but also the lack of educational opportunities. Hasenbalg states in his book Discriminação e desigualdades raciais no Brasil that "os não-brancos têm oportunidades educacionais mais limitadas que os brancos da mesma origem social. Por sua vez, as realizações educacionais dos negros e mulatos são traduzidas em ganhos ocupacionais e de renda proporcionalmente menores que os dos

brancos" (221). He shows that nonwhite involvement in the economy tends to be concentrated in the unskilled sectors, meaning lower income and consumption levels. Hasenbalg believes that the solution to the blacks' situation is better education and job prospects.

In the evening before Tancredo Neves' inauguration in 1985 he fell ill and never recovered. He was a clever political negotiator, and Brazilians were hopeful that he would lead Brazil to development. José Sarney, his vice president, became the leader of the country and had to solve an economic crisis and reestablish full democracy by approving a new constitution (Santos, História 407-09). An economic plan was put into action, and, after a few months, inflation accelerated again. The economy was, once again, out of control. The chaotic economic situation privileged the election of the conservative National Reconstruction Party (PRN) candidate Fernando Collor de Mello, in 1989, completing the last step of the long process of abertura. He began a drastic cut in the government's role in the Brazilian economy through privatization as part of his neo-liberal economic policy. His stabilization plan failed and inflation again accelerated, but his involvement with financial corruption led to his impeachment in 1992. Itamar Franco, his vice president, finished his term (Santos, História 412-13; Skidmore, Brazil

217). Franco, however, "showed little understanding of the economic forces," but invited ministers who did. Fernando Henrique Cardoso was chosen to be Minister of Finance. Cardoso and his team "formulated a complex strategy to fight inflation," which was successful. This paved the way for his running for president, as candidate of a coalition of Brazilian Social Democratic Party (PSDB), Liberal Front Party (PFL) and other small parties in 1994 (Skidmore, Brazil 222-23).

Fernando Henrique Cardoso had the support of the majority of the members of the Congress, which made it easier to pass fundamental reforms during his first two years in office. He won election to a second four-year term in 1998 (Martins 797; Smith 214). The economic plan, though, "had not put the Brazilian economy back on the strong growth path that was essential if the country's enormous social needs were to be met: ["education, the labor market, infant mortality, and racial violence"]" (Skidmore, Brazil 232). After running for four times, the candidate of the Workers Party (PT), Luís Inácio Lula da Silva, won the presidential election in 2002. He was the first working-class president to be elected in Brazil; the nation's presidents had traditionally come from the military or the small, wealthy elite. During his speeches, as a worker, he "promoted the concept of empowering working

[class] people to take control of their political destiny” (Meade 182). During his campaign in 2002, Lula promised to fight against poverty, to improve education and productive sectors, to make social reforms, to create more jobs, and to raise salaries. Lula was re-elected in 2006 for a second term.

After the re-establishment of democracy in Brazil in 1985, black movements began to extend their action to influence on local and national politics by indicating black politicians to run for elections under a platform based on racial issues. These issues were considered marginal compared to social problems. This action became possible and succeeded because these movements had already started black consciousness and identity among Afro-Brazilian communities and they were aware of their under-representation and their lack of voice in the government. One politician who did not deny her ancestry and wanted to discuss racial issues with Brazilians was Benedita da Silva. She brought up racial issues during her campaign in 1989 and in the Congress in the 1990s as senator (Telles, Race 48-51). She proposed a ten percent quota for entrance into public universities for black and indigenous people, in order to give the opportunity to those marginalized to study at the best schools in the country. As her initiative was not supported by the majority in Congress, an alternative solution was created by giving the blacks the

opportunity of free preparatory courses for university entrance exams (Martins 798, 807). In 1995, Cardoso broke decades of governmental denial of racism by announcing the need to promote racial justice through public, affirmative action, and compensatory policies, but nothing actually changed (Telles, Race 56-57).

A new stage in the black movement started in 1997 when its actions shifted from denouncing racial injustice to becoming solution oriented through communities' effort. Part of this approach focused on tackling it from the perspective of human rights violations associated to the blacks and mulattos' socio-economic positions, which indicated social injustice and discrimination. Since the international community opened its eyes to the real racial situation in Brazil, the government was pressured to reposition itself and to actively participate in the UN Race Conference in 2001. Before this conference, regional meetings were held. The black movement in Brazil, for the first time, expected a solution from the Brazilian government about some racial issues such as the government's failure to act on blacks' behalf which would promote public policies for the well-being and self-esteem of the black population. Towards this goal, Lula, in 2003, created a department for Promover Políticas de Inclusão Racial (Promoting Policies of Racial Inclusion). Then, part of this

department's actions was the creation of a racial quota which was questioned by white students who felt discriminated against as they would have less vacancies to enter the best public universities (Telles, Race 62-64, 68-70, 73-74).

In a parallel manner, society also began to acknowledge racism. Black movement organizations became part of the democratic process through the implementation of race-based affirmative action related to education, job market and space in the media, other campaigns to end racism in Brazil, and the support to black rural communities. For most of Brazilian history, this multiracial country prided itself on its racial democracy, in which tolerance and accommodation kept peace between groups despite the socio-economic gap between whites and the rest of society. This false vision of racial harmony made Brazil for centuries the envy of the world. And it was a powerful source of national self-esteem, especially when Brazilians compared it to the racial resentment and separatism in the United States. Since the end of the twentieth century and beginning of this century, Brazilians are beginning to accept that racism exists in their society and to realize that education, opportunities and social justice are the way to become a true racial democracy.

CHAPTER THREE

AFRO-BRAZILIAN LITERATURE: AN OVERVIEW

The dynamics of tensions and contradictions present in this literature helps us to understand the attitudes of the authors who either downplayed, denied, or made their ethnic origin central to their identity; clarifies the necessity to denounce social oppression and gives evidence to a new sensibility that aesthetically apprehends the universe of African-Brazilian culture. (Pereira, "Survey" 876)

In Brazil, the beginning of the presence and impact of black or African-Brazilian writers of poetry, drama, short stories, and novels dates back to the second half of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth century. Despite highlighting black culture, history and traditions as literary themes, some issues such as oppression, exploitation, discrimination, and racism are simplified or misinterpreted by the eyes of the reader, usually middle or upper class white males. Therefore, it was crucial to give voice to Afro-Brazilians to question and fight against these racial issues.

One way of doing it is through socio-political movements and another, the one which will be the focus of this dissertation, through literature. In order to show the development of Afro-Brazilian literature, one needs to understand how it was defined then, to know its ideological purpose. My approach is chronological and analytical around the life of the authors and their worldview.

According to Zilá Bernd in Poesia negra brasileira: antologia, there are two ways to define African-Brazilian literature. The definition can be based on theme, i.e., the story deals with black themes, and blacks as characters are the object of the writing. In this case, any author's writings on black themes can be classified as Afro-Brazilian literature which may give a stereotypical and negative portrayal of blacks. For example, some black characters were depicted as the "noble slave," or the "devil black," or the "perverted black," all of which served to justify some of the atrocities committed against them especially during slavery. Or the definition can be defined based on author's racial identity, i.e., one assumes oneself as black and becomes the subject of the writing (Bernd, Poesia 13). Being black, however, does not necessarily imply a certain way of writing or preference for a theme that deals with black issues. For example, some authors who are afro-descendants do not refer at all to the subject on

their writings. The definition I will use in this dissertation is a blend of both definitions, i.e., Afro-Brazilian literature is the literature written by black writers focusing on black themes, or, in Domicio Proença Filho's words, the "literatura feita por negros ou descendentes de negros reveladora de ideologias que se caracterizam por uma certa especificidade" (Quoted in Bernd, Negritude 16).

As authors express their consciousness and common experiences of being black, they present a strong ideological purpose, which seeks to deconstruct the world as established by white values and construct a new one reflecting blacks' experiences of oppression and discrimination, and traditions redeeming the latter's forgotten memory, history, and culture. Hence, African-Brazilian literature makes blacks visible and active agents to transform their community and life through affirmative actions, solidarity, building self-esteem, and using unique linguistic expressions. Even though changes occurred, this approach found a solid barrier among Afro-descendants who denied racial inequality and defined blackness based on skin color, cultural background and socio-economic factors instead of ancestry like in the United States as Joel Rufino dos Santos stated (114). Despite these challenges, Afro-Brazilian literature flourished. The selection of authors until the 1980s showed in this chapter is a combination of

previous selections done by Edimilson de Almeida Pereira and by Zilá Bernd. Then, based on the information found on the other authors, their involvement in Afro-Brazilian issues and their publication, I selected or left out the name.

The development of Afro-Brazilian literature begins with Luís Gonzaga Pinto da Gama (1830-82), during Romanticism. Edimilson de Almeida Pereira, however, in his article "Survey of African-Brazilian Literature," considers the beginning of Afro-Brazilian literature to be Domingos Caldas Barbosa (1740-1800) (876). Even though Barbosa was born to a Portuguese father and an African mother, and added a personal style to the Arcadian poetry as he mixed classical poetic patterns to Brazilian oral speech and vocabulary, he did not fully assume his condition of Afro-descendant or fight against discrimination and prejudice. For example, Barbosa retains his self possession even in the face of the insulting words declared by the poet Manuel Maria Barbosa du Bocage (1765-1805) and others towards his master piece Viola de Lereno (1798) (Sayers 62-63). Pereira also considers Manuel Inácio da Silva Alvarenga (1749-1814) to be a black Brazilian writer, but his reference to black themes is only in O desertor das letras (1774), which he "tells how after a riot the ridiculous hero, Gonçalo, is led with a group of friends to a jail in the same way that the defeated inhabitants of a 'quilombo' might

be led into captivity by the Indians employed to conquer them” (Sayers 62). Both Arcadian poets, despite their African heritage, reveal a common belief that “the Negro and the mulatto were not yet considered suitable subjects for poetry” (Sayers 64).

Luís Gonzaga Pinto da Gama, who was sold by his father at the age of ten, earned his freedom, studied, became a lawyer, orator, and journalist. Gama embraces the abolitionist cause, characteristic of the last period of Romanticism, but affirms his pride in his blackness. His poems are characterized by a transgression of social patterns and by a quest for black identity in the society of the nineteenth century (Bernd 17). Gama also presents whites in an inverted perspective, as in his poem “Quem sou eu?,” from his satiric book of poetry Primeiras trovas burlescas de Getulino (1861), he used irony and humor to convey the inverted meaning of the word “bode” [goat] to make fun of whites the same way whites made fun of blacks. In doing this he changes the role of blacks from object to subject in his poetry (Gomes, Negro 89). Gama also used satire to criticize a Brazilian society that attempted to make itself European. He wrote love verses to the black woman, emphasizing her sensibility and beauty instead of her sexual attributes.

Considered the first black female Brazilian writer, Maria Firmina dos Reis (1825-1917) wrote her only novel Úrsula in 1859 and a book of poetry called Cantos à beira mar in 1871. Her work denounces injustice in the Brazilian patriarchal society against slaves and women. Úrsula, the main character, is a weak and sweet girl with whom two men are in love: one is a good person, the other a villain. Úrsula is expected to fall in love with the good man. However, she falls for the villain and becomes a victim of his cruelty. She is condemned and mistreated for having made the wrong choice. Reis shows through her characters that whenever women and slaves deviate from the established rules of the patriarchal system or refuse to accept the rules of society, they are punished. Furthermore, Úrsula, her mother, and some female slaves are portrayed from an inside perspective, showing a truthful historical point of view from Colonial Brazil.

During Romanticism, especially the last period (1870-81), Realism and Naturalism (1881-93), blacks continued to be mainly objects in many novels such as Bernardo Guimarães' Escrava Isaura (1872), Aluísio de Azevedo's O mulato (1881) and O cortiço (1900), Joaquim Manuel de Macedo's As vítimas algozes (1873) and Júlio Ribeiro's A carne (1888), in dramas such as José de Alencar's O demônio familiar (1857), and in poetic works such as Castro Alves' "Navio negreiro" (1869).

Although the poetry during Romanticism, as Massaud Moisés explains, is social and portrays Brazil without any disguise (Moisés, Origens 507). This does not necessarily mean that authors, in general, were impartial and truthful to reality, they touch the reader but do not question society.

Furthermore, during both periods, literature was mainly written by white authors who belonged to the status quo and created characters to serve the interest and to satisfy the tastes and attitudes of their reading audience. Even those authors who criticized the injustices that blacks suffered, talked generally and theoretically about it. Some black authors also took that approach, namely Tobias Barreto de Menezes (1839-89) who expressed his concerns in social poetry, not directly related to slavery but rather to the racial identity of the mestizo, a race in formation in Brazil. Menezes' arguments about the mestizo were reformulated later in Gilberto Freyre's articulation of the notion of Brazilian racial democracy (Sayers 118).

The most notable Afro-descendant writer in the nineteenth century is the symbolist poet and journalist João da Cruz e Sousa (1861-98), who also wrote abolitionist chronicles. Cruz e Sousa's poetic work represents the high point of Brazilian Symbolism. His works express his fight against racial oppression and contribute to the formation of the

consciousness of blackness through his display of pride which shocked many contemporaries. He is known for struggling against his tragic fate of poverty in a society based on slavocracy and whiteness,⁴ and bad health. A tension emerges from his use of the symbolist aesthetic and his personal life experiences. In Poesia negra brasileira, Bernd states that Cruz e Sousa's poetry reflects implicitly and symbolically the prejudice, discrimination, and isolation blacks suffered during this period in Brazil. His long prose poem "Emparedado" in Evocações (1896) reveals a criticism directed at white society in which he feels trapped, as all the good qualities are associated with whiteness, and blackness is related to pain and vices. Discrimination "pretende vedar ao negro seu acesso à plena realização individual, social e, sobretudo, artística" (Bernd, Poesia 30). Another example of his internal struggle to become visible and accepted is through his poem "Antífona" in Broquéis (1893) where he discusses the "conflict between the 'imperfect' reality of blackness and the unconscious obsession with 'perfection,' symbolized in whiteness" (Afolabi 323). Throughout his life and his works,

⁴ According to Morrison, the concept of whiteness "powerfully evoke[s] and enforce[s] hidden signs of racial superiority, cultural hegemony, and dismissive 'othering'" (Playing x). It was socially constructed as American society felt the need to protect itself from "blackness" through a social structure based on subordination, alienation and exploitation (Alexander 648, Harris 1712), "to affirm the validity of [its] power" (Keating 906), and to oppress those "who do [did] not conform to its standard" (Keating 916). It was a concept that blended history, culture, and attitudes to create a hegemonic privileged race (Babb 10).

Cruz e Sousa attempts to destroy the negative assumption society has about blacks and their culture (Moisés, Realismo 271-75), but at the time he was brutally criticized by as his poetry differed from the literary taste of the readers and writers alike.

The beginning of the twentieth century is marked by an aesthetic change in Brazilian arts with the Week of Modern Art in São Paulo in 1922 reflecting social, cultural, and political changes in Brazil after the proclamation of the Republic in 1889 and following the European vanguard. Despite the valorization of national values, blacks and their culture continued to be marginalized in Brazilian literature until the 1960s not only by other writers, but also by Afro-Brazilian writers who portrayed stereotyped black characters and situations. For example, Jorge Matheos de Lima (1893-1953), used the image of a seducer slave who destroyed her Master's home in "Essa nega Fulô" and of a negative religious practice in "Benedito Calunga," both in Novos poemas (1929) (Proença Filho 166-71). The former also unveils the uneven relationship between a slave woman and her master's wife. Even though the slave woman is subservient, she has power in the relationship because she knows a lot about her mistresses' intimate life. The verses also reveal the violent relationship between the slave and her master. Other collections of poems by Lima that

deal with black themes include Poemas (1927) and Poemas negros (1947). The latter captures black Brazilian history through African goddesses, folklore, and traditions (Moisés, Modernismo 114). Besides novels, poetry and drama, African-Brazilians also began to use other written media to bring awareness about their situation of prejudice. Through periodicals they publicized their cultural and social happenings and it became the vehicle of their literary production, information, and communication. Some of them were Menelik (1915-1935), founded by Deoclesiano Nascimento in São Paulo; O Clarim da Alvorada (1924-1937), by José Corrêa Leite and Jayme Aguiar; and Voz da Raça (1924-1937). They were mainly maintained by the Afro-descendant communities as they did not have any sponsorship (Proença Filho 176). Others focused their energy in putting historical and cultural traditions into writing, narrating aspects of their culture, memory, and oral tradition, forgotten heroes, and aspects of every day life of black Brazilians (Hiraldo 63, Souza, Literatura 68-9).

Afonso Henriques de Lima Barreto's (1881-1922) modest social origins led him to develop a sharply critical perception of a society that was paternalistic, corrupt, and characterized by racial prejudice. To make ends meet, Lima Barreto worked in public service and contributed to local

newspapers. Poverty and the prejudiced and marginalizing society in which he lived contributed to his depression and alcoholism. He published his first book in 1909, Recordações do escrívão Isaiás Caminha. Lima Barreto's social novels exposed the prejudice of Rio de Janeiro's urban and suburban society in relation to social, economic, and racial problems. In his master piece Triste fim de Policarpo Quaresma (1915), he criticizes the kind of nationalism Brazil experienced at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries (Moisés, Realismo 402), and "concentra na figura humana, atormentada por sofrimentos físicos e morais" (Moisés, Realismo 403). The novel Clara dos Anjos (1923-24) describes in detail a poor area in Rio de Janeiro. Through this novel, Lima Barreto criticizes how Brazilian women, particularly those of color like Clara, the protagonist, are viewed as immoral and are negatively judged by society; suffering injustice and prejudice because of their color. As Carlos Faraco explains, "Because of [Lima Barreto's] own marginality in society, he [the author] is able to enter the psychology of the character with a great deal of sensibility" (8). Lima Barreto uses satire, irony, and humor to portray the economic situation of the lower middle and poor classes in his novels. Besides novels, Lima Barreto also published satires and short stories.

Lino Pinto Guedes (1906-51) is a journalist and poet. His works reflect the social and racial context in Brazil between 1920 and 1930: blacks are trapped by two social forces, the ideology of whitening and racial democracy. According to Bernd, these concepts prevented many blacks from becoming conscious of their condition of being black in Brazil (Poesia 37). Some writers like Guedes, however, attempted to overcome their sense of alienation by expressing in their poetry elements of black culture to preserve for future generations. Guedes does not follow strictly the tenets of modernism in Brazil. He feels the need to elaborate a positive image of the black community and to express the soul of Afro-descendants (Bernd, Poesia 38; Liebig 33). An example of the commitment to his people is his book of poetry Canto do cisne negro (1926), in which a black poetic voice expresses the powerless, thus the invisibility of men of his community. He also published Negro preto, cor da noite (1932) and Urucungo (1936) which express his irony as well as reflect on racial discrimination (Proença Filho 177, Pereira 878-79).

Another strong and eloquent voice emerges among Afro-descendants in Solano Trindade's (1908-74) poetry. His poetry is characterized by a search for identity through the resistance to the process of assimilation of whiteness and marginalization (Bernd, Poesia 45). This resistance also

advocates for the working and underprivileged class in search for mobility and in the construction of a more just society. Against oppression, Trindade “reproduce[s] drum rhythms in his verses” (Liebig 33). He also wrote articles for newspapers and journals in São Paulo, including Imprensa Popular, O Momento, Paratodos, and Literatura, and plays. Together with Edson Carneiro, he founded the Teatro Popular Brasileiro [Brazilian Popular Theater], which spread black culture among Brazilians, especially blacks. Besides his ability with words, he worked as a painter and an actor. His works include Poemas negros (1936), Poemas de uma vida simples (1944), Seis tempos de poesias (1958), Cantares ao meu povo (1961), and Violão de rua (1962) (Bernd, Poesia 46; Proença Filho 177). Bernd states that Trindade’s poems, in Cantares ao meu povo, reveal an obsession with history as a way to reconstruct the African past and to transform the slaves’ experiences into positive references for Afro-descendants (Negritude 89). In one of the poems, “Canto de Palmares,” Trindade inverts the traditional portrayal of heroes in epic poems. He transforms Zumbi and the quilombolas [runaway slaves] who are defeated and humiliated in Palmares⁵ into heroes of the action (Bernd, Poesia 47;

⁵Quilombo dos Palmares is a community formed in the early 1600s in the northeast of Brazil by around forty men and women who had escaped from their masters. The last leader of this community Zumbi is now celebrated as a hero and symbol of freedom for Afro-Brazilians on November 20th.

Bernd, Negritude 91-92). Trindade's contribution had a strong impact on future generations' work:

a poesia de Solano Trindade é um marco na trajetória da poesia negra no Brasil, representando um momento de construção de uma imagem positiva, que dificilmente será reeditado quer por seus contemporâneos, quer pelos poetas que o seguirão. (Bernd, Negritude 95)

Carolina Maria de Jesus (1914-77), a black woman from one of the slums of São Paulo constitutes an interesting phenomenon in African-Brazilian literature. Her first work, the diary Quarto de despejo: diário de uma favelada (1960) was published after she showed it to journalist Audálio Dantas who became impressed with the quantity and quality of her writings, i.e., her language is a mixture of her oral culture and autodidactic instruction. According to Maria Madalena Magnabosco and Graciela Ravetti, Carolina "revela através de sua escritura a importância do testemunho como meio de denúncia sócio-política de uma cultura hegemônica que exclui aqueles que lhe são alteridade" (http://www.amulhernaliteratura.ufsc.br/catalogo/carolina_vida.html). Her writings composed of stories, poems, and plays contain a discussion of the constant racial prejudice she faced. The world she describes fascinates her readers because it presents a completely different setting from the one they live in or are used to see described in books. Her other works

include Casa de alvenaria (1961), Pedaços de fome (1963), Provérbios (1963), and Diário de Bitita (1982, posthumously). Her innovative quality transformed her into one of the most translated Brazilian authors in the 1960s and 70s.

Abdias do Nascimento (b. 1914) is a painter, playwright, theater director, University professor, and activist for the Afro-Brazilian cause. He participated in Brazil's first black movement, the Frente Negra Brasileira [Brazilian Black Front] founded in 1931. It had representation in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Rio Grande do Sul. Its purpose was to bring "about the 'political and social union of the Brazilian Negroes'" and to seek "to win greater political, economic, legal, and social equality for Afro-Brazilian workers," but it was silenced by Getúlio Vargas in 1937 (Meade, "Eldorado" 98). He fought against hypocrisy in Brazil, which he felt denied its African heritage. His reaction against racial inequality led to the foundation of the Teatro Experimental do Negro (TEN) [Experimental Black Theater] with Solano Trindade in 1944. TEN is the first Afro-Brazilian organization to perform plays written by blacks with black actors and actresses. Its mission was not only to produce plays, but to use the theater as a weapon to fight for the improvements of the life of Afro-descendants and a forum to educate them to be aware and proud of their African heritage and culture. Nascimento comments

that the "primary intentions [of the company were] to purge the ancient load of pejorative connotations implicit in the word 'black.' 'Black' was always synonymous with absolute Evil; that which was ugly and inferior was always expressed in terms of 'black'" ("Sortilege" 822). As part of the new wave of awareness and protest, in 1945 the newspapers Mundo Novo, Novo Horizonte and Alvorada, and the Associação dos Negros Brasileiros [Black Brazilians Association] began their actions through speeches and rallies (Proença Filho 176). Nascimento lived in exile for thirteen years during the military dictatorship (1968-81). He is the co-founder of the Memorial Zumbi (1980), a national organization which brings together Afro-Brazilian civil and human rights groups from all regions of Brazil. He is a professor Emeritus of the State University of New York at Buffalo. Besides his activism through theater, painting, literary criticism, research, organizations, and poetry, Abdias do Nascimento entered politics in 1983. As the first Afro-Brazilian congressman, he proposed anti-discrimination legislation and led a movement to break diplomatic ties with South Africa and Namibia, which were under strong racist policies. Nascimento has published many books, some in English, and edited two journals, Afrodiaspora (1983-86) and Thoth (1997-99). His one volume of poetry is entitled Axés do sangue e da esperança: Oríkis (1983), and it

rescues forgotten myths and rituals of black culture. Other works include Sortilégio: mistério negro (1959), O genocídio do negro brasileiro: processo de um racismo mascarado (1978), Sortilégio II: mistério negro de Zumbi redivivo (1979), O quilombismo (1980), and Quilombo (2003) (Proença Filho 178). His paintings have been exhibited in several galleries in Brazil and the United States. His book Orixás: os deuses vivos da África (1995) contains seventy-four color reproductions of his paintings, poetry, and critical essays by intellectuals from Africa, Brazil, and the United States. Nascimento's participation in multiple activities in Brazil, the United States, and Africa has culminated in his unique view of art and society.

Nascimento's Sortilégio: mistério negro is the most important landmark in the history of black Brazilian theater. It was written in 1951, but the government did not allow it to be staged until 1957. Although the censors stated that the work contained inappropriate language, most critics believed that the true reason for censoring was its themes of social interaction and racial hatred. Some critics, however, condemned the play for being racist. In the preface of the text, Abdias do Nascimento explains that "This play is one of the products of the Black Experimental Theater--BET--which [is] ... an exigency of the lamentable situation in which black

people found themselves in Brazilian society and, particularly, in the Brazilian Theater" ("Sortilege" 821). O genocídio do negro brasileiro: processo de um racismo mascarado deals with the process of whitening that Nascimento calls a double genocide of black Brazilians. For Nascimento, it implies a physical and cultural extermination of blacks through miscegenation and assimilation as an imposition of a hegemonic Eurocentric culture on Afro-descendants in Brazil. In O quilombismo, Nascimento deepens the discussion raised in O genocídio do negro brasileiro about the subtle and disguised racism in Brazil. According to Nascimento, racism kills through silence. In this book, he also points out some strategies for black resistance to survive the genocide and to establish a model of Brazilian identity as a diverse identity. Quilombo contains articles published between 1948 and 1950 in the newspaper Quilombo: vida, problemas e aspirações do negro (1948-51), directed by Nascimento in Rio de Janeiro. He seeks affirmative actions that emancipate and open new possibilities to blacks in Brazil, the African roots of Brazilian popular culture, and an acknowledgement of black Brazilians intellectuals and artists.

Afro-Brazilian writers not only express resistance through their works, but rather reflect upon their assimilation, which implies a violent imposition of European

culture and disregard of African culture, history and tradition. The status quo elects what needs to be eliminated (African values) and what must be kept alive and valued (European traditions) throughout history, and literary and artistic productions (Francisco 125). Afro-Brazilian poetry, especially in the 1960s, reflects their assimilation upon the hybridism of their two worlds where they have to cope with: on the one hand, their African traditions and values trying to survive in the new world and, on the other, the influence of other cultures, especially the white, trying to oppress any values other than its own (Bernd, Poesia 57). In the 1970s, the literary production began to change its approach showing the reality of prejudice against blacks and to attack this by articulating the need "for the acquisition of a Black identity in Brazil" (Alves, Enfim 19). The consciousness of the writers, according to Bernd, works to attract and repulse the reader in relation to themes of discrimination and injustice against blacks because of the problem of denial of racism in Brazil. At the same time, writers attempt to involve the reader in the process of hope to build the cultural space of the latter (Bernd, Negritude 81). This attitude also helped to bring awareness to Afro-descendant communities through social and cultural movements.

Eduardo de Oliveira (b. 1926) is a poet, lawyer, and professor. His first book of poetry was published in 1944, Além do pó. He has published many books of poetry, including Banzo (1965), Gestas líricas da negritude (1967), and Túnica de ébano (1980). His writings employ traditional poetic forms, rhythms, and symbols, but his themes refer to Brazilian black history and heroes which are often neglected or forgotten by the official history of the country. Oliveira recovers important events and information about his people and culture in an effort to help Afro-Brazilians build their self-esteem and identity (Bernd, Poesia 58-59; Bernd, Negritude 105-07). Túnica de ébano, according to Bernd, is a metaphor for the social restriction blacks face in Brazilian society. Their skin color prevents them from belonging to a white society, which they culturally and religiously accept as their own. Blacks, thus, fluctuate between reality and aspiration (Bernd, Negritude 105). In Gestas líricas da negritude, Oliveira dedicates some poems to the most important poets of the Négritude Movement⁶: Aimé Césaire, Leopold Senghor, Léon Damas, Nicolás Guillén, and Langston Hughes. Oliveira establishes a connection between his works and theirs in what

⁶ *Négritude* Movement has "called on people of African descent across Africa, Europe, and the Americas to forge a collective identity beyond national boundaries, recognize their shared history of oppression and resistance, and celebrate and preserve a common culture rooted in Africa" (Payne 424).

he considers to be the main purpose of the movement, that is, “defender e valorizar tudo quanto pertença ou se identifique com o mundo negro” (Bernd, Negritude 107).

Oswaldo de Camargo (b. 1934) is a journalist, writer, and musician. His works include Grito de angústia (1958), Um homem tenta ser anjo (1959), 15 Poemas negros (1963), O carro de êxito (1972), A descoberta do frio (1979), and O estranho (1984). These works reflect the hybridism defined earlier, and in O estranho, he expresses a feeling of strangeness in a predominantly dominant white society through the “experiência do exílio no interior de si próprio e de seu país” (Bernd, Negritude 97-98). He writes as if he belongs to either the African or European cultures. His earlier works Um homem tenta ser anjo and 15 Poemas negros also deal with this issue. These works express a lack of identity and a negative image of blacks; they discuss the invisibility of the black person, and express the blacks’ desire, to be heard and valued as human beings beyond their color (Bernd, Negritude 99-100). Camargo emphasizes that he has experienced blackness, therefore he can talk about the uniqueness of the black’s painful experience in a world dominated by whiteness and in which social progress is associated to the acceptance of white cultural values. In 1986, Camargo organized an anthology of poetry called A razão da chama: antologia de poetas negros brasileiros, and in 1987,

O negro escrito. In the first anthology, he expresses his perception of race and of being black in the "Epígrafe:" Eu tenho na minh'alma/ a angústia de todas as raças./ Só há um pormenor: sou um negro" (Camargo, chama 6). He shows that there is anguish in all races, but his focus is in one, in the detail of being black which is neglected by other writers and critics.

In an interview given to Portal Afro: Instituto Cultural, Camargo talks about the similarity between the black literature produced in Brazil and that produced in the United States and in African countries. The experience of slavery creates a link between the literatures produced in the two countries in the Americas; their themes are more similar to each other than to those of the literature written in African countries. Both literatures reflect the fact that Africans from different countries were brought together in the new world, a strange land far from their people, traditions, and values. They had to adapt to the new environment as well as to the cultures of other Africans and of the whites. African-American literature, however, has a larger publishing structure and audience than Afro-Brazilian writings. The black Brazilian literature shows the influence of the Black Panthers movement, Martin Luther King, and Malcolm X's ideology. This literature, in the beginning, as Camargo points out, did not

target black audiences despite the fact that it was written by blacks. It was only after Lino Guedes' works that black Brazilian literature was written for a black audience. Since then, other writers have had that audience in mind (<http://www.portalafro.com.br>).

Domício Proença Filho (b. 1936) is a poet, fiction writer, and literary critic. He began to write poetry only in 1979; before that his works dealt with literary criticism. His best known book of poetry is Dionísio esfacelado (Quilombo dos Palmares) (1984), which can be read as an epic treatment of Quilombo dos Palmares. Similarly to Solano Trindade, Proença Filho attempts to fill in the gaps in Brazilian black history. He also published two other books of poetry O cerco agreste (1979) and Oratório dos inconfidentes (1989), and the novel Capitu: Memórias póstumas (1998). Dionísio esfacelado searches for a religious connection with the poet's ancestors in the quilombos (Bernd, Negritude 112-13). For the poet, Quilombo dos Palmares represents the space where blacks had their first moment of consciousness, and where they could reconstruct their lives in opposition to the world of torture and suffering outside Palmares. The religion explored in the poem is the cult of African gods from Umbanda.⁷ The sense of

⁷ A Brazilian belief which started in the 1920s in Rio de Janeiro. It worships some *orixás* from *Candomblé*, but also the spirits of ancestors. In

belonging and pride of being part of the group through ancestry and religion, according to Bernd, was a characteristic of the period in which black communities in Brazil were becoming aware of their identity (Negritude 113).

Antônio Vieira (b. 1939) is an anthropologist, poet, artist, and professor. In the poems of Cantares d'África (1980), Vieira talks about his long experiences living in Africa, where his illusions about that continent were destroyed. He stated that blacks had better living conditions in that continent than they had in Brazil, but he found the problems to be equally large and oppressive. In his poetry, he not only identifies with his ancestry, but also tries to make his community conscious of racial problems in Brazil. He advocates for an active participation in creating a Nova Civilização [New Civilization] where blacks will no longer suffer prejudice. For Vieira, writing black poetry is associated with black issues all over the world where blacks are oppressed (Bernd, Poesia 107). He also published two other books of poetry: Areia, mar, poesia (1972), and Cantos, encantos e desencantos d'alma (1975).

Oliveira Ferreira da Silveira (b. 1941) is a poet and a professor, who belonged to the group Palmares from 1971 to

its rituals, believers offer food, drinks, flowers or any other object that please the *orixá* (Johnson 53, Cacciatore 243).

1978 and wrote for the journal Tiçã (n.d.). Associated with black culture and traditions, Silveira adds elements of the traditions of the South of Brazil which is always misrepresented in terms of white values. In 1962 he published his book of poetry Germinou. His other books include Poemas regionais (1968), Banzo, saudade negra (1970), Décima do negro peão (1974), Praça da Palavra (1976), Pêlo escuro (1977), and Roteiro dos tantãs (1981). Silveira's Pêlo escuro deals with the movement of blacks in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. The work discusses the beginning of blacks' consciousness of their participation in all socio-economic-political activities (Bernd, Negritude 126). In his poem "África" in Roteiro dos tantãs, Silveira portrays that continent as a generous mother, a comforting image in contrast to the difficult Brazilian economic and political situation of the in 1980s: "Tuas tetas -- vulcão,/ leite-lava,/ unhas e dentes -- tuas feras,/ tuas veias Zambeze, Níger, Congo,/ cascatas-gargalhadas./ Tua savana-ventre/ e a selva -- cabelos, pentelhos./ Bem ai, mãe, eu quero me repor dentro de ti" (Silveira 4). In his interview with Callaloo, Silveira defines himself and his process of writing:

I position myself as a poet that has a lot to say, who in one moment writes about love and in another moment about social issues, about very different themes, one who is always moved by a need for expression. The majority of my production is

directed toward issues related to black people. They motivate me very much. (816)

In the 1980s, anthologies and collective publications by black authors marked an increase in the number of titles in Afro-Brazilian literature which has continued until today. Authors also contributed in debates in national meetings, which resulted in books with their creative or theoretical texts. The author's ideological orientation was marked by condemnation of the black's living conditions in Brazil, marginalization, and a valorization of black traditions and values. Some of these values were related to Candomblé and Congados,⁸ or to honor influential figures such Ganga Zumba,⁹ Zumbi dos Palmares, Chico Rei¹⁰ and Xica da Silva.¹¹ Blacks were urged to be aware of their situation and to claim respect for their identity and heritage. The aggressiveness of Afro-descendant's literature constituted an answer to the pain and humiliation blacks had suffered throughout the centuries. African-Brazilian literature had become more socially engaged (Bernd, Negritude 102-03). At the same time, however, more

⁸ A kind of folklore sung by blacks who dance for Nossa Senhora do Rosário as if it were a war against the dominant Catholic religion.

⁹ The first leader of Quilombo dos Palmares who escaped enslavement on a sugar cane plantation to assume his destiny.

¹⁰ A previous African king who was brought to Brazil as a slave to work in a gold mine in the state of Minas Gerais.

¹¹ A young female slave who seduced her white master to obtain wealth and privileges from him.

writers began to write about the human experiences of every day life, dealing not only with racial difference, but also with gender issues and sexual preferences.

Adão Ventura Ferreira dos Reis (1946–2004) was a lawyer, poet, and director of the Fundação Palmares for several years. His writings are characterized by a concern for racial and social issues. They are filled with concerns related to blackness, and, at the same time, with a simplicity that makes his poems authentic and fluid. According to Femi Ojo-Ade, “[Ventura] n'est pas pour cela poète pessimiste; car, les réalités négatives existentielles servent de point de départ pour l'acte révolutionnaire” (“Problématique” 6). His books of poetry include A cor da pele (1981) and Jequitinhonha: Poemas do Vale (1980). In the former book, Ventura expresses how Afro-Brazilian men experience and view the world, showing his pride of being black. As Oswaldo de Camargo notes in Portal Afro, it reveals an authentic poet, who created perfect and polished verses (<http://www.portalafro.com.br>). Some of his other books are As musculaturas do Arco do Triunfo (1975), Texturafro (1992), and Litanias de cão (2002); besides his published works, he left Costura de nuvens unpublished.

Eustáquio José Rodrigues (Luís Cláudio Lawa or Eustáquio Lawa) (b. 1946) is an engineer and psychologist, but works in a bureaucratic work in Brasília since 2000. He writes poetry

and fiction, and is an activist in the Afro-Brazilian movement. Lawa's texts call for a reflection on social problems dealt daily by underprivileged people through unveiling social masks. His first book Cauterizai o meu umbigo (1986), a collection of short stories, demystifies Africa to promote and build an Afro-Brazilian identity that is neither entirely African nor Portuguese, but mixed. The short story "Cauterizai o meu umbigo, oh, mãe!" deals with the experience of Rodrigues, an African-Brazilian character, on a trip to Africa (Zaire) in search of his identity: "Porém, à medida que os dias foram-se passando, cada vez que eu olhava para aquela tramôndega sentia-me, mais e mais, distanciado da pulsão inicial" (Rodrigues 102). He, however, finds out through the symbolic artifact of a sword, that it is not in Africa, but in Brazil, as a mixed race tradition. Four years later he published Flor de sangue. Besides these two books, he has also published short stories in Cadernos negros: "Travessia" shows the importance of solidarity even when what one poor numerous family has to offer the other is almost nothing (Lawa 57-62).

Maria Conceição Evaristo (b. 1946) is a teacher, a poet, and a fiction writer. Her appreciation for oral tradition comes from her mother and her aunt, who transmitted to Evaristo their fondness for telling and listening to stories. Besides family heritage, she evokes myths, gods, and

historical figures present in African and Afro-Brazilian tradition. Her work deals with social factors that impact the family, including the power that women exert in their role as mothers and the consequences of society's failure to provide adequately for its youth. Women are not only portrayed as mothers in Evaristo's works; she also discusses their body and the notion of intimacy. This issue is debated in her poem "A noite não adormece nos olhos das mulheres" (Evaristo, "Noite" 42-43), where she explains how difficult it is for women to live their femininity. As all the other black writers in Brazil, Evaristo discusses racial and class prejudice, but in her writings she targets three specific groups: blacks, women and the poor. This is the world of the protagonist in the short story "Maria." She is a maid with two children who dies mercilessly after being mistaken for a thief. In "Beijo na face," Salinda, the protagonist, experiences the difficulties of being in an abusive marriage and discovering love again. Her husband, after thirteen years of marriage finds out that she is having an affair and threatens to take their children away from her. Despite the feeling which connects Salinda and her new partner based on a gentle and caring love, they need to fight against prejudice to live their love:

... um novo amor que vivia e se fortalecia na espera do amanhã... que se revelava por um simples piscar de olhos, por um sorriso ensaiado na metade das

bordas de um lábio, por um repetir constante do eu te amo, declaração feita, muitas vezes, em voz silenciosa, audível apenas para dentro, fazendo com que o eco dessa fala se expandisse no interior mesmo do próprio declarante. (Evaristo, "Beijo" 11)

Her first works were published in Cadernos negros in 1990; she then contributed to several anthologies and collections of Afro-Brazilian writers. In 2003, she published her first novel, Ponciá Vicêncio, one of the works that will be analyzed in this dissertation.

Geni Mariano Guimarães (b. 1947) is a writer and a teacher. She has published two volumes of poetry, Terceiro filho in 1979 and Da flor, o afeto, da pedra, o protesto in 1981. She has also contributed poems to a number of anthologies including Axé: Antologia contemporânea da poesia negra brasileira (1982), A razão da chama: Antologia de poetas negros brasileiros (1986), and O negro escrito (1987). Her book for children, A cor de ternura (1989), tells the story of the protagonist, the author herself, from child to adulthood. It shows the difficulties she had to face to construct a positive black identity in a country full of prejudice. The protagonist and her mother talked a lot and in one of these conversations she asked her mother:

Mãe, se chover água de Deus, será que sai a minha tinta?
Credo-em-cruz! Tinta de gente não sai. Se saísse, mas se saísse mesmo, sabe o que ia acontecer? ... Você

ficava branca e eu preta, você ficava branca e eu preta, você branca e eu preta...

...

Achei que ela estava triste, então falei: Mentira, boba. Vou ficar com esta tinta mesmo. Acha que eu ia deixar você sozinha? Eu não. Nunca, nunquinha mesmo, tá? (Guimarães, cor 10)

At school, the protagonist realized that blacks were not valued or respected and that discrimination against blacks existed. Her teacher and neighbors also contributed to that realization by giving a distorted view of slavery and of the black hero Zumbi. She eventually became a teacher to prove her ability to succeed in life and to satisfy her father's wishes (Souza 32-33). Guimarães also published Balé das emoções (n.d.), a book of poetry, and Leite do peito (1989), a book of short stories. In an interview with Callaloo, she says that she is "aware of [the] problems [of blacks], the problems of the black community, and of [the writer's] duty of resistance" (810). Her writings not only contribute to the discussion of racial prejudice in Brazil, they also evoke the issue of black women's sexuality. She argues that women have to fight against rejection and exclusion from society, especially if they are black.

Paulo Eduardo de Oliveira (Paulo Colina) (1950-99) wrote fiction, poetry, plays, was a literary critic and worked as a journalist. According to Bernd, his verses focus on racial prejudice and social inequality (Negritude 111). His works

include Fogo cruzado (1980), Plano de vôo (1984), A noite não pede licença (1987), Todo o fogo da luta (1989), and a collection of poems by black writers, Axé: Antologia contemporânea da poesia negra brasileira (1982). In the short story "Fogo cruzado," narrated in the third person, Colina tells a story of racial and institutional (police) violence. In "Plano de vôo," a poetic "I" wants to escape from the oppressive and closed reality of the world, but reveals a doubt that there are solutions for the problems (Bernd, Negritude 111). In the poem "Pequena balada insurgente," Colina shows no bad feelings toward society, but he denounces prejudice. According to Oswaldo de Camargo, in Homenagem a Paulo Colina, at Partido da Causa Operária home page, Colina "tinha um senso estético muito fino e dispensava uma grande atenção para a palavra eleita" (www.pco.org.br/joaocandido/colina/e_la_se_foi_colina.htm).

Miriam Alves (b. 1950) is poet, short story writer, and member of the group Quilombhoje Literatura, a publishing group in São Paulo that gives opportunities to new and established militant black writers and critics. Alves' poetry synthesizes her bi-dimensional self (black and female) as she attempts to decipher her role as an activist woman in an oppressive Brazilian society to preserve her history. In her short story "Um só gole," the black protagonist Maria Pretinha exemplifies

these bidimensional oppressive values when she tries to play Maria, Jesus' mother, in a theatrical performance at school:

Maria não podia ser da sua cor.
Chorei, as lágrimas corriam entrecortadas por soluços. Isto fazia a hilaridade da criançada que improvisava um coro: - Maria não é preta, é nossa Senhora. Maria não é preta, é mãe de Jesus. (Alves, "gole" 69)

Alves is part of a larger drive for the construction of self-esteem, which is reflected in the way she presents issues of racism and female exploitation. In her poems she explores the role of Afro-Brazilians in an underprivileged socio-cultural-emotional condition (online). She began her career as a writer with Momentos de busca (1983), a book of poetry, which she focused on the "conscious spiritual search for the unknown" (Afolabi 120). Her other books include Estrelas no dedo (1985), Terramara (1988), and a bilingual publication Enfim... nós: escritoras negras brasileiras contemporâneas / Finally... Us: Contemporary Black Brazilian Women Writers (1994). In an interview with the journal Callaloo, Alves says that the poem

reflects reality, the reality of existence, the reality of life experience, the reality of life, the reality of the world, the reality of the universe, or the negation of that reality. It is in that sense that the poem traverses color, gender, economic issues, social conditions, political and sexual convictions. (803)

Luiz Silva (Cutí) (b. 1951) is a poet, short story writer, playwright, critic, and journalist. He founded

Quilombhoje Literatura, and has also been active in the foundation of the series Cadernos negros (1978-present) with Hugo Ferreira. His favorite themes include interracial and heterosexual relationships and the collective experience of historic resistance against slavery and racism. His language is simple and objective, but strong. He uses parody, irony, and a combative vocabulary to fight the old reality of master/slave life in Brazil (Bernd, Poesia 83). Cuti also wrote about hopelessness in a Brazilian society with prejudices, which was transformed into a weapon to fight against discrimination. Cuti began his literary career in 1978 with the book of poetry Poemas da carapinha (Bernd, Negritude 118-19). His other works include Batuque de tocaia (1982), Suspensão (1983), Flash crioulo sobre o sangue e o sonho (1987), Quizila (1987), A pelada peluda no Largo da Bola (1988), Dois nós na noite e outras peças de teatro negro-brasileiro (1991), Negros em contos (1996), and Sanga (2002). Cuti's poems in Batuque de tocaia are weapons for justice as well as a material for reflection to Afro-descendants. In "Oferenda," he explains that the flame that moves people to fight is always lit, even when it seems extinct: "O fogo de outrora/ do centro da terra/ virá sem demora/ Porque não há/ por completo/ vulcão extinto no peito" (Cuti, Negroesia 126). He defines himself in Poesia negra brasileira:

[s]ou negro: entendo-me em toda dimensão humana da palavra (nascimento, ascendência, crescimento, nacionalidade, morte, memória e com isto toda sorte de sentimentos, emoções e razões existenciais) que encerra situações passadas, presentes e futuras vividas pelo meu povo. (Bernd 82)

According to Cuti, on the website Afro escritores, black literature is important to the community of Afro-descendants because it translates into words and style their universe in Brazil, but he adds that it is crucial that blacks become readers of their own literature.

Sônia Fátima da Conceição (b. 1951) is a writer whose poems and short stories have been published in Cadernos negros, but she also published Marcas, sonhos e raízes (1991) and contributed in anthologies. She also works with troubled black children and teenagers in a social project. For her,

literature is a tool with which to explore liberating strategies critical to the survival and empowerment states that through literature, the African-Brazilian woman can reveal who she is; she implies that in the process, one can also challenge the negative images purveyed by white, male writers both past and present. (Alves, Enfim 90)

"Quem dera" is a poem in which she focus on the African heritage as a type of knowledge that she does not know and that if she did, she would not be free to practice it. One of the African traditions that was passed from generations to generations of women was herbal medicine, but this knowledge was prohibited and therefore, lost:

Ver o mundo com meus olhos/ quem dera/ reconhecer de
novo/ ervas, sentimentos/ desvendar/ o que traz o
curso/ dos ventos/ reverenciar eguns na noite/ saber
da árvore/ a raiz./ ... curar lumbrigueiro/ dizer
aquela reza forte/ e curar, curar/ maelas, sequelas/
invejas, mal olhado/ ignorâncias/ curar.../ quem
dera. (Alves, Enfim 170-71)

Every day life, relationships, and violence are also subjects
in her works. In her short story "N° 505" she writes about
racism expressed in police violence and in advertisement: "Não
disse! É a polícia sim" (Conceição 70) and "Precisa-se
auxiliar contábil/ Escolaridade de 2° grau complete/
Experiência de um ano/ É preciso boa aparência" (Conceição
75).

José Carlos de Andrade (Jamu Minka) (b. 1951) is a
journalist, and was an activist in Centro de Cultura e Arte
Negra (CECAN) [Center of Black Culture and Art] and in
Quilombhoje Literatura. He developed a positive consciousness
about his African roots in the early 1970s after learning
about the ideas and movements of the black population
throughout the world such as Black Power in the United States
and the wars for independence in African countries. His
knowledge about African and Afro-Brazilian struggles and
history can be exemplified in his poem "Zumbabwe" in which
Minka mixes and relates the struggle for independence in
Zimbabwe and the Afro-Brazilian hero Zumbi: "Como a lembrar
Palmares/ a festejar Zumbi/ agora Zumba Zimba...bwe/ Zimba/

Zumba/ Zumbi/ Rodésia no fim/ é Zimbabwe lembrando Zumbi”

(Minka, “Zumbabwe” 32). Furthermore, he articulates his activist agenda and discourse as

Sou de uma geração que contestava o valor do 13 de Maio e que apresentava o 20 de Novembro como verdadeira referência para a comunidade negra. Hoje penso que o 13 de Maio é uma data incorporada à comunidade negra como um todo, e como tal, devemos ocupar esta data com o discurso da consciência negra atual. Não devemos desprezá-la. Para mim, que atuo na literatura, é uma data importante por ser a do nascimento de Afonso Henrique de Lima Barreto, que foi um homem que trouxe uma carga de identidade negra e discurso de consciência já no século passado. Devemos retomar e redirecionar esta data em função do discurso atual. (Portal Afro)

The poem “Efeitos colaterais” suggests a reflection about this exclusion, invisibility, and discrimination:

a propaganda enganosa/ paraíso racial/ hipocrisia
faz mal/ nosso futuro num saco/ sem fundo/ a gente
vê/ e finge que não vê/ a ditadura da brancura/
Negros de alma negra se inscrevem/ naquilo que
escrevem/ mas o Brasil nega/ negro que não se nega.
Minka 82)

This poetic voice does not believe in the racial integration and equality propagated by the government throughout history, and resists the ideology of whitening as Black Brazilians wants to affirm their racial identity.

Luiz Carlos Amaral Gomes (Éle Semog) (b. 1952) is a poet, short story writer, and activist in the Black Movement. He founded two groups--Negrícia, Poesia e Arte de Crioulo in 1984 e Bate Boca de Poesia (n.d). His poems and short stories have

been published in the United States, Germany, Portugal, and France. He co-authored two books with José Carlos Limeira, O arco-iris negro (1979) and Atabaques (1983). In "Lei Áurea," originally published in Atabaques, Semog rescues historically the identity and pride of being black: "Liberdade se toma/ Não se recebe/ Dignidade se adquire/ Não se concede" (http://s-bonini.blogspot.com/2007_08_01_archive.html). In that way, Semog's poetry is like a manifesto which tries to get the black audience, who seems resistant to black's literature, involved. In Callaloo, Semog says that he

began to write about love, about caring, and [he] began to write children's poems. ... [Then, he extended that to] talking about love, talking about crying, talking about the kiss in the black woman's mouth, talking about the loving care for the black child, [in order to break the prejudice that was installed and] ... to recuperate and open other pathways and other meditations in this direction. The issue of race is always in [his] text, but not necessarily explicit in [his] poetry, saying that [he is] black or that you are white or that the system does not oppress. Now, all [his] texts are works of profound questioning of the context in which people live. (757-58)

He also published Curetagem: Poemas doloridos (1987) and A cor da demanda (1997). The latter deals with universal themes such as urban life, women, romance/love, children, sexism, and racism. As an activist, Semog works in the Senate with Abdias do Nascimento and is part of the Executive Board of the Instituto Palmares de Direitos Humanos.

Henrique Cunha Junior (b. 1952) is an engineer, sociologist, and writer (novels, short stories, poems, plays, and essays). He was brought up in a family of black activists who taught him the value of community work. In his writings he reflects about the importance of Africa, quilombos, and slavery in building a Brazilian history which is different from the official one. This approach will be an instrument for Afro-Brazilians to become more conscious about who they are and about their strength to build a different society. Tear africano: contos afrodescendentes (2004), a book of short stories from ten years of activism, reflects this idea and as the author expresses in the introduction, he considers it

apenas uma malha do tecido africano que constitui parcela significativa da história e da cultura nacional. ... Os primeiros tecidos feitos nesta terra saíram de teares africanos, de africanas tecendo o pano. A ignorância e a arrogância dos que nos desconhecem sempre nos fez aparecer na História como seres nus, vindos de supostas tribos de homens nus. Meus textos protestam contra esse descaso da ignorância, e insistem na persistência da dignidade humana, dignidade que representamos e constantemente propomos para a sociedade brasileira como forma civilizada e civilizadora. A bagagem africana tem saberes vários, tecnologias, medicina, propostas políticas, bagagem que o Brasil se especializou em desconhecer e cuja dimensão não ousa imaginar. ... Trabalha contra a corrente que nega africanos e descendentes de africanos como construtores inteligentes de uma cultura. (8)

Cunha also participated between 1978 and 1981 in the first volumes of Cadernos negros with his poems and short stories,

and wrote the comedy "Negros que Riem," which was staged in 1980.

Aparecido Tadeu dos Santos (Oubí Inaê Kibuko) (b. 1955) is a poet, editor of Cabeças Falantes Online: Informativo afro-cultural brasileiro, and a photographer. He is also involved in various social and cultural activities in his community. According to an interview in Afro escritores, he wants literature to make people more aware and be active in the process of affirming their identity and having a higher self-esteem to resist oppression. His books of poetry include Como se fosse pecado (1980), Mergulho (1981), Sobrevivência (1981), Poemas para o meu amor (1984), and Canto à negra mulher amada (1986). In "Renascer" from Como se fosse pecado, Kibuko writes about a time when suffering ceases to exist and hope flourishes in a hostile ground: "De uma senzala de conflitos/... De um exército de aflitos/... O sangue as pedras regou/ Os espinhos foram cultivados/ Do aço uma flor brotou" (Kibuko142). In this volume there are two poems that were dedicated to women: "Do útero da amada arte" (143) and "Plenitude" (144). The first praises his woman and their relationship, and the latter deals with sexual intercourse and pleasure. From Sobrevivência, "Esperância" expresses encouragement to Afro-descendants to fight against racism, and hope and faith that they will win in the end: "Ser bravo como

um sábio guerreiro/ Que jamais recua ou da luta desiste/ Para com orgulho e dignidade vencer/ Nossa esperança ainda resiste..." (Kibuko 147).

Esmeralda Ribeiro (b. 1958) is a poet, fiction writer, journalist, and member of Quilombohoje Literatura. She has published more than thirty poems and several short stories in Cadernos negros, and one short novel, Malungos e Milongas (1988). She has also written several essays on children's literature, women writers, and politics. Her own works express sentiments coming out of an urban, Southern existence as a black woman. In many ways, her voice is silent, reflecting the difficulties a writer like herself, whose dominant theme is racism, pain, death, love, longing, has faced. Ribeiro is described as an Afro-Brazilian writer, which means that the themes, issues, form and content mirror a specific perspective of reality and life in Brazil. She prefers not to see prejudice in a negative light since it provides writers with the opportunity to build strength from within. She prefers to perceive the inner self as valuable, and so construct a more powerful social image of Afro-descendants to become visible (Afro escritores). In her stories she revisits African themes, but within the anthropological and sociological context provided by her experience, and of having to overcome the odds of finding something positive in her own reality. Her writings

express a profound sense of suffering out of which woman always has to rise. Ribeiro attempts to create a black female subjectivity, and through it attributes a positive value to the existence of her female protagonists. In all cases, strength comes associated with that uniqueness of existence that only black Brazilians possess. She was co-author with Márcio Barbosa of Gostando mais de nós mesmos (1999). In the poem "Cenas de emoções," from Cadernos negros 23, Ribeiro, in six parts, like a movie, reveals love. The emotions expressed in the poem are full of guilt and revelations about the poetic's voice's true feelings: "gravando/ Sabe, meu guri,/ Na nossa casa, além do cálido cheiro de gim/ Ficaram teus olhos colados em mim" (48).

Zuleika Itagibi Medeiros (Zula Gibi) (b. 1958) works in a pre-school as a pedagog. She writes essays, and a lot of poetry and short stories. Her poems and stories have been published in Cadernos negros since 1985 and an essay in the anthology A escrita de Adé: Perspectivas teóricas dos estudos gays e lesbic@s no Brasil (2002). Gibi's text "Caíndo na real" deals with the feelings that bring together unexpectedly two women despite any racial difference: "Dormimos abraçadas ali no tapete, transformado em fina relva orvalhada. Não fosse um corpo branco e o outro negro, um mosaico improvisado, seríamos um só ser" (Gibi, "Caíndo" 109). In the short story "New

York," the physical relationship between Carol and Laura happens after the death of the former's mother: "Laura se arrepiou inteira, mas não interrompeu. Fechou os olhos e deixou-a brincar de criança grande" (Gibi, "New" 113).

Eliane Vieira (Lia Vieira) (b. 1958) is a writer, a researcher, and an activist in the Movimento Negro and Movimento de Mulheres (Women Movement). She has published two books: Eu, mulher: Mural de poesia (1990) and Chica da Silva, a mulher que inventou o mar (2001). The latter, according to Andréia Lisboa de Souza is set during slavery. Its protagonist is a black woman who fights for better working conditions. Because she is married to a rich white man, people gossip about her and this unusual marriage. Their relationship was considered transgressive for the time. Her husband, however, was more concerned with making all her wishes come true. Her last request was to have her own ocean (38). Chica da Silva, a mulher que inventou o mar reinforces the contribution of blacks to the formation of Brazil and offers a different view of their participation in some historical facts not usually shown in history books. In "Maria Déia," Vieira tells the story of the main character, Maria Déia, and her husband Greg. One day people and machines suddenly appeared in their community provoking hope as locals thought improvements were about to come to them. Instead of water and infrastructures

these people were there to build a government building. The inhabitants were banned from their homes or died before having the chance to move. In this story Vieira shows how the poor population of the slums in Brazil is neglected by authorities.

Márcio Barbosa (b. 1959) is a writer, activist, and coordinator of Quilombhoje Literatura. His works are published in several anthologies, Cadernos negros, Paixões crioulas (1987), Frente negra brasileira: Depoimentos (1998), and Gostando mais de nós mesmos (1999). His writing is characterized by themes of love/pleasure, racial relations, and marginalization. Barbosa has stated that literature, especially short stories, speaks from a specific place with a unique voice and color, expressing genuine feelings and meanings. In Afro escritores, he says that black literature offers a wider view of Brazil because “resgata a humanidade de uma parcela da população que, de forma às vezes sutil às vezes violenta, tem sido freqüentemente marginalizada” (www.afroescritores.com.br). This literature also engages in the democratization of racial relations by deconstructing racial misconceptions, and by expressing the imaginary of the black population while connecting Afro-descendants with their ancestors. In “O homem de touca,” Barbosa discusses the question of the marginalized in Brazilian society. The main character is a street beggar, who is tired of not being

noticed by other people. The only way he finds to call people's attention to his existence is through violence. In one incident, he points a gun at someone's head because the latter has never noticed him even though he passes by that street every day: "Aí, falei que tava me devendo. Mais um. Mais um que não sabia quem eu era. Aí, maluco, agora já sabe" (Barbosa, "homem" 94). In "O Odu caiu bom," another short story, Barbosa portrays racial conflicts, however seeks social ascension, not for individuals but for all Afro-Brazilians (Barbosa 36).

Edimilson de Almeida Pereira (b. 1963) published his first book of poetry Dormundo in 1985. In 1983, however, he met the poets of the group Abre Alas/Revista D'Lira. Between 1983 and 1994 he worked with Professor Núbia Pereira de Magalhães Gomes on a project about popular culture and Bantu traditions in the state of Minas Gerais called "Minas e Mineiros." This collaborative work resulted in the publication of five books: Negras raízes mineiras: os Arturos (1988), Assim se benze em Minas Gerais (1989), Arturos: olhos do Rosário (1990), Mundo encaixado: significado da cultura popular (1992), and Do presépio à balança: representações sociais da vida religiosa (1995). In addition, his works of poetry include Livro de falas ou kalunbunu (1987), O homem da orelha furada (1995), Zeosório blues: obra poética 1 (2002),

and As coisas arcas: obra poética 4 (2003). Part of Pereira's work reflects his African heritage. In Livro de falas ou kalunbunu, for example, the poetic voice dialogues with the myths of Candomblé.¹² As a non-initiated person in the religion, he writes about the original myth in an epigraph for each poem, and the poetic voice converses with the myth (Pereira, Callaloo 44-45). Besides African heritage and popular culture, Pereira discusses through his poetry racism, misery, oppression, and violence. The function of his poetry, however, is not to "[expose] the wounds of an unjust society and [to awaken] political awareness," it

is [to] highly [engage] with the defense of human rights, with the preservation of the dignity of individuals and social groups. It is certainly a poetry engaged with [his] history as a black man: what [he wants] for [them], and for all people, is respect, dignity and freedom. (Pereira, Callaloo 51)

The language in his poetry incorporates many of the symbols present in popular culture and in religious rituals (Pereira, Callaloo 51).

Cristiane Sobral (b. 1977) is an actress, writer, and playwright. She has written two award-winning plays: "Uma boneca no lixo" (1998) and "Dra. Sida" (2001). The former is a reflection on the myth of racial democracy, and the latter is

¹² A Western African belief practiced in Brazil since the nineteenth century. It is the result of the syncretism of African tribal beliefs and Catholicism. In some ceremonies and rituals, believers offer animals in sacrifice (Johnson 41, De Lascio 24).

a musical comedy about sexuality and Aids (Sobral e-mail). She works with the theater group Cabeça Feita, which was founded in 1999 by black actors. According to Sobral, its mission is to involve black artists in the Brazilian entertainment industry (e-mail). Their play "Petardo, será que você agüenta?," which is structured by poems, is a love story (Sobral e-mail). The text was written by Sobral and Dojival Vieira¹³ and performed in Angola and some Brazilian cities. While travelling throughout Brazil (São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Salvador) or in Brasília with Cabeça Feita, she benefits from the opportunity to read and perform her poems. All her short stories and poems have been published in Cadernos negros. They are all related to "O ser humano em geral e também [as] experiências do ser negro num país multiracial que ainda tem dificuldades de lidar com as diferenças [raciais];" she wants to "denunciar [as] estratégias de embranquecimento e destacar o amor que tenho pela negritude, sua força e coragem de sobreviver e manter a cultura em qualquer parte do mundo" (Sobral e-mail). Her writing expresses simple experiences of every day life or reveals female fantasies with humor like in "Estrangeira:" "Só porque estou em outra cidade/ faço sexo nos táxis./ Assumo a primeira pessoa do singular./ Resolvo conjugar o Eu em voz alta./ Sem papai, igreja nem sistema./

¹³ Dojival Vieira is a journalist, poet and lawyer.

Sem o menor dilema./ Nesta vida tão gostosa" (Sobral, "Estrangeira" 40). Another example of life experience is Sobral's "O buraco negro" which brings the one problem that people from any race, social class or education suffer these days--depression. The narrator describes depression as a black hole which is invisible to anyone but the person who suffers from it. Moreover, this hole grows larger as she becomes more depressed. Depression, however, is treatable, and the narrator finds her way out. The imagery created to represent her discovery is that the narrator notices some flowers on the edge of the hole. She overcomes her depression and plants a garden. People start noticing and admiring the garden, which is what the narrator needed to give her life meaning.

Since the re-establishment of democracy in Brazil in 1985, the growing activism and literary production by Afro-Brazilians have produced the necessity of reflecting upon the myth of racial democracy which has served the status quo for centuries. Afro-descendants have found a sense of identity among themselves, and, through scholars and writers, a set of values found in African culture, tradition, and religion.

Many of those who started out publishing in Cadernos negros, odd number issues dedicated to poetry and even numbers to fiction writing, published once a year by Quilombhoje Literatura since 1978, now have their own independent

publications or are published by well known publishers. It is the product of a collective effort of writers, poets, critics, intellectuals, and readers. Some of the themes with which this series deals include religion (African tradition), the black body, racism, inner conflicts, identity, and racial consciousness. According to Carolyn R. Durham, "The canon of Brazilian literature, while rich in numerous Afro-Brazilian female characters, nevertheless includes only a handful of Afro-Brazilian women authors sprinkled across the centuries" (Quoted in Alves, Enfim 3). Both Miriam Alves and Durham agree that in the works of the canon the images of black female characters are always those of servants, mammies, and sexy mulatto women.

There is no doubt that literary groups like Quilombhoje Literatura have been largely responsible for making Afro-Brazilian literature available to Brazilians from all races and backgrounds. Besides Quilombhoje Literatura in São Paulo, there are two other leading publishing groups of black writers: Negrícia, Poesia e Arte de Crioulo (1982) in Rio de Janeiro, and GENS (Grupo de Escritores Negros de Salvador) (1985) in Salvador. They were engaged in dribbling the difficulties by publishing Afro-descendant authors. In Brasília, Fundação Cultural Palmares (1988) is an institution created to give support to Afro-Brazilians. Their literature

is characterized by regional differences (and conflicts), as David Brookshaw points out:

Na verdade não é apenas uma questão de região, mas a incompatibilidade básica entre heranças culturais regionais que separa os afro-brasileiros culturais de Salvador e do Rio dos afro-brasileiros raciais de São Paulo. (202)

When people discuss Afro-Brazilian literature, there is a tendency to visualize a homogeneous production. Such a concept is geographically impossible, since the concept of being Black in Brazil is one built on a combination of factors based on regional, class, economic, and physical differences.

In Chapter Five I analyze some works of the following writers shown in this chapter; Afonso Henrique de Lima Barreto, Luiz Silva (Cuti), Éle Semog, Oubí Inaê Kibuko, Esmeralda Ribeiro, Márcio Barbosa, Lia Vieira, Cristiane Sobral, and Maria Conceição Evaristo because they have contributed greatly to bringing awareness of racial issues to the Brazilian population not only through their literary works, but also by participating in cultural events, and because most of the literary works I found had chosen to include one or more stories or poems written by these authors.

CHAPTER FOUR

AFRICAN-AMERICAN LITERARY WORKS: VIEWS OF BRAZILIAN RACIAL DEMOCRACY

An effort is made to scatter far and wide before the winds of propaganda the idea that here in Brazil the Negro has found his paradise where he may enjoy equal rights with other men. (Hellwig, African-American 157)

Throughout Brazilian history, the government and the elite invested their efforts in establishing and perpetuating the ideology of the myth of racial democracy. This myth attracted the attention of foreigners, especially those interested in comparing racial relations in Brazil to those in the United States. In this chapter I want to analyze how two African-American authors (Nella Larsen and Danzy Senna) used this Brazilian ideology to discuss racial relations in the United States in their novels Passing (1929) and Caucasia (1998). I show how his ideology was, at first, the solution to the African-American's reality of segregation, and then, how it came to be perceived as another form of prejudice and discrimination. To achieve my goal for this chapter I give a

brief historical account of how, when and why the myth of racial democracy arrived in the United States from Brazil, and how these selected narratives either reaffirm or deconstruct the myth.

The American Perception of Brazilian Racial Democracy

Brazil has long attracted the attention of scholars, travelers, students, and writers from the United States, especially those interested in comparing slavery and racial relations in the two countries. This interest results from the fact that both countries had plantation systems and slavery as their economic basis, as Frank Carpenter confirmed upon his visit to Brazil in the 1880s. Even though the two countries established the same system, they were ruled by different sets of values and customs brought to these two countries by their colonizers. The Roman Catholic Church and Portuguese society defined and shaped Brazil just as Protestantism and Anglo-Saxon values did the United States. Travelers often judged Brazilian life and society and formed inaccurate observations after visiting only one city or plantation. At first, there was a slow flow of English and American travelers to Brazil who were driven by curiosity focusing on elementary information. Around the mid-1800s a steady number of travelers showed an interest in specific topics such as Brazilian flora,

fauna, religion, society, slavery, politics, and economy. In the late 1800s, travelers expanded their approach and accounts to comparisons and comments on previous experiences (Hamilton 539-41). These accounts and experiences began to promote the idea of a tolerant and harmonious Brazilian society towards the black population. Travelers described Brazil as a unique slave-holding society, which was summarized by Mathison as "the land of distinctiveness and attraction" (Quoted in Nelson 203-04). The travelers include Henry Koster (1816), Gilbert F. Mathison (1825), William H. Edwards (1847), John Esaias Warren (1851), Thomas Ewbank (1856), D. P. Kidder and J. C. Fletcher (1857), Ballard S. Dunn (1866), John Codman (1867), Louis Agassiz (1868), Herbert Smith (1879), Frank D. Y. Carpenter (1884), and James W. Wells (1887).

To explain how this idea about the myth of racial democracy reached Americans, one must look at how the travellers reported their views on the slave-master relationship. According to Codman and Warren's observations, slaves were treated very kindly on some plantations as a consequence of the Portuguese paternalist attitude (Cardozo 254; Nelson 213-14). This kindness contrasted to what Americans witnessed in the United States, where slave owners exploited their properties from sunrise to sundown everyday of the week under strict control (Kelley 72, 78). Other

travelers, such Koster, Mathison, Ewbank, and Kidder and Fletcher, witnessed inhuman and repugnant scenes at slave auctions, slave trade conditions, severe punishments for insubordination, a high number of suicides, and a very low life expectancy due to extremely hard working and living conditions. Their narratives criticized Brazilian society for lacking strong and effective laws to punish the offenders who, unlike the majority of the population, abused their power (Hamilton 534-35; Nelson 206-10). This negligence to apply the law was also criticized by Wells, who believed that some punishment would not hurt slaves, if it was given correctly to prevent laziness, which he considered a characteristic of the race (Hamilton 543).

Brazilian society did not raise any barriers to prevent blacks' social advancement as Brazil treated differently a slave from a free black, giving the latter an equal opportunity to ascend socially. This attitude disappointed Kidder and Fletcher who stated that Brazil lacked "Anglo-Saxon race discrimination" (Hamilton 535), and Edwards misinterpreted it, claiming that "Brazilian slavery was little more than slavery in name" (Nelson 208). Another noticeable difference was that, in Brazil, there was an almost even distribution of the black population throughout all regions of the country, in both skilled and unskilled jobs. Blacks filled

positions that no one else would take because "everybody who was anybody had at least one or two slaves to do his work and earn his living" (Nelson 204). This characterized the Portuguese mentality towards work during that period, which contrasted with the British to whom work was highly valued. In the United States, blacks lived mainly in the South due to the demand for slaves in the plantation system. Freeman, in the United States, had a few more opportunities, but there were a lot of restrictions (Foeman 541-42). Until the mid-1800s, "the ratio of blacks to whites in the South was one to two, whereas in the North it was but one to sixty-eight" (Alexander 352). The number of free blacks was insignificant before the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783), but afterwards it increased in both areas, especially in the North because the government manumitted its black soldiers, threatening white Americans. The latter's response to the possibility of losing their power and privileges was to create laws to restrict blacks' social and economic advancement (Hornsby xxiii; Alexander 351). As Hornsby notes, "By 1840, the free black population in the United States was almost completely disfranchised" (xxiv). For this reason, blacks felt uncertain about their future in the United States. Furthermore, travelers to Brazil were surprised to see wealthy free blacks, who earned their living as either plantation or small business

owners or in positions in the military, government or priesthood, as Ewbank, Agassiz and Koster observed (Nelson 204, 216, Cardozo 255). Hence, blacks in Brazil were not considered separate from mainstream society as they were in the United States.

The lack of racial barriers also permitted and encouraged interracial marriage in Brazil. Some travelers, in particular Codman and Agassiz, were amazed by the number of people of mixed race and by their place in Brazilian society, as "mixed blood offspring were not relegated automatically to the slave category" as they were in the United States (Skidmore, "Bi-racial" 377-78). In the United States, interracial marriage was forbidden by law. This prohibition had the purpose of avoiding social association and maintaining two distinct races (Mc Elrath 132; Foeman 541-42). As a result of the long history of miscegenation, Codman believed that Brazil was destined to fail as a great nation unless it attracted white immigrants to "restore the balance in favor of salvation" and progress (Cardozo 244). White immigration was also proposed by Dunn, a Chaplain in the Confederate Army and a leader of a colony of emigrants from Louisiana. Dunn believed in the possibility of reconstructing in Brazil the old Southern slave structure since it was the only place where slavery still existed in the same fashion as it did in the United States

(Hamilton 536-37). Dunn's book was filled with information and "nostalgic passages designed to make us [Americans] wish for what once had been" (Cardozo 243).

This uncertainty about their future led some American black leaders to encourage their followers to fight for equality in politics, and for equal civil, religious, and social privileges. They argued that Thomas Jefferson's declaration which stated that "'all men are created equal'" should be truly respected and put into practice in their country (Kelley 102). Among the groups that claimed for African-Americans a social and political space was the Free African Society from Philadelphia and the New England Blacks. These organizations had the support of some newspapers to inform "[blacks] of happenings in their own community and the nation," like the ones published by Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey (1818-1895), known as Frederick Douglass.¹⁴ They defended the idea that the "solution to black's misfortune was self-improvement," and that they should challenge "America to stand by its principles of democracy and liberty" (Kelley 141, 213-14). Yet, black abolitionists were not only concerned with freedom, but also with "moral, mental, and social improvement" (Brotz 264). A new organization to

¹⁴ Frederick Douglass has been called the father of the civil rights movement. He was internationally recognized as an uncompromising abolitionist, indefatigable worker for justice and equal opportunity, and an unyielding defender of women's rights.

help the cause, The National Council of Colored People, "was formed [in New York, in 1853] as a permanent body to advance the cause of blacks" (Hornsby 25).

Other leaders advocated that African-Americans should return to Africa, to the land of their forefathers, or go to other countries where they would not face discrimination. This was not a new plan; it had been proposed in 1787, 1789, and 1794, but failed each time. In 1816, the American Colonization Society was founded to carry on a colonization plan in Africa. The majority of blacks who followed it were slaves who received their freedom after departure. They went to the Republic of Liberia in 1822. Liberia fulfilled the purpose of creating a society free of racism and segregation for African-Americans for ten years. Then it collapsed as the result of a decrease in the number of newcomers who were discouraged to go due to the high cost of living and the mismanagement in the colony (Kelley 212-13; Franklin 168-69). Another emigration plan proposed in Martin Delany's book The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States (1852) targeted Central or South America, except for Brazil, which still maintained slavery. In these other parts of the American continent, African-Americans could enjoy "the privileges of citizenship" and freedom they would never have in the United States or in Liberia (Kelley 217).

Despite the refusal to emigrate to Brazil, African-Americans viewed it as a paradise for people of color because they heard that Afro-Brazilians had a less harsh life than theirs. African-Americans could also migrate to the unsettled American West (Brotz 80-2). As Kelly notes "[all] These emigration plans failed for two reasons:" the groups did not have enough money for a massive removal of people, and the number of people interested in this kind of enterprise was small (Kelley 221).

After the end of the American Civil War (1861-65), slavery was abolished in all states through the Thirteenth Amendment (1865). Yet, emancipation did not guarantee African-Americans their civil rights. On the contrary, they were subjected to discriminatory Black Codes (1865), which limited their rights and freedom of movement as a means of maintaining them in an inferior position (Hornsby xxvi). Besides the legal restrictions imposed by the Codes, blacks lived in fear of Southern white supremacist groups that, through terrorist attacks on individual blacks and on black communities, kept the former from exercising their freedom. This was a desperate act to regain political power and restore control over African-Americans. The best-known group, which appeared in 1866, was the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). African-Americans, however, did not let fear paralyze them. They fought for their rights

and against discrimination and injustice, and they organized themselves to affirm political leadership (Kelley 242-43; Foeman 546). In 1866, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act to overturn the Black Codes and, in 1868, the Fourteenth Amendment passed. The Amendment guaranteed, citizenship without regard to race, color or condition, and all rights and privileges to African-Americans. Southerners, however, did not recognize the Fourteenth Amendment; they did not want to share with blacks the privileges they claimed should be only theirs. Only in 1870, through the Fifteenth Amendment, were African-Americans, according to the law, able to exercise all their rights as citizens (Hornsby xxvi-viii).

Even though the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments guaranteed African-Americans' civil rights, white Americans managed to manipulate the system to reestablish segregation. In 1883, for example, the Supreme Court ruled unconstitutional the Civil Rights Act of 1875, which prohibited discrimination in public places, and banned African-Americans from white facilities such as hotels, barber shops, restaurants, and theaters. (Hornsby 45; Franklin 262). Furthermore, in 1896, the United States institutionalized the "separate but equal" doctrine, separating facilities for blacks and whites, in the Plessy vs. Ferguson decision. The ruling legally codified the color line by securing the "one

drop" rule to define "blackness." As Hornsby notes, "In practice, however, the facilities were separate but unequal" (Hornsby xxvii-iv). In order to survive, as Charles Chesnutt points out, "the absurdities of a social system of classification and identification that insisted on an absolute difference between white and black" (Kawash 124). African-Americans created and expanded institutions such as restaurants, social clubs, churches and schools, to provide for themselves. They created a parallel world to that for whites (Skidmore, "Toward" 16). To justify discrimination and social control, and to maintain the status quo, white Americans used Herbert Spencer's theory of Social Darwinism as the Brazilians had done. This scenario of discrimination, and political and social exclusion pushed African-Americans to action at the beginning of the twentieth century. As Franklin says, "Disillusionment and despair settled over them" (Franklin 354).

At this time, African-Americans had two possible ways to take action, neither of which involved escaping the country. There was Booker T. Washington, who attracted followers with a discourse of compromise to political power and social equality, and W. E. B. DuBois, who proposed a more aggressive action from an integrationist point of view to end discrimination in the United States. Dubois advocated "freedom

of speech and criticism, manhood suffrage, [and to ensure] the abolition of all distinctions based on race, the recognition of the basic principles of human fellowship, and respect for the working person" (Franklin 317-18). As part of his aggressive plan of action, DuBois organized in 1905 together with other black intellectuals, including William Monroe Trotter, the Niagara Movement. This movement demanded in its first meeting political, social, and civil rights for African-Americans. In 1909, in an integrated conference with a group of white liberals, both groups combined their efforts and convictions to found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) (Brotz 19-24).

As segregation, violence, and economic difficulties grew stronger in the South, and the shortage of workers after the World War I increased in the industrialized North, African-Americans began a massive migration to that part of the country. The first wave of the Great Migration was between 1916 and 1918, and the second, between 1921 and 1924 (Kelley 386-87; Kornweibel 140-41). The number of African-Americans leaving the South was so large that authorities created committees to plan a "work of cooperation and to reduce friction between white and black workers" in the North (Franklin 341). Yet, these committees did not avoid clashes, which got out of control with the outbreak of racial violence

between 1917 and 1921. Over twenty race riots broke out between April and October 1919, a period remembered as the "Red Summer." At this time, the Ku Klux Klan was being revived, and racial hatred, violence and terror emerged with the resurgence of lynching, burning, and oppression of black men and women around the country (Hornsby xxx).

In 1919, the NAACP set up "a program of assault against bigotry and injustice in America" and worked with the congress to pass "a federal law against lynching" which was not approved. Similar laws in 1935 and 1940 had the same outcome as Southern congressmen lobbied against them (Franklin 355). Even though the NAACP fought to improve and change African-Americans' life, its discourse, program, and manifestations did not reach the masses. Marcus M. Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), founded in 1914 in Jamaica and rooted in Harlem since 1916, however, called on African-Americans to show their racial pride and to fight against their oppressors, insisting "that black stood for strength and beauty, not inferiority" (Franklin 357). Garvey hoped that "White and black will learn to respect each other when they cease to be active competitors in the same countries for the same things in politics and society" (Brotz 576). Garvey, once again, tried to settle another colony in Africa, in Liberia, as part of his separatist approach to solve American racial

problems. In 1927, as he was deported after serving five years in prison for fraud, his nationalist movement had ended.

While emancipation did not bring much hope to African-Americans as discrimination and segregation escalated, between the 1910s and 1930s the African-American press and leaders continued to endorse a highly flattering assessment of racial relations in Brazil. Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. DuBois explained that Brazil offered blacks opportunities denied in the United States. The latter even mentioned that political leaders, representatives, and the president could be black because of the absence of a "color line," and because people were judged by their ability and character (Meade, "Eldorado" 91). Furthermore, J. A. Rogers stated that "the Negro [in Brazil] is taught not only to regard himself the equal of the white man, but he is given an opportunity to prove it" (27-28). George Rambo, from the Associate Negro Press, added: "There are no distinctions whatever, other than those imposed by wealth, culture and position..." (Hellwig 41). The lack of a segregation law and the apparent social integration consistently convinced American visitors, including many prominent blacks and president Theodore Roosevelt, that Brazil was a "racial paradise." Roosevelt traveled to Brazil in 1913 and upon his return he reinforced in his article "Brazil and the Negro" this assumption, that blacks "were accepted quite

simply on their worth, and apparently nobody had any idea of discriminating against them in any official or business relations because of their color" (Roosevelt 409). Instead of racial polarization, a Brazilian statesman suggested to president Roosevelt that the United States should adopt his country's approach because the American model would increase their racial problem as the number of African-Americans grew with time. In Brazil, absorption would within generations create a society free of the Negro question, not because blacks were treated as equals, but because it would lead to the disappearance of African blood (Perry 83; Nunes 60; Roosevelt 410-11).

Other leaders and intellectuals such as Cyril V. Briggs from the Crusader, and E. R. James and Robert S. Abbott from the Chicago Defender also manifested their enthusiasm towards Brazil and their interest in promoting immigration. In addition to the propaganda sent to government offices in the United States and in Europe, the Baltimore Afro-American newspaper also published an offer from the Brazilian Ministry of Agriculture to Americans who wanted to settle in Brazil. The offer, African-American emigrationists thought, would be the solution for those who were disillusioned by the failed attempts in settling in Africa and by American segregation law. The paper emphasized the opportunities Brazil offered to

its people of color as they outnumbered whites, and there was no "color line." Various schemes in the 1920s to encourage emigration to Brazil were proposed, including a project of colonization sponsored by the Brazilian American Colonization Syndicate (BACS). These projects were unsuccessful, however, because Brazil wanted to attract only white immigrants, even though the government never stated that clearly to the public (Meade, "Eldorado" 87, 92). A plan announced by Abbott to send a group of three hundred business and professional African-American men to South America in 1925 was unsuccessful. African-Americans would have the opportunity "to gain firsthand knowledge of opportunities there, and to offset the negative image of American Negroes in South America, a product of 'poisonous propaganda' spread there by white Americans" which the former believed was the reason why Brazilians refused to accept African-Americans in their country (Hellwig, "New Frontier" 64). Besides the obsession with the idea of whitening the population, white Brazilians were also afraid that those emigrants would influence Afro-Brazilians to become more conscious of their own situation and become active to change it. The Brazilian government took measures to secure the "whitening" plan through immigration by approving federal and state laws to build a barrier against unwelcomed immigrants. The United States helped Brazil by passing

information to authorities about undesirable groups of emigrants. By the end of the 1920s neither the BACS nor any other African-American group was able to enter Brazil legally (Meade, "Eldorado" 97).

Yet, Briggs believed Brazil was a land of opportunities for those who wanted to work in agriculture, which had been neglected because of the rubber boom in the Amazon. James also promoted the opportunities Brazil offered to all men who were highly trained and willing to work hard; he emphasized the lack of prejudice by saying that he "kept my [his] eyes and ears open[ed] for" any trace of prejudice, but he found none (Hellwig 49; Meade, "Eldorado" 91). To be more emphatic about equality in Brazil, James mentioned that poverty was evenly distributed between both races. In Abbott's situation, he observed that "Everywhere, signs of the acceptance of the Negro were abundant, leading the editor to add his influential voice to those who had proclaimed that color prejudice was nonexistent in Brazil," during his visit in 1923 (Hellwig, "New Frontier" 61). Abbott mentioned, children of all colors playing together, acceptance and encouragement of interracial marriage, and African descendants being in charge of white workers without any conflict. These experiences in locus made him consider the refusal of a visa for him and his wife at the Brazilian Consulate in Chicago and of a room in a fancy hotel

in Rio de Janeiro as exceptions to how average Brazilians dealt with different races or as signs of contamination of part of the Brazilian population by American racial ideology (Hellwig 59, 65). He believed that Brazil represented a new frontier of wealth for African-Americans with skills and capital.

Washington, DuBois, Briggs, James, and Abbott looked only at the surface of Brazilian racial relations from their own parameters, and this led to misconceptions. They "seemed completely unaware of Brazil's effort to whiten the complexion of its populace and to exclude black immigration" and were convinced of the veracity of the ideology promoted by the government (Meade, "Eldorado" 89). Besides their own experiences and observations, African-Americans had also read works published by numerous researchers about Brazilian society and racial relations, including the ones published by Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre. Freyre's works also led to misinterpretations of Brazilian racial relations since he used the American model of slavery and racial relations to approach Brazilian reality.

In addition to political, economic, and social movements that fought for African-American rights, the African-American community initiated a new form of activism through an artistic and cultural movement called the Harlem Renaissance. It

originated in New York City and flourished in the 1920s and 1930s. The Harlem Renaissance captured the spirit of the new Negro as a racial ideology movement of inclusion and integration. It reflected the despair of generations of unfulfilled promises. Some of the United States' most influential African-Americans contributed to divulge their culture and struggle for civil rights and to revolutionize people's perception of their experience by showing their pride and self-respect in their work. The Harlem Renaissance exalted the unique culture of African-Americans, redefined their expressions, celebrated their heritage, and developed a new aesthetic in the fine arts. Among the most influential names of the movement were Countee Cullen, W. E. B. DuBois, Jessie Fauset, Marcus Garvey, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, James Weldon Johnson, Nella Larsen, Claude McKay, Wallace Thurman, Jean Toomer, Dorothy West, and Walter White (Hornsby xxxi).

Meanwhile, the Ku Klux Klan was dissolved as a social movement only to return later under different social and political circumstances. Americans suffered economic losses and problems caused by the Great Depression after the crash of the New York stock market in 1929. African-Americans were devastated by the situation since most of them already occupied the bottom of the socio-economic ladder. Americans

had to concentrate their efforts on survival and on the rebuilding of their economy and lives. The government created the New Deal (1935-39) to help Americans to get out of the Depression. African-Americans, however, were not entitled to receive the same benefits as white Americans. Facing more difficulties than before, African-Americans abandoned their dream of emigration to put all their strength in maintaining themselves alive in their country. Interest in Brazil as a land of "racial democracy" in the 1930s decreased (Hornsby Jr. 77-9, Hellwig 87).

African-Americans began a new wave of migration after World War II (1939-1945). They moved to urban areas seeking job opportunities in the defense industry. Once again, however, they faced discrimination and segregation. This mass of migrants was forced to live in ghettos where white society had control over them (Kornweibel 183). Americans were not only separated according to race, but also according to their economic status. Despite the disadvantages, African-Americans combined their efforts and began to prosper, which was "the most powerful source of white resistance" (Sitkoff 14). Race relations deteriorated and violence broke out in several cities. NAACP leaders A. Philip Randolph and Walter White met with president Roosevelt and demanded the end of racial discrimination in government employment, defense industries,

and training programs. With the entrance of the United States into WWII and the service of thousands of African-Americans in the military, some changes to increase job and educational opportunities gave hope of a new future (Kelley 439, 443; Franklin 462-63):

The improvement in the status of African Americans was neither uniform nor without vigorous opposition in some quarters. On the job, white workers frequently threatened to quit if blacks were employed or upgraded. While the threats were not always successful, they served to retard the advancement of blacks. ... There was, likewise, resistance to any change in the voting habits of African Americans. (Franklin 466-67)

In schools, whites organized protests against desegregation, and states declared that the federal government could not prohibit segregation. As Hornsby notes, "From 1945 to 1954, the NAACP attacked legalized segregation and discrimination in almost every domain" (xxxiii). For its active participation in desegregating schools, housing, transportation, and recreation facilities, the NAACP was considered subversive by Southerners. The organization's activities were restricted in the South (Franklin 468; Sitkoff 17). Despite all the protest and violence, "The United States Supreme Court, in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, ruled unanimously that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional" (Hornsby 101). The court overruled the *Plessy vs. Ferguson* decision. Despite court rulings and decrees, many Southern

states did not observe them and continued discrimination in public transportation. Although there was no separation inside buses anymore, it persisted in waiting-rooms and other facilities. Civil rights committees were established to investigate and report injustices (Hornsby 112).

As the economic situation stabilized, African-Americans returned to their interest in understanding Brazilian racial policy, as their struggle for civil rights continued. Regardless of the acts of discrimination or prejudice already widespread in the United States, Brazil's image of a racial paradise persisted. It, was now less certain than in the past:

Enhanced opportunities for travel and education, a resurgence of protest during World War II as black Americans fought to achieve a victory for democracy at home as well as abroad, accelerated pressure by Africans and other colonized peoples for independence, and persistent reports of Brazilian opposition to African-American immigration served both to heighten interest in Brazil and to fragment the earlier consensus [traditional view] regarding race relations there. (Hellwig 87)

Defending the traditional view, was James W. Ivy, from the Baltimore Afro-American newspaper. He observed that Brazilian color prejudice, which was confirmed by the small number of "pure blacks" in ruling positions, was not racial discrimination, but rather a consequence of slavery that placed them at the bottom of the ladder and gave them no education or opportunities. Yet, there were many African

descendants who achieved success and were freely accepted in Brazilian society as equals (Hellwig 111-14). Anthropologist Irene Diggs shared the same opinion in "Amalgamation and Race Relations," published in 1947, in which she declares that "The problem of race and color in South America is in great part a matter of economics and cultural status" (Hellwig, "Racial Paradise" 50). Sociologist E. Franklin Frazier, in an article published in 1942, also reaffirmed the lack of racial prejudice in Brazil. He called attention, however, to the importance of understanding the relation between class and color, i.e. blacks' success or failure depended on their individual competence since instead of segregating blacks for fear, Brazilians decided to integrate them into society (Hellwig 125). In 1944, Frazier discussed social differences in Brazil, which were the result of lack of education and skills. In the South of Brazil, however, Frazier observed racial problems due to the number of German and Italian immigrants, who show no tolerance for racial equality (Hellwig 133). Finally, Lorenzo D. Turner, from the Chicago Jewish Forum, affirmed in 1957 that "Racial friction in Brazil is at a minimum. In fact, one is scarcely aware of one's color there" (Hellwig 164).

There were African-American journalists and leaders who challenged the traditional view. Journalist Ollie Stewart from

the Baltimore Afro-American newspaper, who was in Brazil during the spring of 1940, pointed out that one might not find segregation and discrimination as they were defined in the United States, but there was a Brazilian version of them. He realized that after talking to people who expressed their disappointment with their racial reality: a young Afro-Brazilian man dreamt about going to Tuskegee, Alabama, to escape discrimination and to gain freedom; a woman from Barbados, who emigrated to Brazil in search of opportunities, described the country as "hell on earth for colored people" (Hellwig 97); and a racially engaged young Brazilian man expressed the hopelessness of blacks as there were not many opportunities for them to ascend socially and economically. Yet, what Stewart was expecting to find in Brazil was the exact same things those in the country knew that did not exist there. The solution to combat Brazilian racial hypocrisy, according to Stewart, was "to follow the example of the American colored man" who was fighting for justice and equality (Hellwig 98). Moreover, Manoel Pasao, the president of the National Union of Men of Color in Brazil, in "A Message to American Negroes" (1942) stated: "Urge that the Brazilian Negro follow the example of his North American brother; that he regenerate himself and take pride in seeing his people functioning in a complex civilization, learning to think and

direct himself" (286). This was not a very easy task since Afro-Brazilians were not organized as a group like the Americans, and discrimination was not openly admitted by Brazilians, in general or by the Brazilian government.

W.E.B. DuBois, who, in 1914, saw miscegenation in Brazil as a positive sign of racial relations, criticized the country's ideology in a letter written in 1941. At this time he warned his readers of the cultural and political harm of miscegenation for African descendants: "Miscegenation had not enhanced the power of blacks or the value associated with Africanness in Brazil and it was not going to do so elsewhere" (Hellwig 88). Furthermore, miscegenation and the ideology of "whitening" were creating Afro-Brazilians who no longer identified themselves with their African heritage, except with some cultural and religious manifestations which were considered part of Brazilian culture since a few drops of white blood make a Brazilian white. To DuBois, such behavior was of a nonviolent solution, a mistake that "tend[ed] to eliminate the darker races from the world" (Hellwig, "Racial Paradise" 52). He believed that it created a society that negates or was ashamed of its identity and preferred to be identified with white values in order to survive.

The first issue of Ebony in 1945, which included the article called "The Truth about Brazil," observed that it was

"more than coincidental that most Negroes are in the poorer classes," and that "Brazil is one of the few countries in the world where there is no racial discrimination" (Hellwig, "Racial Parasite" 48). The same kind of contradiction was noticed by journalist George Schuyler of the Pittsburgh Courier while visiting Brazil in 1948 and 1949. Interaction between blacks and whites without any sign of prejudice happened everywhere, which could be identified as no sign of discrimination, but then, certain businesses and organizations restricted the presence of Afro-Brazilians, especially in high positions. In this competitive setting, whites and near-whites had the help of blacks to guarantee the latter's inferior position on the social scale, as those who managed to escape the fate usually avoided any association with their racial group (Hellwig 145-47, 150-52). African-Americans were beginning to see the ambiguity of how Brazilian racial relations were established and functioned, and they were beginning to question them. Intellectuals and researchers have differed in their opinions about Brazil as a racial paradise, since there were signs of racial inequalities which the Brazilian elite tried to justify as class inequality. Many believed, until the 1950s, that Brazil was less racist than the United States as the former lacked formal segregation or

feared "blackness" that led to violent acts (Skidmore, "Bi-racial" 374-75).

White Americans, especially in the South, felt threatened by the emergence of the Civil Rights movement. In the 1950s the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) organizations were revived. Besides the KKK, other associations were founded, all of which were equally violent. "Time and again in the decade ahead, such racist extremism would discredit the cause of the white South and force a majority of otherwise unconcerned citizens [from the North, mainly] to demand that the federal government act to preserve order" (Sitkoff 28). President Dwight D. Eisenhower, however, did not act against his Southern voters; neither did legislators from the Democrat and Republican parties. The changes mentioned above were advancement towards full citizenship, but they came at a slow pace, according to the convenience of white Americans. Hence, African-Americans realized "that segregation and discrimination, however wrong and unconstitutional, would cease only when blacks themselves acted militantly enough to guarantee that end" (Sitkoff 34). To fight for justice, groups were founded and leaders rose to take blacks to a more promising future. Among these leaders were Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. Their message and form of resistance, however, were different. Malcolm X learned about Islam in prison and turned the Nation of Islam into a

national force "that would scare many white liberals and nurture a new generation of black radicals" (Kelley 478). He believed that integration into white society was not the solution for African-Americans; instead they should build black institutions and defend themselves from racist violence. Some of his ideas, like participating in politics, were not part of the Nation of Islam policy (Kelley 479). After an inappropriate comment about John F. Kennedy's death, Elijah Muhammad suspended Malcolm X from the Nation of Islam. He was assassinated in 1965 while putting together a new organization called the Organization of Afro-American Unity. Some activists, who followed Malcolm X, became radicals (Harris 8).

In 1957 Martin Luther King Jr. became the first president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), which organized and participated in several demonstrations throughout the country. He encouraged young African-Americans to fight against segregation and discrimination through passive resistance (Hornsby 106-08). Sit-in campaigns, freedom rides, boycotts, and protest marches became powerful instruments of protest. Most of these demonstrations ended with civil rights activists arrested or brutally repressed (Hornsby 113). Racial tension exploded again, and in April 1963, there was an intense activity promoted by freedom movements, and demonstrations that challenged segregation

across the South, from Maryland to Louisiana. African-Americans began to see some results as negotiations began. They agreed on a timetable to implement all the changes, which included desegregation in public accommodations such as restrooms, fitting rooms, lunch counters, and drinking fountains. Yet, white supremacist groups attacked violently as a response to the agreement. Demonstrators and leaders demanded an action from the federal government (Kelley 506, 510). President John F. Kennedy submitted a new civil rights bill to the Congress, which

would end discrimination in all interstate transportation, at hotels, and in other public places; it ensured all who had a sixth-grade education the right to vote; and it gave the attorney general the power to cut off government funds to states and communities that continued to practice racial discrimination. (Kelley 511)

It took Congress more than a year to pass the Civil Rights Acts of 1964. Meanwhile, Martin Luther King Jr. and others organized a demonstration in Washington, D.C, to press the Congress to pass the bill. It became the largest demonstration in the United States history

where 250,000 blacks and whites gathered to lobby for passage of sweeping civil rights measures by Congress. Martin Luther King, Jr. thrilled the crowd with his immortal "I Have a Dream" oration. President Kennedy received a delegation of civil rights leaders at the White House and promised to push ahead for anti-discrimination legislation. (Hornsby 114-16).

King's speech and the march gave African-Americans hope in the future, but they also brought death and violence. The Voting Rights Act of 1965, however, prohibited states from imposing limits like literacy requirements and poll taxes on the registration of black voters. With this Act, blacks could no longer be denied the right to vote (Kelley 517; Harris 6-7).

During the second half of the 1960s, joblessness, inferior schools, police brutality, lack of political representation, and segregation led to racial disturbances as some activists did not think they would achieve equality with peaceful actions. A group of activists (Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton) from New Jersey, in 1966, decided to take a more radical direction with the Black Power movement, which "came to mean the empowerment of African-American communities" (Harris 10). The movement was "a united Black voice reflecting racial pride in the tradition of our heterogeneous nation" (Kelley 518). It "denoted a more aggressive posture for its supporters" (Hornsby 127). Africa became once again the focus of attention; African-Americans would refer to it as their home. They would adopt African dresses and hair-do, and African or Arabic names, and their social and political statement was "Black is beautiful" (Franklin 523; Smith 86). Meanwhile, in California, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale organized the Black Panther Party, which "called for full

employment, decent housing, black control of the black community, and an end to every form of repression and brutality" (Franklin 518-20; Hornsby 128). In the summer of the following year, more than forty riots and at least a hundred of other incidents occurred in almost all major cities of the United States. The growth of the black population in the larger cities also represented an increase of their representation in public offices and of their voices, decreasing their feeling of powerlessness and hopelessness (Hornsby 130; Franklin 525). Black Studies in the 1960s in several universities throughout the country supported and stimulated discussions that included culture, politics, society, and race related to black issues (Kelly 533). Tension and race riots still erupted in cities throughout America in the decade of 1970. By the end of the decade African-Americans faced the highest rate of unemployment since it started being registered, and it increased in the following decade as the situation worsened when about thirty percent of African-Americans were below the poverty line (Kelley 561). While a majority of blacks experienced poverty, violence, and exploitation, a number of African-Americans were succeeding professionally and increasing their percentage in the middle and upper classes in the 1980s and 1990s (Kelly 563).

Despite all the problems of Brazil's racial relations, African-Americans and other intellectuals and scholars decided to reexamine it. This reexamination, however, showed Brazilians lack of awareness and organization and their emphasis on "whiteness" to achieve progress. These factors made Brazil less attractive to the activists who were engaged in the Black Power movement and were finding solutions to solve their internal problems (Hellwig 169). The Brazilian government insisted on the "myth of racial democracy," but the articles produced by a new generation of African-American scholars in the early 1970s abandoned the traditional view. Richard L. Jackson and Leslie B. Rout Jr. are two important revisionists, who point out the idea that low status is related not only to class prejudice, but to racial prejudice as well (Toplin 139). Richard Jackson discussed the development of Afro-Latin American culture in 1975, with specific references to Brazil. He calls attention to the problem of acculturation and assimilation as being the black's passport to the world of "whiteness." Like Rout Jr., he mentions how language was used as a mark of prejudice. He also deals with recognition of rights and privileges of blacks in Latin societies (Hellwig 216- 44). Rout Jr. had read Gilberto Freyre and Frank Tannenbaum's works, watched some reports on Brazil, and talked to some Brazilians. From these different

sources, he assumed that there was no racial problem in Brazil, as the ideology was part of common knowledge and was unquestioned in Brazil. He, however, believed that the problem was subtle as Afro-Brazilians did not feel comfortable at an event which was predominantly for middle and upper class Brazilians (Hellwig, African-American 184). He decided to search for the real reasons: racial prejudice was presented in the form of social pressure, language differences, citizenship, and economic situation instead of ancestry (Hellwig 185-94). Black was not beautiful in Brazil.

Cleveland Donald Jr. in "Equality in Brazil: Confronting Reality" (1972) explains how Brazil maintained its image of being a racial paradise. Part of it was the cooperation of African-American scholars and journals who did not know much about the country but promoted stories of black success in Brazil, which was part of the government propaganda. The other reason had to do with how the government controlled Afro-Brazilians. At the same time that it oppressed Brazilians, it showed how bad the situation was for African-Americans as a way to discourage Afro-descendants from Brazil to follow their path and become active in demanding their rights. There was hidden hostility toward blacks instead of encouragement to progress on the part of the Brazilian population. Violence was used to maintain the status quo when any sign of subversion of

the order emerged, and there was extensive color classification, which gave blacks no sense of group or belonging (Hellwig 199-205, 210). Niani (Dee Brown), in "Black Consciousness vs. Racism in Brazil" (1980), states that social discrimination masked the result of legal equality: "Though there existed no equivalent to societal racial segregation or physical lynchings to characterize the Brazilian post-emancipation period, a more subtle form of racial oppression began to take shape" (Quoted in Hellwig, African-American 228). For example, the majority of the lowest class was black. This number increased even more with industrialization, and there was little racial consciousness which made achievement from any black movement very difficult. African-Americans continued to look to Brazil as a way to understand their own situation. They examined Brazil's interracial relations, racial issues associated to class variables, and identification and classification. Moreover, Brazil, under the dictatorship and with the help of the United States, continued to spread the ideology of "racial democracy," even though arguments to explain it were weakened.

African-American Literary Reading of Brazilian
Racial Democracy

Racial Democracy in Passing: To Escape Segregation

One of the most enigmatic writers of the Harlem Renaissance was Nella Larsen. Born in 1891 of an interracial marriage--her father was from the Virgin Islands and her mother was of Danish origin--, she was raised in a white world. Feeling lonely in that environment, she became an avid reader of novels and travelogues and a keen observer of life around her. Her first experience in the black world happened when she went to high school in Tennessee in 1909. In 1912, she moved to New York City to study nursing, after spending two years in Copenhagen. In 1919, she married Elmer Samuel Imes, an important black physicist, who introduced her to the Harlem elite. She worked for several years as a nurse, but her love for books led her to become a librarian in the Harlem Branch of the New York Public Library from 1922 to 1926. Her first novel Quicksand (1928), which was awarded a Bronze Medal from the Harmon Foundation, was considered largely autobiographical, since it is about "a mulatto woman who searches in vain for sexual and racial identity" (Larsen vi). In the following year she published Passing, which was about "a light-skinned black woman [Clare Kendry] who chooses to 'pass' as white for economic security and social status"

(Larsen vi) and Irene Redfield who, even though she could "pass," identified herself with blacks (Wall 105). In both novels, "Nella Larsen sought to explore the innumerable social problems of young African-American women in their efforts to struggle upward both in America and in Europe" (Franklin 371). These novels addressed questions of identity and race consciousness, cultural issues of "passing," gender conflicts, and class distinction problems, which were barriers to full economic and social participation in American society. In 1930, at the same time that she was the first African-American writer to receive a Guggenheim Fellowship in creative writing, she was also accused of plagiarism with her short story "Sanctuary" (1926). Even though she proved to be innocent, her third novel was not accepted for publication. During this turbulent period, her marriage came to an end with a lot of attention from the press. All these events made her abandon writing and literary circles. She returned to nursing, which occupied the last twenty years of her life. She died in New York City in 1964.

Passing addresses the issue conveyed in its title through the life of its two main characters, Irene Redfield and Clare Kendry. These characters and their husbands represent American upper class in the 1920s. Each one has different ways of dealing with segregation and of finding solutions to their

life, according to their opportunities and interests. John Bellew, Clare's husband, is a tall, wealthy banker whose fortune came somewhat mysteriously from South American gold. Bellew, the only white character from this book analyzed in this dissertation, represents the dominant ideology of racism, which he learned through stories full of prejudice that he heard or read. He avoided contact with African-Americans, whom he came to identify through physical signs: "White people were so stupid about such things for all that they usually asserted that they were able to tell; and by the most ridiculous means, finger-nails, palms of hands, shapes of ears, teeth, and other equally silly rot" (Larsen 16). Since he could not identify Clare Kendry's African genetic heritage, he married her, thinking that she was white. They have a daughter, Margery, who has no idea about her African blood, studying in Europe. Bellew has nothing to complain about the problems related to segregation as he belongs to the privileged American society. Therefore, he does not see the need for any changes since society runs perfectly the way it is arranged. African-Americans do not deserve anything more than what they have already accomplished as they are inferior beings and should remain in that position, secluded in their own world. Not only does Bellew support segregation in the United States, but he also thinks prosperity exists only in countries where "they

ever get the nigger out of it" (Larsen 59). Bellew fights through his discourse to maintain the system like it is since that is the best way to protect white Americans and keep African-Americans in their place.

Clare and Irene, the light skinned "passing" characters, deal differently with segregation. Clare is described as an attractive woman with dark eyes, bright hair, wide mouth, and a soft white face. She has a catlike character, i.e. selfish, cold at times and affectionate at others, and hard. Although Clare is legally defined as black, she possesses no visible markers of blackness. She "passed" many years before, when she was young, to escape impoverishment. As Toplin explains, this happened to many African-Americans who disappeared from their hometown and families without leaving any traceable track (Toplin 138). Clare's "passing" was a life-changing situation. It transformed her life forever as she consciously put her past aside and denied her roots. She assumed a new identity, one that could give her a better and more glamorous future. Clare never really cared about her race, family, and community. She was more interested in her own well being. Clare and Irene's encounter shows the latter that Clare's attempt to succeed in life was fulfilled. After Clare's father died, she moved to the other side of town to live with some relatives. From time to time, however, she visited her old

neighborhood. During one of those visits, Irene's mother noticed Clare's unhappiness. Some time after her last visit, Clare's relatives told Irene's father that Clare had disappeared. No one knew where she was, but there were rumors of her "passing" since some neighbors had seen her with white rich people (Larsen 20-23). Clare believed that her only way towards happiness was through "passing." Based on the statement "You can't know how in this pale life of mine I [Clare] am all the time seeing the bright pictures of that other that I once thought I was glad to be free of ... " (Larsen 7). The reader concludes that she is in reality unhappy, even though she has access to the privileges of "whiteness" and to a wealthy life. Clare summarizes this feeling of hopelessness by saying that "I'm beginning to believe ... that no one is ever completely happy, or free, or safe" (Larsen 101).

About two years after Clare encountered and had a long conversation with Irene about life, the former showed interest in returning to her old world, despite the risk of having her true identity revealed, especially to her husband. Her return would be occasional, i.e. it would be nothing more than an escapism from her unexciting life in the white world to the enjoyment and fun in Harlem, when her husband John was away on a business trip. Clare wants both worlds. In a letter she sends to Irene, she blames her friend for bringing her memory

and feelings about her old life (Sheehy 406; Harrison-Kahan 111): "'and it's your fault, 'Rene dear. At least partly. For I wouldn't now, perhaps, have this terrible, this wild desire if I hadn't seen you that time in Chicago ...'" (Larsen 7-8). Since Clare's life with her husband seems stable and secure, she does not fear being discovered, but, as any "passing" characters knows, any wrong move could jeopardize her whole world and makes it collapse. Clare's decision to "pass" and to hide her past from her family was made because she did not want her impoverished life anymore. It implies a discontent with her social condition which led her to subvert the racial and social order. The price for wanting to become "white" and suppress "blackness" is high for those who consciously subvert the racial and social order; it may be paid with one's life, as in the case of Clare's life.

Irene Redfield presents herself throughout the novel as well educated and sophisticated. She is a dedicated wife and mother of two boys (Brian Junior and Theodore), a proud member of the Harlem community who is involved in various social and cultural activities. Even though she describes herself as a dedicated wife, she and Brian Redfield, her husband, live an unhappy marriage which does not end in divorce because of social and financial interests involved (Ramsey 36-37). She describes her son Junior, the oldest, as resembling "his

father in feature and colouring" (Larsen 93), while Theodore, the youngest, does it in temperament "For ever wanting something that he couldn't have" (Larsen 12). Irene is a light skinned woman who only "passes" occasionally, like on the day she encountered Clare on the roof of Drayton hotel in Chicago. Unlike many "passing" characters, including Clare, Irene has never wanted to cross the racial line to escape segregation laws because she has always been happy. She has had all she wanted since childhood and continues to have all provided by her husband (Larsen 36). At the hotel, however, before recognizing her old friend Clare, who she had not seen in at least for twelve years, Irene felt unease with Clare's stare. She did not fear being recognized as an African-American because she was proud of her identity, but did not like the idea of being expelled from the place, even if in a polite manner. When she decides to "pass," it is just for entertainment, to be free to choose what she wants to do, where she wants to go, even if it is forbidden for blacks. Moreover, her act of "passing" does not imply any discontentment with her racial condition or any need to subvert the order of the establishment.

Brian Redfield, a doctor in Manhattan whose wealth and respect is the product of his black migrant clientele, is a dark skinned liberal intellectual. Despite his economic

success and respect, he is not happy with his country. He is not completely free; he does not have all his civil rights guaranteed as an American citizen. Like Clare, Brian is a character moved by a desire for a life other than the one he has always known. He wants a life outside the racist and segregationist American society. He wants a less hostile environment for him and for his boys. Clare and Brian repudiate boundaries and do not conform to the situation imposed upon them. And like Bellew, Brian is attracted to the richness of South America, but more specifically to the racial harmony promoted in Brazil. Brian's response to American segregation is a combination of Clare's solution to her unhappy self in the African-American community and Bellew's search for richness in South America, i.e. Brian's response lies in Brazil where race is of no importance, as Brian and many African-Americans were led to believe.

Brazil represented to many African-Americans in the 1920s freedom, racial equality, and respect; values not guaranteed to them in the United States. Thus, Brian became obsessed by the idea of moving to the land of opportunities since Brazil was inviting immigrants to come to the country, and offering many advantages. He felt hopeless and frustrated about racial relations and segregation in his country. Brian was ready to "rush off to that remote place of his heart's desire" (Larsen

90). He believed Brazil was his only hope and option to have access to the privileges of "whiteness" as his physical features "of an exquisitely fine texture and deep copper color" did not allow him to "pass" (Larsen 78). This move would correspond to crossing the line, but, unlike Clare crossing the racial line, Brian and his family would be crossing a geographical line. His desire for expatriation, however, was rejected by Irene who thought it represented a dangerous business, especially for her and the boys whom she dreamt about sending off to Europe. Her reference to a dangerous business to herself is related to her unwillingness to abandon her life which is comfortable, secure and safe, and her country: "she would not go to Brazil. She belonged in this land of rising towers. She was an American. She grew from this soil, and she would not be uprooted" (Larsen 169-70). Furthermore, she "didn't like change, particularly changes that affected her smooth routine of her household" (Larsen 83-84). And she did not feel ready for the "breaking away from all that was familiar and friendly to take one's chance in another environment" (Larsen 30). Irene was afraid of the unknown because in the United States she was aware of the rules of segregation and discrimination, and even more acquainted with how to escape these. She was also familiar with all the parameters of identity which are based on

American values. She did not know anything about those issues in relation to Brazil, i.e. she had no idea of what to expect and how to behave there. Brazil seemed like a puzzle to her (Larsen 131). Therefore, she thought that she would not be able to survive there. Her fear for her boys' future and happiness in Brazil lay in the fact that it was an unknown and exotic place. In Europe, on the other hand, they would be able to get a good and refined education based on strong values. By sending the boys to Europe she would also have the advantage of not having to worry about explaining anything about segregation or race relations to them. Irene wanted her children to be happy, and she avoided any serious conversation that would disrupt their childhood.

Irene's refusal led Brian to repress his feelings and not mention that desire to her anymore, but that did not stop him from thinking about it. He wanted to avoid unnecessary discussions and fights with her. He, however, would sometimes change his mood and feel "that old, queer, unhappy restlessness ..., that craving for some place strange and different" (Larsen 68-69). Even though he would not say anything, Irene knew what was causing that change. However, but she thought and hoped that Brian would eventually forget about it as his "crisis" was already less frequent.

Unlike Irene, Brian's concern about their sons' future lay in giving them a chance for true happiness, freedom, and knowledge of what they were and their African heritage. Brian believed that Brazil would be the best place for them, but since Irene opposed the move, he wanted to prepare them for life as it was allowed to African-Americans in their country. Junior and Theodore did not need to wait until they became older to learn about segregation and what it meant to be an African-American in the United States in the 1920s.

In Passing, Brazil represents to all the characters a different perspective. All think of Brazil, however, as an exotic land. Due to the numerous opportunities of enrichment, Brian thought it was a wonderful place. Clare did not seem interested at all about Brazil or any other place besides Europe; she needed to maintain her forged identity. Irene feared Brazil as it represented the unknown, and she needed security and safety for her and her family in order to be happy. Brian wanted to emigrate there in search of happiness and freedom, similarly to what happened to many African-Americans. He could only dream about the possibility of what it could have been like living in a harmonious society since he had never had the chance to go. They had to wait and fight for changes to happen in their own country.

Racial Democracy in Caucasia: Self-Consciousness

Danzy Senna is, like Nella Larsen, biracial. She was born of a black father and a white Jewish mother in Boston in 1970. Her father is a non-fiction writer and a journalist who writes about race, and her mother is a poet and novelist. Another similarity to Larsen is her love for books; she describes herself as a voracious reader since childhood. Her childhood experiences were painful and led her to writing. Senna remembers scenes of racial hypocrisy when she was growing up in the Boston area: "the face they [white people] wore in mixed company, and the face they wore when they thought they were alone" shows that they still think of themselves as different from others (Senna, Callaloo 450). Being a daughter of writers and liking to write led her to pursue a degree in creative writing in California. Caucasia is her first novel, published in 1998. It is the story of two biracial sisters, Collete (Cole) and Baby (Birdie) Lee, from 1975 until 1982. It begins in New England (where Senna grew up), moves to New Hampshire, and ends in California. They are daughters of a black father, Deck Lee, and a white mother, Sandra (Sandy) Lee, both intellectuals and activists in the Civil Rights movement in Boston in the 1970s. Caucasia discusses the issue of "passing," not as a conscious act of the narrator, Birdie, because she does not want to hide her African heritage, but

rather as a protective act imposed by her mother to save her life from political repression as Sandy is involved in radical acts. This decision sets the sisters apart. Senna's second novel, Symptomatic (2005), is a minimalist novel. The narrator and main character, Greta, is also mixed-race and suffers a lot, because "She's somebody who people project things onto. She's kind of a blank because she doesn't know who she is. It leaves her vulnerable" (Weber). The setting of the novel is New York City, where Senna now lives. In both novels, the author explores the vulnerability of biracial females in their effort to maintain their identity. Her writings also include short stories and non-fiction.

Caucasia is told as a flashback by Birdie, the youngest member of a middle class biracial family of four. She narrates her changes in identity and environment and explains how she once disappeared into America through "passing." Because of their diversity, each of the four characters deals with racial issues and identity differently. Sandy is described as tall, blond, blue-eyed, brave and beautiful. She, in the beginning of the novel, teaches dyslexic children at home, and, then, in New Hampshire, she works as a research assistant on police culture for a university professor of sociology. She comes from an old and liberal Boston family; her father was a Harvard professor and her mother, a socialite. Sandy, who at

the age of eighteen in 1963 met her future black husband Deck Lee, did not know much about blacks, besides what she read in the newspapers, i.e. that "the Negroes down South were mobilizing for their civil rights" (Senna 33). At that time, she had no interest in them or in their cause, but noticed that when liberal and intellectual whites like her parents and their friends discussed black movements and struggles, their point of view expressed their detachment as their approach was only at an intellectual level and when blacks appeared on television or movies, they were always happy and smiley. Sandy Lodge's interest in the subject grew as she began to date Deck Lee, since he was involved in the Civil Rights movement. This was a time of struggle for African-Americans. After some time as an activist, she became highly involved in the radical branch of the movement. She hid fugitives in the house and held political resistance meetings there. She believed in their cause. Despite all her sacrifices for the cause, Sandy, in 1976, afraid of being caught by the FBI for her involvement in the movement which is never fully explained, decided to run away and disappear with Birdie.

Sandy and Birdie, then, became the widow and daughter of a recently deceased Jewish professor of classics, David Goldman. After months of uncertainties, they finally settle down in New Hampshire and Sandy becomes Sheila Goldman. Sandy

who is a radical activist, unlike many other activists, does not leave the country in an act to save her own life when oppression reaches a high point and the FBI arrests and kills people. She "leaves" herself to become someone else, despite the consequences to her daughters (Senna 313). Sandy truly believed in her radical ideas and transformed that into her means of existence, her reason to live. Her daughter Birdie would be the living proof that their idea of racial freedom could be possible as she would be "the first child raised and educated free of racism, patriarchy, and capitalism" (Senna 138). For her, the only way African-Americans would get their freedom and rights was through armed fights, and she carried that radicalism throughout the novel, always thinking that someone would be a FBI agent disguised and ready to take her into captivity. But, paradoxically, she moved to a racist town where people continue to spread pervasive and unrealistic stereotypes of African-Americans, like their violent nature, wild sexual performance, and primitive instincts. She realized that unless the new generation broke this vicious cycle and brought awareness to the town, the racist ideology would be reproduced indefinitely.

Birdie, the narrator, who was forced to follow her mother and "pass," was around seven years old when they fled to Boston. Birdie has straight hair, pale skin, and is skinny

(Senna 29, 128, 213). In appearance she resembles her mother, but in attitudes her father. She and her sister Cole identify themselves as black and are proud of their African roots. Others, however, do not see her that way. For example, when they go to the Black Power school (Nkrumah School in Roxbury) Birdie is excluded, at first, and asked why a white girl is there (Senna 43). After a few days, she makes some friends with the help of Cole and becomes part of a girl's club. With them and her sister's friends, Cole and Birdie learn a lot on how to be "black," i.e. how to talk and to dress. Birdie wants to prove to everyone her true identity despite her looks. Her father also treats her differently by showing little interest in what she says or does. He gives all his attention to Cole, even though Birdie seems to be more interested than her sister in learning about African traditions and African-American issues. She tries to do anything to please him (Senna 56). The only time he was more affectionate to her was when they were in Boston Common, and he was questioned by police officers about her. He showed a photograph of them and his identification card from Boston University, but that did not seem to convince the officers who told Birdie "You can tell us, kiddie. He can't hurt you here. You're safe now" (Senna 61). Carmen, Deck's new girlfriend, also shows rejection in accepting Birdie as one of them. She ignores Birdie every time

the four of them go out. She does not make eye contact with her and gives one-word answers to her questions (Senna 90).

Contrary to Sandy, Birdie does not have any reason to leave Boston. She is happy there as Irene was happy in New York City. Even though this change in their life makes her feel awkward, incomplete, and as a betrayer of her race, she needs to assume a white identity as Jesse Goldman. In this new life, she is accepted easily in a nearly all-white public school in New Hampshire, but she does not feel that she belongs there:

The less I behave like myself, the more I could believe that this was still a game. That my real self--Birdie Lee--was safely hidden beneath my beige flesh, and that when the right moment came, I would reveal her, preserved, frozen solid in the moment in which I had left her. (Senna 233)

As a way to maintain herself connected to her true identity, i.e. her blackness, she keeps her "Negrobilia," "a shoe box filled with a collection of strange objects," which her father left for her before traveling to Brazil (Senna 127).

Throughout time Birdie adds items she finds interesting or that bring her closer to her "lost" family members who are in Brazil. For example, she found and stole the postcard her aunt Dorothy sent to Sandy when she returned to Boston from India, ripped a page on Brazilian Candomblé from a library book, among other things in the box. In that page, she learnt about

Exu-Elegba, and thought that Cole could be practicing it because she liked magic and ceremonies, but she could not see her father in it since "He didn't believe in things he couldn't explain with logic" (Senna 241-42).

Another way Birdie found to remain connected to her sister and father, and to herself, was through her thoughts. During those six years she lost contact with part of her family. All Birdie knew was that they were in Brazil, so she imagined and wondered how they were and what they were doing. Since she did not know much about life in Brazil, she fantasized about Deck and Cole's lifestyle and Brazil, an exotic place, completely different from the United States. She, as a child or teenager, was not concerned about racial issues or any other intellectual dilemma. Her focus was on daily life and mundane worries. She wondered if Cole had a boyfriend, if she had her hair done or dressed differently, and how Brazilian teenagers talked. Birdie's curiosity led her to the realization that, in fact, Brazilian fashion is very much like that of the United States (Senna 158, 309). Birdie also speculated about where they lived: she imagined them in a favela, but an idealized one, where "the smells of food from some other family, some other mother, reaching her through the air, and sisters laughing together beyond her small window" (Senna 307). After six years of pretending to be someone else

and holding to her old self in private through objects and memories, Birdie decided that it was time to search for the other half of the family. She packed some of her belongings and left for Boston, to her aunt Dorothy's house. When Birdie finally reunited with her father and sister in California, she confronted them about why they never tried to find her as her father had promised (Senna 406). They claimed they were afraid of jeopardizing their safety, but it appears that after they returned from Brazil, all they wanted was to restart their life. Birdie, however, was obsessed by the idea of finding them because she needed Cole to restore her identity and her sense of completeness.

Cole, Deck and Sandy's other girl, is three years older than Birdie. She is described as "cinnamon-skinned, curly-haired, [and] serious" (Senna 6). Being the older sister, Cole was to Birdie a kind of role model, through whom Birdie identified her own blackness. In their hectic house, the girls grew inseparable by escaping their reality through the creation of a parallel world with its own language, "Elemeno." In this world the inhabitants had the ability to disappear as part of their survival skills. Their bond lost some of its strength when they became exposed to the bigger world, of Nkrumah School, where Cole, due to her appearance, adjusted almost immediately. Ironically, even though she looked black,

Cole needed to learn to be black, i.e. how to take special care of some dryer body parts and of her hair, and how to talk and dress accordingly. Children learn certain survival and social strategies at home, mostly with their mother. Yet, Sandy could not teach Cole and Birdie about being black, because she was not black. Cole became frustrated and resentful that her mother could not help her with her hair. Cole expresses that feeling to Birdie and Deck: "Mum doesn't know anything about raising a black child" (Senna 53). Contrasting her mother's lack of knowledge of black beauty, Carmen, who is black, became Cole's role model and consultant. Carmen took Cole to a beauty salon and talked to her about different subjects. Cole found in Carmen the reflection of what she was in the external world, a reflection she could not find in Sandy.

After Cole and Birdie reunite, she tells Birdie about their high expectations about Brazil and their disappointment. A few months after their arrival in Rio de Janeiro, they began to see how Brazilian society was racist. But it was a different racism than in the United States. They noticed the resemblance of poor Brazilian's living conditions in the favelas to African huts and tribal lifestyle, and of rich Brazilians, to European housing and lifestyle. People in the middle struggled and were "obsessed with where they and their

children would fall on the spectrum of color" (Senna 406). Acknowledging this Brazilian reality made Cole and Deck lose all their initial fascination and enchantment towards that land, and the attraction that led them there ceased to exist.

Deck has deep eyes, thin lips, brown skin, kinky hair and a small nose, and he is tall and a professor of anthropology who is considered a genius. When Sandy turned to a more radical side of the movement, Deck went deeper in the opposite direction. He devoted his time and efforts to understanding race and racial issues in American society. His research led to the publication of some books. These differences in how to fight against oppression made them become distant and their marriage fell apart, at the end. Deck's interest in understanding racial relations grew as he started a project for a new book. Brazil, which in the 1970s was not considered by African-Americans a "racial paradise" any more, attracted researchers because of its uniqueness. Sandy did not think he was going to Brazil because of his book, but that he simply wanted to escape American racial conflicts (Senna 114).

Perhaps he was trying to escape the horror America had become, but he was also thinking about a new perspective to discuss racial issues. He thought Brazil could point to another outlet that did not have to be through violence. Cole talked to Birdie about all of them going to Brazil one day. In order to

prepare themselves for the trip the girls started "reading out loud to one another about Brazil" (Senna 91), and all of them listened to Brazilian music in the car (Senna 89).

Unexpectedly, Carmen, Deck, and Cole flew to Brazil in 1975.

During the two years they spent there, Deck wrote once to his sister Dorothy from Bahia to say they were fine, and he sent a picture in which he seemed happy and healthy. Then, they lost contact with each other. Happiness did not last long, as seen in the explanation Cole gave to Birdie about her experience in Brazil. This frustration was also mentioned in a conversation Deck had with his old friend from Boston, Ronnie, when they returned from Brazil in 1977. Ronnie mentioned that Deck was disappointed with Brazil because "he [Deck] thought it was going to be this Xanadu, this grand Mulatto Nation ... It wasn't the racial paradise he thought it was going to be" (Senna 355). Even though the experience was not as they expected, Deck was able to collect information and data for his book, The Petrified Monkey: Race, Blood, and the Origins of Hypocrisy (Senna 390). He worked on it for almost five years. This research made him review certain concepts and assumptions he had about race. For example, "Race is a complete illusion, make-believe. It's a costume. We all wear one" (Senna 391). He considered it to be a social construction. He believed that race existed and required

survival skills to stand for the choices one makes according to socio-economic and political conventions and preferences. Along with that, there is the canary-in-the-coal-mine theory. He claimed that

the mulatto in America functions as a canary in the coal mine. The canaries ... were used by coal miners to gauge how poisonous the air underground was. ... [Deck] said that likewise, mulattos had historically been the gauge of how poisonous American race relations were. The fate of the mulatto in history and in literature ... will manifest the symptoms that will eventually infect the rest of the nation. (Senna 393)

Despite the long history of miscegenation in the United States, mulattos have not succeeded, i.e. they tried to claim their mixed-blood identity, but society did not accept that and put them in their place. Yet Deck thinks his daughters will be the first generation to survive this fate, but not without scars. They had to face a lot of problems on the way, to be strong about their choices and even deny their identity for sometime. At the end, however, they seem to have succeeded. Deck's theory brought new insights into how to analyze racial relations in the United States, so that can be a sign of American becoming more flexible in racial acceptance. Birdie will not need to erase a part of her identity to be accepted in American society as she is. Deck's book shocked the traditional branch of academia which, for the most part, continued with the same discourse and complaints of

the nineteenth century led by African-American scholars, a sign that they do not pay attention to social changes or do not want to see changes.

In Caucasia, all characters have an idealized expectation regarding Brazil. All of them think of Brazil as a place where racial relations are easier to deal with. Sandy, for example, expresses that when she tells Birdie that her father is trying to escape American issues by going to Brazil. Then, all Birdie's associations to Brazil and Brazilian lifestyle are idealized and exotic. She did not think of it in racial terms. Cole and Deck had high expectations about it as it was known among African-Americans as a "racial democracy," a concept which interested him as part of his new book. Deck and Cole had the chance to experience and put to proof their knowledge and concepts. To their surprise, Brazil failed to be a "racial paradise," but presented material for Deck's new theory.

In conclusion, Passing and Caucasia convey a different image of Brazil. Both Larsen and Senna follow the ideology of the "myth of racial democracy," but from the perspective of the story timeline, i.e. in the 1920s African-Americans believed in the ideology as it was presented by the Brazilian government and by their interpretation of Brazilian reality, according to the American point of view of Brazilian race relation. This fascination led Brian Redfield to dream about

this country for him and his family to escape the segregation of the United States in the 1920s as he could not escape it through "passing." This concept lasted until the 1940s when a few researchers started questioning it, but some continued supporting it. Not until the 1960s and 1970s, was the "myth of racial democracy" challenged and deconstructed as more African-American researchers visited the country. This was a difficult time in African-American history because African-Americans were fighting for their rights. Senna recreated the idealized Brazil to her characters trapped in a racial struggle. Similar to Brian, Deck Lee does not share the same ideas and feelings about race relations in the United States as his wife, Sandy Lee. But, contrary to what happens to Brian, Deck goes to Brazil with his daughter Cole. They experience the Brazilian race reality and begin to reformulate their theory of Brazilian racial relation. They realized that after all, Brazil was not very different from America: racism and prejudice were just not openly stated, as Deck and Cole found out. Brazil became, after the 1960s, a place where African-Americans went to investigate how other societies dealt with racial issues that was not based on legal segregation.

CHAPTER FIVE

AFRO-BRAZILIAN LITERARY WORKS: DECONSTRUCTION OF FREYRE'S RACIAL DEMOCRACY

The substitution of class for race seems to be a method of claiming that Brazil has no racial discrimination (Skidmore, Toward 18).

In spite of all the difficulties in discussing racial issues in Brazilian society throughout the centuries, Brazilian poets and writers were not intimidated and broke resistance by writing about themes related to Afro-Brazilian history, identity, traditions, and problems to bring awareness and to build a positive self-image of blackness. These difficulties existed because of the denial of black Brazilians and the elite to accept discrimination and racism, which were disguised by the myth of racial democracy. The selection of works by Afro-Brazilian authors that are analyzed in this chapter were written around the 1920s by Afonso Henrique de Lima Barreto and from the 1980s to 2003 by Luiz Silva (Cutí), Éle Semog, Oubí Inaê Kibuko, Esmeralda Ribeiro, Márcio Barbosa, Lia Vieira, Cristiane Sobral, and Maria Conceição

Evaristo. Through their short stories, novels, and one play, these writers show Brazilian reality from an inside perspective which will help not only the ordinary reader, but also Afro-descendants to better understand the dynamics of Brazilian society in relation to racial issues. In this chapter I want to analyze how these writers, through their works, react against the myth of racial democracy formulated by Gilberto Freyre. These writers reveal how prejudice and discrimination are present in different situations and forms in the Afro-Brazilian's life, and they bring awareness about their lack of space in Brazilian society. I first present an analysis of both stories from around the 1920s, and then fifteen stories from the 1980s to the present. In each time period I discuss some specific concerns related to racial issues.

Racism and Discrimination Challenged by Lima Barreto

Since the first decades of the twentieth century, some Afro-Brazilian writers and poets sought space and financial conditions to publish their work as a form to combat prejudice and invisibility against blackness. Most writers, however, including a few Afro-Brazilians did not include in their writings an open discussion of the problems faced by black Brazilians or often treated the matter from a stereotypical

and discriminatory view point. The government in this period showed no concern to combat or solve the problems since it excluded itself from any responsibility toward its underprivileged citizens. The government left each person to fight against discrimination and prejudice, and convinced society that the problems were only class related as the result of the recent emancipation. Lima Barreto's Vida e morte de M. J. Gonzaga de Sá (1919) and Clara dos Anjos (1923-24) are examples of commitment to speak about racism and discrimination to and for his people as a way to openly discuss these issues and fight against them.

In Vida e morte de M. J. Gonzaga de Sá, the narrator Augusto Machado agrees to write a biography of his friend and mentor Manuel Joaquim Gonzaga de Sá. Gonzaga is described as tall, old, and lonely as he never got married. He is well educated, ironic, pessimistic, works as a civil servant, and belongs to an aristocratic family whose wealth was lost. Machado is a young middle class mulatto man, who is educated, single, and enjoys talking with Gonzaga while walking through different parts of Rio de Janeiro, places he would not have been if it were not for Gonzaga. Throughout the novel, Machado and Gonzaga attack various aspects of Brazilian life and society, especially bureaucracy, the bourgeoisie, and discrimination. While Vida e morte de M. J. Gonzaga de Sá

discusses racism and discrimination on a more intellectual level, in Clara dos Anjos these issues are the reality and fate of some characters, including the protagonist Clara dos Anjos, who is seduced and abandoned by Cassi Jones de Azevedo in the poor area of Rio de Janeiro. Clara is a light-skinned lower class mulatto girl, about seventeen years old, naïve, inexperienced, and the only daughter to Joaquim and Dona Engrácia dos Anjos. Cassi is “um rapaz de pouco menos de trinta anos, branco, sardento, insignificante, de rosto e de corpo” (Barreto, Clara 23), belongs to a lower middle class family, and “não havia nunca trabalhado,” except for creating and selling fighting roosters (Barreto, Clara 75).

Racism and discrimination in Lima Barreto's two novels analyzed in this chapter, yet, will be divided into the discussion of social separation or segregation, and opportunities for progress in this time period.

Social Separation or Segregation

In the first decades of the twentieth century, Brazilian society, as mentioned in Chapter Two, had been influenced by racist attitudes and ideologies from the United States and Europe, which were used to justify social and class inequalities. Lima Barreto, through his characters Gonzaga and Machado, in the first story, criticizes the “scientific”

theory of Social Darwinism, which claims whites are biologically superior to blacks. During a train trip, Machado overhears part of a conversation between two men about the inferiority of blacks: "Tem a capacidade mental, intelectual limitada; a ciência já mostrou isso" (Barreto, Gonzaga 111). Machado points out that the man who makes this assumption seems well educated because he wears a large graduation ring. He is preaching to the other, a younger person, about this ideology. The latter does not question the former's opinions nor did the majority of Brazilians, including some Afro-Brazilians, when it was spread without any resistance throughout the country by scientists and intellectuals. Gonzaga argues that if Afro-Brazilians confronted the arguments, "poderiam ter chegado a resultados opostos" which would have dismantled society's explanation to socio-economic inequality and, possibly, made society open to a more equal arrangement and black Brazilians would have better opportunities based on their capabilities and value (Barreto, Gonzaga 121). Gonzaga also shows his disagreement with the idea of the inferiority of blacks when he observes Inácio's behavior. Inácio is Gonzaga's family ex-slave who was born just a few days before Gonzaga and freed shortly after that. According to society, Inácio's dedication and servitude to the family, despite his condition of freeman, shows his lack of

critical thinking and, thus, inferiority. Gonzaga, however, attributes such behavior to their strong bond and companionship since childhood. Gonzaga is intrigued, fascinated, and touched by Inácio's behavior, which is "uma subalterna dedicação animal ... [mas, também,] um sentimento divino," that he cannot understand or explain (Barreto, Gonzaga 87).

Another situation which exemplifies social separation is when Gonzaga and Machado go to the opera. The latter feels intimidated by the bourgeois audience who, in spite of not saying or doing anything to offend or discriminate against him, makes him feel unwelcomed because of their apparent glamor and refinement. Gonzaga explains that this feeling is, in part, the result of the social distance and lack of knowledge between Afro-Brazilians and the bourgeoisie. Nonetheless, he doubts that any kind of respectful companionship will ever be possible: "êsses [quase quatrocentos] anos passados dão fôrça e direitos [aos afro-descendentes], que os devem reivindicar" (Barreto, Gonzaga 156-57). Gonzaga does not imply that black Brazilians had already experienced racial democracy during the colonial and imperial periods, but that, because of their past history and companionship in different levels, blacks and the old elite might reach a better understanding for the demands of the

former's rights. In this new social hierarchy, blacks would probably have to use violence to get respect and their rights assured. The bourgeoisie, mainly made up of foreigners, will not make socio-economic changes to empower blacks as they want to dominate the country. And Gonzaga states that the physical separation of the citizens, as the result of the topography of the city of Rio de Janeiro, makes integration of the different parts of the city very difficult, and also contributes to his social distance: "As montanhas e as colinas afastam e separam as partes componentes da cidade" (Barreto, Gonzaga 65). This problem, Gonzaga believes, will be solved with public investment in transportation which will shorten distances and might make people communicate among themselves, decreasing the gap among its citizens from various social classes.

While in Vida e morte de M. J. Gonzaga de Sá, social separation between blacks and whites is viewed as a distorted perception of human race and social hierarchy, in Clara dos Anjos, this separation of social status serves as a barrier used by Cassi's mother, Dona Salustiana Baeta de Azevedo, to protect her son and to help him get away from his responsibilities as the result of his seduction. As the narrator explains, to get girls and women whose only hope of happiness laid in love, Cassi "Escolhia bem a vítima [entre as pobres raparigas], simulava amor, escrevia detestavelmente

cartas langorosas, fingia sofrer, empregava, enfim, todo o arsenal do amor antigo” (Barreto, Clara 35) because “pouco ou nenhum mal lhe poderiam fazer, não só no que toca à ação das autoridades, como da dos pais e responsáveis” (Barreto, Clara 126). Despite Cassi’s premeditated actions against harmless and innocent victims, Dona Salustina does not sympathize with any of the girls and women as she claims these girls are not victims because they are not forced to do anything. Her reason for being against them, however, is that she cannot admit having a colored, poor, and uneducated daughter-in-law “staining” her family name. She claims she descends from an English nobleman named Jones, but gives no proof of that. Cassi also counts on the help of authorities for not obligating him to marry his pregnant victims because of family power when the girl or someone else denounces him. He counts on the feeling of shame and fear his victims and their family feel that prevent them from denouncing his wrong-doing. Hence, no matter what Cassi does, he is never punished because his mother and the authorities always take his side and the girls and women are left alone and condemned by society.

Even though Cassi is white, and belongs to a slightly higher social class than most his neighbors and his victims, he does not feel comfortable outside his neighborhood and its people. Every time he ventures outside his world, he “percebia

toda a sua inferioridade de inteligência, de educação; a sua rusticidade, diante daqueles rapazes a conversar sobre coisas de que ele não entendia e ... tratando de assuntos cuja importância ele não avaliava" (Barreto, Clara 113). Cassi is separated from his equals in race for his lack of education and manners, but it is a situation he can reverse if he decides to change. The same option is not possible for his victims since they are neglected by authorities, the government, and society. Cassi yet does not want any change; he is happy with his life and taking advantage of the less fortunate girls and women with his ability to enchant them with his guitar and modinhas.

Segregation was also felt by Leonardo Flores who is a famous Afro-Brazilian poet. Flores, according to the narrator, influenced the following generation of poets, but, like the author of this story, he lost his personal battle against prejudice and discrimination and became insane, a victim of alcoholism. Flores' poetry because of the passion with which he writes, is admired by all. He is aware of its power and knows that "ela representava, não só a [sua] Redenção, mas toda a dos [seus] irmãos, na mesma dor" (Barreto, Clara 87). His goal to bring redemption to himself and black Brazilians is never achieved as his artistic skills and works were undervalued and excluded from literary circles by

intellectuals and other writers because of prejudice and discrimination. An old black woman explains Flores' tragic ending in poverty and alcoholism despite his promising future: "... Foi inveja da 'inteligência' dele! ... Gentes da nossa 'cô' não pode 'tê inteligência'!" (Barreto, Clara 58). She argues that Flores' fate is the result of trying to enter an exclusive world forbidden to blacks.

Opportunities for Progress

Both stories, Vida e morte de M. J. Gonzaga de Sá and Clara dos Anjos, point to the same solution for Afro-descendants to fight against discrimination and prejudice without the use of violence, i.e. through education. Aleixo Manuel, Gonzaga's godson, goes to live with Gonzaga and his aunt, Dona Escolástica, after Romualdo de Araújo's death, Aleixo's father. Aleixo is a nine-year old mulatto boy, very intelligent, dedicated, and eager to learn. Gonzaga and Machado are proud of the little boy, but also aware that life is not easy for Afro-Brazilians. Aleixo will have to work harder than anyone else to overcome prejudice as what people see and judge first is his skin color: "Nem o estudo lhe valeria, nem os livros, nem o valor, porque, quando o olhassem diriam lá para os infalíveis: aquilo lá pode saber nada!" (Barreto, Gonzaga 123). Through education, Aleixo and other

Afro-descendants, on the one hand, can be better prepared and intellectually stronger to fight for their rights. But, on the other hand, as Dona Escolástica expresses, they can lose interest in education as the result of frustration for their lack of success, and for being undervalued: “a consciência da criança que devia ficar restricta aos dados elementares para o uso do viver comum, sem que viessem surgir nela uma mágoa constante e um fatal princípio permanente de inadaptação ao meio, criando-lhe um mal-estar irremediável” (Barreto, Gonzaga 168). The educational system and society discourage them from advancing in their studies claiming that they will not learn more than elementary topics or that they do not need to know more than that for the kind of jobs available for them. The establishment fears educated Afro-descendants since they can become a threat to the socio-economic order.

Clara, on the other story, was raised to accept her place in society, and to conform and follow the status quo policy. Therefore, she has no aspirations in life except for marrying and raising a family. Clara does not need to worry about anything, not even about the dangers of life for a girl like her because her parents protect and hide her from the world as their way of saving her: “Não imaginava as catástrofes imprevistas da vida, que nos empurram, às vezes, para onde nunca sonhamos ter de parar” (Barreto, Clara 89). Clara’s

world collapses when she discovers she is pregnant by Cassi and that he has abandoned her. The person who helps her to go to Cassi's house and demands justice is her neighbor and friend Dona Margarida Pestana as Clara's parents were "dóceis demais, como que passivos, mal armados para a luta entre os maus e contra as insídias da vida" (Barreto, Clara 128-29). I believe that someone needs to stop him from molesting innocent girls, and to help girls to become aware of and to learn how to escape from Cassi and others' seducing strategies. Besides pressing charges and speaking up, girls need to protect themselves with a different tool:

O que era preciso, tanto a ela como às suas iguais, era educar o caráter, revestir-se de vontade ... para se defender de Cassi e semelhantes, e bater-se contra todos os que se opusessem ... contra a elevação dela, social e moralmente" (Barreto, Clara 133).

Education will not only help girls and women to avoid abuse from people like Cassi, but it will give them a means of providing for themselves and of seeking opportunities of a better future: "uma pequena profissão honesta e digna do seu sexo, [que] auxiliaria seus pais e seu marido" (Barreto, Clara 89).

Another aspect related to opportunities mentioned by Gonzaga and Machado is related to the role of poor black women in Brazilian society. These women often become mistresses or prostitutes. Their fate changes if they are lucky to marry a

good and respectable man, like Romualdo. To the majority of them, this is the only opportunity to escape poverty.

Romualdo's mother-in-law thanks him for rescuing her daughter from this fate:

Casara com a filha, apoiara com o seu prestígio de homem a sua fraqueza de condição de menina, arrebatara-a ao ambiente que cerca as raparigas de côr, dignificara-a, ela, ... sem excetuar os seus iguais, admitem que o seu destino natural é a prostituição e a mancebia. (Barreto, Gonzaga 122)

In contrast to the role of black women, which does not offer much opportunity to escape, there were the foreign women whose "missão era afinar a nossa sociedade, tirar as asperezas" from the centuries of companionship with slave women and their manners. These foreigners "estimulariam o contacto entre a nossa terra e os grandes centros do mundo, requintando o gosto e o luxo" of Brazilian white women and increasing local business' profits with imported products (Barreto, Gonzaga 105). In this case, Gonzaga and Machado not only criticize how black women are undervalued, abused, and blamed for the Brazilian lack of sophistication, but how white males use women for their sexual pleasure and for business profit.

To protect Clara from the fate of many mulatto girls, her parents do not allow her to go anywhere or do anything without an adult supervision. Their excessive care and protection, however, make her vulnerable and unaware of Cassi's real

intensions. Clara's godfather Senhor Antônio da Silva Marramaque also fears for Clara's future and reputation if something happens to her as he

sempre observou a atmosfera de corrupção que cerca as raparigas do nascimento e da cor de sua afilhada; e também o mau conceito em que se têm as suas virtudes de mulher. A priori, estão condenadas; e tudo e todos pareciam condenar os seus esforços e os dos seus para elevar a sua condição moral e social (Barreto, Clara 42).

When Clara is first introduced to Cassi at her birthday party, his modinhas and gaze enchant her and transport her to "regiões de perpétua felicidade, de amor, de satisfação, de alegria, a ponto de quase ela suspender" (Barreto, Clara 49). She is very romantic and believes that love "tudo pode, para ele não há obstáculos de raça, de fortuna, de condição" (Barreto, Clara 54). Despite all warnings from her parents, her godfather, and Dona Margarida, Clara falls in love with Cassi. He takes advantage of her, as he had done of other girls, making her believe that his feelings are genuine and that they will be together as soon as he gets a job because, then, people will have no reason to disapprove of their relationship. Her love for him made her justify her suspicion for the death of her godfather as "um esporádico ato de loucura, provocado pelo amor que [Cassi] tinha a ela. Era um obstáculo e..." (Barreto, Clara 108). After Clara becomes pregnant and finds out he ran away, she fears for her future,

and the punishment from family and society. Cassi stole the only thing she had and that was valuable. This situation, however, is eye-opening because she finally realizes who Cassi is, but also heart-breaking as “ela não era moça como as outras; era muito menos no conceito de todos” (Barreto, Clara 132).

Racism and Discrimination Questioned in
Cadernos negros and Other Works

Towards the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twentieth-first, Afro-Brazilian writers and poets used the literary format to question exclusion of blackness in public policies, to construct a positive self-image of the black body, to bring awareness and visibility to blackness, and to highlight the need of affirmative actions and other fighting strategies against the socio-economic order. The series Cadernos negros, published since 1978 in São Paulo, is the main vehicle of literary production related to African or Afro-Brazilian culture and heritage, and also some independent publication or small publishers as a way to deconstruct the ideology of the “myth of racial democracy.” At the same time, Brazil was moving toward a democratic regime after twenty-one years (1964-1985) of military dictatorship. Brazilians would be able again to exercise their political

rights and Afro-descendants would also be able to discuss openly their problems not only with their own people, but to transform that into a political discussion. Examples of works from this period that address these issues include the following: Luiz Silva (Cutí)'s "Namoro" (1987), "Quizila" (1987) and "Dívida em vida" (1996); Éle Semog's "A seiva da vida" (1983); Oubí Inaê Kibuko's "Reencontro" (1993); Esmeralda Ribeiro's Malungos e milongas (1988) and "Guarde segredo" (1991); Márcio Barbosa's "O Odu caiu bom" (1983) and "Espelho" (1993); Lia Vieira's "Rosa da Farinha" (1999) and "Provas para o Capitão" (2003); Cristiane Sobral's Uma boneca no lixo (unpublished, 1998) and "Pixaim" (2001); and Maria Conceição Evaristo's "Duzu-Querença" (1993) and Ponciá Vicêncio (2003). Issues related to racial differences in Brazilian society will be divided into the discussion of social mobility, self-image of the black body, identity and tradition, and justice and revenge.

Social Mobility

The first issue, social mobility, is presented in different aspects in "A seiva da vida" by Semog, "O Odu caiu bom" by Barbosa, Malungos e Milongas by Ribeiro, and "Duzu-Querença" by Evaristo.

In "A seiva da vida," Éle Semog shows that sexuality or sexual exchange, as the solution to the problem of social mobility, is not real. It gives a false sense of mobility upward. Jorge Ganga and his mother, Dalva, talk about getting out of the miserable life of the brothels in the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro. As the narrator describes: "Falavam sobre o destino, mastigavam a sorte no sonho de que um dia ela [Dalva] sairia daquela vida" (Semog, "seiva" 51). Dalva was the first to find her way out by getting married to an Italian homosexual count, Conde Di Pinnoccio, who needed to hide his sexual preferences from society. Dalva, known as "a negra do Caribe," moved up the social ladder as she became a countess in Italy. Her presence was acknowledged, and she was respected everywhere she went. No one, however, thought about her as a person; instead she merely represented an important title. Her son, Ganga, decided to take a different approach in his fight against racism, a more intellectual one, i.e. through discourse. His intellectual skills did not take him far. His opportunity to change his life came when he met a rich old lady and they found out that his semen had the power to make older people (men and women) young. Soon all friends and acquaintances of this old lady were taking advantage of his sexual power by paying a great amount of money: "No fim de um ano a polpuda conta bancária de Jorge Ganga tinha o peso que

ele nunca sonhara" (Semog, "seiva" 59). All the money and fame Jorge Ganga acquired, however, did not lead him to social ascension. He was able to be at certain places and to join conversations with upper class people because he had the money to be there, but he was not part of it. These people were never interested in him, in what he thought or in giving him a chance to prove his intellectual skills and his value. Even his own mother used him for her own benefit and her husband's. Despite their financial success and high social circle, Dalva and Ganga were just part of a social game. Society would use them, and then, discard them.

Márcio Barbosa's "O Odu caiu bom" also shows the struggle of two characters (Luís Fobeda and Guatumbé) seeking social ascension. In this short story, however, Luís Fobeda and Guatumbé face and endure the social condition to achieve progress and mobility: "[uma] política de 'individualização para o progresso' ... que consistia no seguinte: cada negro de bem deveria isolar-se do restante da plebe de marginais e entregar-se ao estudo e ao trabalho exaustivo" (Barbosa, "Odu" 36). Society, through this policy, isolates each person from everything one knows and everyone one cares for in order to give one a chance to succeed. If success is ever achieved, it is only partial because one cannot extend it to one's family or community. And one's link and bond to those whom one cares

for is forever broken or is weakened. Furthermore, this policy ultimately destroys any attempt of a community or group to form a strong bond to secure social mobility to Afro-descendants and their family.

In Esmeralda Ribeiro's Malungos e Milongas, social mobility leads "to fracture that already fragile union that is the Afro-Brazilian family" as ambition and individualism are introduced to its members (Duke 111). Carlos Gabriel, Marta, Mauro, and Ruth are brothers and sisters who work at the same company, in the same section until the day the president decides to separate them for no apparent reason. Sr. Eduardo, the head of the section, is asked to promote Ruth to executive manager, which he does not obey. Instead, he creates a hostile and competitive atmosphere among the brothers. This competition drives brothers and sisters who used to be friends, to become deceitful and offensive. Carlos Gabriel, for example, calls Marta "Sua vaca. Sua putinha. ... eu vou à delegacia denunciar aquele aborto que você fez por causa dos chutes daquele vagabundo, ouviu sua..." (Ribeiro, Malungos 28) and Marta replies by calling him a "nego preto sem-vergonha, frustrado, [que] não consegue arrumar uma mulher. Sua bicha preta. ... Você não presta nem pra se masturbar" (Ribeiro, Malungos 28). Ruth calls Mauro a useless idiot.

Christmas was always a celebration that expressed family union, happiness and friendship. That year, however, the celebration would be split into alliances: Carlos and Ruth formed one alliance which opposed Mauro and Marta. Ruth comments with Carlos Gabriel that the promotion was the way their supervisor found to break their bond, to weaken them: "Pessoas como o Sr. Eduardo infestam nossas vidas. Parece que o fantasma do sinhozinho está sentado no centro do mundo. ... A gente vira as costas e eles [os nossos inimigos] rezam e nos entregam na primeira encruzilhada" (Ribeiro, Malungos 42-43). They find other jobs that might give them challenges and freedom to explore other situations. Marta and Mauro, however, have not realized what happened to their family since Mauro is happy with his promotion and Marta continues to work in the same section. Sr. Eduardo successfully destroyed their bonds, and therefore, their strength to fight against their enemy and discrimination. Similar to the idea of social mobility indicated in the last story, the company only rewards one member of the family after a competitive and unfair process to be moved upward inside that hierarchy. Mauro is the winner of the competition, but he and the rest of the family lost their bond and respect for each other.

Conceição Evaristo in "Duzu-Querença" portrays the life of Duzu, an ex-prostitute, from the day she arrived in town to

the day she died. Duzu's parents were hopeful about their future in the big city. Her father wanted to learn a new job because he wanted to give his daughter a better chance in life, but he also wanted her to go to school as "Duzu era caprichosa e tinha cabeça para leitura. [Ele esperava que] Um dia sua filha seria pessoa de muito saber" (Evaristo, "Duzu" 30). She would get out of poverty and help the rest of the family. Instead of going to school, Duzu worked hard as a housemaid and later as a prostitute. Instead of moving upward socially, she went down the social ladder. She, however, never lost hope that someone in the future generations would get an education and have a better chance in succeeding in life. Of all her grandchildren Querença is the only one able to make Duzu's dream come true: "Estrela era para a menina Querença, moradia nova, bendito ayê, onde ancestrais e vitais sonhos haveriam de florescer e acontecer" (Evaristo, "Duzu" 35). Querença was in school, but she also wanted to improve the life of others like her, so she "ensinava as crianças menores da favela, participava do grupo de jovens da Associação de Moradores e do Grêmio da Escola. Intuía que tudo era muito pouco. A luta devia ser maior ainda" (Evaristo, "Duzu" 36-37). Even though one does not know what Querença becomes, one knows that she is already making a difference in the life of someone else in the community. She is involved in group activities

that can bring them together to fight for a better life and bring awareness to the racial problems in Brazil. Duzu and her parents, in the past, did not have a chance in life, but they never lost hope in the future. Querença, however, not only makes an effort to change their situation, but also encourages and helps other to obtain the same, through hard work and perseverance.

These first four stories deal with social mobility in two different ways. The first three focus on how society manipulates and weakens its members in the game to obtain social mobility. In the first story, money disguises social mobility while in the other two stories, characters abandon their families and communities to move upward. Social mobility is associated with individual achievement. The last story of this group presents the possibility of social mobility of a community which, moved by hope in the future and perseverance, decides to change their situation and overcome the obstacles.

Self-Image of the Black Body

In relation to the idea of self-image, "Pixaim" by Sobral, "Reencontro" by Kibuko, "Espelho" by Barbosa, and "Namoro" by Cuti are the selected examples.

In Cristiane Sobral's "Pixaim," the narrator tells the story of a nameless ten-year-old girl who "decide lutar para

manter intactas as suas raízes" (Sobral, "Pixaim" 13). She refuses to accept whiteness as the desirable value imposed by family and neighbors. Her family did not know how to handle the little girl's hair, but they did not like that untamed hair. One neighbor points out that the little girl's beautiful face was hidden by the hair and that something needed to be done to solve the "problem." Her mother decides to straighten her hair. The little girl went through two different processes of torture to make her hair beautiful: the first one was by using a hot comb, a technique "[usada] na época para fazer o crespo ficar 'bom'" (Sobral, "Pixaim" 14). The girl resisted, but then had to give in. The sacrifice, however, was ruined by the rain. The second process was more drastic and permanent as it involved a chemical cream product called Henê to straighten the hair. On the product's box there was a picture of a very happy Afro-Brazilian woman who had used the product. The message is very clear; women can only feel good and be happy about their hair if it is straight. The little girl survives her "primeira sessão de tortura" (Sobral, "Pixaim" 15) and is horrified with the realization that her mother wants her to disappear: "Era a tentativa de extinção do meu valor" (Sobral, "Pixaim" 15). After the process is completed, her mother looks at her and, for the first time, tells her that she is beautiful. To that same image reflected in the mirror, the

girl cries in despair to see herself transformed into someone she refuses to become. In spite of knowing that people will not accept her for who she is, she decides to rebel and to fight for her rights to refuse to become white.

Her family and neighbors do not understand how she can refuse to give herself a better opportunity to “[sobreviver] à cruel discriminação de ser o tempo todo rejeitada por ser diferente” (Sobral, “Pixaim” 16). They think that she is being mean and ungrateful to all their efforts. But the girl feels differently about herself; she does not want to deny who she is to avoid problems. She wants to face them, even though she does not know exactly how. She thought she would be better understood if she had

[uma] família toda pretinha e com uma avó que [lhe] fizesse tranças como aquelas que [ela via] numa revista, cheias de desenhos na cabeça, coisa que só a [sua] carapinha permitia fazer ... Mas [sua] mãe não sabia nada dessas coisas. (Sobral, “Pixaim” 14)

Fifteen years later, she is an independent and beautiful woman, who is proud of her roots and does not hide herself to avoid prejudice. Her discovery of who she is and who she does not want to become is revealed through the battle over her hair. She understands that her struggles derive from the fact that she does not share the idea that beauty lays in whiteness. Jumping fifteen years forward and describing her

success help the reader understands that one can also succeed if one remains true to oneself.

In Oubi Inaê Kibuko's "Reencontro," the protagonist, Abayomi, meets with his friend, Kawame, whom he has not seen in some time. While talking to her, trying to know what she is doing, what her future plans are, and how her life is, he also pays attention to her appearance: "Ela continua linda! Uma escultura de ébano assentada no pedestal dos [seus] devaneios e carências. Está muito à vontade numa saia e blusa de seda com motivos afros, cabelos rastafari com pequenos búzios nas pontas" (Kibuko, "Reencontro" 84-85). And he continues: Kawame has "Rosto oval e luzidio, belo sorriso lua cheia, lábios, pele e nariz dignos de serem amados!" (Kibuko, "Reencontro" 85). Not only is she beautiful, and her face delicate and soft, but she knows who she is and is proud of her ancestry and identity. Even though Abayomi is enchanted by her beauty, that is not the only thing about her that interests him. He is also fascinated by her determination in life to achieve her goals (she works two jobs, sells perfumes, and studies) and engagement in the black cause: "... é apenas a forma que eu encontrei para atingir meus objetivos e, talvez, defender, algum dia, uma causa coletiva. Por amor ao que tenho, sou e desejo concretizar" (Kibuko, "Reencontro" 86). She is ready for any sacrifices to be able to have a better future and to

help others too. This feeling of hope is represented by the name of the subway station where they got off: Estação da Luz (Kibuko, "Reencontro" 92). Her sacrifice is part of a process that has begun earlier and advanced slowly. Part of it is related to building a positive self-image of the black body.

In "Espelho," Márcio Barbosa shows the dreams of a black girl to become a model, an actress, a hostess of a show, or something else in the entertainment industry. She believes it is going to be easy for her to get there, because every day she has imaginary conversations with a man from TV who tells her that he has never seen such a beautiful and talented girl. She believes in every word he says, looks at herself in the mirror and thinks she is beautiful, and believes she will be happy. She is not fully aware of how this industry works with diversity. Her awakening moment comes when her physical appearance is described as not as bad as the guy next to her, who has stronger African features: "Ah, mas ela é tão engraçadinha. Não tem o cabelo tão ruim. O nariz é bonitinho..." (Barbosa, "Espelho" 71) and "O moço aqui do lado tem o nariz grande, chato, credo! É tão feio ... Mas o nariz da sua filha não é tão grande..." (Barbosa, "Espelho" 71). She looks at herself in the mirror and sees her true image, and she does not like it, because it is not similar to the image she is used to seeing on TV. At this moment, her brother comforts

her: "Eu gosto do seu cabelo, do seu nariz... e sua pele é bonita" (Barbosa, "Espelho" 72). She expresses that it will be a challenge for herself, and for any other black to enter that industry as "não tem modelo preta na TV" (Barbosa, "Espelho" 72), but her brother makes her believe she will be the ground-breaker, and that one can fulfill one's wishes if one truly wants it. She continues to dream about her life as a model, but now thinking about herself as black, trying to find new ways to fix her hair and "[sorrindo] a cada novidade descoberta. Olhou-se. Tinha um corpo realmente bonito" (Barbosa, "Espelho" 73). At this time, she realizes how beautiful she is, but not because someone else tells her, but because she finds out herself. Differently from the other two stories, the protagonist here awakes about her identity when another person points it out to her. But, the outcome of that discovery is the same, she knows that there will be obstacles on the way, and she needs to be strong to overcome them all.

In Cuti's short story "Namoro," Juvenal, Bárbara's father, is a successful black man, but he knows how difficult it is to be respected and valued in a society that undervalues blacks' capacities. He is an advertisement designer who works about twelve hours a day, Juvenal

Era daqueles que sabiam das dificuldades para subir na vida. Daqueles que sabiam dos inúmeros obstáculos. Era um que sempre repetia aos amigos e

parentes: 'Nós temos que ser, não duas vezes, mas três vezes mais do que [os brancos]. Só assim a gente chega lá.' (Cuti "Namoro" 45)

Even though he is competent in what he does, it took him longer than it would a white man to receive professional recognition and respect from his colleagues, boss, and costumers because he needed to prove his capacity. And he was tested each time he had work to do. Juvenal knew that being black was considered a social "stain" to most Brazilians. Blacks know that they can be recognized professionally, but they will always be tested and each mistake will be greater than it is in reality. Mistakes will be justified by the notion that one can expect much from blacks. Juvenal worries about his two children, Bárbara and João Carlos, and wants to give them a good example about hard working and about being black. He wants to teach them about demanding respect and recognition for their work. He wants them to know that they can succeed, but they cannot forget who they are.

Bárbara is a seventeen-year-old black girl who is happily in love with Maurício, a nineteen-year-old white boy. They share the same taste for music, have the same wishes for the future and, above all, have courage to fight together against adversaries of their relationship. The first obstacle Maurício has to overcome to prove he is being serious about the relationship is to resist Bárbara's brother's attack during a

soccer match. João Carlos wants to protect his sister from Maurício who “queria Bárbara só para tirar o sarro e depois deixar de lado” (Cutí “Namoro” 40). Maurício has good intentions towards Bárbara and their relationship and to prove that he invites and takes her to his house to meet his parents. Even though her brother and parents do not like the relationship because they fear it will not end well, they do not interfere in her choice. Her father, however, warns her about possible deceptions related to racial prejudice by certain people against interracial relationships: “... Espero que você não tenha decepção, filha” (Cutí, “Namoro” 45). When Bárbara enters the house to meet Maurício’s parents, she does not feel comfortable, but his mother tries to break the ice by inviting them to the kitchen. Then, Crispim, Maurício’s father, is introduced to Bárbara. She tries to be friends with him, but he is very rude to her: “Você tá louco, rapaz! Meu único filho e já vai querer sujar a família!? Idiota! Não quero saber desse tipo de gente aqui em casa! Não admito preto na família! Não admito!” (Cutí, “Namoro” 48). Crispim, through his attitude, shows that racial democracy is not a reality, but rather an idealization of a relationship which has been tolerated by some members of society for centuries or encouraged by others. His wife and son are taken by surprise and do not react against it. Bárbara, on the other hand, who

has never felt that way before, does not have any other reaction but to run from Maurício's house. This story reveals two different examples of self-image: the father is very well aware of his value, of all the effort he needs to make to maintain his position, and he is proud of his achievements. But his daughter is too young to know how to fight against prejudice even though he teaches his children about those things.

The previous four stories present the topic of self-image of the black body. The first story ("Pixaim") shows the self-discovery of a nine-year-old girl who refuses to accept that beauty and opportunities exist only in whiteness and fights to remain true to who she is. The second story ("Reencontro") treats the subject from a different perspective as Kawame is an adult and well aware of who she is and what she wants in life. She does her hair and dresses in a way to call attention to her strong features. In "Espelho," the third story, the protagonist discovers herself and realizes she is beautiful. She knows she has a big dream of becoming a model, but she knows she can overcome prejudice if she fights to realize it. The last story presents how different generations react to assure their pride of their black body. The father has dealt with prejudice throughout his career and knows how the system

works while his daughter is beginning her journey and faces her first deception related to a rejection of her black body.

Identity and Tradition

I have selected four stories which deal with the question of identity and/or tradition: "Quizila" by Cuti, Ponciá Vicêncio by Evaristo, "Rosa da Farinha" by Vieira, and Uma boneca no lixo by Sobral.

In "Quizila," by Cuti, Ronaldo, one of the many characters, reacts peacefully against his oppressor as the leader of an organization that preaches non-violence. Different from some of the other characters and members of this organization, he has a high self-esteem which empowers him to present himself as a proud Afro-Brazilian: "O cabelo à black-power impecável, jaqueta de couro, calça jeans, tênis cano longo, Ronaldo impõe respeito com sua atitude sempre responsável" (Cuti, "Quizila" 25). Not only has he put on a look to reaffirm his heritage, but also he is responsible and committed to his group and their cause. During their meeting, when everyone was already dispersing, he called everyone's attention to the purpose of the meeting, the establishment of the goals of the organization, and the organization of a party to raise money to build a place for the meetings of Centro de Cultura Negra DO BRASIL. Ronaldo wants everyone involved in

the group to be responsible. Different from Ronaldo, Ventura wants a more active and violent action for the group, and he expresses this in a conversation with Jurandir on their way home: “Não dá, rapaz. Ficar com aquelas reuniõezinhas bestas, sabe duma coisa, já encheu o saco! O negócio é denunciar o racismo, fazer movimento de massa, passeata, pressionar essa sociedade capitalista e racista” (Cutí, “Quizila” 32).

Jurandir’s sentence states the purpose of this black movement which wants to make a change in the life of Afro-descendants, but in a peaceful way through high self-esteem, responsibility, inclusion, organization, cultural and social activities. Tinho and Carmen are also part of the organization. They add to the discussion of identity the fact that some Afro-descendants, due to their skin tone, act and name themselves white to avoid discrimination“... Tinho, mas tem muito cara igual a você que, só porque é mais claro, já pensa que é branco, não quer se assumir” (Cutí “Quizila” 24). Even though Tinho could take advantage of this, he identifies himself as black. This character’s attitude clearly exemplifies that “racial democracy” does not exist in Brazil because if it did, there would be no need for anyone to deny their race to escape discrimination.

In Ponciá Vicêncio, Conceição Evaristo portrays the idea of racial identity and tradition as a family legacy. Ponciá,

the main character, has a very strong bond to her grandfather who died when she could not even walk. But “Ela reteve na memória os choros misturados aos risos, o bracinho cotoco e as palavras não inteligíveis de Vô Vicêncio” (Evaristo, Ponciá 12). Her relationship with him is so strong that even though she tries to escape it, she ends up going back to her past. Vô Vicêncio was not a slave, but he and his family still lived on the ex-master’s farm and served the family as if they were slaves. Ponciá’s father could not understand or accept that fate; they were free, they could live and work anywhere else. Even though Ponciá’s father aspired to something else, he ended up following in his father’s foot steps, because when he showed signs that he could escape from that fate, he was deprived of the chance. His boss’ son taught him the alphabet, but “o que o negro ia fazer com o saber de branco?” (Evaristo, Ponciá 15). Ponciá and her brother, Luandi Vicêncio, wanted to escape that fate, yet, they managed. Ponciá was the first to move to a big city in search of better working and living conditions for her and her family; she promised to come back to take them when she could. Despite her knowledge of reading and writing skills, her opportunities were not better as she expected. Her race was a barrier to development: “De que valia ler? De que valia ter aprendido a ler? No tempo em que vivia na roça, pensava que, quando viesse para a cidade, a leitura

lhe abriria meio mundo ou até o mundo inteiro" (Evaristo, Ponciá 93). Ponciá realized that her family's fate was much rooted in the prejudice of Brazilian society and in Brazilian backland. She was glad her seven children died before birth, so she did not have to pass on that legacy of suffering. She is "Escrava de uma condição de vida que se repetia. Escrava do desespero, da falta de esperança, da impossibilidade de travar novas batalhas, de organizar novos quilombos, de inventar outra e nova vida" (Evaristo, Ponciá 84). Some years had passed and Luandi decided to go on his own. Upon his arrival in the big city, he met Soldado Nestor who was black, and appeared to have some power and respect. Looking at Nestor, Luandi decided that he wanted to become a police officer, like Nestor. He believed that the job would free him from his past of semi-slavery and submission. Luandi studied to become a police officer and was proud to put on his uniform. But it did not give him the power he thought it would: "Fardado, com a roupa do poder, entraria em qualquer lugar, seria respeitado por todos" (Evaristo, Ponciá 125-26). Luandi felt disappointed to acknowledge that, in fact, his life did not change; he was still marginalized by society. Luandi was sent to work at the station where, by chance, he found his sister. Together with their mother, they made the trip back to their past, to their life.

Ponciá and Luandi realized they could not escape their fate, the family fate. They had to return to the land where their grandfather lived, because it was where their roots were. Their identity was the family legacy and tradition. They did not think of their land as simply a land that tied them to their master, to slavery, and to subservience and ignorance. Their land carried their family history, and they had to go back to continue to make that history. Ponciá is “herdeira de uma história ... sofrida, porque enquanto o sofrimento [estiver] vivo na memória de todos, quem sabe não [procurarão], nem que [seja] pela força do desejo, a criação de um outro destino” (Evaristo, Ponciá 130). Their history, however, would have other experiences, like the ones lived by Ponciá and Luandi in the big city. This new part of their history would bring a different perspective to their experience in the backlands and transform their reality. At the same time, however, it emphasizes the fact that all they need to be happy is there in their community, with their people.

Lia Vieira’s “Rosa da Farinha” is a story which presents no conflict, but links past and present generations. Vô Joaquim and vô Rosa were slaves back in 1857. They worked hard in the mill house and also getting drinking water from the well to their master and his family. They were hard times of suffering, but also times to make sure their descendants

carried on their traditions and values through oral transmission (stories, songs, and words from their mother Africa). The present generation faces a different reality which does not include harsh physical punishments, but it still faces prejudice and discrimination. Oral tradition is not the only means of transmitting knowledge, but there is still the need to keep the Afro-Brazilian community aware and informed about those stories passed from generation to generation to keep family bonds strong: “É dessa fusão de tempos perdidos que desejo fazer o meu tempo; essa colheita de tempos fugazes” (Vieira, “Rosa” 62).

In the unpublished one-act play Uma boneca no lixo, Cristiane Sobral tells the story of a black girl who was found by a nurse inside a trash can in 1974. Her name is Ióli, and she learned at a young age that she would be treated differently just because she was black: “A gente não vai brincar com você porque você é preta, e suja” (Sobral, boneca). The other children associated blackness with dirtiness, but she defended herself by letting them know that “... [sua] mãe [lhe] dá banho, [sua] mãe penteia o [seu] cabelinho, [ela é] a única criança da [sua] escolinha, que não pegou piolho” (Sobral, boneca). As she grows older, she realizes that no matter how good she behaves she will never be chosen to be in the first roll of students during the parade

on Independence Day (September 7). Ióli cannot understand why things are that way: discrimination, lack of opportunities, and segregation against blacks. But she does not give up hoping for an opportunity and when she is invited by her teacher to take part in a school play, her hopes and expectations are frustrated when she finds out that she will play the witch. After these bad experiences, Ióli gives up trying to enter or to being accepted into the white world. She decides to write and perform her own plays or other famous plays with other children from the neighborhood. Her father, however, is very concerned with her attitude. He does not want her to stop studying because through education she can fight for her rights: "acho bom você estudar, viu, que é para ninguém te tratar mal, entendeu o papai?" (Sobral, boneca). When Ióli tells her father that she wants to be an actress, he asks her if she is aware of all the difficulties she will face in that profession. Her wish to become an actress, however, is stronger than anything else. Her father then tells her how wonderful it will be to see her on soap operas, TV series or even on the big screen.

Ióli is the third generation of women in her family to fight for the appreciation of her race. Her grandmother, whom she admires very much, explains that blacks have big hair to protect their head because that is where the power, i.e. the

intellect, to fight for the race is. She never gives up hope, but, at the same time, she is always ready to defend it, and to honor it, because she knows her knowledge will give her strength and power to fight without violence. Ióli's mother has gone through the same process; she explains to Ióli that every day there will be a barrier that seems impossible to overcome, but that she will be able to make it. Now it is Ióli's turn to take the responsibility of defending and honoring the race, and she has learned from her grandmother that education helps to free them because through knowledge she can argue, discuss, and explain what their racial identity, tradition, and history are.

These four stories about identity and tradition show that these two issues are intrinsically connected to our ancestors and history. The best examples of this relation can be found in Ponciá Vicêncio as the family returns to their roots after experiencing life in the city, to continue to write their own history; in "Rosa da Farinha" as family experiences and stories are passed from generation to generation through oral tradition to maintain it alive and to make people aware of how much harder was life during slavery; and in Uma boneca no lixo as Ióli receives the family legacy to defend and honor the race through education and non-violent actions. The first story, "Quizila," however, expresses the importance for the

movement and to its achievements to have all Afro-descendants united around the same values, traditions, and causes.

Justice and Revenge

The last topic to be discussed in this dissertation will be the question of justice and revenge in "Provas para o Capitão" by Vieira, "Dívida em vida" by Cuti, and "Guarde segredo" by Ribeiro. These stories reveal that behind this question, racism and discrimination will shadow truth.

"Provas para o Capitão" by Lia Vieira begins with the murder of Hermann Schultz, an architect, and the rest of the story is the investigation to solve the case. During the investigation at the scene of the crime, Capitão Vidal, who is in charge of the case, does not find any evidence that would lead to a suspect or to incriminate anyone. Due to Schultz's social class, Vidal believes that no one will ever say anything even if they suspect somebody, unless revealing the name becomes more profitable than hiding it. That is how high society functions: people do not act according to a moral or ethical code, but rather to how advantageous revealing or hiding information can be for that person. Without a suspect, Vidal has to fabricate one, and he finds the perfect prey in Cezario, a black worker at the company owned by Schultz. Cezario would have all the right motives to kill the boss, and

because of his race, he is always the first to be accused when something wrong happens, especially when he is presented as a criminal. Blacks, unlike anyone else, are the first ones to be accused when something wrong happens. So, other characters think that Cezario needs to be punished to confess his crime as if he is a slave. Then, if they keep this version, facts will have to be twisted as a crime committed by a black cannot have a glamorous plot, but rather a "trama arrepiante" (Vieira, "Provas" 80) because it is consequence of repressed anger, which "[acaba] por explodir dentro [dele] o primitivismo de sua raça" (Vieira, "Provas" 81).

The other stigma dealt with by Afro-descendants presented here is invisibility which Cezario feels at his work when dealing with important people. Cezario says that they "Brincam de mesmo que existas, de tu não mereces existir, depois de tu não existes. Negam a minha identidade" (Vieira, "Provas" 77). So Cezario is well aware of his place in this high society where he works. He accepts his fate hoping that there will be a day when blacks will be able to affirm themselves to the one who deny them.

Cuti presents in "Dívida em vida" a fossilized discourse that, on the one hand, fights against racism as it points out some of the sentences used by the Brazilian elite and intellectuals to convince citizens about the "myth of racial

democracy." These sentences, on the other hand, can be read as a way to reinforce the ideology of "whiteness" and racism, showing how powerful this discourse is as it can be used by the black movement or against it:

... [destacam]-se os Brancos cujos Melhores Amigos são Negros, os Não [Tenho] Intenção de Ofender, a Senhora Democracia Racial--exibindo seu rosto de duas mil plásticas--e o Deputado Amor não Tem Cor. Bem à frente do conferentista, [nota]-se o Reverendo Somos Todos Iguais, além de outras autoridades políticas, militares, empresariais e eclesiásticas (Cutí, "Dívida" 127).

Cuti is ironic and conscious of the double reading of this passage. He does not want people to blindly follow an ideology or to contest it; he wants people to be able to analyze what they read in newspaper and magazines, see on TV and on the streets, and hear through music.

Esmeralda Ribeiro's mission in "Guarde segredo" is to deconstruct the end given in Lima Barreto's Clara dos Anjos. While Lima Barreto and vovó Olívia are having a pleasant conversation in one of the rooms of her house, her granddaughter enters after having stabbed Cassi Jones to death. To her surprise and astonishment, she did not have to say a word to them about what she had done because they already knew:

Gritei, chamando vovó. Fui entrando, entrando e ouvi o Lima Barreto escrevendo à máquina. Conversavam e riam muito. ...

Você matou Cassi Jones? ele interrompeu o meu devaneio.
Matei respondi. ...
Bravo! Esse era o outro final que eu queria para o cafajeste do Cassi Jones (Ribeiro, "Guarda" 71).

Vovó Olívia's granddaughter is seventeen years old and becomes involved with Cassi Jones. He acts as usual, but she does not live in the beginning of the twentieth century anymore, but rather at the end of it. So, she is not hopeless and helpless like Clara, and despite his mother's accusation and threat, she takes action. Lima Barreto is relieved by the new ending as Cassi is finally punished for what he does. At the time Lima Barreto wrote the story, social values, racism, and lack of consciousness among Afro-Brazilians prevented him from giving Cassi this deserved ending.

These last three stories dealing with justice and revenge present different discussion materials. Cezario, in the first story, is a passive Afro-Brazilian who accepts his fate and hopes that his day to demand justice and his space will come. Cuti, in the second story, is ironic, but plays well with the double reading of the text. He brings awareness to the double messages one reads, sees, and hears every day. The last story gives a different ending to Cassi Jones' abusive behavior. He is not saved by his mother's threat, but he transforms himself into the victim of his last victim.

In conclusion, all the short stories, novels, and play presented in this chapter have the mission to bring awareness to Afro-descendants in Brazil so that they can better understand their world and can unite their efforts to fight for a better life. In the first part of this chapter I discussed Lima Barreto's Vida e morte de M. J. Gonzaga de Sá and Clara dos Anjos, both published around 1920s. This discussion focused on social separation and opportunities. In the first story, Gonzaga and Machado analyzes various situations in which different parts of society are separated in relation to social hierarchy while in the second story this issue is used by Cassi's mother to distinguish her family from her neighbor's as well as to show Cassi as a useless person. Both stories present education as a non-violent solution to win the battle against racism and discrimination. In Vida e morte de M. J. Gonzaga de Sá, Aleixo is an intelligent mulatto boy who can achieve success if he perseveres and is strong enough to wait for it. In contrast to this character, Clara from Clara dos Anjos lacks any ambition, but as her life takes an unexpected turn she will have to learn how to defend herself and her interests.

The second part of the chapter deals with works from 1983 until 2003 and discusses the ways how blacks are exploited and discriminated against. But they fight against it when they

become conscious of how they are deprived of social mobility. They build a strong self-image of the black body and claim their identity with pride in their tradition. They fight for justice and seek revenge. Social mobility is the first topic discussed, and it is presented as a game to make Afro-Brazilians believe that their situation has changed when it is a false perception. This is seen in Éle Semog's "A seiva da vida." Social mobility, however, can be achieved with the sacrifice of a family bond, like in Esmeralda Ribeiro's Malungos e milongas. In Conceição Evaristo's "Duzu-Querença" and Márcio Barbosa's "O Odu caiu bom," the possibility of moving upward only comes through education and perseverance to overcome the obstacles.

In Cuti's "Namoro," Oubí Inaê Kibuko's "Reencontro," Márcio Barbosa's "Espelho," and Cristiane Sobral's "Pixaim," the self-image of the black body is reinforced by the concept that black is beautiful. In "Pixaim," a nine-year-old girl refuses to straighten her hair because people do not like it; in "Reencontro," Kawame is a proud Afro-Brazilian woman who takes control of her life. In "Espelho," the protagonist dreams about becoming a TV star, but she is aware of the obstacles. The last story deals with how father and daughter react to assure their pride in being black. Identity and tradition are the topic exemplified by Cuti's "Quizila," Lia

Vieira's "Rosa da Farinha," Conceição Evaristo's Ponciá Vicêncio, and Cristiane Sobral's Uma boneca no lixo. All of them relate present generations to past generations; in Ponciá Vicêncio it evolves around the land where the family has always lived, while in "Rosa da Farinha" it is the oral tradition of the family that keep these two worlds linked. In Uma boneca no lixo, the family legacy to defend and honor their race is passed to the protagonist, Ióli; and "Quizila" expresses the importance of the union of all Afro-descendants around the same values, traditions, and causes.

In Cuti's "Dívida em vida," Esmeralda Ribeiro's "Guarde segredo," and Lia Vieira's "Provas para o Capitão" justice and revenge are presented. Cezario from "Provas para o Capitão" does not seek justice or revenge; he waits for justice to come and hopes that his day to claim justice and his space will come. "Dívida em vida" plays with words as a form to demand justice and bring awareness to Afro-Brazilians. "Guarde segredo" expresses both justice and revenge as Cassi Jones is punished after making one more victim. All the stories, in one way or another, show the fight of a group of people, Afro-descendants, to deconstruct a myth that was constructed in the 1930s to support an ideology of a homogeneous society, the "myth of racial democracy."

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN BLACK. THE SURPRISING NEWS THAT THERE [in Brazil] was a place where I wasn't, necessarily, or at least didn't have to be, was imparted to me one hot summer's afternoon in Rio de Janeiro on the beach at Ipanema. (Robinson 9)

Racial relations in Brazil have, over the centuries, called attention to scholars and travelers from all over the world, but especially from those from the United States. These people were interested, at first, in understanding how a country which developed a similar colonial economy, i.e. based on the plantation system and slavery, could have become so dissimilar. The relationship between blacks and whites in Brazil was described as peaceful and harmonious, because of their extensive miscegenation and lack of clear separation between whites and blacks. This concept was believed to offer a positive model to the United States and led many African-Americans to visit Brazil after the Civil War in search of a better future. Based on their accounts, many African-Americans

organized groups to emigrate to Brazil as the United States offered few opportunities for them and restricted their moves and rights following the segregationist law of "Separate but equal" policy.

In the 1920s, Nella Larsen, in Passing, used the argument that Brazil dealt with its black population without prejudice and discrimination, giving them equal opportunities. This gave African-Americans like Brian, hope of starting a new life and of escaping segregation. Brian dreamed about moving to Brazil as he did not think the African-American's situation in the United States would change in the near future. But his wife Irene did not accept the idea. Irene did not need to move to another country to escape, at least for some moments, segregation because she could "pass" as she did not have the visible marks of blackness. Therefore, Brazil remained in the realm of fantasy, imagination, and utopia as an ideal place to raise one's children without having to worry about racism and segregation.

Brazilians, in that decade, viewed Afro-Brazilians as inferior beings, due to the influence of the Social Darwinist theory which was used by society to deny opportunities to them. Lima Barreto's Vida e morte de M. J. Gonzaga de Sá and Clara dos Anjos question inferiority and point out that the only way to survive and fight against racial prejudice and

exclusion is through education. While African-Americans dream about a Brazilian society free of segregationist law, Afro-descendants face prejudice and hopelessness despite their freedom to move and interact with people.

In the following decades, especially after World War II, African-Americans began to challenge the image of Brazil as a "racial democracy." Studies showed some results that would lead scholars to continue to classify Brazil as a "racial democracy," but other parameters showed an opposite result. This discrepancy was attributed to what scholars took into consideration in their analyses and where their data were collected. There was no doubt, however, that Afro-Brazilians, like African-Americans, constituted the majority of poor and dispossessed group of people despite repeated assurances by the elite and the government of the socio-economic advancement of some people. Black Brazilians have been victims of false promises because, in reality, they were denied the educational and financial resources needed to transform rights into real opportunities of better jobs, housing, and health care. The situation in the United States began to change in the 1960s and 1970s as part of the Civil Rights movement agenda and actions. Brazil was no longer a place to escape segregation, but rather a place African-Americans could experience a

different racial arrangement, i.e. a place where people do not have to rationalize everything in terms of racial issues.

In this context Danzy Senna placed the Lee family in Caucasia. Deck Lee was a scholar interested in doing research about race in Brazil for his next book as he had heard and read so much about the "myth of racial democracy." Unlike Brian's unfulfilled dream about going to Brazil, Deck and one of his daughters flew to Brazil, but the other daughter stayed and let her imagination take her to an idealized Brazilian society. After the first weeks, Deck realized that racial relations there were far from harmonious, and that Brazilians had developed a different form of racism, i.e. contrary to the United States where racism was openly and furiously expressed. In Brazil it was veiled because people, including some Afro-descendants, pretended that it did not exist. While in the United States, African-Americans were united to claim and protest for equal rights, in Brazil, some Afro-descendants were praising their diverse nation and the lack of racial tension. Others were trying to get them united and aware of their situation, so they could have a chance of altering their socio-economic and political condition of disadvantage. In order to unite themselves, black Brazilian movements campaigned to make Afro-descendants conscious of their racial identity and of racism in Brazil. This union would give them

strength and hope to fight for their cause, which include affirmative actions, and against the values and ideals related to whiteness.

After the "opening" to democracy in the late 1970s, the Afro-Brazilian movement began to organize its people and community to bring awareness about the lack of social mobility, the beauty of the black body, the pride of racial identity and tradition, and the notion of justice and revenge. The deconstruction of the "myth of racial democracy" had begun. The movement developed different forms to approach these issues and formats to deliver them, and literature was one of them. Among Brazilian writers, I have focused on stories by Éle Semog, Esmeralda Ribeiro, Conceição Evaristo, Márcio Barbosa, Cuti, Oubí Inaê Kibuko, Cristiane Sobral, and Lia Vieira. These authors contributed to a heterogeneous and diverse production and themes as they come from different parts of the country and socio-economic background. Their skin color differs, which could have given some of them the possibility to take advantage of becoming white.

Other formats that have been used by Afro-Brazilians to convey their messages and to denounce their reality of prejudice include music, especially from the Hip-hop movement, and films (fiction and documentaries). These formats present features other than their textual power, such as rhythm,

dance, graffiti, image, facial expressions, and sound. The deconstruction of the "myth of racial democracy" can be expanded to an analysis or a comparison and contrast approach of these various artistic formats. Another possible expansion of the work presented here is through a geographic expansion. In this case, there would be an analysis of certain themes related to racial issues such as sexual exploitation of the black body, concept of racial identity, and oral tradition as a form to maintain traditional or tribal values in Afro-descendant's literary works from different countries.

All these authors, and by extension Afro-descendant artists from all over the world, show the daily struggle of their characters to overcome social and racial barriers imposed by society to their advancement. On the one hand, these characters do not give up on their hope to succeed and on their persistence no matter how difficult it might be or how long it takes; on the other, these authors use their talent and skills to express to the world what it is to be discriminated against, different ways people use to express it or disguise it, and most importantly, how one can fight against it without the use of violence.

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