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WHITE FEARS AND FANTASIES:
WRITING THE NATION
IN POST-ABOLITION BRAZIL AND CUBA
BY
LYLE SCOTT NASH

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

White Fears and Fantasies: Writing the Nation in Post-Abolition Brazil and Cuba

By Lyle Scott Nash

Dissertation Director:

Dr. Thomas Stephens

This dissertation discusses the literary representations of Afro-descendants in mid- to late-nineteenth century Cuba and Brazil, and how these representations impacted the development of the national narratives and mapped out the future social terrain for blacks and whites in both countries. This work evaluates Doris Sommer's assertion that novels can serve as attempts to consolidate national identity, and that they help bind disparate groups in the formation of new nations. I use her model of "Foundational Fictions" to analyze the development of the national narratives in Cuba and Brazil, two nations with deeply-rooted histories of slavery, large slave populations, and late abolition of slavery. Novels by Cirilo Villaverde and Aluísio Azevedo were chosen as representative examples because of the dominant roles that Afro-Cubans and Afro-Brazilian play in their narratives. If literary unions symbolized unions between antagonistic social cadres, erasing social distinctions, then testing the model's ability would be most useful in nations with large Afro-descent populations; the results of the analysis were negative. All unions between whites and Afro-descendants delineated in the novels were marked with tragedy and death, resulting in failures I call "Foundering Fictions." These novels accentuated differences between Afro-descendants and whites

and ideologically informed the nascent social institutions of the new republics. Therein, they served to attenuate the oppression of Afro-descendants in both countries.

This work discusses the deployment of stereotypes in the corpus novels, and the key role they play in the formation of prejudice, by arguing that prejudicial treatment is less motivated by belief than by practical benefits such as power and wealth. It also considers the historical development of race thinking and its relation to the justification of slavery in the corpus texts. Additionally, the thesis focuses on the social role of the mulatto during this period of shifting narrative perspectives discusses the multifaceted representation of the mulatto. Finally, it analyzes the ironic tendency of white writers to depict the white population as victims of slavery and the efforts of those writers to rewrite the history of slavery in order to inhibit the social progress of their Afro-descent contemporaries.

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I reserve a special thank you for Dr. Susana Rotker, my mentor and friend. She inspired me, gave me self-assurance, and ignited a deep passion for socially committed literature and academic endeavor. I mourn her passing and strive to live up to the confidence she had in me.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

In this dissertation I will give an overview of the depictions of Afro-descent characters in the work of two nineteenth-century novelists: the Cuban Cirilo Villaverde and the Brazilian Aluísio Azevedo. I will link these representations to specific and actual events, such the approach of abolition and economic and political changes. I selected these two authors because their representations of Afro-Americans¹ played a pivotal role in the development of the national images in Cuba and Brazil.

This dissertation will analyze three novels by Aluísio Azevedo, O mulato (1881), Casa de pensão (1884), and O cortiço (1890), and the novel Cecilia Valdés (1882) by Cirilo Villaverde, as well as an earlier, shorter version of Cecilia Valdés (1839) and the travel narrative Excursión a Vueltabajo (1838, 1842). These texts were chosen primarily because the race thematic plays a dominant role, but secondarily because they were written in the period immediately preceding and following abolition in both countries. I will also examine novels and historical documents of the period, thus seeking information to contextualize my reading of these selected texts.

I limited the scope of my inquiry to four defined areas: 1) race definition, as it related to the justification of slavery; 2) the representation of mulattos; 3) the idea of good slave owners bad slave owners; and 4) the idea of whites as victims of slavery. I will dedicate the first section to a historical analysis of race definition and justification of

¹ I have opted to use the term Afro-American when referring to all American members of the African diaspora. When discussing individuals from Cuba and Brazil, specifically, I will use the terms Afro-Cuban and Afro-Brazilian, and for those living in the United States I will use African-American. Race terminology is determined by the shifting social perspectives of a given time and place. I believe these terms to be the most appropriate at this time and place.

slavery. Both Azevedo and Villaverde address the slavery justification problematic through their characters. For example, the discussion between Pancho Sofla and Leonardo Gamboa about Roman law and its bearing on slavery in Cuba depicted in Cecilia Valdés piqued my interest. I have included a short historical view of slavery justifications, comparing Cuban and Brazilian justifications for slavery with those of Roman and Anglo-German thought in order to contextualize these Latin American texts in the larger body of work on race.

The chapter on the representation of mulattos discusses the appropriateness of the term “mulatto” and its history. There is an enormous body of work on mulattos, particularly in the United States and Latin America, and as I searched the existing scholarship for ideas on how to organize the information about mulattos in an effective way, I encountered a plethora of race classifications, each one dividing and subdividing, postulating and pronouncing. It became apparent in the end that critical analytic texts were not entirely different from the literary texts I was analyzing, in terms of claims to authority and authenticity. As a result, rather than studying the primary analytic literature to define the mulatto, I have used it to study the ways in which the term “mulatto” establishes or constructs identity.

A close reading of the corpus texts contextualizes this material with historical documents and events. My comments will be based on what is said by mulatto characters, and what is said of them. I will frame that information with historical and biographical information, and use the existing criticism and my own insights, not so much as paradigms or authorizing texts, but rather as sounding boards and reasoning points. I will present what has been said about the corpus texts, and compare it with my own close

reading of the texts. Even though seemingly a subjective exercise, this interplay of sources, criticism, and my perceptions should offer a new perspective on these texts.

The following chapter will address the view found in the texts that slavery was prejudicial to whites, as opposed to injurious to the slaves themselves. In this perverted logic, the slave benefits from exposure to Christianity and European civilization, whereas white society suffers from its exposure to supposed African immorality. This common thread winds its way throughout these texts and within the cultural milieu in which they were produced. This chapter will include a discussion of the deployment of the good master vs. bad master concept, and what role it might have played in the establishment of an independent Cuba and a post-abolition Brazil. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the perception of Brazil and Cuba as mulatto nations and how this perception is developed in and through the texts. The purported mulatto nature of Brazil and its inhabitants, for instance, is a debate that has raged in Brazilian academia since the nineteenth century. Even as the twentieth century was coming to a close, in 1998, a paper presented at the Latin American Studies Association meeting by a Brazilian participant referred to the suggestions that Brazil was a mulatto nation as “not very flattering opinions.”² Regardless of whether the assertion is true, this response reveals a bias against the Afro-Brazilian element, and suggests that even today it has been difficult for many Brazilians to come to terms with the Afro-Brazilian presence in their country.³ I

² *Ethnic Question in Brazil (1910-1920)* by Tania Regina de Luca, presented at the 1998 meeting of the Latin American Studies Association, Chicago, Illinois, September 24-26, 1998.

³ Peggy A. Lovell and Charles H. Wood discuss the inclination to dissimulate one's Afro-Brazilian background in their article “Skin Color, Racial Identity, and Life Chances in Brazil,” basing their analysis on data from the national census organized by Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), in which individual participants tended to “whiten” themselves, via category choice, over a period of thirty years, pp. 93,105.

hope to shed some light on this debate as it appears in Azevedo's texts, and contextualize it with the views of foreign visitors and the nationalist movement.

As a follow up, I will briefly discuss the function of the novel in nation-building and the role of race in this process. I will also discuss the methodological approaches I intend to employ as well as the relationship between race, the novel, and the nation: the potential of the novel as an agent of change. Here I would add a word on race and writing, specifically the issue of white men writing about slavery. George B. Handley suggests that the Oedipus allegory should apply to the white author writing about the slave character because his investigation incriminates the investigator.⁴ The implication is that the white author cannot objectively analyze a historical process in which he or she is subject. Perhaps there is some truth to that suggestion, a pithy, if not completely appropriate, summary of a complex situation. However, there is no clear answer to that allegorical conundrum. This purported lack of objectivity assumes a certain stability or constancy in humans as well as the texts they produce – the idea that somehow one can, as a human, can have a fixed and logical position on any given issue rings false. To explain this point, I will use a fictional allegory, albeit a far less succinct one.

While reading a Robert Louis Stevenson story called “The Beach of Falesa” from his Island Nights' Entertainments collection of South Sea stories, I encountered an outrageously contradictory character, a disreputable British trader who “marries” a local Kanaka girl.⁵ He repeatedly says he hates Kanakas, but admits to loving this particular girl. He also says that he detests “half-castes,” but worries about his own “half-caste”

⁴ Post-Slavery Literatures in the Americas by George B. Handley, p.33. I will discuss some of Handley's ideas on slavery in Cuba at length in later chapters.

⁵ The term is used in a derogatory manner in the text; however, it actually means “man” in Hawaiian according to Oxford English Dictionary, second edition, 1989.

children, and does all possible to help them. The conflict between his personal experience and emotions and the received, socially constructed reality produces the conundrum “I know they are not valuable, but they are valuable to me.” This contradiction underlines a breakdown of the meaning-making machine that is the social narrative. This social narrative is performative in the sense that it authorizes or disallows certain behaviors or interactions, and effects change in the physical realm, such as sanctioning unions or punishments. This disconnect between individual experience, itself limited by received ideas, and official versions of reality creates an instability often reflected in texts.

Madrazo in Cecilia Valdés suffers a similar conflict to that in Stevenson’s story; at a slave auction, he tries to buy back his publicly unrecognized children and their slave mother, without admitting his relationship with them to his white colleagues. The white writer is also bound by an array of complex and contradictory emotions and perceptions, but I would argue that the Afro-American writer is no less so. The Afro-American writer’s perspective would certainly be different, but would it be more authentic? Is Manzano’s Autobiografía de un esclavo a more realistic depiction of slavery, than Suárez y Romero’s Francisco, because Manzano was a black slave who personally experienced the horrors of slavery, and Suárez y Romero was white and lived a privileged life on a slave plantation? What of the other factors? Manzano’s work was edited and published by a British subject with connections to Jamaican sugar interests; is it still more authentic? Manzano was also fervently Catholic, and religious symbolism pervades his text; does this adoption of the master’s religion make him a more or less authentic voice? What about the bi-racial writer Morúa Delgado – is he half as authentic as Manzano?

One may never find the real answers to these questions, but rather just ideological positions, including critiques of literature. All humans, regardless of background, come to these texts as messy, complex, and confusing individuals. To assume objectivity is absurd on the face of it. The best one can hope for is to be sincere and diligent. With that in mind, I will explore the contradictions in the texts, attempt to expose any underlying patterns, and discuss their impact on human beings. I will regard the texts as a symptom of a process – not as a cause or a product, but rather as an integral part of the disruption and reconstruction of the social narrative.

The race novel as crucible of the nation

Some critics have spoken of Cecilia Valdés and other Latin American novels with a race-dominant component, as textual attempts to consolidate national identity. These interactions were marked by a shifting dialectic of assimilation and cultural resistance. Angel Rama (46) argued, in his theory of transculturation, that “writers expand the boundaries of national community by identifying sites of newly miscegenated cultures,” and that this process, nevertheless, leaves “traces of unassimilated difference.”

Doris Sommer has written at length about the idea of the national romance, in which novels help bind disparate groups in the formation of new nations. Sommer harks to certain novels as crucibles of national identity. In Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America (1991), she argues that recently independent Latin American nations produced a series of fictional works that she refers to as “foundational fictions.” She proposed the idea of a rhetorical relationship between heterosexual passion and hegemonic states in Latin America, and that all their nation-building novels have

romantic entanglements as integral elements of the theme. Sommer (32) cites John McLean's Primitive Marriage (1865), in which he writes that "sexual attraction is the underlying principle of all social formations." She indicates that this state/passion allegory does not reflect some essential quality, but rather produces meaning via an interlocking, non-parallel relationship.

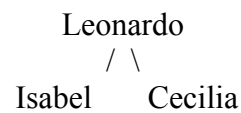
Generally these "foundational fictions" depict productive heterosexual relationships between individuals from distinct, sometimes antagonistic, social strata. These individuals would form a symbolic union, erasing divisions and allowing a prosperous, conflict-free future. Although Sommer makes an excellent case for the role of these nation-sustaining novels, I would argue that they have evil siblings that in fact carry the opposite message, that of doom for multi-racial societies. These latter can be referred to as "foundering fictions" and seen as novelistic harbingers of disaster and products of the pessimism that pervade most Naturalist novels. These "foundering fictions" mirror Naturalism's brutal rejection of the view that man is essentially good, that even if he is led astray by a corrupt world, man will find redemption. Contrary to the optimistic vision of the Romantics, Naturalism brought the terror of late nineteenth-century pseudo-science to bear on the portrayal of human relationships. If the "foundational fictions" of the Romantic vein depicted the eventual success of a stable, heterosexual patriarchy, the national romances produced during the Naturalist period promoted a vision of degeneration and collapse in which the coupling of protagonists is neither productive nor entirely heterosexual. O mulato, O cortiço, Cecilia Valdés, and Bom Crioulo,⁶ novels

⁶ I include Bom Crioulo in this introduction as a key inter-textual point of contact because, although it does not form part of the dissertation corpus, it strengthens my case for the role of triangular romances as allegories of symbolic national failure.

with substantial social impact in their countries and beyond, all contain examples of failed triangular, interracial relationships.

Cecilia Valdés is often epitomized as the Cuban “foundational fiction,” and a crucial text in the establishment of the Cuban myth of racial equality. Sintia Molino⁷ in El Naturalismo en la novela cubana suggests that “la mulatería” serves “como símbolo de la cubanidad.” On the contrary, Cecilia Valdés presents a problematic relationship, with dire consequences for the unified birth of the new Cuban nation. If Leonardo and Cecilia’s affair is the archetypical union of white, slave-owning Cuba and black enslaved Cuba, which represents the rise of a cordial mixed-race society, the future it offers is not bright.

Cecilia, Leonardo, and Isabel form a socially destructive romantic triangle, very different from Sommer’s productive romantic pairings:

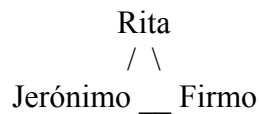


Leonardo’s white Creole fiancée is cast aside as a result of his uncontrolled lust for the mulatta Cecilia; the fiancée becomes a nun, a procreative dead end. Leonardo himself is killed, Cecilia is imprisoned, and their offspring, the symbolic fruit of the union of Afro and White Cuba, is an incestuous⁸ bastard with an uncertain future. This kind of disastrous triangular relationship may be the key to the Naturalist novelists’ understanding of the future of their multiracial societies.

⁷ Introduction, p. 2.

⁸ Both Cecilia and Leonardo are Cándido Gamboa’s children, although Cecilia’s paternal origin had been concealed because she was born out of wedlock to Gamboa’s lover, Charo, a free mulatta.

The novel O cortiço also reveals that the symbolic union not only fails to erase social divisions and promote social unity, but accentuates them. Taken out of context, the union of the Afro-Brazilian Rita and the white Jerónimo would seem to signal an erosion of racial barriers, yet their union actually serves as a warning to those who would advocate interracial relationships. The literary critic João Sedycias⁹ disentangles the complex symbolic relationship depicted in the novel, that of Rita, Jerónimo, and Firmo:



Sedycias' unique analysis does not accept the simplistic view of desire as being a direct connection between a desiring entity and the object of desire. He argues that Jerónimo's desire was a mediated desire that followed the Girardian mimetic model, and that his object of desire was not, in fact, Rita Baiana, but rather Brazil itself. According to Sedycias, in this triangle Jerónimo did not want Rita because Firmo wanted her, but because Rita represented "Brazilianness." That is, by acquiring Rita, Jerónimo could metaphorically join with Brazil, a staggering implication. In the text Rita Baiana is closely linked with Brazilian nature, as an embodiment of Brazilianness, which most attracts Jerónimo to her:

Naquela mulata estava o grande mistério...luz ardente do meio-dia...o calor vermelho das sestras da fazenda...o aroma quente dos trevos e das baubilhas, que atordoara as matas brasileiras (82).

By casting Rita as the essence of Brazil, Azevedo sets up an image of Brazil as a mulatta. The fact that the white immigrant yearned to join with that mixed-race symbol of Brazil,

⁹ "Violent Symmetries: Self and Other in *O cortiço*" in The Naturalistic Novel of the New World: A Comparative Study of Stephen Crane, Aluísio Azevedo, and Federico Gamboa. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1993: pp. 167-204.

embodied in Rita, in symbolic coitus, and as a submissive partner, runs counter to the master plan of the white elite, who engineered his immigration hoping to whiten Brazil through miscegenation. The white immigrant was imported to displace and overcome the Afro-Brazilian, the basic assumption being that Afro-Brazilian women would seek white partners and produce ever-whiter children. Here the paradigm is flipped as the white man submissively seeks the mulatta. Furthermore, this coupling produces no offspring; Rita and Jerónimo's relationship is framed as superficial and sterile. Portraying the union as weakening the industrious white element signifies the failure of that whitening project.¹⁰

Another damning triangle entanglement in *O cortiço* is the initially productive pairing of Bertoleza and João Romão. Their relationship allegorically mirrors the history of the white elite and the slave, the former benefiting from the latter's labor and efforts for hundreds of years, with the latter becoming an embarrassment as white elite Brazil sought its perceived place among "civilized" white nations. João Romão, a penniless Portuguese immigrant, relied heavily on the aid and income of the black slave Bertoleza, but later found his social mobility limited by her presence. However, through trickery and connivance, he is able to liberate himself from the slave woman who shared his bed and on whose back he built his fortune, and marries a daughter of the white elite. In the end, Bertoleza kills herself, tellingly with her fish knife, an emblem of her productivity, to avoid being dragged back into slavery. This relationship, in a perverted way, represents the foundational fiction that best encapsulates white elite Brazilian desires and policies of the period, which are to eliminate the black element and replace it with the immigrant

¹⁰ It also threatens the patriarchal nature of the Nation-State by inverting gender roles.

white constituency. The whites thus benefit from the gains of the slave past, without endangering the *civilized* future as they envisioned it – Eurocentric, white, elite.

In O mulato, the romantic triangle is more perverse and more telling of Azevedo's view of Brazil's racial future. This triangle consists of the extremely light-skinned, European educated Raimundo, Ana Rosa, the daughter of a Portuguese trader and a white Creole woman, and Luis, a grubby, low-class Portuguese immigrant. Raimundo and Ana Rosa manage to come together, against the wishes of rabid racist white citizens of Maranhão¹¹ and the racially cynical Portuguese immigrants, such as Manuel Pescada. The triangle is destroyed when Raimundo gets murdered and Ana Rosa marries Luís:

$$\begin{array}{ccc} & \text{Ana Rosa} & \\ & / \quad \backslash & \\ \text{Raimundo} & \text{---} & \text{Luís} \end{array}$$

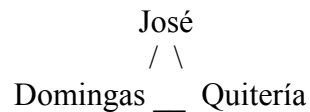
If one looks to the novel as narrating a potential future of the nation, then the message, explicit herein, remains: no matter how white or how educated you may become, if you are marked as “colored,” there is no “mulatto escape hatch,” to use Degler's term.¹² At the end of this story, Luis murders Raimundo, and Ana Rosa miscarries Raimundo's baby. Whereas Villaverde's vision of the union of Afro and White Cuba takes the form of an incestuous bastard child, Azevedo completely excises the African element. The erstwhile white heroine Ana Rosa is shown in the end to be faithless and cold as she cheerfully celebrates her marriage to Luís. This tale of betrayal grants a pyrrhic victory for the whites. The African element has been “eliminated,” but it has been replaced by an ignorant and immoral immigrant who is essentially a foreign element. This situation perversely reflects the national whitening program promoted by Brazil's white elite, in

¹¹ A state in the Northeast of Brazil.

¹² Neither Black nor White: Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and the United States.

that there is practically no Brazilian element left, either white or black. Both Ana Rosa's father and Luis, the father of her children, are Portuguese nationals. The vision Azevedo offers – of the African element being actively eliminated – differs greatly from the racial paradise that Brazil would come to claim in the time of Gilberto Freyre.

This triangle is not the only tripartite foundational romance found in O mulato. More damning to the dream of racial harmony is the romantic triangle between Raimundo's father José, his white wife Quiteria, and the slave girl Domingas:



Domingas is a loyal slave girl, who, against the interests of her own community, saves her master from a slave uprising. She is kept as a mistress and bears Raimundo, and later is tortured brutally by José's new, white Creole wife Quiteria. Domingas's genitals are burned, a symbolic warning both intra- and extratextually, against interracial coupling. Eventually Domingas goes mad and is abandoned on the defunct plantation, where she lingers as a demented, ghostly presence. Therein, she serves as yet another symbolic representation of the perceived irksome black presence in a Brazil, where the white elite sought to form a civilized, "European" nation. Domingas' son Raimundo is saved and sent off to a peaceful life in Europe. In an idealized, romantic version of the story, the handsome, light-skinned Raimundo would have returned to marry his white love.¹³ That moment would have marked the birth of a new Brazil, in the logic of Sommers' nation-building, foundational fiction model. However, neither Azevedo nor most Naturalist writers envisioned such a trajectory for Latin America's mixed-race nations.

¹³ Literary examples of the marriage of white women and mulatto men exist in O Cortiço, with Alexandre and Augusta, and in O mulato when Amância suggests that poor white girls might happily marry wealthy mulattoes (137).

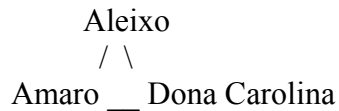
The most dramatic national romance is that of Bom Crioulo (1895), which, although it is not one of the primary texts to be discussed herein, serves as a key example of what I refer to as “foundering fictions.” Bom Crioulo was written in the Naturalist vein. As Émile Zola articulates, the underlying beliefs that follow constitute the Naturalist approach to literature in his “Le Roman Experimental” (1890):

le romancier est fait d'un observateur et d'un expérimentateur. L'observateur chez lui donne les faits tels qu'il les a observés, pose le point de départ, établit le terrain solide sur lequel vont marcher les personnages et se développer les phénomènes. Puis, l'expérimentateur paraît et institue l'expérience, je veux dire fait mouvoir les personnages dans une histoire particulière, pour y montrer que la succession des faits y sera telle que l'exige le déterminisme des phénomènes mis à l'étude... Le romancier part à la recherche d'une vérité (7).

The purported goal of Naturalism was to reflect objectively the face of reality. In spite of this claim to the objective representation of reality, the Naturalist novels were clearly crucial to the formation of the social reality within the framework of the scientific discourse of the day. Bom Crioulo performs this function in regard to the positioning of the Afro-Brazilian in the post-empire, post-abolition Brazilian national narrative.

Remarkably, Bom Crioulo is free of many of the stock stereotypes of the period that permeate novels such as O cortiço. However, Adolpho Caminha's racial characterizations are in fact as devastating as they are subtle, both for Afro-Brazilians and the future he posited of the Brazilian nation. Here the symbolic union that would erase social divisions and lead to a conflict free future in a traditional “foundational fiction” gains a new facet by integrating sexual orientation into the existing racial equation, creating a more socially unstable romantic triangle.

The characters that form this romantic triangle are Amaro, a sailor and ex-slave, Aleixo, a delicate blonde novice on his ship, and Dona Carolina, a syphilitic retired Portuguese prostitute:



The relationship between these three characters demonstrates Caminha's totally pessimistic view of fin-de-siècle Brazil, a nation that sought European-style modernity. There was growing belief among members of the Brazilian white elite that they needed a European-style proletariat to replace the ex-slave labor force, which was viewed as inappropriate for industrial production. As a result, the Government, elite academic circles, and private institutions began to promote European immigration, and spent millions of modern day dollars on pavilions at European expositions and on media campaigns to promote the image of a white, prosperous Brazil in order to attract white immigrants. At home, blacks were blamed for the nation's non-modern ills and were tagged as lazy, ignorant, and superstitious, among other things.¹⁴ This context is the scene for a symbolic drama that represents the fears and pessimism of Brazil's Naturalist movement in regards to Africans, and how the relationship of these three characters and the denouement of their love triangle is a dynamic allegory for Caminha's view of the race situation and its significance for Brazil's future as a nation.

¹⁴ This paragraph is a summary of information on white immigration and European expositions found in Lilia Moritz Schwarcz's *As barbas do imperador* (pp. 103 and 393) and Thomas E. Skidmore's *Black into White* (pp. 24, 31-37, 126-128).

The focus of the love triangle is Aleixo, at first Amaro's lover, but later seduced away by Dona Carolina. Amaro does not fit the traditional "inverted" stereotypes of the time; he is not effeminate as is Azevedo's Albino character in O cortiço nor is he an end of the line decadent in the vein of Des Esseintes in Huysmans' À rebours. Caminha's Amaro is a virile rejection of Ambroise Tardieu's popular theory "De l'extérieur de pédérastes,"¹⁵ in which external signifiers of dress code, tightly fitting clothes, and frizzled hair, for example, indicate pederasty.

The opposite can be found to be the case in Bom Crioulo, since Amaro is described as "um latagão de negro, muito alto e corpulento, figura colossal de cafre...o Amaro, o célebre, o terrível Bom Crioulo" (18). There occurs a change in the sexual object, not an altering of the male role identification. Amaro does not invert sex roles; he always calls the shots, he is always the dominant: "Dentro do negro rugiam desejos de touro ao pressentir a fêmea...Bom Crioulo...aproximando-se, continuou o exame atencioso de grumete, palpando-lhe as carnes" (49). Aleixo, on the other hand, is described in purely passive feminine terms: "A brancura lacteal e maciça daquela carne...Faltavam-lhe os seios para que Aleixo fosse uma verdadeira mulher!" (49). Aleixo always receives and does not get to decide how. The relationship between Amaro and Aleixo is not mutual since Aleixo's submission is total. This relationship plays out in the racial matrix and is key to the novel's function in presenting a vision of the Brazilian nation. Race roles are literally and symbolically inverted, with enormous ramifications. The so-called sexual inversion of the characters mirrors an inversion of the social status

¹⁵ Cited in "Taxonomic trends, literary fashions and lace handkerchiefs: the decadent aesthete as homosexual in vogue," by Phillip Winn (Mots Pluriels, no. 10, April 1999).

quo. In this text, white becomes submissive to black; four hundred years of white being discursively dominant is overturned.

If one accepts John McLean's idea that "sexual attraction is the underlying principle of all social formations,"¹⁶ and Doris Sommer's assertion that there is a rhetorical relationship between heterosexual passion and hegemonic states in Latin America, then Amaro, Aleixo, and Dona Carolina plot a unique national course. In Bom Crioulo homosexual rather than heterosexual passion produces the impression of social and State instability. If love for the State and the Law is expressed by uniting and sanctioning lovers in the heterosexual model, then conversely, a forbidden or "outlaw" love subverts the law and challenges State hegemony. Bom Crioulo further subverts the dominant paradigm by racially charging the sexual inversion with race. However, this subversion of the dominant paradigm does not mark a positive progression since, ultimately, Amaro serves as a metaphor for sterility and a procreative cul-de-sac.

Ironically, given Amaro's virility, he functions as a symbol of sterility. To rewrite the African at his vibrant moment of freedom, to heap newly-formed stereotypes on him in order to justify his exclusion from the new Brazil, the European Brazil, represented not only an evolved form of oppression, a textual subjugation, but ultimately undermined the white elite national project. In a final, contorted vision of Brazil's racial future, Caminha offers a symbol of the fresh-faced new Brazil in the form of Aleixo, who comes of age and is ready to seek his independence from his old love and supporter, the African Amaro, and uplink with white Europeans. In Bom Crioulo, however, Dona Carolina

¹⁶ Cited by Sommer in Foundational Fictions p. 32.

represents faded-glory, syphilitic, Portuguese Europe, which Silvio Romero refers to as the “*estragado e corrupto ramo da velha raça latina*”¹⁷ and Gobineau calls degenerate.¹⁸

With Bom Crioulo, Caminha has put a different spin on the black/white binary, suggesting that, between the pernicious presence of the dangerous/sterile black and the degeneracy of its original European colonizer, the new Brazilian nation’s future was indeed grim. Amaro’s corporal text imposes itself on the white elite – full stop – a sterile implement, incapable of producing (according to their race discourse), yet so very present and frightening. Caminha’s prognosis is bleak, and Brazil’s fate is metaphorically sealed when Aleixo dies violently by Amaro’s hand. In Caminha’s symbolic structure, the white Brazilian elite is wedged between a huge African and mulatto population that it believes to be socially and physically sterile on one hand, and the syphilitic dregs of Europe, the Dona Carolinas, on the other – a triangle that really displays the ultimate “foundering fiction.”

Writing a multiracial nation

Although Sommer’s argument for a rhetorical relationship between heterosexual passion and hegemonic states in Latin America is enticing on the surface, it fails to

¹⁷ Estudos sobre a Poesia Popular do Brasil, p. 266.

¹⁸ Gobineau condemned the Spanish and Portuguese for a perceived readiness to inter-marry with other races, citing their lack of ethnic purity as the cause: “Les Portugais...se mêlèrent sans scrupule aux anciens possesseurs de la contrée, sans se scandaliser de l’abrutissement de ceux-ci. Cette facilité de mœurs provenait, sans aucun doute, des points d’attraction que la composition des races respectives laissait subsister entre les maîtres et les sujets. Chez les aventuriers sortis de la péninsule hispanique, et qui appartenaient pour la plupart à l’Andalousie, le sang sémitique dominait, et quelques éléments jaunes, provenus des parties ibériennes et celtiques de la généalogie, donnaient à ces groupes une certaine portée malaise. Ses principes blancs étaient là en minorité devant l’essence mélanienne. Une affinité véritable existait donc entre les vainqueurs et les vaincus, et il en résultait une assez grande facilité de s’entendre, et, par suite, propension à se mêler” (Essai sur l’inégalité des races humaines (1853-1855) Livres 5 et 6, Paris: Éditions Pierre Belfond, 1967, p. 314).

demonstrate precisely how literary texts can effect change in the real world. I will rely on the corpus texts to illustrate how texts impacted social relations, guided the development of institutions, and served to maintain the oppression of Afro-Americans during the developmental years of Cuban and Brazilian nationhood. This oppressive function is not immediately obvious since a text can be appropriated by a group and infused with symbolic meaning that is often contrary to what is actually articulated by the text. In Cuba itself, an abiding concept revolves around the notion that the novel Cecilia Valdés contributed to the forging of a national, multi-racial identity. Well known Cuban novelist and historian, Carlos Alberto Montaner, has even commented that “Cecilia Valdés is one of those key works from which the country's identity is constructed.”¹⁹ Cecilia Valdés did not, as he believed, sanction interracial marriage, but rather condemned it, as a close reading supports. That is, once any text has become an artifact with power, independent of its contents, seeing beyond its aura or its perceived value as a touchstone becomes difficult.²⁰

Villaverde's contemporaries likely did not see the novel as promoting interracial harmony. In fact, it seems probable that the novel was co-opted later, in the 1930s, by the nationalist project of that period. One specific articulation of this co-opting was Gonzalo Roig's Zarzuela, *Cecilia Valdés*, published in 1932, which gives a romanticized version

¹⁹ Cited in *Revisiting a timeless Cuban classic*, by Jordan Levin, Sep. 30, 2002 in The Miami Herald.

²⁰ I use this term as a *double entendre*, since the touchstone, or transliterated from the Greek as *basano*, was a black stone used to test the purity of gold or silver. However, according to Page DuBois in Torture and Truth (pp. 21, 42), it was also the name given to the rack the ancient Greeks used to torture slaves due to their shared function, to derive truth. The Greek authorities used the *basano* to obtain the desired version of the truth from slaves through torture. Ironically, a master would stand accused of a crime, yet the his slave would be tortured because he was believed to be an inferior creature, unable to hold his silence under torture, unlike the superior master who would, ostensibly, be able to hide the truth. Critics like Montaner see Cecilia Valdés as verifying an idyllic vision of the past, when the text actually represents the forced confessions of fictional slaves verifying Villaverde's vision of the truth. Cecilia Valdés serves as a textual rack from which the desired version of truth is derived from Afro-Cuban characters.

of star-crossed lovers unfairly thwarted by a cruel society. Both in Cuba, and Brazil, there was a palpable effort in artistic and intellectual circles, to craft a racially inclusive vision of the nation while minimizing, or working to eradicate, the articulation of race-based differences. In Cuba, Fernando Ortiz founded the Sociedad de Estudios Afro-cubanos in 1937, which had as its stated goal:

estudiar con criterio objetivo los...fenómenos...producidos en Cuba por la convivencia de razas distintas, particularmente de la llamada negra de origen africano, y la llamada blanca o caucásica, con el fin de lograr...la mayor compenetración igualitaria de los diversos elementos integrantes de la nación cubana hacia la feliz realización de sus comunes destinos históricos (Los negros brujos, introduction xxi, editor's italics).

In practice, his work displayed a tendency to sanitize Afro-Cuban culture socially, as evidenced in Los negros brujos, specifically in his chapter on *Brujería*, or Afro-Cuban witchcraft, where he refers to Afro-Cuban religious practices as “parasitic.” While citing Cesare Lombroso,²¹ Ortiz suggests that the monotheism of Protestant sects would help Afro-Cubans resist the “pasiones innobles” inherent in their own religion (250). Writers such as Ortiz attempted to craft an aesthetic version of racial difference that would coincide with the goals of the populist government, which came into power in 1925 when Gerardo Machado suspended the constitution and made himself dictator. In spite of the purported goal to forge the common historical destiny of the races, Ortiz's work, relying heavily on Positivism and the work of racist academics such as Cesare Lombroso and Nina Rodrigues,²² sought to rearticulate Afro-Cuban reality in such a way as to conform to the needs of Cuba's white elite.

²¹ Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909) was an Italian criminologist who promoted the idea of biological determinism. His work not only influenced criminologists around the world, but also had a great impact on the nascent fields of Psychology and Anthropology.

²² Nina Rodrigues (1862-1906) was a Brazilian doctor and anthropologist who studied criminology and Afro-Brazilian culture.

Ortiz's academic counterpart in Brazil was Gilberto Freyre. Although ideologically opposed to dictator Getúlio Vargas, who seized power in 1930 and instituted the fascist Estado Novo in 1937, Freyre's theory of Brazilian racial democracy was an aesthetic articulation that suppressed Afro-Brazilian reality and produced a social fantasy that would be comfortable for the white elite and the Vargas' populist dictatorship, which found its new power base in the urban areas and sought the support of the heavily Afro-Brazilian proletariat. Gilberto Freyre's new theories on racial inclusion softened the edges of interracial conflict, although his racial inclusive paradise was based on essentially racist assumptions. He argued in Casa grande e senzala that the "uniões irregulares de homens abastados...com negras e mulatas" produced "decididas vantagens para o desenvolvimento da sociedade brasileira em linhas democráticas" (714-15), in other words, for racial democracy. He also reasoned that the major impetus to those "uniões irregulares" between Afro-Brazilian slave women and the Portuguese was that "as negras que trouxessem da África" had "instintos no sangue, na carne, maior violência sensual que as portuguesas ou as índias" (683).²³ In short, Freyre essentially argues that, miscegenation, fueled by the oversexed nature of African women and moral weakness of Portuguese colonists, (due to their high degree of Moorish blood, he points out),²⁴ has created a racially diverse nation where the qualities of each individual group have been subducted into the greater social mass. By ignoring marked differences in social condition and cultural articulation between races, Freyre supported, even if unintentionally, the nationalistic propaganda of the dictator Getúlio Vargas, which sought

²³ This statement is particularly outrageous, given that the African slave trade occasioned the longest-running mass rape of women in history.

²⁴ "A singular predisposição do português para a colonização híbrida e escravocrata...explica em grande parte o seu passado étnico...o sangue mouro o Negro" (Casa grande e senzala, p. 86). In other words, the Portuguese desired the African women because they too were part African.

to erase difference and project a common social vision.²⁵ Ultimately more damaging to the understanding of the Afro-Brazilian experience was Freyre's reduction of the Afro-Brazilian cultural element to a form of diversion, as seen in Casa grande e senzala:

Foi ainda o negro quem animou a vida doméstica do brasileiro de sua maior alegria. O português, já de si melancólico, deu no Brasil para sorumbático, tristonho; e do caboclo nem se fala: calado, desconfiado, quase um doente na sua tristeza. Seu contacto só fez acentuar a meloncolia portuguesa. A risada do Negro é que quebrou toda essa "apagada e vil tristeza" em que se foi abafando a vida nas casas grandes. Ele deu aos são-joões do engenho; que animou os bumbas-meu-boi, os cavalhos-marinheiros, os carnavais, as festas de Reis (738).

Vargas' nationalist propaganda would use this idea of the Afro-Brazilian as the entertainer to unify Brazil in a "bread and circus" fashion, reducing Brazil's African heritage to sambas and folkloric representations, essentially stripping them of their historical contributions as freedom fighters, intellectuals, and active players in the development of the Brazilian nation.

These so-called racially inclusive movements in Brazil and Cuba reacted to nationalist movements abroad and to the rabid nationalism that was sweeping the world at the time. Most of these nationalist movements were race and ethnicity-based, such as in Germany and Italy; yet, in multiracial Cuba and Brazil, these types of race and ethnicity-based national movements were not possible. In a sense, official racial inclusiveness, which should have inspired an organic movement toward breaking down racial barriers, articulated national difference.²⁶ Novels such as Cecilia Valdés were

²⁵ The implication here is that race had become the handmaiden of nationalism, and that race-inclusiveness formed part of the underlying national discourse. This is not to suggest that Gilberto Freyre supported Getúlio Vargas; in fact he fled the Vargas regime in 1930, taking refuge in Portugal, and later in the United States.

²⁶ This is particularly true with the establishment of Getúlio Vargas' *Estado Novo* in Brazil, which articulated its national difference through an official policy of racial inclusiveness. Although on the surface, a state proclaiming "racial inclusiveness" as a foundational premise for the new national order would seem to be a positive development, the policy of racial inclusiveness actually served as tool of political and racial oppression. Under the auspices of this policy, Afro-Brazilian political activist groups, such as the *Frente*

incorporated into the national discourse of the day, stripped of their original symbolic value and reworked to meet the discourse needs of the political regime. Cecilia Valdés was anything but a text promoting racial inclusiveness. Aluísio Azevedo's O mulato, a testimony to the failure of the national whitening program, is touted as an abolitionist novel. The treatment of race by both authors in both countries exposes the writing of the nation in Cuba and Brazil as a process wholly in the white domain, organized and controlled by the white elite. It would be highly unlikely that the vast majority of Afro-Cubans, or Afro-Brazilians for that matter, would have voluntarily bought into the nation-building projects as proposed by the white elites.

In the nineteenth century the white Cuban elite really saw no place in its nation-to-be for Afro-Cubans. Their underlying fear of black participation in the independence movement was highlighted by the hysteria generated by the Aponte Rebellion (1812), and the so-called Ladder Conspiracy (1843-44), as well in the writings of José Antonio Saco, a well-known, anti-black intellectual. Handley points out in Post-Slavery Literatures in the Americas, that many white Cubans favored the annexation of Cuba by the United States out of fear of a black uprising.²⁷ Instead of trying to form an amalgamated multi-racial nation, the white elite sought to maintain its dominant position in society through a variety of strategies, including massive white immigration, physical aggression, and symbolic violence.

When speaking of writing the nation, the inevitable question of intentionality arises. Villaverde, and Azevedo to a lesser degree, intentionally depicted their countries

Negra Brasileira, were suppressed, and further Afro-Brazilian activism was thwarted, as Kim D. Butler points out in Freedoms Given, Freedoms Won: Afro-Brazilians in Post-Abolition São Paulo and Salvador, "This period of Afro-Brazilian activism ended with the establishment of the Estado Novo (New State) in 1937, when President Getúlio Vargas censured all forms of political expression" (10-11).

²⁷ Handley, p. 41.

in a way that would spur reading to specific conclusions and actions. The degree to which individual agency plays a role in social change bears directly on the production of the novel. In other words, can the authors really change social reality with their narratives? Are the novelists and their novels agents of change or mere pawns of social forces?

It would be easy to read these texts and their narratives as if they were merely by-products of social structures in the Althusserian or Marxist sense, since the individual agency of writers and social actors is rejected by their structuralist approach. Although it is true that authors and their texts are informed and limited by the social conditions in which they are produced, it is also true that they are not simply marionettes whose strings are mechanistically pulled by social forces.

The works of Raymond Williams and Pierre Bourdieu inform the reader on the production of texts, an important step when discussing literature with socio-historical impact on an issue as hotly debated as race. Although these thinkers have distinct approaches to many issues, they share a similar view of individual agency and its relationship with the overarching social production of meaning. Bourdieu has created a model that rejects the view of reality as mechanistic and static, which could be analyzed in a detached neutral manner. He favors instead an approach that views reality as fluid and changeable, a state in which the observer is not neutral but a contributing factor. This model engages the issue of race on two levels: the analytic and the authorial. In regard to the analytic level, the degree to which one can break ground or make discoveries is limited, since there is little possibility of articulating an objective truth that breaks through the received culture and ideas. On the authorial level, one must question whether an author, abolitionist or other social actor, can really break through the given cultural

and social system and create a revolution that will effect change in the physical world, on living humans, and not become trapped in a conceptual bubble.

In essence, Bourdieu avers that one receives ideas of self and others from the group to which one pertains. He refers to these received ideas as *habitus*, which are transmitted or reproduced in such a way as to make them appear “natural.” Bourdieu also highlights the artificiality of the process. One of his early examples related to the Algerian peasant concept of time, a basic component of perceived “reality” and its difference from the Western or European concept. Starting with that basic concept, he suggested that Algerian peasants’ take on reality so differed from that of the West that they lacked the objective conditions for achieving liberation in the Western, and particularly Marxist, sense of liberation. This argument represents a fine line, especially in the colonialist context, in that could smack of ethnic or racial superiority or be used to justify oppression.

From these observations, however, one can surmise that each cultural system has rules and boundaries, similar to those of a game, internalized at a young age, and that it is impossible to function suddenly under a different set of rules in a distinct game. For change to happen, the existing system must be shattered and replaced, or at least greatly modified. The idea that Algerian peasants lacked the conceptual underpinnings to lead a revolution is supported by the fact that Algeria’s independence movement arose from the urban milieu. In fact, westernized Algerians who had learned the new game, who could imagine something beyond the traditional system and develop a conceptual framework that would allow for the development of a resistance consciousness, spearheaded this revolution. Bourdieu rejected Sartre’s concept that Algerian peasants could play a

revolutionary role, arguing that there was a limit to what they could do, as a result of the material conditions into which they had been born.

This same question must also be addressed when speaking of nineteenth-century Brazilian and Cuban writers. For Bourdieu, the agent is constrained by the subjective limitations of their class. One could argue that given their conceptual framework, it was essentially impossible for Villaverde or Azevedo to be revolutionary in terms of race. Being white, wealthy, and educated in a specific manner in a nation such as Brazil, which during Azevedo's era had a two-percent literacy rate, meant that there was a limit to what the population could think or say about the issue of race and slavery. Black or mulatto writers could ostensibly be seen as more authoritative voices on Afro-Cuban and Afro-Brazilian issues due to their elite social position as intellectuals, although they were equally as trapped by convention and received mores.

Bourdieu's *habitus* proposed this "internalization of objective possibility" as subjective expectation, in which individuals incorporate constraints and possibilities as an instinctive feel for a pattern of behavior. These patterns are reinforced by education and media, in a process Bourdieu calls *reproduction*. Each community has its own *habitus* and its bodily manifestation *hexis*.²⁸ However, there exists a mechanism that pushes members of an oppressed, colonialized, or enslaved group to pick up the basic attitudes, manner, and perhaps dispositions of the oppressor group; the attempted imitation of elite white dress by the Dionisio character in Cecilia Valdés provides good evidence for this mechanism. Notably, Dionisio is portrayed as ridiculous, not so much for trying to emulate the white elite, but for his failure to do so properly. His main critics, those who

²⁸ "Bodily *hexis* is political mythology realized, *em-bodied*, turned into a permanent disposition, a durable manner of standing, speaking, and thereby of *feeling* and *thinking*" (author's italics), Outline of a Theory of Practice, p. 93.

mock him the most, are the mulatto attendees of the “Colored Ball,” who are more adept at emulating the received models.

This emulation of models exemplifies the trap of symbolic capital. The white elite establishes the standard of dress, and the oppressed black man not only is recognized as failing to meet that standard, but is portrayed as a failure. The black man’s failure not only serves to show his inferiority, but also elevates the critical mulatto’s sense of self-worth, in that he is more successful in emulating the white model. Meanwhile, the “winner” in all this is the white elite, who has trapped the Afro-Cubans in a web of values not of their own production, a situation that distracts from the oppressive system and creates intra-group conflicts and divisions.

This phenomenon also applies to the academic who studies a group of texts, and to the author who produces the texts, and is even expressed in the structures and strictures of the text itself. In Leçon sur la leçon Bourdieu (38), in reference to the individual, states that “le corps est dans le monde social mais le monde social est dans le corps.” The text is also in the world and that the world is in the text, which is not to imply a type of rigid determinism. Texts, and specifically the texts analyzed herein, catalogue received ideas, but they also contribute something to the existing system of social concepts, very much following the same process as Raymond Williams’ linguistic model. Therein the individual is constituted in the existing language system, but can, in a small way, alter that system through individual input. This dialectic process leads to a slow but unavoidable change in the language, in which individual agency has a small but inexorable impact. Even if not revolutionary, these texts incrementally intensify the snail’s pace of social change.

As mentioned earlier, the corporality of the *habitus* that one receives even on a physical level – ways of walking, expressions – encompasses what Bourdieu refers to as *hexis*. The political, social mythology is embodied, literally, in the individual.²⁹ He suggests that *hexis* goes from body to body, not necessarily going through the discourse of consciousness.³⁰ Criticized for an overly androcentric vision of *hexis*, in 2001 Bourdieu explained that there were two different types of *habitus*, and that they took the form of “opposed and complementary” bodily *hexis*, which leads to the classification of all things in a way reducible to the male/female opposition, and averred that this division is constitutive of the social order and reinforced through *reproduction*.³¹

Cuba and Brazil, and in essence all slave societies and mixed-race societies in general, will have complications with *reproduction*, (in the sociological, not biological sense), and *habitus*. In Cuba, one finds competing spheres of social domination: on one hand, the Spanish colonial authorities, with their specific traditions and institutions; on the other, the Creole elite with its own informal authority, (primarily economic) and traditions. Parallel to the white spheres of power, one can see the traditions and institutions of blacks and mulattos that are not only separate from, but sometimes antagonistic to, those of the white elites.

In the most basic sense, “whiteness” and “blackness” are themselves institutions, both ideological and hierarchical in their structures, which impose an institutionalization of comportment. Whereas Bourdieu suggests that other racialized identities developed in

²⁹ “The bodily **hexis** is the principal prop of a class judgement which fails to recognize itself as such: it is as if a concrete intuition of the properties of the body, grasped and designated as properties of the person, motivated the global perception and appreciation of the intellectual and moral qualities,” *Homo Academicus*, p. 201.

³⁰ *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, p. 87.

³¹ *Masculine Domination*, p. 30.

response to white domination, I believe that identities have deeper roots. Although identities are affected by differential treatment, access to power, and means of production, they are not produced by an outgroup but are autochthonous structures to each ingroup. “Racialization”³² as a function of differentiation has a history that dates back far before the enslavement of Africans by Europeans. Africans and their descendants in the Americas had a plethora of pre-established identities millennia old. Although they may not have identified themselves as “black” or “African,” they certainly distinguished themselves from others around them in structures of differentiation that mirror the functionality of what is called “race.” Recognizing that all institutions share one basic characteristic, Bourdieu commented in Language and Symbolic Power that “the function of the act of institution [is]...to discourage...attempt[s] to cross the line, transgress or quit.”³³

In Bourdieu’s usage, the act of institution signifies, and aggressively maintains, one’s group identity. For Afro-Americans caught in the web of white nation-building, this effort to maintain meant not only the pressure to buy into the white elite cultural system, manifested in a variety of institutions, but also the surrender of the sense of self inculcated by parallel, often secret, religious and cultural Afro-American institutions. For many Afro-Cubans and Afro-Brazilians assimilation into the new Eurocentric Nation would imply an erasure of the identity and sense of self. The existence and power of these deeply rooted afrocentric institutions were apparent in the Haitian resistance to the

³² This term implies that race is not a natural phenomenon, but a social construct. Steve Martinot articulates this view of race in “The Structure of Whiteness, Its History and Politics,” in Race, Class and Community Identity edited by Andrew Light and Nagel Mechthild, (p. 71): “Rather than a biological fact, race is a system of social designations and meanings invented by Europeans and inscribed upon non-European bodies using color as its icon.” Martinot articulates a clear understanding of the constructed nature of race, but is off the mark when he asserts that it is purely a European practice.

³³ Language and Symbolic Power by Pierre Bourdieu, Cambridge, Howard Press, 1991, p. 336, as quoted by Steve Martinot in Race, Class and Community Identity, p. 77.

French colonial presence, manifested in figures such as Mackandal.³⁴ With the creation of a nation, one is not just speaking of demographics and physical domination, but of the destruction of competing cultural institutions. Analogous to Bourdieu's Algerians and in their specific way of appreciating reality, the Cuban white elite saw the Afro-Cubans as foreign elements who needed to be integrated into the dominant symbolic structure during this period of consolidation of the national narrative. The more the Afro-Cubans bought into the exchange of symbolic capital and accepted the dominant cultural values, the less physical repression would be needed.

The "social game" is inscribed in a diverse group of people in many ways. The modes of behaviors or dispositions are supposedly passed down through generations, but this intergenerational transfer of dispositions implies that each group would inherit distinctive subjective expectations, a unique instinctive sense of what can be done or achieved, and how things should be analyzed. In order to inscribe the social game on such a diverse population it would be necessary to rely more heavily on *reproduction* of the structures of domination and the imposition of cultural values. *Reproduction*, to use Bourdieu's term, would be crucial due to the lack of a unified field of *habitus*. In Cecilia Valdés examples of such institutions include Cuba's academic establishment represented in the text by figures such as the aforementioned Antonio Saco, and schools for Afro-Cubans, such as the one that the Malanga character attended. The military was another state institution of *reproduction* that bred characters such as Tondá, based on an actual historical figure. The Church also played a major role in this, one example being the Afro-Cuban religious order responsible for burials: "los hermanos de la Caridad y de la

³⁴ Leader of the Mackandal Rebellion of 1759, reputedly an *Hougan*, a male *Vodou* priest and charismatic leader.

Fe, institución religiosa compuesta exclusivamente de gente de color que se ocupaba en asistir a los enfermos y moribundos y en enterrar a los muertos” (138-139). These institutions served to reproduce Spanish colonial cultural values, and to invest them with a sense of justness and desirability; by mastering certain aspects of the cultural and ascending through the institutional ranks, Afro-Cubans could acquire a certain amount of cultural capital, which they could parley into economic capital.

The aperture of access was small, primarily open to free mulattos, and its promise was far more important than its produced benefit. The dream of gaining access served to lessen revolutionary sentiments on the part of those who had learned the social game. *Reproduction* is not generally a conscious practice on the part of the white elite, but a social control mechanism that exists in all societies that maintain internal group control, as well as assimilates outside elements, as is the case with colonialism.

The tailor Uribe in Cecilia Valdés reflects the dynamic of *reproduction* on a textual level. The character exemplifies how the forms of cultural domination act on different levels. In his dress, manner, and self-image, he clings to dominant Spanish culture. Although he does not totally embrace the existing system, unlike the anonymous mulatto in O mulato, who refers to Raimundo as one of “estes negros” (136), Uribe does clearly assert his cultural submission to the white elite. The character may complain of the unfairness of his lot in life, but these are his consciously articulated statements; his adherence to Spanish cultural codes and his pride in his Spanish Brigadier father suggest that he has been subsumed into the dominant culture, and that he evaluates the world around him in white elite terms (206).

The military reference made by Uribe is particularly intriguing, considering the historical Francisco Uribe, on whom this character was based. In addition to being a tailor, the historical Uribe was also a First Sergeant of the Havana Battalion of Cuba's militia of color. The *fuero militar* granted social status and access to practical benefits such as military courts and *preeminencias* that exempted members from civil taxes, as well as giving them a sense of honor. The institution thus combines material and symbolic capital to integrate individuals into the dominant system and inscribe them with the "social game."

The Uribe character is also the mediator for a further level of cultural domination and *reproduction* in the form of non-Spanish, European culture, in this case, specifically English culture. His job is to keep Leonardo Gamboa in the latest European fashions, and for Leonardo, that means English-style clothes. Intellectuals in both the Brazilian and Cuban elites looked to Europe, and later to the United States, for cultural and social models.

In order to grasp the importance of these different levels of cultural domination and *reproduction* on the national level, one must contextualize them within the greater sphere of cultural, material, and social domination by Britain, France, and the United States. The *reproduction* dynamic that occurs internally between groups in Brazil and Cuba also takes place at an international level between the white elite and European and North American powers. This relationship of domination will manifest itself even in the physical production of texts. Consider the role of the British abolitionist Madden and British capital interests in Jamaica in the production of Autobiografía de un esclavo and financial support for its author, the former Cuban slave Manzano. Herein lies the

interpenetration of the two levels: during the economic struggle between Britain and Spanish Cuba, Britain attempts to gain an economic advantage by developing symbolic capital, in the form of supporting and molding the Cuban abolitionist movement. This deployment of Manzano's autobiography, by Madden, sought to undermine the internal relations of domination in Cuba and counter the justifications and symbolic techniques deployed by the Cuban white elite to reduce Afro-Cuban resistance.

The tie between economic capital and symbolic capital was quite clear in the Brazil of that period, considering the large influx of British capital, and Brazil's financial and military dependence on Britain, which dramatically increased during the reign of King João VI, 1808-1821. During that time, Brazil negotiated treaties that limited local production and encouraged import of manufactured goods from Britain; two important examples of this were the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation, which lowered taxes on British goods, and the Alliance and Friendship treaty. The latter imposed restrictions on the slave trade. Later, in 1871, Britain's pressure would culminate in Brazil's passing of the *Lei do Ventre Livre*, which ostensibly ensured that children born of slaves would be free.³⁵ British capitalist interests would later play a crucial role in the promulgation of Brazil's *Lei Áurea* (1888), which proclaimed abolition.

Gilberto Freyre, in his book, *Ingleses no Brasil*, primarily comments on Britain's practical contributions to Brazilian life:

as primeiras fundições modernas, o primeiro cabo submarino, as primeiras estradas de ferro, os primeiros telégrafos, os primeiros bondes, as primeiras moendas de engenho moderno de açúcar, a primeira iluminação a gás, os primeiros barcos a vapor, as primeiras redes de esgotos.³⁶

³⁵ In practice many slave owners altered birth certificates and employed other tactics to escape the provisions of this law.

³⁶ From Peter Burke's "The Place of Material Culture in *Ingleses no Brasil*," from the Seminário Internacional Novo Mundo nos Trópicos, Recife, March 21 a 24, 2000, (p.141).

British investment in technology and infrastructure played a double role. On one hand, Brazil was a market for the British, and the Brazilians depended on Britain for infrastructural investment and loans. On the other hand, the social and economic shift away from a slave-based system of economic production to a modern, industrial mode of production also indicated the play between symbolic capital and *reproduction*. Britain and Europe established the symbolic standard for what was modern, and Brazil sought to acquire symbolic capital, as it acquired financial capital, to meet that standard. Brazil's movement away from a slave-based economy was not motivated by an ethical epiphany within the dominant white elite. The abandonment of the slave-based economy was an attempt to bring itself in line, economically and symbolically, with European models.

In terms of the arts, the primary means of *reproduction* discussed in this dissertation, it is assumed that French literature and cultural models predominated in early nineteenth-century Brazil, a view supported by Antônio Cândido. There is, though, also evidence of British influence on the artistic front. Vasconcelos points out that the British Subscription Library, which opened in 1826, was one of the key borrowing and reading sites in Brazil during the infancy of the Brazilian novel.³⁷ Vasconcelos also speaks of the influence that the British novel The Children of the Abbey by Regina Maria Roche had on the Brazilian novelist José de Alencar, who, in turn, influenced many Brazilian writers of his own and later generations. The critic further comments that José de Alencar was one of those for whom the reading of European novels would “imprint on [his] spirit the moulds of this literary structure.”³⁸ This critique implies a deep penetration

³⁷ In “Novels adrift: British contributions to the making of the Brazilian novel.”

³⁸ She drew the reference from Alencar's “Como e porque sou romancista”, in Obra Completa (Rio de Janeiro: José Aguilar, 1965).

in all aspects of Brazilian society of British influence, of the presence of British models and an admiration of things British. A scene confirming the importance of British literary models on Brazilian writers and readers appears in Machado de Assis' Helena, in which the Dona Ursula character reads St. Clair of the Isles, or the Outlaws of Barra by British author Elizabeth Helme. In terms of symbolic capital, this reading of the British novel by Dona Ursula can be read as Machado de Assis demonstrating his knowledge of British literature, effectively deploying acquired symbolic capital within an international hierarchy of culture, or can be seen as a comment on how the Brazilian elite, to which Dona Ursula pertained, deployed symbolic capital in the same international system. The British were not liked in the emotional sense; in fact, their stand on abolition often garnered the animosity of the white elite, but that they were held up as a social and economic model. Work done in Brazil was compared to European models, and items as frivolous as dress fashions or elements as weighty as the British Masonic role in the development of the Republic, formed a system of symbolic capital that structured a network of domination.

Cuba, in the late nineteenth century, was heavily dependent on United States material imports. In Cecilia Valdés, Cándido Gamboa is shown importing timber from the United States that, significantly, was used to build a prison to house Ladder Rebellion figures. Ships made in the United States were used to import Gamboa's slaves. There is also an extensive scene involving his United States made sugar cane processing machine, which came accompanied by a machinist, "un joven americano." The sugar cane processing apparatus contributed to the status of the plantation: "su máquina de vapor con hasta veinte y cinco caballos de fuerza, recién importada de la América del Norte, al

costo de veinte y tanto mil pesos” (437), which factored into its perception as “una finca soberbia.” The ownership of that North American machine conferred a touch of progress and modernity upon the plantation. This scene implies Cuban technical inferiority and highlights the perceived ingenuity of the United States and the value of its products. Again modernity, in this case technical, is a standard set by an outside group that the subordinate group fails to meet.

The Brazilian and Cuban white literary elite, however, primarily looked to European literary models such as Romanticism and Naturalism. This adherence to French cultural models developed very early on in the evolution of the Brazilian nation. José Bonifácio de Andrade e Silva, a leading Brazilian intellectual and political activist often referred to as the “Patriarch of the Independence,” cut his intellectual teeth in Paris as a student at Royal School of Mines between the years 1790-1792. He was also a member of one of the most influential political clubs of the French Revolution, the Club Breton. French cultural influence even manifested itself in the writing of Brazil’s first Constitution of 1863,³⁹ was largely based on the French Constitution of 1816. Unsurprisingly, Bonifácio de Andrade e Silva was a guiding force behind the formation of that constitution.⁴⁰ The continued admiration for French cultural models appears in Azevedo’s O mulato, in which familiarity and adherence to French cultural forms contribute to Raimundo’s social whitening. His familiarity with Paris, “Ohle! Ai

³⁹ José Bonifácio de Andrade e Silva is often portrayed as one of the earliest proponents of abolition among the Brazilian elite. However, his motivation appeared to be grounded in the view that slaves themselves were harmful to Brazil, not the suffering of the slaves themselves. Consider Bonifácio’s comment cited by Paul Vanorden Shaw in his article *José Bonifacio, The Neglected Father of His Country, Brazil* on page 49 of the *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 44, No. 1., March 1929, “But how can there be a liberal and lasting constitution in a country inhabited by an immense multitude of brutal and hostile slaves?”

⁴⁰ Drawn from José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva: The Greatest Man in Brazilian History by Ricardo C. Amaral, (pp. 15, 123).

tem...um dos pontos mais bonitos de Paris...são as Tulherias,”⁴¹ (61) and his implied liaison with a French dancer:

solto dentro do livro; um retrato de mulher, sorrindo maliciosamente numa posição de teatro; com as saias de cambraia, curtíssimas, formando-lhe um nuvem vaporosa em torno dos quadris; colo nu, pernas e braços de meia...É uma dançarina parisiense, explicou Raimundo, fingindo pouco caso...tomando a fotografia com cuidado, para que Ana Rosa não percebesse a dedicatória nas costas do retrato (61).

This liaison with a French dancer implies a degree of culture superior to the provincial Brazilians of Maranhão. It is as if Raimundo has appealed to a higher cultural court; his bloodline may not be as impeccable as his Portuguese counterpart, Luís, but he possesses superior French cultural capital. As Azevedo argues, Raimundo is superior to the other characters because he can deploy this cultural capital. In spite of Raimundo’s superior French cultural assets, Brazilian society fears and rejects him, thus producing the effect of injustice. Cultural capital does not trump his inferior bloodline. The tragic irony is produced because Raimundo’s cultural capital did not count for much in the end, and his fate was determined by a very narrow definition of race, not the appropriate accumulation of cultural capital. This failure to respect the cultural models on the part of Maranhão’s provincial elite was as much a target of Azevedo’s criticism as the racially motivated brutality.

The system of symbolic capital establishes a dominating group as a standard and the dominated group evaluates its own worth as it adheres to that norm. Azevedo effectively mocks the Brazilian elite for failing to recognize the value of Raimundo’s

⁴¹ The mention of the Tuileries Palace could also be a subtle inference to Raimundo’s radical politics. The Tuileries Palace was the seat of the revolutionary National Convention from 1792 to 1795, the seat of the Council of 500 of the *Directoire* from 1795 to 1798, and also served as the headquarters of the radical Breton Club from 1799. This association of Raimundo with the seat of Republican power and the Breton Club could also imply that he represents danger, a social threat, particularly because the Breton Club, later known as the Jacobin Club, was said to have organized the executions during the “Reign of Terror” of 1793 and 1794.

acquired European cultural capital, because it illustrates the trap of *reproduction*. The Europeans, the French in this instance, established a standard, which Latin Americans, in their own view, always failed to achieve.

What one found in Brazil and Cuba was a stratification of dominance and symbolic violence, with the white Creole elite in Cuba actively trying to inculcate a symbolic structure in the Afro-Cuban community that would justify their economic and political domination. Meanwhile, they were dominated by a more subtle, more deeply structured, form of symbolic violence from Europe and North America, a process through which Brazil passed. However, since Brazil's colonial yoke had already been removed, Brazilians did not have the colonial layer of domination. Their relationship was one of direct submission to the European models, although it can be argued that Brazil's independence constituted more of a dynastic shift than of true independence. Both Cuba and Brazil attempted to dominate their Afro-American populations with a multi-pronged approach, which included symbolic violence, physical repression and active economic marginalization through white immigration. As will become evident, any analysis of late nineteenth-century literature in Cuba and Brazil must take this multi-pronged approach into account.

Stereotypes: What are they and how do they work?

The approach of abolition and changes in the means of production rendered the pre-existing codification of the Afro-American in the social narrative obsolete. To re-write it, the new stereotypes had to replace the old ones. Generally, contemporary

ideologies meld with popular beliefs in order to create a stereotype that meets the current socio-economic and psychological needs of the writing elite's member group.

During the mid to late nineteenth century the quantity of material written about Africans and Afro-American grew exponentially, hand in hand with a concomitant and dramatic increase in the variety of stereotypes about them. The language used to refer to Afro-Americans became increasingly negative, and the scientific discourse incorporated traditional prejudices/beliefs against/about Afro-Americans in order to create a custom-tailored set of stereotypes that were disseminated through literature, music, visual arts and the press, as well as the political and scientific discourses. The white elite attempted to re-define Afro-Americans in a way that would write them into the post-empire, post-slavocracy Brazilian and Cuban social narratives, without granting them the rights and freedoms that would be part and parcel of a liberal democratic state. At the time, this retuning of the definition created an image that supported the white elite's concept of self and nation.

Bertoleza, in O cortiço, is depicted as a dirty, ignorant slave woman, tricked into leaving her master for a liaison with a Portuguese immigrant. She is the Portuguese immigrant's initial contact and financial support when he arrives in Brazil. Once he had achieved superior economic status and acquired a wealthy white fiancée, however, he sought to rid himself of his former romantic and economic partner, now perceived as a social handicap. The parallel with Brazil's economic dependence on slavery and desire to join the "modern" world is striking; after literally hundreds of years of slaves providing for all their needs and desires, in the mid-1800s the Brazilian white elite looked to Europe and North America and realized that their slave-based mode of production would not

allow them to achieve the same degree of material or cultural production found in those nations. With the promise of European and North American investment and in anticipation of a shift toward an industrial, urban economy, the Brazilian white elite sought to rid itself of its slave past, and the ex-slaves that were a reminder of that past. However, Afro-Brazilians, unlike Bertoleza who conveniently killed herself, persisted, and did not politely fade away.⁴²

On a theoretical level there exist situations in, or actions taken by, a given community that are at odds with the existing social narrative, or the group's vision of itself. The group will find it necessary to justify these acts, which results in an increase, often a spike, in social text production in order to provide what is loosely labeled a justification. The approach of abolition, and shifting of social values internationally, produced a severe contradiction in the Cuban and Brazilian social texts, particularly in regards to Afro-Americans, which resulted in a surge of Afro-American related texts. The existence of an affluent, free Afro-American middle-class called into question not only the theoretical justification of slavery, which was racial inferiority, but also blurred the established line of demarcation between black and white socially. This blurring of the line between black and white weakened the psychological bulwark that supported white identity and justified white domination.

The words *stereotype* and *prejudice*, used loosely in contemporary race discourse, are often deployed in highly politicized contexts. These terms generally fall within the

⁴² In a certain sense, the Afro-Brazilian came to be depicted as an impediment to the rise of the modern Brazilian nation. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, older black women, in particular, were depicted as unrepentantly foreign. The Balbina character in Coelho Netto's *Rei Negro*, for example, is depicted as unable and unwilling to integrate into the new industrial democracy that the white elite envisioned for Brazil.

parameters established by Daniel Bar-Tal in his essay “Delegitimization.”⁴³ He defines stereotypes simply as beliefs about another group’s traits, attributes or behavioral descriptions, in a positive or negative sense. Prejudice is defined as the affective or external expression of negative beliefs about another group. Neither stereotypes nor prejudices, on their own, can guide group behavior; each is implicated as cognitive, affective, and behavioral components in a process that Bar Tal refers to as delegitimization. That process places them into extremely negative social categories, which define them as beasts, savages, and the like. The category to which the target group is assigned is totally rejected by the norms or values of delegitimizing group, which inspires extreme negative emotions and guides their treatment of members of the target group. Prejudice is not simply an individual pathology, the outbursts of a few hateful people; rather, it becomes the social norm for the delegitimizing group, supported by its social institutions (e.g., the government as represented by O’Reilly in Cecilia Valdés, or the Church in O mulato, as personified by Canon Diogo). Bar-Tal also rejects the commonly held assumption that “stereotype is cognitive basis for prejudice, and that prejudice fosters discrimination.”⁴⁴ In other words, prejudicial treatment is less motivated by belief than by practical benefits such as power and wealth, and their distribution. He suggests that some people discriminate due to social pressure or personal gain, and are not necessarily motivated by sentiments. The stereotypes employed when referring to mulatto characters in the texts herein studied relate more to gaining a benefit than to dearly held beliefs.

⁴³ In Stereotyping and Prejudice by Bar-Tal and Grauman.

⁴⁴ Stereotypes and Prejudice, p. 186.

My selection of texts clearly offers examples of the situation described above. For instance, Leonardo in Cecilia Valdés does not display any personal hatred of mulattos. He certainly feels superior, but that superiority is based more on class than on a deep-seated fear or loathing of mulattos. When referring to the threat Pimienta might pose to his romantic conquest of Cecilia, he refuses to consider the idea during an interior monologue: “se creía muy superior para ocuparse de las simpatías de un hombre de baja esfera, mulato por añadidura” (209). The mention of Pimienta’s racial category is secondary and indicates that Leonardo’s received stereotype of mulattos has little to do with why he would like or dislike Pimienta. He just operates within the existing power structure, without any personal conviction about the inferiority of mulattos. Leonardo’s father, Cándido Gamboa, stereotypes in very much the same way, deploying race only to get what he wants, as in the case upon his meeting with O’Reilly. He begins his attempt to get the State to intervene in his children’s love affair without any direct reference to race: “una mozuela trae loco a mi hijo...le seduce y encanta con sus mañas” (593). However, when O’Reilly responds coolly to his request, he resorts to race, but gently, without fervor, intimating that the girl in question is: “pobre, pobrecita y de color” (593). In the end, though, fearing an incestuous union and revelation of his hidden affair, he resorts to stereotypical references, contradicting the moderate language he had used earlier in the conversation: “[C]omo es de raza híbrida, no hay que fijar mucho en su virtud. ... Es mulatilla...se sabe que hija de gata, ratones mata, y por do salta la cabra salta la que mama” (594). O’Reilly notices the contradiction and gently rebukes him: “Dice V. que la chica es bien criada, de un estado honesto, linda, que puede pasar por blanca” (598). Gamboa, frustrated by his interlocutor’s unwillingness to automatically act

on the stereotypes presented in the traditional fashion, expresses his desperation with a sharper stereotypical outburst, but its origin is clearly born of anxiety over potential incest, and his own guilt, plus the fact that he must repress that guilt. In an act of transference that has nothing to do with a cognitive evaluation of mulattos he cries out: “Estas mulatas son el diablo” (598).

In the end, O'Reilly recognizes that Gamboa's arguments are *pro forma* stereotypical references, cynically deployed to achieve a desired end. However, class solidarity wins the day, and O'Reilly imprisons Cecilia, even though he is clearly aware of her innocence. To justify his decision, undermining the personal positions he has taken vis-à-vis the acceptance of a “passing” into the Gamboa family, he falls back on tradition: “nuestros refranes encierran gran fondo de sabiduría” (594). These *refranes* are code for official received stereotypes that will justify certain prejudicial actions, and are not necessarily accepted as reflecting an objective reality. This pragmatic deployment of racism is important because it demonstrates that delegitimization is not simply the product of a bad ruling elites, on to which the blame of injustice can be shifted, while the individual members claim to have been misled, thus joining the ranks of the victims. Delegitimization is shown in these examples to be a systemic, constitutive activity on the part of the entire delegitimizing group, each individual taking advantage of the delegitimization framework for personal gain, and for which every individual member of the group must take personal responsibility.

For Doña Rosa Gamboa, on the other hand, the delegitimization process has functioned effectively, inspiring hatred and fear. One can infer that she dislikes mulattos and displays a general and visceral rejection of them, as opposed to the opportunistic

views of her husband and son. This hatred is certainly not a cognitive evaluation, but rather a deeply felt perception, part of the *habitus* that she has inherited from her forbears, and it is in precisely in this way that Bourdieu's concepts of *reproduction* and *habitus* function within the delegitimization framework, transmitting the delegitimizing message from generation to generation. Her dislike of Don Liborio,⁴⁵ the mulatto overseer, seems to go beyond practical concern; she refers to him with terms such as *bandolero* 'bad guy' and *cara de hereje* 'two-faced.' The latter referent is the richest in terms of stereotypical meaning; the word *hereje* derives from the Late Latin *haereticus*, which in turn was taken from the transliterated Greek word *hairetikos*, meaning 'able to choose or factious.'⁴⁶ In its most essential sense, the heretic is the one who chooses between two options, and it is inferred that they have chosen incorrectly. This double nature is the most commonly used stereotype of the mulatto, that of the *Janus*, or two-faced deity, a double identity taken as the biggest threat to white hegemony.

The role of stereotypes as prêt-a-porter insults is important. Doña Rosa Gamboa also refers to Charo, Cecilia's mother, as "una mulata sucia, que purga sus penas y pecados en un hospital de caridad" (356). On the level of the narrative, Doña Rosa Gamboa must justify, for her own self-image's sake, her husband's unfaithfulness,

⁴⁵ Most Cubans today will immediately associate the name *Liborio* with the Cuban everyman, who Antoni Kapcia argues "represented a collective self-image of unsophisticated and self-deprecating common sense, a cunning ability to survive." This image was a twentieth-century phenomenon, however, and the name Liborio most probably held no such significance for nineteenth-century readers. The *Liborio* of the twentieth century was also clearly white, according to Kapcia, a circumstance that in 1910 led Julián Valdés Sierra, (a black Cuban who fought with Maceo in the War of independence), to "counterpose 'José Rosario,' a black representative of common sense and nationalism" (*Havana: The Making of Cuban Culture*, p. 74).

⁴⁶ This etymology was taken from the 4th edition of *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, published in 2000. The 22nd edition of the *Diccionario de la Lengua Española* de la Real Academia Española, published in 2001, determines that *hereje* was derived from the Provençal word *eretge*. However, *eretge* was also derived from the Late Latin word *haereticus*. The association of the term *hereje* with the Provençal Cathar heresy, though, adds another layer of cultural significance to the insult, perhaps even a suggestion of sexual excess, a stereotype often leveled at Afro-Cubans.

blaming it on the fact that Charo is a mulatta, which implies some kind of magical power of sexual persuasion, a common mulatta stereotype. However, her reference to her husband's mulatta mistress is also contextualized by her assertion that a white Creole man would never have done such a thing, and that only Spanish men would stoop so low, thus deploying the mulatto stereotype in the power struggle between white Creoles and the Spanish, in which the mulatto is simply a pawn. Again, stereotypes are not just something believed, felt, or held, but serve as a tool for justifying personal agendas, as well as political and economic exploitation. To say that Cecilia Valdés is simply a reflection of historical types, as Villaverde claimed, or as the crucible of national identity, as Handley suggests, misses the complex role that stereotypes play in the delegitimization process within and outside of the text.

Revealing examples of the delegitimization process in the Brazilian texts, particularly the cynical deployment of *pro forma* stereotypical references, achieve a desired end – to avoid difficulty. In O mulato, for instance, the Portuguese immigrant Manuel Pescada states clearly that he has no problem with the fact that Raimundo is a mulatto, but argues that Brazilian social conventions force him to deny Raimundo Ana Rosa's hand in marriage: “concordo...asneira...prejuízo tolo...não imagina o que é por cá a prevenção contra os mulatos” (126). His prejudicial treatment of Raimundo does not derive from a cognitively held stereotype, but rather from blatant social pressure and the self-serving desire to avoid difficulty, very similar in substance to the pragmatic deployment of stereotypes by Cândido Gamboa. It is Manuel Pescada's sister in law, Dona Maria Bárbara, who truly seems to hate mulattos *a priori*, regardless of any practical concern, and she is rabid and descriptive in her references when Raimundo

presumes to mingle in her society as an equal: “Uma cabra...Crioulos cheios de fumaças! Hoje todos eles são assim! Súcia de apistolados! Dá-selhes o pé e tomam a mão” (67). Although Dona Maria Bárbara’s descriptions of hatred are similar to those attributed to Rosa Gamboa, it is clear that she is closer in her motivation to Cândido Gamboa and Manuel Pescada than she is to Rosa Gamboa. Rosa Gamboa is shown to be someone who believes the stereotypes, who has been successfully indoctrinated by the delegitimization process, but for Dona Maria Bárbara, what is at stake is the social hierarchy; underpinning her obsessive hatred of mulattos lies her practical concern that they are rising above their station and displacing her in the power structure.

One of the key mechanisms in delegitimization is the tagging of the target group as less than human,⁴⁷ which will permit otherwise unthinkable behavior, such as murder, toward them. Bar Tal argues that human beings need an explanation for exploitative behavior; in other words they must justify unfair acts to themselves. In the textual strategies of the authors, for example, in *O cortiço*, Azevedo applies so many negative attributes to the Firmo character that the reader feels relief at his death by Jerónimo, this joy even though based on the facts, Jerónimo is the bad guy. He stole Firmo’s girlfriend, left his own wife and child in poverty, and was generally a dissolute character. However, Firmo is labeled “uma pouca-vergonha,” “coisa-ruim,” and “um traste,” and is said to possess an “instinto luxurioso e canalha.”⁴⁸ When he is murdered, he is not missed, but rather is depicted as less than human, and his murder seems totally justified because the reader has been prepared by Firmo’s delegitimization.

⁴⁷ *Stereotypes and Prejudice*, p. 176.

⁴⁸ These references to Firmo are found on pp. 48, 158, and 169, respectively.

This delegitimization process is also played out in other texts. Canon Diogo, for example, employs this dehumanizing strategy in O mulato when he tries to convince Luis to murder Raimundo, referring to him as “cabra,” a derogative term for mulattos, based on a dehumanizing reference to goats.⁴⁹ He tries to convince the hesitant Dias to murder Raimundo by showing that he is inferior, contrary to the actual characteristics displayed by the Raimundo character, who is shown to be superior in all areas. For that reason, Diogo must relegate Raimundo to a category that has been officially degraded: “um homem de cor, um mulato nascido escravo...[u]m negro forro à pia não pode aspirar à mão de uma senhora branca e rica! É um crime...que o facinora...perpetuar contra nossa sociedade” (175-176).

Primarily, delegitimization is a way to rationalize exploitation by ideologically distancing one’s group from another. It also serves as a “justification of extreme negative behavior,”⁵⁰ such as brutal violence and acting outside of the law. In the case of Cuban mulattos, this ideological distancing would be employed to limit the ascendancy of upwardly mobile mulattos. The so-called Escalera Rebellion, although its actual existence has been questioned, served as a pretext to seize property from free mulattos and blacks, and to murder 3,000 of them. The effects of delegitimization are evident in O mulato, where the fear of successful mulattos such as Raimundo, and even of independent mulattas, in the white elite community, is visceral. Doña Ana Maria and her cronies rile against successful mulatto women by tagging them as presumptuous, “[a]té parecem

⁴⁹ Seemingly insignificant race references can hold great meaning. The term *cabra*, for example, often referred to the offspring of a mulatto and black person, who was seen in the received race paradigm as a step backwards, since a mulatto should “marry” a white, if possible, or another mulatto if that is not possible. Thus, the term does not simply mark a position in the race paradigm, but also signifies a whole array of social implications, and for this reason close reading and etymological analysis are key to engaging these texts.

⁵⁰ Stereotypes and Prejudice, p. 176.

Señoras” (47), at once ridiculing the mulattas and reaffirming the boundary between groups. With abolition pending and the economic power of the mulatto trade classes growing, Brazilian whites felt a specific threat from the mulatto class. Although mulattos were rarely as prepared to challenge their dominion as Raimundo, they were not only dominant in the practical trades, but many had become politically active, such as Luiz Gama (1830-1882), a lawyer, orator, and journalist who mocked the Brazilian elite’s efforts to portray its nation as European. In *O mulato*, a Portuguese character makes a tongue-in-cheek reference to the anxiety experienced by whites in regards to mulatto competence: “Esta raça cruzada é a mais esperta de Brasil! Coitadinhos dos brancos” (136). In the end, however, the success of the delegitimization process is manifested in the ultimate supremacy of Luis, the Portuguese store clerk, who is encouraged to murder Raimundo. He represents the future Brazil, to which low-caste, uneducated Europeans were fetched in order to break the mulatto skilled labor chokehold on the Brazilian economy. To justify this policy, the actual competence and success of the mulatto class in Brazil had to be negated, and delegitimization was the process, both intra- and extratextually.

In general, in both Cuba and Brazil, because of the demographic increase of people of African descent, the white elite had for some time felt its power under threat. Add to that miscegenation⁵¹ was constantly creating a growing class of non-white

⁵¹ The term *miscegenation* first appeared in the pamphlet entitled *Miscegenation: The Theory of the Blending of the Races, Applied to the American White Man and Negro*, (1863), an anonymous text now attributed to David Croly. The term was often used by segregationists accusing abolitionists of seeking to destroy the white race through inter-breeding. David Croly perceived himself as a Progressive and co-founded *The New Republic* with Walter Lippmann. However, his work contains highly racist positions; at one point he defends Southern slave owners in his book *The American Promise*, arguing that, “They were right, moreover, in believing that the negroes were a race possessed of moral and intellectual qualities inferior to those of the white men” (81). The term is used here for lack of a better choice, but is done so with certain reservations.

individuals who, although still denied the rights of white citizens, were advancing socially. These mostly urban and house slaves often had closer social ties with whites, (secret offspring, lovers, etc), more freedom and greater access to education, trade skills, wealth, than their rural counterparts. With abolition clearly on the horizon, and Republican government of some form probable, the white elite toward the end of the nineteenth-century felt more threatened by the mulatto class than by the black population at large. Delegitimizing categories can shift as situation changes, but still they have the same goal. This delegitimization might explain the new and varied extreme negative stereotypes that appear in late nineteenth-century Brazilian and Cuban texts, and in the selection herein discussed in particular. One should consider Bar Tal's view that the more threatened a group feels, the more it will try to delegitimize the group it feels is threatening them. Take the example of the whites in Maranhão, as portrayed by Azevedo. They fear most the upwardly mobile mulatto, the mulatto with talent and wealth, who in the end must be eliminated.

Bar Tal describes delegitimization as a coping mechanism by which the threat is reduced first by explanation and then by prediction, but what is apparent from the texts I have included and historical events such as the post-Escalera rebellion, is that these two steps are usually followed by action. The delegitimization concept applies when discussing the depiction of mulattos in these texts. It highlights the "need for intergroup differentiation" (177) and its growth with physical proximity and/or cultural similarity. It is the very closeness – geographical, biological and cultural – of the mulatto class to the white elite that makes them a greater source of anxiety, and thus a target of delegitimization. Even texts that purport to paint a more positive picture of mulattos often

reinforce delegitimization. This process takes place through the employment of caricature-like physical descriptions, such as that of Pancho Sofla in Cecilia Valdés, as well as the subtle acceptance of some ingrained stereotypes, such mulatto presumptuousness and foolishness, as is the case of the tailor Uribe's mistaken belief that his wife Clara chose him over white suitors.

Even the words put in the mouth of "bad" characters, for example Dona Ana Maria in O mulato, who constantly spew hateful images in order to highlight the foolishness of the racist position, serve to maintain formed group categories since the reader or perceiver will accept information that supports the existing social categorization, and reject that which does not. The strength of delegitimization resides in its creation of a feeling of superiority on the part of the delegitimizing group that is hard to counter with logic or facts.

Delegitimization represents the overarching purpose of stereotypes, but one also needs to address how the stereotype functions on a basic level. A stereotype is a snapshot of a complex sociolinguistic process in which a series of pre-held beliefs and new perspectives are metaphorically and metonymically condensed into a single image. This stereotype permits one to avoid the details; the part stands for the whole. For example, when speaking of mulattas, something as innocuous as the image of wild hair, a characteristic repeatedly mentioned in these texts, can offer an input management function; this single image is the part that stands for the unmanageable whole that is the mulatta, a synecdoche that stands for the author's mythical construction of the mulatta, itself a combination of what he has objectively seen and what he already believed. It reduces difference to the equivalent to a linguistic sound byte, and allows the speaker to

assimilate it into his worldview without really expending much intellectual energy and evaluating the true nature and implications of the mulatta category. The focus is not so much on particular stereotypes, but on the fact that the written narrative represents a form of mass media, a myth-making medium.

The particular stereotype, incidental as it may be, incites the social action of the medium. The creation of the stereotype mimics advertising in a way, just as the advertising executive tries to express an entire product concept in a single image. With advertisements, however, it is not the individual advert that really impacts society, but rather advertising as a whole, the manner in which it has transformed contemporary consumer behavior and entertainment habits. The same structure can be found in the novel and the stereotypes it contains. The preservation of the narrative myth is impervious to the overturning of any particular stereotype. Antonio Gonçalves Dias, the well-known Brazilian Indianist writer, refused to recognize a group of indigenous people he encountered in his travel as being indigenous because aboriginal Americans contradicted the existing stereotype. Gonçalves Dias instead insisted that they were, in fact, blacks or half-breed Indians.

The social function of a given stereotype can change. One of the main stereotypes encountered in Brazilian and Cuban literature relates to the inferior black who desires the superior white in a physical sense. This stereotype first appears in Brazilian writing in the seventeenth-century works of Gregório de Mattos (1633-96), in which he depicts Afro-Brazilian women as “immoral” and eager to offer sexual favors to white men, who, de Mattos asserts, were perceived by these women as being more desirable and having

superior sexual capacity.⁵² The most probable socio-political reality that spawned this original form of the stereotype was the scarcity of Portuguese female colonists on one hand, and the need to justify the desired extramarital sex with slave women. By depicting the women as aggressively seeking the white men, the men can convert themselves into the victims and do not have to reconcile their acts in light of the prohibitions of their own worldview.

By 1890, however, when *O cortiço* was published, the cultural and social context had changed; the white elite faced new pressures. The benefits of abolition and a republican form of government had not produced the expected entrance into the family of modern, industrialized nations. In reality, the economic malaise had worsened, the republic had become a dictatorship, and a census report published in 1890 put the “black” population at 44%, although it was probably much higher. The blame for the socio-economic failures was not put on the economic elites’ failure to invest in industry or its nepotistic practices, but was rather laid squarely at the feet of the recently freed slaves.

As abolition approached, a popularization of deterministic racial theories from Europe and the United States combined with existing stereotypes. These theories aided in denying suffrage to Afro-Brazilians by declaring them biologically incompetent. These new hybrid stereotypes were used to further marginalize Afro-Brazilian workers and artisans, not only by portraying them as shiftless and dull-witted, the traditional stereotypes, but also by demonstrating “scientifically” that they were culturally and biologically unable to manage the complexity of modern industry. This marginalization opened the way for the massive importation of European laborers and artisans, which

⁵² In *Three Sad Races* by David T. Haberly, p. 12.

resulted in the displacement of Afro-Brazilian producers, effectively stripping them of their last vestige of power, the material dependency of the master on the slave.

The Naturalist novel was the crucible for the construction of these transformed racial stereotypes, which in itself is disturbing. Novels such as O cortiço have been touted by critics for over a century as being *the* social novel that best reflected the gritty reality of the Brazilian slum. Its function is constitutive, not mimetic, thus supplying the stereotype required to justify marginalization.

The role of stereotypes in O cortiço, or in any other the corpus texts, for that matter, is not solely an academic question. Stereotypes in the dominant media have an effect on human bodies and play a key role in the formation of prejudice. Individuals and groups actively create prejudice to gain or maintain economic or political dominance. This prejudice is institutionalized and passed on to the following generations through the socialization process. The more threatening the target group, the more negative the stereotype. As an example, in the North American West, Indians were described as bloodthirsty, and it was often repeated that the only good Indian was a dead Indian. The indigenous people were active competitors for land and resources. They were a threat to the Anglo-American continental expansion, and as a result they were tagged with a negative fictive identity to justify their elimination. During the Brazilian Indianist movement, from 1840 to 1870, the only good Indian was perceived to be a dead Indian. Although the Indianist stereotypes were “positive,” they were able to be so only because the vast majority of the indigenous population had been killed and indigenous people were no longer a threat to the status quo; thus, the indigenous people could be “good” because they were dead. If one follows that line of reasoning, the extreme negativity of

African stereotypes in the Naturalist novel demonstrates the degree to which the elite white community feared that their hold on power was being threatened by the Afro-Brazilians.

There had always existed an underlying fear of the black presence in Brazil and Cuba, and the idea that slavery was bad for the nation because it brought whites in contact with immoral blacks. Azevedo plays on this fear in Casa de pensão by tracing the origins of the Amâncio character's immorality back to his black wet-nurse's breast milk and the decadent influence of female house slaves. The nineteenth-century Cuban intellectual Antonio Saco articulated a view of blacks as bad for Cuba, grounding his argument in the Haitian-inspired fear of slave rebellion. Primarily, however, the fin-de-siècle idea that blacks were not suitable for building a modern nation prompted, in both Cuba and Brazil, the massive importation of Europeans in the 1880s.

In this new cultural context, Afro-Brazilians, and Afro-Brazilian women in particular, were still represented in the nation-constructing texts as desiring white partners, even as the reasons they did so had changed. Instead of being wantonly sexual, and wanting more capable white lovers, they were depicted as feeling some kind of instinctive urge to better the race of their offspring by taking white lovers, at any cost. The stereotype continued intact, but the *why* behind it had shifted.

Elite intellectuals such as the Brazilian Silvio Romero and the Cuban José Antonio Saco actually took the novel step of encouraging marriage between poor white men and black women and mulattas, in a convoluted racist logic, to wash gradually the "blackness" out of the population.⁵³ It is clear in his writings that the preferred coupling was white male/black female, but the opposite was also accepted as long as the

⁵³ Handley, p. 43.

relationship occurred among the lower classes. The white elite also accepted unofficial relationships with Afro-Brazilian mistresses.

To justify such a project, the literary elite modified the old attraction stereotype by verifying it through biology. The inferior black yearned biologically to breed with the superior white race according to scientists such as Nina Rodrigues. In O cortiço that stereotype is manifested when the mulatta Rita Baiana leaves her *malandro* mulatto boyfriend Firmo for Jerônimo, the bull-like Portuguese stonemason. The narrator explains why: “sua sangue de mestiça reclamou seus direitos de apuração...preferiu o macho da raza superior” (169). No more just a question of more desirable white males, it was in the blood. Also in O cortiço, Bertoleza puts up with untold horrors at the hands of João Romão, but clung to him to the end because, “como toda cafuza, Bertoleza não queria sujeitar-se aos negros e procurava instintivamente o homen numa raza superior à sua” (20).

Azevedo carries the stereotype beyond mere biology in the case of the mulatto policeman, Alexandre, who is proudly married to a poor white woman and eagerly selects a white prostitute to be the godmother to his child. Even while affirming fractures in the race logic of the day, with a white woman marrying a mulatto man, an idea called absurd by Amância in O mulato, he reconfirms the desire to whiten and be seen as white. That Alexandre would seek a white prostitute as godmother for his daughter suggests that the desire to have access to white society, at whatever level, appears as the Afro-American's highest aspiration. The stereotype remains intact, but its function shifts.

One of the most deeply rooted stereotypes that runs throughout O cortiço is that of the purported animal nature of African-descent individuals. The textual presence of this

stereotype in Portuguese language texts predates their arrival in Brazil. In 1497, Portuguese explorer Pero da Covilhã reported that Ethiopians had tails (79), and General Francisco Barreto, the former viceroy of Portuguese India (1555-1558) who invaded Zanzibar in 1571, wrote of the monster offspring born from the sexual liaison between a *bugio* (monkey) and an African woman in Quiloa on the Zanzibar coast in 1498 (82). These images were passed down through the centuries and appeared unquestioned in Oliveira Martin's As raças humanas in the late nineteenth century. Nor questioned were the motives of the Portuguese colonizers who injected the images into the official discourse, although it is no coincidence that Quiloa was a wealthy Moorish town that refused to pay tribute and was laid waste by the Portuguese in 1505. Conquest and colonization must always be justified, not to others but within the national narrative myth of the colonizer. Nineteenth-century social pundits adorn this old stereotype with scientific jargon. Nina Rodrigues asserted that Africans have proto-psychology, with a form of symbolic expression that demonstrates that they are of a different species.

Dona Bárbara in O mulato constantly refers to Raimundo as “cabra” and “bode,” at one point combining both in “o cabra é bode” (104).⁵⁴ Some are subtle, such as suggesting that Marciana “berrou,” and Florinda “berrava,” animal cries that are never associated with the emotional outbursts of the white characters.⁵⁵ Metaphoric comparisons of African characters with animals are spread throughout the text. Florinda has “olhos luxuriosos de macaca,” and later she is said to have gone on like “un animal puxado pela coleira.” Young Leonor is said to have “a agilidade de mono.” Even the

⁵⁴ For a fascinating deliberation on the multiple meanings of cabra and bode, see Mauro Mota's article "Caprinocultura," in *O Jornal*, Rio de Janeiro, September 12, 1969. O cortiço is also thick with such references.

⁵⁵ *Berrar* is defined as ‘to roar, howl, or bleat’ in the Michaelis Dicionário Ilustrado (1961). The Brazilian popular definition given in the same dictionary is “to be of Negro or mulatto descent.”

seductive Rita Baiana is described as “a cobra verde e traiçoeira,” and “a largarta viscosa.” These serpent references also make allusion to the stereotype of mulattos as treacherous and cunning. But in addition to being snake-like she is also said to have the “lascivas de macaco” and “o cheiro sensual dos bodes.” Her image alone is a small bestiary in itself. A close reading of the texts reveals few such animal comparisons with the white characters, and when they are present, they are positive; e.g., Jerónimo is bull-like and Pombinha is a little dove.

Given the insidious, hurtful effect of such stereotypes, there have been many attempts to dispel them, usually through presenting “true” counter-texts. One can even find this approach in contemporary criticism. Carol Chiago Lujan convincingly lays out an argument for the intentional nature of stereotypes creation in her essay “Politicians: Or, ‘The only real Indian is a stereotyped Indian’,”⁵⁶ highlighting how politicians maintain the socio-economic interests of the dominant group by manipulating existing stereotypes and forming new ones in order to control the subjugated group. However, she could not resist offering a counter-narrative that she called “Dispelling the Stereotypes: A general overview of the American Indian nations.” The article offers another ideologically charged, narrative myth, an ideological salvo into an opposing camp, another shot in the war of truths. The mythical nature of *all* narratives defines a group or community of individuals. The observations of stereotypes in these texts demonstrate how the narrative myth was constructed and how the interpenetration of fiction, political policy and economic imperatives came to produce the macro-myths that orient human

⁵⁶ In Images of Color, Images of Crime: Readings, edited by Coramae Mann, Nancy Rodriguez, and Marjorie S Zatz.

actions and relationships. The following chapter gives a brief history of the development of the macro-myths that form the underpinnings for Western race thought and behavior.

CHAPTER II

Race and the justification of slavery

The very concept of race in Western culture has been naturalized, deceptively, giving it the appearance of a certain materiality, when it is, in reality, pure artifice – a very flexible and unstable social construct. This chapter explores the inter-textual points of contact between an array of earlier slavery-related European texts and these selected novels by Azevedo and Villaverde. Taking as a starting point specific references in the corpus texts, such as Pancho Sofla's references to Roman law, the analysis will deal with the conceptual genealogy of race ideology and the justification of slavery in European literary and philosophical texts, hoping to illustrate that Villaverde and Azevedo's views do not represent an individual pathology, but are manifestations of, or exceptions to, a tradition that has evolved over millennia.

The first section will discuss the historical development of race thinking and its relation to the justification of slavery in the corpus texts, as well as the role it plays in the contemporary study of race. Latin race thinking will be tracked from the Roman era, through medieval Iberia to nineteenth century Latin America, ultimately comparing it with the Anglo-German race model that dominates the race discourse in North American academic circles. The last section will discuss Romantic influences on the novels, and the possible Anglo-German roots of this Romantic influence.

Referring back to Roman slave ideology might appear to be anachronistic in a dissertation discussing nineteenth-century Latin American novels, but it is justified for two reasons. First, there are many direct and indirect references to the Roman slave

ideology in both Cecilia Valdés and O mulato, which are partially a result of the Romantic reliance on neo-classical imagery and the importance of the Latin classics as symbolic capital in the white elite academic circles. Second, Hispanic writers were the inheritors of a cultural view on slavery that was derived from the Roman model. The Roman cultural model was certainly not the sole influence on Latin American race thinking; medieval Spanish views on race, the Romantic perspective, and the Anglo-German model will be discussed, as well. These observations will be contextualized with the corpus texts and this section will conclude with a discussion on race theories coetaneous with the corpus novels, which will be followed by a final section that specifically discusses how race is defined and delineated in the corpus texts.

When one analyzes writing about slavery, literature cannot show how it *really* was. As William Fitzgerald, a specialist on slavery in the Classical World, makes clear, the historical representations of slavery are one-sided, generally deriving from those invested in the continuation of slavery. These representations are ideological in nature and as a result, this literature formed part of the ideological structure that enabled slavery, as is also the case for the texts in my corpus. One must not look at these texts as a mere reflection of slavery and race relations in nineteenth-century Brazil and Cuba, but as part of a structure that enabled and sustained slavery and the system of racial classification. The following section outlines a genealogy of race thinking, and justifications for slavery, in order to contextualize what is expressed and implied in these texts, and what can be read and inferred from them.

A brief history of Roman race thought and justifications for slavery

Roman and medieval European, particularly medieval Iberian, ideas of race and slavery had a direct impact on the slavery discourse in nineteenth-century Cuba and Brazil. That is the case, not only due to the actual textual references to Roman and medieval Iberian concepts that appear directly in the texts, but also because the representation of race and slavery that appears in these texts reflects a specific way of seeing race and slavery that is distinct from that of the non-Latin European world, more specifically, distinct from the Anglo-German view of race.

Essentially, those who were fit to be slaves, in the Roman view, encompassed those who were unable to resist enslavement. The Romans wrote little about the essential inferiority of slaves that could be used as a justification for slavery. Nothing at all that could be construed as a consistent ideology as to the intrinsic flaws that appears in Roman literary texts that discuss slavery. Christopher Francese, in his review of William Fitzgerald's Slavery and the Roman Literary Imagination: Roman Literature and Its Contexts, a text that seeks to establish an ideology of slavery, comments that the Fitzgerald fails to make a case for anything similar to race-based slavery:

Fitzgerald looks hard, as others have before him, for a Roman ideology that declares that foreigners are born naturally slavish, and that slaves are morally inferior and so deserve and even benefit from their fate. This alone, it is held, could justify the cruel and inhuman practice of slavery, as the racist ideology (absent in Rome) justified modern slavery. Fitzgerald needs such an ideology so that he can deconstruct it through literary analysis... Yet he finds only a handful of texts that say anything like this... In a way, the failure of the attempt shows just how unideological ancient slavery was... in comparison with the modern variety.⁵⁷

In Rome many slaves were recognized as intelligent, competent beings, even serving as poets and philosophers. Free Romans in financial need also accepted slavery as a way out

⁵⁷ Bryn Mawr *Classical Review* 2001.04.20.

of penury. The *paterfamilias* could sell any of his children into slavery. An enterprising slave could eventually buy his freedom, a practice known as manumission.⁵⁸

Full manumission brought freedom and Roman citizenship at the same time. The term manumission and its Spanish cousin *emancipación*,⁵⁹ have their roots in the Latin word *manus*, or hand, which in this specific context referred to prisoners captured in war that were in the “hands” of the Romans. The Latin *præservare*⁶⁰ was a term applied to the captured enemies of Rome that were spared death, literally “preserved alive,” to serve as slaves. This etymology demonstrates a linguistic heritage that reflects the original Roman idea that those who failed to defend themselves, those who lacked *virtus*⁶¹ and were captured were seen as less than human and thus fit for slavery.

As was the case later in Cuba and Brazil, some freed slaves gained prominence in Roman society. Publilius Syrus, a famous playwright born in Syria, was a freed slave while the great poet Horace was the son of an emancipated slave. Educated Greek slaves were sought after as teachers. Now, some might argue that these freed slaves were also fellow whites, thus the Roman model has no bearing on African slavery. However, the assumption is erroneous because they were as brutal with those with a shared ethnic background, as they were with those whom today one would refer to as non-white. In

⁵⁸ In the classical Latin *manūmittere*: *manū*, the ablative singular of *manus* the power of a father or master (literally ‘hand’) and *mittere* to release, OED September 2000.

⁵⁹ *Mancipium* in classical Latin meant “the laying hold of a thing in the presence of witnesses as a formal method of conveyance of property,” and is derived from the word *manceps*, or agent or dealer, which is in turn derived from *manus* and *ceps*, the compounded form of *capere* to take or seize, OED September 2000. The connection between hand and *emancipación* is also established in the Oxford [Elementary Latin Dictionary](#) on page 490 under the definition for *manūmittō* [*manus* + *mitto*] where the term emancipation is listed as one definition.

⁶⁰ *Præservare* in classical Latin derived from *prae* ‘before’ and *servāre* ‘to keep, protect’ (OED December 2007).

⁶¹ This term is often simply translated as “manliness” or “valor,” as in the case of the OED, but is far more complex, grounded in the context of the Roman Republic and Stoic thought. *Virtus* implies strength, simplicity and the resolve to perform one’s duties in the face of adversity. It is specifically applied to one’s performance on the field of battle, but also refers to one’s ethical choices in resisting daily temptations. Failure in war implied a *de facto* absence of worthiness, and thus justified enslavement.

fact, many argue that Rome was originally an Etruscan city, yet that heritage did not keep the Romans from regularly sacking other Etruscan cities and enslaving their peoples from 510 BCE to 29 BCE.

Rome had five colonies in Africa, and many freed African slaves became prominent, as well. The playwright Publius Terentius Afer, who famously wrote "Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto,"⁶² was born in Africa. The intrinsic value of the slave was not the rationale for their enslavement; it was a question of positionality and power. This view of slavery differs greatly from the purity/inferiority-based Anglo-German model. The Roman model, while certainly cruel, allowed for the eventual liberation of certain slaves, generating the *libertino/ingenuo* binary discussed by Leonardo Gamboa and Pancho Sofla in Cecilia Valdés. This scene implies a detailed debate on the nature of slaves and slavery, strongly rooted in Roman concepts.

Leonardo taunts his mulatto classmate Pancho by suggesting that he is a thing, not a person: "...a los ojos del Derecho no eres persona, sino cosa" (135). He is citing a national legal *derecho patrio* definition that sustains the contradictory category of the *talking thing*: "según el derecho patrio, hay personas y hay cosas; que muchas de éstas, aunque hablan y piensan, no tienen los mismos derechos" (135). This latter category was also a conundrum for ancient slave societies; Marcus Terentius Varro, in his De re rustica 1.17, referred to the slave as an *instrumentum vocale*, a speaking instrument, a popular intellectual topic among the Roman slave-owning elite, as it was in Cecilia Valdés.

Questions such as "can the slave exercise virtue?" as cited by Fitzgerald (8), were

⁶² "I am a man: I consider nothing pertaining to man foreign to myself," from Terence's Heauton Timoroumenos (The Self-Tormentor), translation from Blythe Allen's 1880 English edition, p. 9. The original language citation is from Frederick William Ricord's 1885 bilingual edition, p. 25. This citation also appears in Cicero's De Officiis I, 30, where he comments that the Heauton Timoroumenos character Chermes "thinks nothing that concerns man is foreign to him" (*humani nihil a se alienum putat*), p. 31.

popular debate topics in Rome. In this sense, Leonardo and Pancho's debate represents a latter day installment of a debate that has come down through the ages.

Pancho Sofla voices the traditional Roman view when he asserts his status as a human, based on the Roman concept of social positionality: "no soy esclavo, que es a quien se considera cosa el derecho romano" (135). This view is diametrically opposed to the absolute somatic-based racial determination that underpins the Anglo-German concept of race. Since he is not presently a slave, then he is human; his *virtus* is intact. Leonardo points out that due to his physical markers it is clear that one of Pancho's ancestors was indeed chattel, a 'thing': "No eres esclavo, pero alguno de tus progenitores lo fue sin duda... Tu pelo al menos es sospechoso" (135). This reference to phenotype demonstrates the limits of the positionality paradigm. Even in Rome there was a lingering shadow of slavery that followed the *libertino* 'Roman citizen who was a freed slave' and his descendants. Horace, the Roman poet and satirist, spoke of the difficulties of being the son of a *libertino*: "Never while in my senses could I be ashamed of such a father, and so I will not defend myself, as would a goodly number, who say it is no fault of theirs that they have not been free-born" (Satires 1.6.89-92).

While expressing respect and admiration for the *libertino* father who worked hard to educate his son, he also shows that the stigma remained with the ex-slave, which is literally the case of the *libertino* who tries to hide the "stigma" on his forehead with a bandage in Martial's Epigram 2-29.⁶³ As was the case in Brazilian emancipation, slaves in Rome often retained certain obligations to their owners and suffered "legal disabilities."⁶⁴

⁶³ Fitzgerald p. 88.

⁶⁴ Fitzgerald p. 88.

A *libertino* in the *Satyricon* (57, 75, 76) was depicted as proud of his status, which he associated with self-sufficiency.⁶⁵ Pancho is also portrayed as constantly challenged by his circumstances and shown to be courageous in the defense of his rights and ideas, as Leonardo mentions: “la cuestión de razas te ha costado algunos quebraderos de cabeza” (135). This dialog between Leonardo and Pancho highlights the increasing impossibility of the determination of race via physical markers and the real dependency of social position and legal determination to indicate race: “aquellos que pasan por ingenuos entre nosotros, son cuando menos libertinos” (135). The remark by Pancho is meant to antagonize Leonardo, yet Leonardo simply recognizes the reality of miscegenation, suggesting that his Creole mother and her family were not free of the suspicion of miscegenation: “Mi padre es español y no tiene mula; mi madre sí es criolla y no respondo que sea de sangre pura” (135). Pancho points out that Spain was hardly free of race mixing:

tu padre, por ser español...sospecha de tener sangre mezclada...supongo que es andaluz y de Sevilla vinieron los primeros esclavos negros...Tampoco los árabes que dominaban...España, fueron de raza pura caucásica, sino africana...la unión de blancos y negros, según...Cervantes (135).

This dialog about genealogy and the indeterminacy of race exposes the non-somatic roots of Cuban race definition and justification of slavery, showing that in the end that it is a question of power and brute force, much as it was in Rome, where one’s fitness for freedom was determined by one’s *virtus*.

The Roman concept of *virtus* was the primary quality that marked the difference between the free and the enslaved. The Roman general Regulus, captured in the First Punic War (261-241 BCE), saw himself and his men as weakened by their new

⁶⁵ Fitzgerald p. 88.

environment. It was not just a question of shame, but rather he saw himself as transformed into an inferior being. He and his men had become compromised in Roman eyes: “nec vera virtus, cum semel excidit, curit reponi deterioribus.”⁶⁶ The Carthaginians returned Regulus to Rome so that he could negotiate the ransom of his men. Upon his arrival he requested that Rome not pay ransom and proceeded to commit suicide. He knew that his men faced a life of servitude or death as a result, but for him, he and his men had become slaves when their *virtus* had failed and had allowed them to be captured. In Rome, those who were seen fit for slavery were those who could not maintain their freedom.⁶⁷

The character Cándido Gamboa employs this same argument of enslavement that results from failed *virtus* in Cecilia Valdés:

Gamboa de achaque de etnología africana...tráfico constante de esclavos por muchos años...le habían enseñado según su raza eran más sumisos o levantisco, más o menos a propósitos para llevar hasta la muerte el pesado yugo de la esclavitud (445-446).

Gamboa suggests that particular types of Africans are fit to be enslaved because they are submissive or, as the Romans would put it, lack *virtus*: “Mas todos ésos son congo real, congo loango o congo musundi, raza humilde, sumisa, leal, la más propia para la esclavitud, que parece su condición natural” (445). Gamboa refers again to the idea that slavery is their natural condition, emphasizing that the slaves they received in Cuba had been enslaved in their own land under African masters: “es su condición natural, en su mismo país no son otra cosa que esclavos...de...amos o del demonio” (447).

⁶⁶ “Nor does true manhood, when it once has vanished, care to be restored to degenerate breasts,” from Charles Edwin Bennett’s translation of Horace’s *Odes and Epodes*, p. 197.

⁶⁷ These events are related by Horace in Ode 3.5, commonly referred to as the *Regulus Ode*.

Villaverde mentions a specific African leader who traded in slaves, *el Rey de Gotto*,⁶⁸ a name that appears in Mungo Park's Travels into the Interior of Africa, a journal of his travels in West Africa in 1795, 1796, and 1797. Oddly enough, the kingdom of Gotto, today encompassing the land of the Mossi in modern day Burkina Faso, was roughly 1250 kilometers inland, and unlikely to be trading slaves since the trade was controlled by coastal kingdoms such as Ouidah, the concession later controlled by the famous Brazilian mulatto slave trader Francisco Félix de Souza, under the protection of the king of Abomey. The Mossi were, more often than not, a source of slaves sent to the coast.

This reference to slavery in Africa has bearing on the corpus texts because the idea that slavery was commonplace and indigenous to Africa, as Gamboa suggests with the above statements, was a justification for slavery that was often found in Latin American texts that discussed slavery. Mungo Park did speak of the traditional surrendering of slaves by the king of Bamabara to the king of Gotto, but one can also see from the way it is discussed in Park's journals in Travels into the Interior of Africa, that slaves were not traditionally a product of economic trade between African kingdoms, as

⁶⁸ "To the southward of Jinbala is situated the negro kingdom of Gotto, which is said to be of great extent. It was formerly divided into a number of petty states, which were governed by their own chiefs; but their private quarrels invited invasion from the neighbouring kingdoms. At length a politic chief of the name of Moossee had address enough to make them unite in hostilities against Bambarra; and on this occasion he was unanimously chosen general—the different chiefs consenting for a time to act under his command. Moossee immediately dispatched a fleet of canoes, loaded with provisions, from the banks of the lake Dibbie up the Niger towards Jenne, and with the whole of his army pushed forwards into Bambarra. He arrived on the bank of the Niger opposite to Jenne before the townspeople had the smallest intimation of his approach. His fleet of canoes joined him the same day, and having landed the provisions, he embarked part of his army, and in the night took Jenne by storm. This event so terrified the king of Bambarra that he sent messengers to sue for peace; and in order to obtain it consented to deliver to Moossee a certain number of slaves every year, and return everything that had been taken from the inhabitants of Gotto. Moossee, thus triumphant, returned to Gotto, where he was declared king, and the capital of the country is called by his name." Travels into the Interior of Africa, p. 165.

they were traded with the Europeans, but were part of war reparations, often more like hostages.

West Africa produced palm oil for Europe before slaves were traded. The palm oil trade was destroyed because European trading ships would carry only slaves, due to their higher profitability as a commodity. Certain African leaders, such as the King of Abomey were partners in the slave trade. Freed slaves participated as slave traders and owners; Francisco Félix de Souza⁶⁹ was one of the major suppliers on the Slave Coast. These individuals were motivated by profit, not some determination of racial inferiority.

In Cecilia Valdés one can find several attempts to justify or explain the enslavement of Africans: Roman law, local African custom, evangelization. However, underlying it all is the economic motive. Cándido Gamboa comments that runaway slaves robbed him of production. Although there are certain psychological and social aspects to race definition and the concomitant justification of slavery, a certain pragmatism underlies economic motive. The very nature of African slavery in Africa was distinct from American or Cuban slavery, and the wholesale hunting and sale of slaves was a business generated for and by Europeans. Thus, the stereotypical depiction of Africans being born to, and culturally inclined toward slavery, was one of the greatest propaganda coups of the nineteenth century. Cecilia Valdés and similar texts served as the medium through which these stereotypes spread.

One must infer, thus, that Africans lacked *virtus*; they were naturally prone to slavery because they permitted themselves to be held in bondage in their home continent.

⁶⁹ In Os Africanos no Brasil by Nina Rodrigues. Slave trader Félix da Souza dominated the trade on the West African coast at the end of the eighteenth-century. Souza, along with another powerful slave trader, Domingos Martins, disposed the king of Dahomey and installed his brother Ghezo, who was friendly toward the trade, on the throne. Souza was a Brazilian, “um mulato natural de Rio de Janeiro,” according to Rodrigues.

Wittingly or not, writers such as Villaverde used this justification, essentially relying on the Roman model for justifying the enslavement of another group. These African references also emphasize the wide-ranging textual sources exploited by Villaverde to lend credibility to his evaluation of race and slavery in Cuba. Gamboa's statements imply that the Africans who were brought to Cuba were the defeated ones, those that had been captured in battle, which in the end repackages the *virtus* argument: Slaves were enslaved because they failed to protect themselves from enslavement.

Virtus is more than a disposition, or a quality; it is symbolic capital, which allows the individual to access power. The *virtus* concept involves two distinct types of symbolic capital; the first is the internalized elite cultural knowledge that reflects class and dominant group values, which Bourdieu refers to as the *embodied* form of symbolic capital. In practical terms, embodied symbolic capital could denote a consciousness of the ignominy of capitulation to a physical enemy, or even to desire itself. In other words, it is the loss of control over the self.

The second form of symbolic capital is the *institutionalized* form, which Bourdieu generally uses to refer to academic qualification. However, I use it here to refer to the status granted a member of the Roman citizenry who had successfully displayed his understanding of the institutional values; i.e., "to be Roman" was not to pertain to a specific ethnicity, but rather expected a particular cultural articulation. The framework within which this symbolic capital is exchanged is what Bourdieu refers as the *field*,⁷⁰ a structured social space with set rules, not dissimilar to a game. Individuals in given

⁷⁰ These ideas on the exchange of symbolic capital primarily come from Bourdieu's Ce que parler veut dire: L'économie des échanges linguistiques, pp. 53-56.

groups have their perception of the rules that have been subconsciously internalized since childhood.

General Regulus,⁷¹ as an individual actor in a field of interaction, typifies the Roman citizen who has internalized the rules of the game and participated in the development and deployment of symbolic capital; through his successful deployment of this symbolic capital he achieved status and power. It is also his internalization of the rules, his inherited *habitus*, that required that he deem himself inhuman and subservient, lacking *virtus* upon capture. The system functions to control so well that he himself enforces its rules through suicide. Regulus formed part of the dominant class, a Roman citizen in a Roman Empire; part of the group that had the power to legitimize the social structure and set the rules of the game. Even though Regulus himself was ultimately a victim of the symbolic value attached to the *virtus* criteria, he participated in a system in which *virtus* served as a form of symbolic violence that permitted the Romans to subjugate other groups. In a reality constructed by the Romans, simply failing to protect oneself militarily or maintain oneself financially, put one in a symbolic category marked as inhuman and appropriate for enslavement.

Every group has its own systems, its own game to be learned, its own constructed reality based on symbolic power. In nineteenth-century Cuba, black skin or brown skin certainly marked one visually and immediately; the Pancho Sofla and Govantes characters in Cecilia Valdés, who possess the Cuban version of *virtus*, evince the power of the cultural aspect. This cultural capital allows them to participate in the dominant

⁷¹ As mentioned earlier, the tale of General Regulus experiences is found in Horace's Ode 3.5, known as the *Regulus Ode*. I have taken the concept of *virtus*, as Fitzgerald outlines it, and incorporated it into the social framework developed by Bourdieu. I use the Regulus story to illustrate how symbolic capital, as Bourdieu outlined it, served to underpin Roman, and I argue, Spanish slave systems.

white society at a higher level. Sofla is portrayed as bookish, an example of *objectified* symbolic capital. In fact, those who want to insult him try to associate him with other symbols, as was the case when he walked through the market and the Spanish immigrant merchants mocked him by offering to sell him knives (137), the stereotypical association of mulattos with knife-fighting that appears in the text.

Both Govantes and Sofla are shown to retain institutionalized symbolic capital, the former as a professor at an elite white university, the latter as a student at the same. Interestingly enough, when Govantes speaks about the history of slavery,⁷² he does not relate it to modern history or contemporary abolitionist arguments, but rather to Roman law. The successful deployment of symbolic capital by Govantes and Sofla supports the idea that Cuba, as it is portrayed in this text, like Rome, placed more emphasis on symbolic value than on somatic markers. This conclusion can be drawn, not just because Roman law is cited, but also because the high-level academic citing it, the mulatto Govantes, is living proof of the power of symbolic capital. Villaverde militates against the Roman, non-somatic view of race and fitness for servitude, in his text.

Medieval determination of race

Although Roman philosophy and law pervade the narratives of both Azevedo and Villaverde, there are also direct and subtle references to medieval Iberia and the medieval Iberian treatment of race, as found in the discussion between Pancho and Leonardo. In order to establish a clear lineage of Latin race thinking, it is necessary to understand what medieval Europe took from their Roman forebears, and how their own historical experiences altered their perceptions on race and slavery.

⁷² Cecilia Valdés, p. 149.

There are traces of the Roman, non-physical cultural basis for ‘race’ in medieval Europe as well. One excellent example that would immediately bring the dominance of a visual regimen for determining race in medieval Europe into question is their depiction of the Saracen. The term *Saracen*,⁷³ although it purported to represent a unified image, in fact referred to a multiplicity of ethnicities of the Eastern world and was not grounded in any specific physical markers. Jeffrey Cohen, in his study of medieval identity, Medieval Identity Machines, supports that point: “In textual and pictorial representation throughout the middle ages, Saracens did not necessarily possess identical bodily contours, facial features or skin color” (191). He further highlights the lack of a physical locus in the categorization of the Saracen, arguing that they “could be depicted as similar in body and even in soul to Latin Christians” (191). The residents of Muslim-occupied Iberia, descendants of Hispano-Romans and various Germanic groups who converted to Islam, were also considered Saracens. Two brothers could adopt different religions, and one could be considered a Saracen and the other a Latin. Cohen cites Barrett, who argues that race in medieval Europe was almost entirely cultural, being primarily “a compound of language, law, power and blood” (191). As was the case with the Romans, blood was the least factor, and only one among several that determined race. Race markers did not come to dominate European thinking until the late Middle Ages.

The Romans themselves recognized and represented difference in skin color and physiology. It was widely believed, in Roman times, that darker-skinned peoples in

⁷³ The application of the term was truly broad, being applied to pagan Danes in the medieval romance Arthur and Merlin (ca. 1330): “Of Danmark Sarrazins þat were of Angys lins” (line 2056), OED, second edition 1989. Danes were also referred to as *Sarazins* in King Horn, an earlier romance from the Anglo-Norman tradition dating from ca. 1225 to ca. 1250. Diane King, in her article “The Saracens of *King Horn*,” affirms that “[t]here could have been no memory of an invasion of the British Isles by any of the peoples belonging to the world of Islam,” and that “the Saracens of the poem have come to be identified as Danes or Vikings” (p. 565). This elastic use of the term Saracen affirms my contention that religion, not race markers were the major factor in determining group affiliation in the medieval world.

Ethiopia had started out white and had gotten darker due to exposure to sun. However, they did not deploy these corporal features in their determination of human and non-human, slave and free. This instability of the meaning of race dovetails well with Goldberg's idea of race as an "empty concept;" he believes that the usage of the term "race" distinguishes the racist from the non-racist. He defines racism as the use of race to justify exclusion and/or oppression, primarily in the articulation and defense of a perceived group.⁷⁴ Therefore, following Goldberg's thinking, the Romans articulated group membership in a non-racial manner.

In the Middle Ages, it was not until the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 that one finds a racial delineation based on physical markers. The main culprit for constructing this racialized difference in Europe was the Roman Catholic Church. As Geraldine Heng states in her article "The Romance of England: Richard Coer de Lyon, Saracens, Jews, and the politics of Race and Nation,"⁷⁵ the Church focused on "religion, color and bodily difference." (139). This somatic-based racial determination appears to be linked to the European conflict with the Islamic world, primarily in Muslim-occupied Iberia, and was a manner of restructuring a power relationship based on exclusion, which would also explain the Church's leadership role in this social articulation. This somatic-based determination was, however, provisional at best, and difficult to effect, especially in Iberia and the Middle East in general, because the target groups – Jews, Muslims, and Moriscos – shared similar physical markers with the Latin Christians who were striving, often in vain, to mark the difference.

⁷⁴ In *Desiring Whiteness*, p. 15.

⁷⁵ "The Romance of England: Richard Coer de Lyon, Saracens, Jews, and the Politics of Race and Nation," *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*, ed. Jeffrey Cohen.

As a result, there exists a greater reliance on the legal determination of race that is not based on somatic indicators, but rather on documentation that would confirm the family bloodline. This legal verification of race, a category that was supposed to be determined by religious belief, skin color, and physical difference is contradictory and indicative of the capacity of humans to hold two opposing views at once. On one hand, there is the attempt to racialize the Saracen by asserting somatic difference as a determining factor in evaluating qualitative human difference, and on the other hand, the necessity of legal means to determine the difference between Latin Christians and Saracens, due to the lack of an actual somatic difference. Immediately upon its establishment, the regime of somatic-based racial determination contradicts its own basic tenet by determining race through non-corporal means, not by physical markers, but by legal status, genealogies, and religious documents.

Further evidence of the failure of the somatic element as a determinant of race is the medieval Spanish use of *Santo y Seña*, which is actually referenced in Cecilia Valdés when the black doorman of the Salon is said to “pedirles santo y seña” (286). In Cecilia Valdés, this reference is used to verify Cándido Gamboa and his comrades’ membership in the elite social clique, although the function is the same: to determine group membership among individuals who cannot be differentiated by physical markers. In spite of all the references to *pureza de sangre* in medieval Spain, a somatic reference that would suggest a determination of race based on physical characteristics was impractical. There was no distinguishable type, no pure blood, just those who were capable of deploying symbolic capital, and at times material capital, successfully.

The reference to *santo y seña* and the legal need to verify *pureza de sangre* are testaments to the failure of the physical marker as a means to determine race. It was very much the same in nineteenth-century Brazil and Cuba, more often than not, due to massive miscegenation. Legal means were necessary to determine race, as was evident with the Raimundo and Cecilia characters. Occasionally these legal means simply backfired, as demonstrated in Morúa Delagado's Sofía, in which a socially determined white woman is taken for a slave because of errors in her legal biography.

Race in the Romanized world has always been less about skin color and more about culture and social position. The appearance of somatic-based race definition in the Middle Ages was a specific response to a particular socio-economic situation and did not represent the traditional race thinking of the Roman world. Non-somatic Latin race thinking helps the reader to engage these Latin American texts via a North American academic context, or prism, through which race thinking is constituted by, and dependent on, Anglo-German race models.

There exists a distinct Roman tradition of race thinking, passed down from the Romans, through medieval Iberia, which tends to determine race and fitness for freedom or chattel based on positionality and *virtus*, as opposed to purity and originality, the hallmarks of Anglo-German race thinking. Iberia inherited the situational concept of race from Rome, a view that granted groups or individuals the status of full “humanity” based on their ability to maintain their freedom and independence. In this way of thinking, if one allows oneself to be pressed in to slavery you, *a priori*, had a slavish nature. The emphasis of genotype was minimal.

It appears, however, that with the pressures of the post Roman and Visigoth period, and with the Muslim invasions, a new emphasis on racial and religious purity appeared. The most facile conclusion is that the “European” Spaniards developed a race purity position, manifested in the *pureza de sangre* concept, as a reaction to the invasion of a foreign, – read darker and very different – group. That view is problematic on various levels. It assumes a homogeneity in Spain that did not exist. Various ethnic layers existed, consisting of varying degrees of hybridism, including pre-Roman peoples, Romans, Visigoths, and Jews. Spain was far from pure in terms of genotype or phenotype. In fact, the Muslim influx represented another ethnic layer. In the end, difference in post-invasion Iberia continued to be primarily based on traits that were non-physical, as was the case under the Roman regimen.

Anglo-German race thought

Having demonstrated the important links between Roman and Medieval Spanish thought on my corpus texts, I want to discuss now the distinct development of Anglo-German race thinking, and its early impact of the race discourse in Latin America. I argue that this Anglo-German race thinking was not just a distinct cultural view of race, but that it was at the heart of a struggle for the soul of the Romantic Movement’s view on the essential nature of humanity. This battle plays out on the pages of Villaverde and Azevedo’s texts.

During his Addresses to the German Nation (1806-1807), Johann Gottlieb Fichte distinguished between Teutons and the *other Teutons*, or the Neo-Latins, as he called the French, by suggesting that the German language’s continuous development gave

Germans more authenticity, that they were more original. The Neo-Latins (French) had adopted a foreign tongue with a dead Latin root, French.⁷⁶ The claim to authenticity, origin, and purity of the group represents the underpinning of Anglo-German race thought. This view of race stands in contrast to the Roman concept of the citizen based on *virtus* and a legal determination. In the case of Fichte, the means used to establish this difference was language. Certainly, whatever the mechanism, be it language, race, or *virtus*, the goal is to articulate group difference. However, the reliance on concepts such as purity and authenticity, when articulated through physical markers, provides for a different regimen of group delineation that is very rigid and impermeable.

Fichte constructs difference through comparison: “Naturalness on the German side; artificiality on the foreign side.”⁷⁷ The context of the development of this view revolved around political oppression. Napoleon had invaded Germany, and Germans, as a group, were under threat. Groups that perceive themselves to be under threat develop differentiation strategies to motivate the group to resist *en masse*, which in itself is a practical goal. Obviously before Fichte came forward with his idea of the French as fallen, polluted Teutons, cultural and even physical differences had been established by both cultures, yet the step toward group prejudice required a more radical articulation of difference. It was necessary to invest the opposing group with a series of negative qualities to justify extreme action against that group.

A point to recognize with this move to vilify the French is that it was not solely a manner to justify violence against an enemy group, but also a manner to stifle internal dissent. Some members of German society, such as the young Hegel, had become

⁷⁶ In Addresses to the German Nation, pp. 64-65. Also discussed at length in Desiring Whiteness, p. 53.

⁷⁷ In Desiring Whiteness, p. 53.

enamored with the radical ideas of the French Revolution; others were attracted by French culture and the allure of Empire. The assertion of difference was not only an effort to impugn an enemy, but also an effort to purge attractive outside ideas that were perceived to threaten the integrity of the group.

Bourdieu noted that groups tend to mark a line in the sand that cannot be crossed by the members of the group,⁷⁸ and in this way, racialization cuts both ways, at once authorizing violence against the opposing group and prohibiting overtures to the opposing group from within. An example of this prohibition in North America during the early days of the Virginia Colony are English settlers, many of them bonded servants who fled the white settlements and lived among the indigenous peoples. Race laws that prohibited interracial marriage were instituted in the 1690s to address that very issue. Martinot⁷⁹ suggests in his article “The Structure of Whiteness, Its History and Politics,” that racialization was developed to inhibit desperate white settlers from abandoning the colony of Virginia and living with the successful Indians. European settlers were needed for growing export crops and their defection was a threat to the white populace.

However, in a deeper sense it also goes to group consolidation. Race is not only used to act against the perceived other, but also to maintain group integrity. Race as a tool to maintain group integrity derives from Bourdieu – it is not so much an identity or an ideology, but an “institutionalization of comportment.”⁸⁰ This strict separation of *us* and *them* is one of the hallmarks of Anglo-German race thinking. The boundary between slave and free, although seemingly well delineated in Roman race thinking, is permeable

⁷⁸ Cited by Martinot in Race, Class and Community Identity, p.77.

⁷⁹ Race, Class and Community Identity, p. 68.

⁸⁰ Cited by Martinot in Race, Class and Community Identity, p. 83.

in the end. The Anglo-German model is a caste-like system characterized by an absolute separation of the groups, with no possible interpenetration.

Fichte did not argue for the universalism of German culture, as was the view of the Romans, nor did he accept the possibility of assimilation. To be German was to be apart from others. A Greek slave could, ostensibly, become human, in other words become a Roman citizen. For Fichte that was unthinkable, since being German was not a status, but an essence. He put forth a notion of “original people,”⁸¹ grounded in linguistic theory. He noted subtle “differences” between Teutonic peoples, and then worked toward a hierarchical schema of races, with German whites, the “original people,” as a starting point of reference. He based his idea of German originality in “moral seriousness” and spirituality, suggesting that freedom was a right only for “original people.”

This impossibility of assimilation distinguishes Hispano-Roman race thought from Anglo-German race thought. The Iberians, as did the Romans before them, ultimately relied on a legal determination of human, free and citizen, and did not base their judgments solely on genotype or phenotype. This impossibility resulted partially from miscegenation in both cultures, and even more from their positional view of what *made* one human, which was primarily based on one’s ability to resist enslavement. In the Anglo-German model there are only absolute categories, regardless of talent, wealth, or fitness. If one does not pass the visibility regimen, meaning that one does not match the established physical paradigm of the *pure European*, then one is judged inferior.

Even in Spain’s most extreme period of racial exclusion, during the Spanish Inquisition, when the Catholic Monarchs of Spain sought to separate out the Jews and Moors, there was no attempt to determine race based on physical markers. So-called

⁸¹ In *Desiring Whiteness*, p. 54.

pureza de sangre depended not on somatic elements, but rather on legal documents, such as baptismal certificates, to distinguish *Conversos* from *Cristianos Viejos*, Muslims and Jews from Latin (Christian) *Hispanos*.

Villaverde depicts Cecilia Valdés as being perceived as white. She cannot be distinguished from the officially white people via the visual regimen, and she is pitied and criticized for having fallen on hard times and being forced to socialize with Afro-Cubans: “podían oírse voces de compasión, pues tomándola por una joven de pura sangre...que creyese de bajos sentimientos a quien consentía en rozarse tan de cerca con gente de color” (381). In Morúa Delgado’s *Sofía* the irony of this racial classification, ostensibly based of somatic difference, is highlighted by the erroneous official genealogy that mistakenly designates Sofia as Afro-Cuban, although both of her parents are, in fact, white.

This kind of contradictory race categorization originally grew out of Spain’s conflict with the Muslims, and continued, in a structural sense, well into the nineteenth century. This articulated difference, which justifies enslavement, is largely based on a purported somatic difference. Put simply, black people are theoretically inferior, a race born to slavery, and their blackness can be determined on sight. This view embraces the Anglo-German view on race, which is based on originality and purity because it asserts a clear, dichotomous view of race. The contradiction arises, however, in the actual practice of race. Even though the official line was, as Sebastião Campos puts it in *O mulato*: “Preto é preto, branco é branco!” (49). One finds that things were not quite so tidy in reality. As a result of the massive degree of miscegenation, the line between black and white had been irrevocably blurred from the earliest period of black slavery in Spanish

and Portuguese America. More telling was the ascension of Afro-Cubans and Afro-Brazilians to high-level positions in business, arts, and politics. Certainly, as was the case with Roman *libertinos*, there were often strictures placed upon freed slaves and their offspring, some legal, and more often social, as described through the Raimundo character in O mulato.

Famous Afro-American personalities, including the famous mulatto portrait artist Vicente Escobar in Cecilia Valdés (124) and the mulatto engineer Rebouças in O mulato (136), are mentioned in the corpus texts. Throughout all of these texts, and historical and literary texts of the period, one can discover examples of talented Afro-Americans who had ascended to positions of influence. While the somatic regimen certainly dominated race thinking, an underlying current that calculated and recalculated an individual's value, or humanity based their talent in respected fields and their ability to acquire monetary capital, these articulations of symbolic capital being contemporary counterparts to the Roman concepts of *virtus* and social positionality. However, as the fate of Raimundo indicates in O mulato, this Roman paradigm also delimits boundaries. Raimundo processes *virtus*, a socially advantageous position, and is perceived to be white; however, his legally determined mulatto status dooms him. With this case, the corporal locus of race, based on Anglo-German race thought, trumps *virtus* and symbolic capital. Unfortunately, with Raimundo, the rather easy shift between slave and free status, between human and thing, present in traditional Roman thought, does not survive to the nineteenth century. The Spanish and white Creole authorities persisted in the improbable effort to separate individuals into distinct racial entities. One finds in the texts an increasingly provisional, failing system of racial identification, that having failed to

establish a visual regimen for race determination, and unwilling to establish a system based on merit and ability, maintained the fiction of a visual regimen while actually determining fitness for slavery based on genealogy and monetary capital. In other words, in practice there was no real attempt at justifying slavery. It was simply a cynical race regime where freedom and status as a human could be purchased for a price, and the only thing standing between the enslavers and the enslaved was money and physical force.

Further textual evidence that Cuban and Brazilian slavers simply used race as a hypocritical justification for slavery, as opposed to it being an ideological impetus for the enslavement of Africans, can be found in Morúa Delgado's novel Sofía, published in 1891. Slavery was based on cynical pragmatism, availability and raw power. In Sofía, the Gonzaga character echoes the Roman view when he comments that slavery has always been about the strongest enslaving the weakest, race not being a factor: "Así como en los tiempos primitivos bastaba solo el triunfo del más fuerte para establecer la esclavitud sobre los más débiles, sin miramientos por la igualdad de la piel" (78). He further notes the artificial race construction that had been established in Cuba as a justification for slavery: "en nuestros tiempos, más avanzados ha tenido que presentarse la diferencia de esa misma piel...para sostener el argumento de superioridad a favor de aquellos propios fines de vasallajes humano" (78).

These comments, written soon after the publication of Cecilia Valdés, demonstrate that literate Cubans recognize the artificiality of their justifications for slavery. Sofía reaffirmed the fact that bodily marks were less important than legal status and that the race-based determination of social value was a fiction. Sofia, physically white, is considered legally a slave and treated as such. The *ingenuas*, who, along with

their parents were untouched by slavery, although physically dark, were accorded a higher status than Sofia, who was actually white.

Romantic visions of race

Both Azevedo and Villaverde, in spite of the difference in their age,⁸² were thoroughly indoctrinated with the Romantic vision throughout their education and professional careers. This Romantic vision, in the end, affected Azevedo's and Villaverde's views on race, perhaps far more than the Naturalist ideas that dominated academic discourse during their writing careers.

Romanticism rebelled aesthetically against Classical models, militating in favor of the regional, and against the Latin center. However, the Romantic view on race and nation conditioned the fate of black characters in the corpus novels. Beyond Rousseau's idea of the Noble Savage, embodied in characters such as Chateaubriand's tragic Atala, there is an underlying racial essentialism grounded in the existential ethic of Fichte. Fichte perverted Rousseau's idea that individuals and cultures have an original inner essence, hijacking it and integrating it into his schema of racial hierarchy. Azevedo constructs a world in which the Noble Savage ideal exists in the form of Raimundo, whom Azevedo portrays as an honorable mulatto unburdened with the oppressive stereotypes of the slave society due to his residence in Europe.

Azevedo describes a Europe that is significantly less racist than Brazil; there, Raimundo is respected for his intellect and accepted into High Society. This underlying assumption of a less racist Europe is crucial in O mulato because Azevedo establishes

⁸² Villaverde, born in 1812, was 45 years older than Azevedo, born in 1857. Villaverde was educated at the apex of the Romantic period, and Azevedo during its waning years. However, due to a tardy adherence to Romantic models among the Brazilian literary elite, it is likely that Azevedo's early literary education was grounded in Romantic values.

Europe as an idyllic space that serves as the counter point to the degraded space that is Brazil. However, his idyllic projection of Europe resembled the actual Europe of his day about as much as Chateaubriand's "America" reflected North American reality in the early nineteenth century. Both projections, however, created mythic spaces wherein authors could project criticism of their own society through negative comparison.

Raimundo arrives in Maranhão pure of heart, only to be affected strongly by the vicious cruelty of Brazilian slave society and to become a marginal character. The portrayal of Raimundo as a kind of modern Noble Savage, something strongly implied in the text, exposes the fact that Azevedo saw the Afro-Brazilians essentially as a different type of being, much in the same way Romantic writers had seen Native Americans. He establishes Raimundo as an intrinsically good man when unchallenged by the cruelty of civilization, but one who falls quickly into vice with little prompting. The horrors of slave society "lhe minava o espiritu" (64). Instead of representing him as Romantic hero defending the right of slaves, such as the white character Gonzaga in *Sofia*, Azevedo shows a Raimundo who cannot cope and turns to drinking and gambling: "Em breve criou fama de jogador e bêbado" (64). It is as if the Noble Savage is innocent and good when left alone, but also essentially weak and given to indulgence when slightly pressed. Azevedo also portrays Raimundo as exuding a natural sensuality, generally attributed to mulattos; and he is characterized as having an amorous effect on women: "se os chefes de família lhe fechavam a casa, as moças não lhe fechavam o coração, em sociedade o repeliam todas...mas.... o chamavam para a alcova...várias damas solteiras, casadas e viúvas... mandaram-lhes flores e recados" (63). Azevedo's presentation of Raimundo as a Noble Savage serves to undermine Rousseau's Noble Savage idea. The Noble Savage, in

the end, as represented by Raimundo, is good only due to the absence of temptation, but is, in reality, intrinsically weak, succumbing easily to the pressures of racist modern society. Raimundo is a Romantic-style Noble Savage thrust into a Naturalist world. His story parallels, in a perverted way, the travails of Peri and Cecília in O Guarani (1857), by José de Alencar. One encounters the noble, non-white male lead with a hidden origin, who loves the white patriarch's daughter, the white suitor who seeks to usurp his position and the scheming white female relative who seeks to destroy the noble hero of color. However, in Azevedo's fable, the Afro-Brazilian hero was born a slave, not a noble Indian chief. The noble father D. Antônio becomes the weak-willed Pescada, and the evil plot succeeds when Dona Bárbara and Canon Diogo, who plays a worthy Loredano (also a former Friar in O guarani), facilitate the victory of the smarmy white suitor, Luís. In the end, even the romantic Ana Rosa is no Cecília, quickly forgetting her murdered love and finding great happiness with his murderer. Both Peri and Raimundo originate as truly noble and honorable characters, but the main difference is that Peri is the innocuous symbol of a defeated people that represented no threat to the white elite. Raimundo, to the contrary, represented the worst nightmare of the white elite – a capable and refined mulatto man with money and education.

The evil of civilization that will destroy the Noble Savage, spiritually and materially, resides in the elegant Canon Diogo, the epitome of the corrupting influence of civilization, a scion of the slave-owning elite, an epicurean, and a representative of the imperial Church. He represents the two pillars of white power and privilege in the slave state of Brazil, the economic elite and the Church. One controlled the wealth, the other the mind.

Raimundo is not simply a symbolic threat to the white elite dominance; his character articulates an intellectual threat to the old regime, voicing radical Romantic ideas. He complains of slave owners baptizing “*ingênuos*” as “*nascidos antes da lei do ventre livre*” (140), the practice of backdating the baptismal certificates of those born free under the Law of the Free Womb of 1871. As was the case with Leonardo and Pancho’s debate on the nature of humanity in Cecilia Valdés, these references to *ingênuos* reflect the Roman linguistic heritage that often appears in discussions about slavery of the period, which shows that on a basic level, the Roman vision of slavery was understood, if not articulated, and formed part of the race discourse, even if it was not part of the contemporary practice. However, the character Raimundo rejects the cynical, “survival of the fittest” argument that came down from the Romans about slavery, and leans toward Rousseau’s idea of the innocent state of man, who is degraded not by his physical environment, arguing that “*a natureza não criou cativos!*” (126). In an interior monologue he blames human society, in short civilization for the abject state of the slave: “*não tens...culpa...castigado e amaldiçoado pelos irmãos...que inventaram a escravidão no Brasil!*” (126).

Azevedo, in his portrayal of the Raimundo character, follows neither the Hispano-Roman nor the Anglo-German way of determining who is human; rather, he adopts Rousseau’s view that all are born equal, decent, and good. However, this Romantic vision of life guarantees that Raimundo will be spoiled by contact with civilization. Raimundo’s life resembles an allegory for this worldview. He leads the life of a wealthy and white liberal student, free from the corrupting influences of the slave owning civilization that produced him. He is the ideal bourgeois citizen, essentially living a sheltered life as a

white man, because as one can determine from the text, where his biography is unknown, he is seen as white. Whiteness is a social space that he inhabits, much like the bucolic paradise of the Noble Savage. It is only when Raimundo is exiled from whiteness does he begin to experience difficulties. At the very moment that he becomes aware of his black heritage, a change comes over him: “na brancura daquele carácter imaculado brotou...uma hinchada de vermes destruidores” (127).

The mere awareness of his blackness brings the symbolic curse down upon his head. Raimundo knows, has social knowledge of, what it means to be mulatto and that knowledge suddenly transforms him from a confident, professional man to a morose and doubtful outsider. In a certain sense, this is not a picture of the Noble Savage being seduced and ruined by civilization: this is the Noble Savage ambushed and crushed by a civilization down to which he refused to bow.

A Latin American mode of race construction

This section on race was initially conceived of as an opportunity to argue for a distinct mode of analysis for the study of race in Latin America. Most analysis of race in Latin American texts have a North American bias, even those published by Latin American academics, because of the North American dominance in the field of race theory and the ever-growing dependence of Latin American academics on North American universities. There is, however, a specificity to Latin American race thinking that generally does not appear in the academic discourse.

It has already been established that there is a Latin or Roman mode of race construction and that the differences in race perception are grounded in specific historical

precedents. However, in continuing to study Villaverde's Cecilia Valdés and Excursión a Vueltabajo, I began to see something that had escaped my notice before. Certainly the Cuba portrayed by Villaverde in Cecilia Valdés displays the characteristics of the Hispano-Roman model. After a closer reading, it became apparent that Villaverde's novel subtly advocated, or at least supported, the Anglo-German model of race thinking, not so much as way of seeing race that he had personally internalized through his own life experience, but as an observed solution for the challenges faced by the new multi-racial nation of Cuba that he hoped would come into being.

Villaverde, and the Cuban white elite in general, sought a way to gain independence, yet maintain white privilege. Benedict Anderson suggests in Imagined Communities that this tendency existed throughout Latin America and impeded independence from Spain, in that "the long duration of the continental struggle against Spain, by then a second-rate European power and one itself recently conquered, suggests a certain 'social thinness' to these Latin American independence movements" (49). According to Anderson, Spain successfully retook Venezuela from 1814 to 1817 with the help of disenfranchised slaves. He also reminds one that many of those who called for independence from Spain were the same "slave-owning agrarian magnates" that had rejected the 1789 Spanish law that mandated more humane treatment of slaves, and detailed the "rights and duties of masters and slaves" (49). The nation-building project in Cuba, as Villaverde envisioned it in Cecilia Valdés and Excursión a Vueltabajo, reflects this planter class mentality, as well as the influence of the North American race paradigm.

Villaverde had perceived the contrast between the United States/Anglo race structure and that of Cuban/Spanish system, and not only recognized the inherent cynicism, or lack of logical justification in Cuban race structure, but also the threat to white privilege Afro-Cuban independence leaders would represent in free Cuba. This Roman, negotiated view of race stood in stark contrast to the race system in the United States where Villaverde resided, which operated under the Anglo-German purity standard, epitomized by hypodescent.⁸³ This Anglo-German conception of race came to appeal to him during his long sojourn in the United States as a means to create a new Cuban nation by and for white Cubans. This concept can be inferred from all Afro-Cuban characters who are ultimately marginalized in the text, and from how miscegenation is generally cast in a negative light.

The racial praxis established in Cecilia Valdés leans toward the Anglo-German mind-set, since all of his black and mulatto characters fail to integrate or achieve full membership into society. Cecilia herself is the most glaring example. She is physically white, but her parentage, social geography, and customs keep her marginalized. She is seen as a non-white, outside of the hegemonic group. Even with her free status, competent manipulation of cultural capital (fashion, social skills), and her white genotype, she is unable to become a full member of white society.

The Roman model is ascendant in the Cuban society portrayed in Cecilia Valdés, and Villaverde deploys representations of successful black and mulatto historical

⁸³ According to Rodrigo Lazo in "Filibustering Cuba," Villaverde had lived in the United States for thirty years when he published the 1882 version of Cecilia Valdés. Although Villaverde primarily lived in New York and New Jersey, he was closely associated with the Confederate cause, translating what Lazo refers to as a "pro-South" text by Edward Pollard entitled History of the First Year of the Southern War. Lazo characterizes Villaverde's preface to the book as "fiery" and "pro-South." In that preface, Villaverde refers to white Southerners as "our people" pps. 2,22.

characters to establish this purported historical context. The actual fate of his black and mulatto characters nonetheless tells different story-of total failure of black and mulatto characters to integrate into the white-dominated society that would eventually organize the state of Cuba, and Villaverde sought to communicate this inability to integrate.

The freed black woman Dolore Santacrú certainly displays the *virtus* expected of a citizen under the Roman system. She is able to accumulate enough financial and cultural capital to free herself and set up a business, but her color limits her chances, and she is destroyed for having presumed to exercise her rights as a free citizen: “Dolore se liberta...mi liberta también...Dolore mete pleito con el blanco...Dolore se pone loca” (572). On the surface, the Dolore Santacrú character could be read as a criticism of Cuban society, but the ultimate message that comes through is that a black woman failed to succeed in business and went mad. These are the two strongest images: black incompatibility with white society and the black proclivity toward madness.

The Malanga character also exemplifies how Villaverde, in spite of what he says, shows blacks to be inferior and incapable of succeeding in a white-dominated society, even when they have assistance. Villaverde speaks of the institutions dedicated to educating people of color, “escuelas...servidas por maestros de color”, and of Malanga’s father’s efforts to provide opportunities for his son: “su padre, bien intencionado Africano... empenó...que recibiera...educación su callejero hijo” (535). The father was said to have sent him to “la escuela de Lorenzo Meléndez, Teniente de granaderos de la milicia de color, concurrida de niños pardos, negros y blancos” (535). However, Villaverde relates that the child “nació curro,” that he had “la cabeza descalabrada,” and that he “curtía desde pequeño, en la pillería y la maldad” (535).

Here Villaverde rejects a social cause, such as prejudice or the deprivations of slavery over generations, for Malanga's badness. Nature, not nurture, makes Malanga bad, in spite of good schools and a concerned father. His African father tried to get him to study, yet he chose to roam the streets, stole things, and joined a rock throwing neighborhood gang. His father gave up on school and gave him over to a shoemaker apprentice. The shoemaker beat him and tied him up because he was an "animal indómito y montaraz" (537). Villaverde offers a grim assessment of a free Afro-Cuban future, in which, despite all efforts, the intrinsically bad black man continues to be seen as a threat to white society until he is eliminated.

In these novels by Azevedo and Villaverde, race thinking is reflected on two levels. The first is the novel's characterization of race thought through the character vehicle, who articulates coetaneous race thinking. The second is the position of race implied in the authors' treatment of race in the texts, just as what is done to or by the characters.

Just as Azevedo drew on Rousseau's Noble Savage concept in his depiction the Afro-Brazilians in O mulato, Villaverde adopted the Fichtean view on race, that of an essential purity and originality in determining race and suitability for freedom. This view dovetailed into his program for establishing a Cuban nation, just as Fichte's initial efforts centered on the establishment of a German state.

Benedict Anderson argues that Latin American national identities were forged by shared experience. Local newspapers started contributing to the development of the "Imagined Community" by reporting practical news, for example, what ship had come in, commodity prices, arriving bishops, marrying elite members of society. Thus, all these

things happening in one place (Caracas, for example) created a shared series of experiences (62). The economic and political interests of the white elite still trumped these shared experiences. Anderson also hints at the complex role that race played in Latin American independence movements: The Liberator Bolívar himself once opined that a Negro revolt was “a thousand times worse than a Spanish invasion” (49). Villaverde himself desires independence from Spain, which is concomitantly tempered by his greater fear of black independence. European nationalist movements tended to take their cue, in a way, from Fichte, in the sense that they based their claims to nationhood on a specificity articulated through language. Anderson argues that from Hungary to the Ukraine, Eastern European “Nations” all seemed to arise from a linguistic assertion; literary masterpieces published in their own language and the set-up of universities, starting around 1800.

This linguistic basis for nationhood highlights the importance of literature and academic institutions, centers of symbolic capital, in the formation of new nations. Certainly the linguistic articulation was not an option for Villaverde and the authors of Cuban nationalism; however, the role of literary cultural artifacts was still material to delineating the outlines of whom and what would be determined to be Cuban. The inclusion and exclusion function of literary texts to establish “historical personalities,” as Anderson calls them, was indispensable to the social structuring of the new nation (103).

In spite of the presence of positive historical and fictional mulatto characters in Cecilia Valdés, disaster is the implied outcome of all interracial relationships represented in the text. Cecilia personifies the living admonition regarding the danger of illicit interracial relationships. Villaverde’s main goal in writing this novel was not historical in

nature, as he claimed, but was, in fact, an attempt to impose a new narrative on Cuban society. This narrative would not reflect what was, but what he felt it needed to be.

Villaverde offers an essentialist view of race in Cecilia Valdés that would underpin white rule in an independent Cuban nation. Much in the same vein as Fichte's efforts to erase the French cultural and political influence on the nascent German nation by tagging the French as a polluting force, as impure and unoriginal, Villaverde sought to represent black and mixed-race Cubans as a negative quantity that had to be marginalized.

Villaverde pursued an idealist vision of an independent Cuba, free of plantations and slaves, and based small farms and white independent farmers, who in Excursión a Vueltabajo, take on mythic status.

The dominant race paradigm in Cuba, in practice, if not in theory, was that of the Romans. Color was often less of a factor than money and talent, although with definite limits. The Roman paradigm is not the race paradigm that appears in Cecilia Valdés, however. The character who is granted the most moral authority and is representative of the state, O'Reilly, speaks of the "idiosincrasia de nuestra clase de color libre" (595), reaffirming that race trumps social position or status. O'Reilly also admonishes Gamboa to not let Leonardo "enredarse con una negrita," because it would be "una desgracia para la familia" (598). The message is clear on two levels, one that an Afro-Cuban can never be truly successful member of society, and second, those who have interracial relationships with Afro-Cubans will also be marginalized.

For Villaverde, the intermingling of the races is the underlying problem. Slavery created a crucible through which unstable race relations played out. The logic of racialization, of evaluating humans based on phenotype, was not questioned. Perhaps for

Villaverde, his time in the United States was the big revelation. The Spanish race model allowed for too much fluidity of categories. In the United States he saw the Anglo model of clear separation between races, in which the white elite claimed racial purity and used that purity to justify their total, practically irrevocable enslavement of Afro-Americans. There were few nuances in the slavery in the United States, allowing for no confusion or intermediate legal categories in the land where hypodescent, or the *one-drop rule*, as it is commonly known, has continued to rule the day.

When Villaverde encountered the Anglo-German race paradigm, and saw the total control that it effected over the excluded, “impure” group, his views on race were altered. He perceived a weakness in the traditional Hispano-Roman race paradigm, in the sense that an ontological exclusion could not be effected when race categories were so negotiable. The Anglo-German paradigm, coldly efficient, would be useful to the white elite in their attempts to construct a Cuban nation on the basis of exclusion.

CHAPTER III

The term *mulatto*

Any classification or linguistic choice can always engender some debate. I have chosen to use the terms *mulatto* and *mulatta* in this dissertation. Although they can be jarring for some English speakers, they best capture the sense of the racial category in the nineteenth century. The term *mulatress*, the feminine equivalent to English *mulatto*, has fallen out of use in American English and carries a certain negativity. The atrophy of the term could also reflect the movement toward absolute race classification, in which the *one-drop rule* applies, and that references to any such race gradation have become irrelevant. The term *mulatta*, which, although not normally current in English, best represents the historical category described herein.

Popular terms may be less controversial in today's social context, but they are also charged with contemporary meanings. The term *bi-racial* carries few of the connotations of the nineteenth-century use of the term *mulatto*, and certainly does not encompass the multiple degrees of interracial mixing reflected in the texts. The term *mulatto*, in its loosest sense, refers to someone that has any degree of black and white interracial mixing. The origin of the term *mulatto* is obscured by time and social politics. The traditional view is that the word *mulatto* derives from "mule." This view links the reference to the sterile, hybrid mule, which emphasizes the dehumanizing aspect of the word. Sebastián de Covarrubias is the first in print to make this mule association in his Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española (1611),⁸⁴ although it still appears in the twenty-

⁸⁴ "MVLATO, el que es hijo de negra, y de hombre blanco, o al revés: y por fer mezcla extraordinaria la compararon a la naturaleza del mulo." This reference is found in folio 117v.

second edition of the Real Academia Española's Diccionario de la lengua española, (2001). Even though the term is not seen to be offensive by Spanish speakers, in light of long-standing strategies of delegitimization in Spain and in Latin America, this association of bestiality and sterility with individuals of mixed-race origins seems too convenient to be incidental. A verifiable etymology of the term may lie elsewhere.

Julio Izquierdo Labrado proposes an alternative etymology in his article “La esclavitud en Huelva y Palos a fines del siglo XVI.” He argues that the term derives from the Arabic word *muwallad*, which referred to the offspring of Arab fathers and foreign mothers, the root *walada* meaning to engender or give birth. It is usually used with an adjective, for example *walad az-zinaa* (illegitimate child), or *walad al-mulaa'ana* (child whose paternity is contested).

Another association is the term *muladí*, which refers to Christians who converted to Islam during the Moorish occupation. This etymology of the term *mulatto* creates a conceptual link between race and religion and would support the view that concepts of race are, in part, derived from old ideas of religious differentiation. Even though the word *walad* alone has no negative connotation, it is often associated with illegitimacy. The term *muladí* carries the essential concept of mixing unlike elements, found in *muwallad*, into the religious area. The hybridism in both parentage and religion connotes negativity in interpretation.

Some have rejected Labrado's work, arguing that the word *muladí* does not appear in the Real Academia Española dictionary until 1884 edition, whereas the term *mulato* is said to date back to 1549, which may be a rather specious argument. It does not seem unnatural that a word of Arabic origin referring to Christians converting to Islam

and intermarriage between Christians and invading Moors would not be listed in an officially sanctioned dictionary, given the role religion played at the time. It certainly does not mean that the term did not exist in the spoken language.

A conceptually related use of the term *muwallad* also supports the Arabic origin of the term. Engseng Ho, a Malaysian anthropologist discusses an Indonesian group referred to as the *Muwalladin*, the plural of *muwallad*, in her article Hadhramis Abroad in Hadhramaut: the Muwalladin.⁸⁵ The *Muwalladin* were the children of Arab immigrants, “ulaytis,” and local Indonesian women, and were seen by conservative leaders in Hadhramaut as morally lax and a source of contamination. When these mixed-race children returned to the homeland of their fathers, Hadhramaut⁸⁶, they suffered discrimination, as can be imagined from the nature of this Hadhrami folk saying:

“In Hadhramaut, there is a saying:
Thālatha lā yajūn bi-l-yadd:
al-kalb, al-khanzīr wa-l-muwallad.
Three things do not come to the hand:
the dog, the pig and the muwallad.”⁸⁷

This traditional use of the term *muwallad* in the Arab context, and the similar stereotypical treatment of Hispanic mulattos and Arab *muwalladin* circumstantially demonstrates the etymological connection between *muwallad* and *mulato*. This connection and interrelation confirm my view that the “mule” theory is more politically charged etymology than historical fact.

⁸⁵ In Hadhrami Traders, Scholars and Statesmen in the Indian Ocean, 1750s-1960s, edited by Freitag and Clarence-Smith, p. 131.

⁸⁶ A historical region of the southern Arabian Peninsula, which today is divided between Yemen and Oman.

⁸⁷ In Hadhrami Traders, Scholars and Statesmen in the Indian Ocean, 1750s-1960s, p. 131.

Mulattos at the approach of abolition: active marginalization

By the late nineteenth century, the mulatto class, free mulattos in particular, had gained social prominence due to their professional skills. In urban zones, they had come to dominate certain trades – tailors, musicians, a whole gamut of artisan trades. This growing social prominence engendered resentment among the white elite and as a result, representations of mulattos increasingly revealed a degree of anxiety on their part. O mulato, in the scene of a group of white men relaxing on the street making observations about mulattos, mentions “a celebre passagem do Imperador com o engenheiro Rebouças,”⁸⁸ and comments that Brazil had already had “um presidente tão negro como qualquer daqueles cangueiros...a pipa de aguardente.” This comment performs a double function, reflecting white anxiety about the perceived political advancement of mulattos, on one hand, while demeaning successful mulattos by associating them with poor, drunken cargo handlers, on the other. This association of successful mulattos with poorer, less educated Afro-Brazilians highlights the limits of symbolic capital to lessen the impact of group delegitimization.

White anxiety about the success of free mulattos can be detected in the ironic comments of a white character, who is described by the narrator as old and wise, when he argues that mulattos “têm habilidade principalmente para a música.” “Habilidade?” responds another white character, continuing in the same ironic vein: “Talento digo-lhe eu? Esta raça cruzada é a mais esperta de Brasil! Coitadinhos dos brancos...se ela pila um pouco de instrução e resolver fazer uma chinfrinada...Felizmente não lhe dão muita ganga!” (136). The use of humor to control fear and advance self-efficacy has been

⁸⁸ André Rebouças, 1838-1898: An Afro-Brazilian engineer, journalist and anti-slavery activist. From Appiah and Gates’ Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience, p.1595.

studied extensively. One of the more notable articles on this is “Analysis of self-efficacy theory of behavioral change” (1977) by Bandura and Adams, who argue that introducing humor into a frightening context allows one to devise a less fearful cognitive construction of the situation. Faced with the rise of the free mulatto class, these white characters joke about mulatto advancement, even as the ironic tone points to fear, and the humor serves as a coping mechanism.

In O cortiço, the action takes place during the slave period, although the novel was written in 1890 and abolition had already been declared two years earlier. Whereas O mulato, as well as Casa de pensão, look back on an earlier version of slavery, O cortiço portrays mulattos in the post-abolition period. This portrayal of the mulatto class bodes ill for the Brazil of the future. Mulatto men are all shown as marginals or puffed up officials. The women are sex-crazed and destructive, or crazy and miserable. The Florinda character represents the arc of the mulatta’s life, what one can expect. Compared to the courageous mulatto class depicted in Cecilia Valdés, Azevedo’s mulattos lack talent and courage. In O mulato, although the mulatto character is shown as “good,” exhibiting Portuguese habits and looks, in the end he backslides and dies.

The mulatto has no future in Azevedo’s work. In a way, this Naturalistic and pessimistic view foreshadowed the catastrophic changes that came about with abolition; primarily the whitening program and the importation of skilled Europeans to take over professions practiced by the free mulatto and black class. However in O cortiço, the blame for this marginalization is put at the feet of the mulattos themselves, suggesting that they had innate characteristics that pushed them toward the margins of society. Some

years later Lima Baretto will go on to explore the same marginalization, but also expose its social causes.

Mulatto as a hybrid

The hybrid embodied one of the major stereotypes to impact the representation of mulattos. The hybrid concept was commonly used in nineteenth-century biological and botanical disciplines in reference primarily to plant and animal life. Already implied in the term is a certain objectification of the subject. Another problem with using the term is that it assumes the existence of two distinct primary categories, two clearly delineated races. This assumption can be seen as constitutive in the formation of white identity. On the surface, the existence of mulattos can be seen to threaten the black/white binary. Post-Colonial theorist Homi Bhabha supports that idea in his article “Signs Taken for Wonders,”⁸⁹ in which he argues that hybridity represents a challenge to the idea of essentialism in terms of cultural identity or race.

By creating the hybrid category, the dominant white elite retrenches the idea of distinct, clearly defined races with specific characteristics. When the existing categories are challenged by realities, the dominant class simply increases the number of categories. This increase thus allows the dominant class to suppress the fact that racial categories are *a priori* untenable. These additional categories reaffirm the extant hierarchy of privilege based on white superiority. The establishment of these untenable hybrid classifications consequently insists on the impurity of the hybrid as an unnatural condition. By marking the hybrid/mulatto as unnatural, as opposed to the natural superiority of whites and natural inferiority of blacks, the white elite actually creates a more vulnerable category.

⁸⁹ In The Post-Colonial Studies Reader, p. 34.

In that same vein, those who ascribe to the “mule” origin of the term *mulatto* perpetuate this mode of thinking. The mule is sterile, a biological dead end, and this association of the mulatto with the mule further propagates the idea of the ultimately untenable nature of the mulatto as a group. This perception also dovetails well with the theories of Gobineau, a well known, nineteenth-century racist, had popularized the idea that mixed-raced individuals would be sterile, and would eventually die out. Although practical experience in Brazil and Cuba demonstrated otherwise, his theories were widely embraced by the white dominated academic elite, and sustained a negative perception of hybridism.

In Cecilia Valdés, Cecilia’s hybridity is stressed, initially in a somewhat Romantic fashion, as “el color ligeramente bronceado... la Venus de la raza híbrida etiópico-caucásica” (100). The *Venus* reference is most likely a Romantic leftover from The primitive Cecilia Valdés in which Cecilia is said to resemble “estatuas griegas” (233). In fact, even the reference to *etiópico* reflects the Romantic attempt to dilute to African aspect of her character, not speaking of Africa, but rather of Ethiopia and the more comfortable images of Sheba⁹⁰ and Prester John. However, the *Venus* reference clarifies that the hybrid, embodied in Cecilia, is intrinsically inferior: “era de la raza híbrida e inferior” (108); in addition, Cecilia displayed the negative characteristics of “orgullo” and “vanidad” (108). The mulatto gets doubly negative qualities, the inferiority of the African and the arrogance of the white. Of course, the whites, being white, are excused their arrogance, a trait unacceptable in the mulatto. Cecilia’s hybrid nature also is said to blame for her moral lapses, as O’Reilly explains to Gamboa: “como es de raza híbrida, no hay que fijar mucho en su virtud” (594). It is not just a question of having

⁹⁰ The Kingdom of Sheba formed part of ancient Ethiopia.

African blood, and therefore being inferior; the hybrid is worse than that – it is unpredictable. It is as if Villaverde is saying that the hybrid is an unstable mix, that it is inconsistent, and thus resists categorization and social control. Bhabha echoes that sentiment in “Signs Taken for Wonders,” and sees inscrutability, the lack of essential stable qualities, as destabilizing to the colonizing or oppressive power.

I believe, to the contrary, that the “mulatto as a hybrid” concept introduces the necessary play into an overly rigid race system, giving it the flexibility to avoid cracking under its own contradictions. In this sense, hybridity does not destabilize the system; rather, it serves as a coping mechanism. The contradiction the hybrid represents within the rigid race system was initially created by the failure of white elite males to respect the social boundaries established by the binary race system. From the earliest days of slavery in the Americas, white elite males entered into sexual congress with black and mulatto women, which initiated the breach in the race barrier, consequently creating the need to develop the hybrid category within the social narrative in order to erase the subsequent contradiction.

Mulatta stereotypes

Although O mulato focused on the tribulations of a mulatto man, the vast majority of writing in this period about mulattos focused on the mulatta. The most common stereotype was that of the oversexed mulatta, and some of the most extreme representations of that stereotype appear in O cortiço in the form of the Rita Baiana character. She is described as possessing an animal sensuality as she danced: "meneios de mestiça ...graça irresistível, simples, primitiva, feita toda de pecado, toda de paraíso, com

muito de serpente e muito de mulher" (81). However, the narrator's description of her dancing does not vary much from his description of her lovemaking, to which he refers as a "frenesi de desejo doido" (171). The mulatta's sex act is depicted as violent, uncontrolled, and sinful: "agonia extrema, sobrenatural, uma agonia de anjos violentados por diabos, entre a vermelhidão cruenta das labareadas do inferno" (171). These references to "anjos violentados" speak not about Rita, but of the Portuguese Jerónimo's experience making love to her. Again the white male is portrayed as a victim, seduced and crushed by the "meneios de mestiça" and her excessive sexuality. Her passion is also described as earthy and essential, tied to "baunilha" and "cumarú" (171), furthering the idea of an animalistic tie to nature.

Beyond simply being erotica, which they are, in a sense, the references betray a certain tendency to show the mulatta's sex as a natural and uncontrolled tendency, distinct from the chaste, regulated sex for procreation sanctioned by the Catholic Church, and reserved for white wives. This uncontrolled sexuality of the mulatta is combined with the stereotype of irresistibility. Jerónimo cannot resist Rita's mere presence: "a mulata olfegante...voluptuosamente...dentro dele (Jerónimo) aqueles cabelos crespos, brilhantes e cheirosos, da mulata, principiavam a formar um ninho de cobras negras e venenosas, que lhe iam devorar o coração" (83). Even white women such as the Portuguese Leocádia seem to be drawn to her: "Leocádia...era perdida pela mulata" (66). This combination of uncontrolled sexuality and irresistibility served to justify the extensive sexual relations between women of color and elite white men. The mere existence of the mulatto class was evidence of sexual violence against women of color, as well as illicit relationships.

Many characters, mostly white females, are supposedly unaware of these relations. In Cecilia Valdés, Adela and Carmen protest strongly when María de Regla suggests that their father is also Cecilia's. They say he would never have a relationship with a "mulata sucia," which is also a source of anxiety in O mulato. Raimundo is hated mostly for the sin of his father, who crossed race lines, not only producing a mixed-race offspring, but also recognizing and educating him. Raimundo is shown to be an attractive character, and the excessive degree of hatred toward him indicates something deeper. This sentiment is expressed directly in other texts of the period. In Zoë, or, The quadroon's triumph, Livermore comments on the mulatto class of the Danish island of Santa Cruz: "for the most part, the children of illicit connections, and where is the community where the odium of such sin falls not upon the weaker party and her innocent offspring?" (11). This blaming of the victim is evident in Cecilia Valdés, from generation to generation; the mulatta women in Cándido Gamboa's life suffer from his actions, not Gamboa himself. Gamboa strips Charo of the infant Cecilia, deposits Cecilia in an orphanage, and has Charo committed to an asylum. Gamboa, when later faced with the incestuous relationship between Leonardo and Cecilia, again relies on the power of the white state apparatus to have Cecilia herself imprisoned. Gamboa faults Cecilia, the multigenerational victim of coerced sexual relations, and her mulatta "mañas" (593), for the inadvertent incestuous affair. The text consistently portrays Cecilia as the villain, as being of weak moral fiber, whereas the text only obliquely criticizes Gamboa, and not in moral terms, but for failing to manage his personal affairs properly.

Mulattos discomfited whites because they were living evidence of sexual violence and the crossing of the race line. The lighter the mulatto, the more evidence of long-term

abuse or interaction. However, the coupling rarely is shown to be a result of white male action; the mulatta, accused of moral laxitude, is established as a symbol of uncontrolled sexuality, as opposed to the white, male who actually controls the situation.⁹¹

In Cecilia Valdés, Doña Rosa exiles María de Regla to the sugar plantation after she serves as wet-nurse for Cecilia, Cándido Gamboa's illegitimate daughter. She is doubly punished, on a basic level because as an urban house slave she is accustomed to a basic degree of comfort, and on the plantation she is stripped of her shoes and has her hair shorn, but more importantly, because she is set up for serial rape by the plantation staff. Doña Rosa is complicit in the rape, which forms part of María de Regla's punishment. She states that she is the cause of trouble at the *ingenio*, forcing the Gamboas to change overseers because "tiene un encanto para los hombres" (306). The implication of this statement is that the rape of slave women is an open secret, and that rape is deployed as a form of punishment. The hypocrisy of this act is highlighted in the text by the fact Doña Rosa bases her argument for slavery on the salvation of the African "savages": "Pues halla más humanitario traer salvajes para convertirles en cristianos y hombres" (270). This travesty hits a low point when she uses the mulatto son of María de Regla as evidence of her moral failings: "Tirso es una acusación viva contra la moralidad de María de Regla – su padre fue un carpintero vizcaíno" (306). Absurd on the face of it, this inversion of blame serves as a moral underpinning of the slave system.

These portrayals of sexually uncontrolled and irresistible mulattas project sexual fantasies. The Leonardo character is depicted as desiring sex with Cecilia: "Aquella es toda pasión y fuego, es mi tentadora, un diablito en figura de mujer, la Venus de los mula... ¿Quién es bastante fuerte para resistarle?" (414). Yet, he seeks marriage with

⁹¹ There are gender issues here that do not fall within the scope of this dissertation.

Isabel, who is described in totally asexual terms: “Isabel...[b]ella, elegante, amable, instruida, severa, posee la virtud de erizo, que punza con sus espinas al que osa tocarla...Estatua, en fin, de mármol por lo rígida y lo fría, inspira respeto, admiración cariño, tal vez, no amor loco, no una pasión volcánica” (414). The sexual objectification of the mulatta reflects a response to the social constraints religion and tradition set on sexual relations within the family. The existence of slavery offered an escape valve for passions and desires that would have been deemed immoral in the existing social context. In fact, the vast population of enslaved, or otherwise socially disadvantaged women in nineteenth-century Brazil and Cuba, served very much the same function as contemporary prostitutes in these same countries today, and under very much the same circumstances. Prostitutes in the developing world are slaves to poverty and the wealthy white men who exploit them generally come from abroad. The narratives relating this contemporary sexual exploitation are marginal, primarily to be found on the Internet or in pornographic magazines. In the late nineteenth century, these eroticized imaginings filled novels that formed part of the legitimate national canon and served to naturalize and justify the activity. Today, even though the sexual exploitation of socially disadvantaged women is not legitimized through mainstream texts, contemporary cinematic and entertainment representations, often ostensibly with the intention to condemn exploitation, function to reaffirm the role of poor women of color as sex providers.

Mulattos and whites

The Cuban and Brazilian nations were constructed on a series of stereotypes, which drew on existing communities of people, blacks, mulattos, Spaniards, Portuguese,

white Creoles, and others. These stereotypes developed from archetypical characters that had evolved from an oral tradition, and later appeared in print, or in theater performances like the *Teatro Bufo* in Cuba, but through time and repetition, became viewed as real.

One of the most popular tropes from the mid-to-late nineteenth century in Cuba and Brazil involved the relationship between mulattos and whites. That relationship is described in a series of pat formulations: the idea of mulattos seeking white partners at any cost, of a “mulatto escape hatch,” or of the “tragic mulatto,” among others. These stereotypes came to inform not just the popular culture of these countries, but also academic studies of race relations throughout the twentieth century in a manner that maintained the institutional structures of racism.

Even as late as the 1970s, Carl N. Degler, in his book Neither Black nor White, described the historical situation of the mulatto in Brazil and the United States based on these stereotypical perceptions. He described the relationship between blacks and whites as more harmonious in Brazil than in the United States. He attributed this harmony to the presence of a large mulatto class: “The presence of the mulatto not only spreads people of color through the society, but it literally blurs and softens the line between black and white” (225). Degler suggests that, through their regular congress⁹² with black, slave women, the Portuguese became more comfortable with black people (as opposed to Anglo-Americans, who he argues had fewer interracial relations), and that this commingling created a special bond with the mulatto class. When Degler was writing, his work was seminal. The strength of received stereotypes, springing from his reliance on the work of Gilberto Freyre, is palpable. This view on the cozy white elite/mulatto

⁹² Degler does not dwell on the fact that this congress was overwhelmingly involuntary on the part of the slave women.

relationship supports a race mythology that to this day undermines Afro-Brazilian social stability, and affects their ability to address social injustices.

In terms of the mulatto class serving as a social bridge between whites and blacks, however, one could suggest just the opposite. The mulatto class, as opposed to being closer to the white elite, had a more complicated relationship with the white elite than it had with the black community. The mulatto's proximity to whites, in terms of physical similarity, as perceived by whites, and the acquisition of cultural skills perceived as European, created anxiety in white society and provoked a social response that is evident in these selected texts. The white elite perceived socially designated blacks, especially *bozales*,⁹³ as totally alien. The ethnologies set out by characters such as Cándido Gamboa in Cecilia Valdés serve to mark their difference and show them as exotic foreigners. This difference, grounded primarily in physical markers, culture, and religion, justified, in the white elite cultural context, the enslavement of Africans. As the mulatto crossed the phenotypical and cultural barriers, the construct created a disconcerting proximity that had to be demolished, thus exposing the occluded "continuum" between black and white. Even as the mulatto spanned the breach, he or she threatened to erode the uncluttered distinctions between the two caste-like categories.

The mulatto novelist Morúa Delgado made this point with his novel Sofia, that racial difference is pure artifice, and must be supported by more and more artifice until it collapses under the weight of its own absurdity. Muñoz del Monte also referenced that anxiety in his poem *La mulata*, when he spoke of the mulatta as "la fatal manzana que al suelo arroja la infernal discordia." The mixed-race person shattered and made impossible the racial categorization that enabled a system of social privileges.

⁹³ *Bozal* is the term used to refer to a black slave recently taken from Africa.

Raimundo, the mulatto character in O mulato, plays a similar function as Sofia. Not his “blackness,” but rather his “whiteness,” his education, his competence and handsomeness, are problematic. The education of mixed-race individuals is an outrage for the Canon Diogo character: “Devian ser burros... que só prestassem... para nos servir. Malditos!” (20). Canon Diogo’s assertion of Afro-American “inferiority” vis-à-vis whites is, in his view, a practical matter. He does not see Afro-Americans as intrinsically inferior; rather their subjugated condition allows him to reap benefits. Canon Diogo does not try to justify philosophically this oppression; he simply evokes the social consequences of its end. Raimundo represents the idealized potential of mixed-race people, socially integrated and familiar, the death-knell for the traditional white elite. Clearly the maintenance of white prerogative in his own profession motivates Diogo to reject mulatto involvement is the clergy so strongly. His character voices the anxiety of a class of individuals weakened by generations of privilege, faced with a flood of talented and energetic people, freed of the yoke of race oppression and slavery.

Even Firmo in O cortiço, the only one of these novels written post-abolition, represents a threat. On the surface, he does not appear so; he is described as living to party, drink, and sing, as a lay-about. However, there are subtle references to his profession as a lathe operator, a skilled laborer, and also to his participation in political gangs. His talent resonated for the white elite readers of the period this novel was written, but his talent. The white elite depended on people of his type, skilled people of color, to operate their world on a day-to-day basis, which worried them. Mulattos, with their cultural and educational skills, their physical familiarity, as well as being living

documents of slavery and hypocritical miscegenation, reminded the white elite of their failures and national guilt.

Black people were mostly relegated to their old plantations, working in modified forms of wave slavery, but the freed and soon to be freed mulattos were in the streets, in their houses, in their markets, and even writing in their newspapers. The urban space described in O cortiço is practically bereft of black characters, just Bertoleza scaling fish, but mulattos dominate the urban landscape, and the whites struggle to reclaim that urban sphere for themselves.

Mulattos were not going away, or dying off from sterility as Gobineau had suggested they would;⁹⁴ in fact they were thriving. Since they were not going away, they had to be written away, discredited. Negative portrayals of mulatto characters multiplied, the minimal government efforts to include mulattos in their civil service ranks were savaged in novels such as Canaan and the short stories of Monteiro Lobato, as well. Even the pitiful police posts they were given became a trope, with a multitude of incompetent mulatto policemen such as Alexandre in O cortiço, with his “carão de mulato” and “ar condolente e estúpido” (108), filling the pages of late nineteenth-century Brazilian novels.

There are a fair number of specific mulatto stereotypes, but instead of doing a laundry list of them all, I would like discuss some broader categories of representation that have had an enduring impact on Afro-Americans. One of the most commonly held truisms about mulattos, and mulattas in particular, is that they want a white partner at any cost. This popular belief is held by many in Cuba and Brazil to this day, and through

⁹⁴ “[O]s mulatos não se reproduzem além de um número limitado de gerações.” Citation from Georges Raeders’ O Conde de Gobineau no Brasil, p. 85.

textual examples, some light can be shed on its constitutive role in the development of Cuban and Brazilian national cultures.

Marrying up

One of the primary stereotypes of women of color, both black and mulatta, in Cuba and Brazil, concerns their supposed dream of marrying, or at least producing offspring, with white men. Azevedo portrays the Bertoleza character in O cortiço as putting up with extreme types of abuse and disrespect from the Portuguese, João Romão, but never considering an Afro-Brazilian partner, “como toda a cafuza, Bertoleza não queria sujeitar-se a negros e procurava instintivamente o homem numa raça superior à sua” (20).

The novel Sofia relates the extremes to which mulattas would go to get a white mate, attending a “jaranita de arroz con frijoles” (87), the derogatory phrase used to describe parties organized by white playboys to get mulatta sex partners. One mulatta character is duped, in an extravagant hoax that includes a sham wedding, into thinking she had been married to one of these white playboys (7), and it is implied that she was foolish for considering such a possibility. In the same novel, the parents of a mulatta encourage their daughter to become a white man’s concubine for the “adelanto de la raza” (151). Furthermore, in Calcagno’s Uno de tantos, the black mother of the Romualdo character is portrayed as happy to have the “porvenir de unirse a un blanco” (31), although the text demonstrates the falsity of her hope with the double loss of her son, stolen away at birth, and murdered as an adult.

This idea of marrying, or breeding up, appears in various forms, and has a variety of implications. One of the primary roles that it plays in the social narrative of the late nineteenth century departs from the whitening program embraced by both countries, whereby the country would become whiter through women of color “marrying up,” and whiteness was furthered through massive white immigration. In the novel Cecilia Valdés, Villaverde narrates the whitening trajectory of four generations of women in Havana. The María de Regla character recounts the process as it played out in Cecilia’s family, listing the names of the women, from generation to generation, who sought out white partners, highlighting how each generation became successively whiter: “Madalena, negra como yo...tuvo con un blanco...Chepilla, parda...Chepilla con otro blanco...Charito, parda clara...Charito con otro blanco Cecilia Valdés, blanca” (524).

This lineage has a array of implications. First of all, it reflects the common theme that Cuba and Brazil would become whiter through miscegenation, predicated on the assumption that Afro-Americans would prefer white partners. Generally this was assumed to be women of color producing offspring with partners lighter-skinned than themselves. Chepilla reaffirms this guiding principle when she speaks to Cecilia about her friend Nemesia: “Se casará, si casa, con un mulato...porque su padre tiene más de negro que otra cosa. Tú...eres casi blanca y puedes aspirar a casarte con un blanco...blanco, aunque pobre, sirve para marido; negro o mulato, ni buey de oro” (86). Cecilia’s female forebears expect her to marry up. María de Regla describes Chepilla and Charo as “sabichosas” (524), although this comment could be taken as a portrayal of mulatto arrogance in the eyes of a black woman. Her remark gives the impression that Chepilla and Charo thought they were doing something smart by having a baby with a

rich, white man. However, only Cecilia offers a frank discussion of the motive for marrying a white man. In Cecilia's case, the motivation relates, on the surface, to money and comfort: "me colma de riquezas y me da muchos tunicos de seda y me hace una señora y me lleva a otra tierra donde nadie me conoce" (328). This financial motive commonly circumscribes motives to marry white men, along with that of the biological imperative to marry white, which is the case with the Rita Baiana character in O cortiço.

Not only money motivates Cecilia, however. Even though most of the related references in the text portray her as having an "índole vagabunda"(74), and to be obsessed with status and luxury, very common stereotypes for the mulatta character, Cecilia's further motivation embodies the idea of going somewhere people do not know her: that desire fuels her wish to marry Leonardo. She wants her dream husband to take her to a land where she is unknown, i.e., where no one knows her biography. She will be able to pass and escape the burden of blackness that she does not carry in her skin, but in her personal history. Villaverde recounts to the reader that mulattos seek to escape their African background. Neither Villaverde, nor the white Cuban elite of his day could conceive of someone preferring to be associated with blackness.

Cecilia is depicted as being terrified at failing to proceed with the multi-generational whitening plan: "Se me caería la cara de vergüenza si me casara y tuviera un hijo saltatrás" (374). The "social truth," seen as "real" or "factual," is a product of *reproduction*, and is *habitus*. Members of a given group are programmed from birth to think some things are true, and not question them. Stereotypes evolve as firm part of the social narrative through repetition. The appearance of this 'marrying up' trope through multiple generations of texts generates the impression that the trope is based on some

objective reality. Yet, the constant retelling of the myth eventually gives it the aura of common knowledge. Even supposedly more enlightened writers, such as the Cuban Morúa Delgado, reinforce the “breeding-up” concept, by portraying mulattas who seek liaisons with rich white men, at parties thrown for that purpose. He depicts the women as fools, responsible for their own predicament when they are cruelly deceived, not as victims of a system that has assigned them an inferior and harsh position in society, as articulated by O’Reilly in Cecilia Valdés: “En concepto de vulgo, nacen predestinadas para concubinas de los hombres de raza superior” (598).

Villaverde portrays mulatto characters as generally accepting the “marrying up” view as normal. Uribe brags that he was able to marry his mulatta wife, Clara, in spite of her desire to marry a white man. The author implies that Clara was unable to find a white partner. To the contrary, by arguing that he was able to attain a light-skinned mulatta woman destined for a white a man, Uribe puts himself on par with those same white men. That is, Uribe acts and determines value within a symbolic system established by the white elite; what he wants, and who he is, are limited by this system. In this double bind situation, he is a victim of a system based on false assumptions, but relies on the same system to heighten his social status. Nemesia accentuates this irony when she intimates to Cecilia, that it was “durita” for Clara to marry a mulatto. Nemesia’s comment serves to undermine Uribe’s claim to status and recapitulates the assumption that mulatto women preferably seek white partners. The text ultimately functioned to inscribe in the social narrative, once again, the supposed social truth of the “marrying up” stereotype.

In Cecilia Valdés, not only is “marrying up” touted as social achievement, the material benefits of concubinage are also emphasized. Chepilla, Cecilia’s grandmother,

herself a mulatta, is depicted as having a relatively nice lifestyle. She is described as having a certain degree of “lujo...por...una mujer de color” and to be an “ama... no criada” (63). She is referred to as “una mulata gorda, bien vestida y hermosa” (518). Cándido Gamboa maintains this comparatively comfortable lifestyle because Charo is his mistress, and is having his child. While ultimately, if not equivocally, critical of the tradition of the mulatta mistress, Villaverde’s reiteration of the social model naturalizes it. The attraction and allure of the mulatta figure quashed any moralistic admonition. Even if the tone is critical, the image of the desirable mulatta represents more than just a mistress, or sex; she is a kind of contrived taboo, an innocuous break with the constraining social structure. It is precisely here that the problem lies – the mulatta, as a function in the text, ceases to be a mere subject, and becomes a symbol of transgression.

That society opted to turn a blind eye to this congress between mulattas and the white elite functions as a social control mechanism, a safety valve grounded in a certain racial calculus. If by permitting this “minor” transgression against race and family, white males marry white women and have unofficial sex with mulattas, then the white bloodlines remain intact via real or sanctioned marriage. Thus, property and wealth stay within the white community, providing less risk of a slow Africanization of the economic elite. The white children of the white mothers receive all titles and monies, while anything offered to the non-white children is portrayed as a gesture of generosity, as detected with the Manero character in Cecilia Valdés, who tries to keep his “family of color” together at the slave market: “se porta como buen amo: no habrá extrañamiento ni dispersión de la familia”(284). Villaverde diverges from the traditional model of the mulatta character. He sees the underlying implications of this widespread concubinage

with mulattas and the concomitant risk of incest. Beyond that, however, is a further motive for his divergence from the traditional model of the mulatto character. Villaverde wrote much of the later, most complete version of his novel in New York, and from that vantage point, Cuba had begun to look very miscegenated, especially compared to the lesser degree of race mixing he found in the United States. Historical evidence ties him to the American South and to *Filibusteros* such as Narciso López, who hoped to annex Cuba to the United States as a slave state.⁹⁵ I believe there is enough historical evidence to suggest that he felt, as did Antonio Saco, that Cuba had gotten too dark. But unlike Saco, who believed miscegenation, combined with European immigration, would whiten Cuba, Villaverde had doubts about the whitening process.

All the mixed race relationships in Cecilia Valdés are depicted negatively. María de Regla gives birth to Tirso after being raped⁹⁶ by a white carpenter; Manero has to buy his own children in a slave market, Charo goes mad, Cecilia goes to jail, Leonardo is murdered, while Cándido Gamboa is socially humiliated. Both white and Afro-Cuban characters voiced the subtle message that interracial relationships lead to trouble. The most enigmatic character in this regard, Charo, is designated as mad because she refused to follow the rules. Charo could not bring herself to surrender her daughter to the Paula orphanage, as ordered by her white, elite lover. She may have been a “free” mulatta, but as already noted, free often was a relative term, simply meaning not a legal slave. She certainly lacked political, social, or economic power, as evidenced by her commitment to the Paula hospice when Cándido Gamboa and his cohort, Dr. Montes de Oca, perceived her to be an unruly mulatta. As a mulatta in the whitening trajectory, Charo had to play

⁹⁵ This conclusion is drawn from Rodrigo Lazo’s article “Filibustering Cuba: Cecilia Valdés and a Memory of Nation in the Americas” *American Literature* 74.1 (2002) 1-30.

⁹⁶ Rape as used herein is any sexual contact under false pretenses and coercion.

by the rules of the game, sacrificing her own desires and rights, and submitting to the white man's rule. In Charo's case, submission meant surrendering her child.

Any mulatta who failed to cooperate was branded as mad. Cecilia is mad in her own way, as well. Instead of accepting her place as a concubine, she dreamed of being a wife, of a legitimate marriage, or of going away and "becoming" white. Villaverde's greatest fear is not of incest, but of a gradual fading of the color line, of the evolution of a nation that was neither black nor white, but brown. Even Cecilia's grandmother thinks she is crazy for wanting to marry a white man: "es un sueño irrealizable, un disparate, una locura...él es blanco y tú de color, por más que lo disimulen tu cutis de nácar y tus cabellos negros y sedosos" (328). Cecilia is punished for her "madness," as was her mother, since in fact, at the end they are imprisoned together. There is some perverted hope, though. Just before she dies, and with her daughter at her side, Charo becomes lucid and recognizes her daughter. In the end, Cecilia has her "white(r)" baby, which, within the logic of "marrying up" is seen as a victory; however for Villaverde it is precisely the mulatta's "marrying up," or even her interracial concubinage, that is a threat and a transgression, for which she must be punished.

According to Villaverde, the cost of these racial projects to white society has also been high. Leonardo is killed, Cándido Gamboa is exposed, and the Isabel character is removed from the legitimate reproduction function that the white woman played in this racial love triangle of white man, mulatta mistress, and white wife. But does the rebellious mulatta Cecilia really win? If her biography prevented her from being white and benefiting from white prerogatives, would not the same be true for her son? As a foundational fiction, a so-called national novel, what is the message for Cuba and how

does it impact its vision of itself as a people? The multigenerational whitening project has failed, a white Creole elite, manifested in the Leonardo character, is depicted as incompetent and self-indulgent to a deadly degree. Could it be that Villaverde's depiction of "marrying up" is an allegory for the failed national program? In O cortiço, the "marrying up" of Rita Baiana spells the death knell for the myth that European immigration would succeed in improving the nation. Jerónimo, the ideal specimen of a European immigrant, a skilled laborer, strong as a bull with a wife and child, is felled by Rita's charms practically fresh off the boat. In a very short time, he has abandoned his wife, become a layabout who prefers to spend his time in bed with Rita rather than build the new and improved Brazil.

Azevedo relies more on the science discourse than Villaverde when discussing race and race relations. The Jerónimo character's quick fall into Brazilian habits is not merely a result of the mulatta's seduction, but reflects some of the late nineteenth-century ideas on race in the sense that he represents the "degenerate civilized man." Fornander's work on Polynesians (1877) and Schlegel's Philosophy of History (1843), widely read works at the time, discuss racial degeneration, arguing that *savagery* was always a stage of degeneration.⁹⁷ In other words, humans start out as civilized and then devolve.

Oliveira Martins juxtaposed this idea of the "degenerate civilized man" with the theory that civilization is contingent on environment, and that Europeans who found themselves in more tropical climates would lose their civilized habits. Martins uses the historical figure Caramarú as an example of a degenerated Portuguese.⁹⁸ Rita Baiana is closely associated with Brazilian nature. Jerónimo is seduced not only by a Brazilian

⁹⁷ As Raças Humanas by Oliveira Martins, p. 51.

⁹⁸ As Raças Humanas, p. 57.

mulatta, but also by the nature of Brazil itself. Rita is so closely tied to a kind of essential Brazilianness, something generally associated with indigenous people at the time. The narrator refers to Rita as “o fruto dourado e acre destes sertões americanos” (169). This view on race and the potential of the whitening program dooms from the outset the dream that Silvio Romero, and others of the white elite, had of the gradual whitening of Brazil through miscegenation. According to expectations, Rita Baiana may have a biological imperative to prefer a white partner: “sangue de mestiça reclamou os seus direitos de apuração” and “preferiu...o macho da raça superior” (169). Azevedo, however, affirms with the Jerónimo character that this coupling will not result in the birth of superior offspring, and that Jerónimo’s contact with the mulatta will strip him of the very qualities that the Europeans were thought to possess: strength and an industrious spirit. Again, it is less that Rita, as a woman of African descent, carries some African quality that is to blame; it is in her symbolic role as Brazil, and its essential nature, that is the danger to the new immigrant.

The stereotype of mulattas desiring to find a white partner crosses the national and regional boundaries of Brazil and Cuba. In spite of a similar cultural context, both slave societies, late on permitting abolition, have very dissimilar ways of interpreting this stereotype, and its repercussions on their societies are also quite distinct. While Cecilia sought wealth and the chance to become white, Rita wants no such thing. No material motive is revealed, nor is there any indication that she sought to be anything but a mulatta. Rita’s desire for Jerónimo was a biological imperative. In the end, Azevedo’s race theory is the most essentialist, and more racist than Villaverde’s, so to speak, since it

is based entirely on racial disposition, and not, as in the case with Cecilia, social considerations.

The repercussions these relations have on society, and on the characters themselves, also differ. In Cecilia Valdés, the white characters meet with failure and death, a warning on the dangers of race mixing, but Cecilia, although brutalized, wins a pyrrhic victory. The Jerónimo character in O cortiço is portrayed as failing, or losing, but only from the perspective of the white elite. Perhaps if there were a non-white elite perspective, it might suggest that he has not led a “bad” life; he might even be considered acculturated. However, certainly, in this text, written by a member of the white elite, he has failed in his immigrant duty.

Rita, however, appears to come out relatively unscathed, although still subjected to symbolic exile; the slum becomes gentrified and she goes away. Rita’s exit could be seen as a victory for the João Romão character, who has liberated himself from his slave partner, Bertoleza, and moved up the social ladder, but there is something almost mythical about the Rita Baiana character. In fact, a note of sadness appears in the narrator’s tone as he speaks of Rita’s departure, as if the slum had lost something essential, something specifically Brazilian: “Depois da partida de Rita, já não faziam sambas” (205). Effectively, Rita Baiana plays a constitutive role in the national narrative, and is not the pliable mulatta that Freyre concocted later.⁹⁹ She is an uncontrollable element, marginalized perhaps, but indestructible. In Rita, Azevedo does not give so much a commentary of miscegenation, but of an essential Brazilianness that would not be erased by waves of immigration. Amidst all of the damaging associations he makes with the mulatta – sensuality, animal desire, a total lack of order – that form part of her

⁹⁹ Casa grande e senzala, p. 683.

“popular” image even today, there seems to be a certain nostalgia, for a Brazil, perhaps a mythical one, that was fading away.

Mulattos who pass

This section will discuss characters that read white, but in fact are later revealed to be mulatto. In the extra-textual world, “reading” white is referred to as “passing,” a term that generally refers to someone socially designated as black, due to their biography, but are seen as white by those they meet and who are unaware of their biography. In fact, the biography, the birth certificates, and institutional documents related to race, are simply texts that, in terms of determining race, are granted more authority than the physical body as text. Texts that address race also rely on biography, a trope common to slave societies in both North and South America.

Some black characters reading white appear unaware of their black heritage, as seen with Raimundo from O mulato, while others are aware of their own biography, as seen, with a few complications, in the case of Cecilia in Cecilia Valdés. In Morúa Delgado’s Sofía, a pointed rewriting of Cecilia Valdés, there is the case of the white woman, who, unaware of her own background, passes as a mulatto, and it is through the irony of a “white” woman perceiving herself as “black” due to errors in biography that he highlights the artificiality of racial categories. “Passing” as an idea calls attention to the untenable theory of racial classification and dismantles socially constructed notions of race through irony.

Biography, central to determining racial category, literally means “writing about the organism.” There already exists a certain corporality to the reference that becomes

accentuated when the biography includes race. Biography, in our contemporary usage, represents more than a simple listing of vital statistics. The term encompasses personality characteristics and the life experience of a human subject. However, in texts that work the race thematic, biography negates the very subjective qualities brought out in our contemporary sense of the biography. Canon Diogo speaks the first words heard about the Raimundo character in O mulato: “Ninguém aqui lhe ignora a biografia, todos sabem de quem ele saiu” (19). Before he even appears on the scene, his race has already been determined by those knowledgeable. However, characters unfamiliar with his family history see him as white, based on his phenotype. They must learn that he is a mulatto: “ouvi dizer que é mulato” (62), says a *galego*¹⁰⁰ immigrant on the street as if he were speaking about a moral defect, as if Raimundo were an ex-convict. This inability to determine race through visual evaluation highlights the advanced degree of miscegenation in Brazilian society at the time. The text does not indicate that other characters can perceive a difference in comportment. Blackness is like a family scandal, a skeleton in the closet, not directly associated with the individual in question, but understood as a dark stain on one’s character regardless of one’s personal qualities. A person’s racial status must be spoken, not seen. The phenotype, the physical text, is insufficient to determine race. Race has left the corporal locus and taken up residence in the moral realm, and reputation frames the window to the moral realm, which has little to do with individual acts and everything about social control.

In Cecilia Valdés, the Cecilia character is phenotypically perceived as white, but her race does not rest in her skin, as the comments to her by the Dionisio character show:

¹⁰⁰ Although the term literally refers to natives of Galicia, in Brazil it is also used as a generic term for the Portuguese (Michaelis Dicionário Ilustrado, 1961).

“Se figura que como tiene el pellejo blanco es blanca” (383). Although this statement might appear to constitute a contradiction, in the race logic of the day it made sense; the “logic” confirms the role of biography in determining race. On the other hand, Raimundo, raised and educated in Europe, ignores his own biography, and based on phenotype and assumed parentage, sees himself as white. He is astonished when he learns his biography from his uncle Manuel Pescada, and seeks out some trace of Africa in his reflection: “procurando descobrir...rosto descorado...algum sinal, que denunciase a raça negra” (130).

Earlier indicators in the text elucidate his racial composition. The narrator refers to his “tez morena e amulatada” (28), so readers have a hint of this secret. Some might also be co-conspirators with Manuel Pescada, perhaps secretly hoping Raimundo will quickly conclude his business and be on his way before he discovers the truth about his background. Here readers can become complicit, having been deftly guided by the narrative to desire that the sympathetic Raimundo character’s race remain a secret, at least to him, so that he may live in peace. Even to the readers, his blackness seems to be a poison, when the real poison is that of passing, the negation of someone’s self. This inclination can be couched in practical terms: the sympathetic reader wants him have a happy life, free from the burden of blackness in a racist society, but that same reader is still rejecting his blackness, his black heritage. Readers become complicit because they “accept” that being white has all the advantages and want Raimundo to go on being white for his own sake, regardless of the rot in the system.

The text leads, as it probably led sensitive readers of the day, to hope that Raimundo’s illusion is maintained, and that is one of the weaknesses of the text, in terms

of race. In reality, passing for white signifies a bonanza in symbolic capital terms, it is the last step, one has met the criteria established by the white elite. White domination is maintained, to a great degree, by social control sustained by a system of symbolic capital, making people long to be like them instead of fighting against them. Passing can be seen as the final test for the mulatto individual whose phenotype is indistinguishable from white. Passing means they have acquired habits, dress, diction, and education and lost any trace of their African forebears. When one wishes for Raimundo, or any mulatto character, to pass successfully, one supports his or her total submission to the concept of whiteness, the white power structure based on exclusion and the rejection of all value and values associated with Afro-Americans.

Whereas Raimundo spends most of his life unintentionally passing as white, in Europe and in his own mind, Cecilia is portrayed as actively attempting to pass. In fact, when freed from the burden of biography, Cecilia is seen as white, referred to by Leonardo and others as “blanca” and “blanca al parecer” (627). She tries herself to maintain that perception in the face of widespread knowledge of her background even after her racial “outing” by Dionisio during the dance, where he charged that: “Si su padre es blanco, su madre no es más blanca que yo” (382) and that “se figura que es blanca, y es parda” (385). Cecilia refuses to concede her origin publicly and complains to Leonardo: “dijo...que yo era mulata.” This concealment of her socially constituted racial identity appears to be part of her campaign to marry a white man.¹⁰¹ However, in the logic of the

¹⁰¹ However, it seems improbable that Leonardo, who knew Cecilia’s grandmother, would be unaware of Cecilia’s racial identity. It would also be unlikely that Leonardo would have failed to make the familiar connection, as Cuban author Morúa Delgado pointed out in the immediate years following the novel’s publication. (Morúa Delgado’s citation found in Segregated Miscegenation: On the Treatment of Racial Hybridity in the North American and Latin American Literary Traditions by Carlos Hiraldo, p. 42.

narrative, Cecilia has a practical motive for wanting to pass. She differs from Raimundo in that she does not encourage the reader to sympathize with her goal. In fact, her successful passing is shown as courting disaster, on the micro-level because it will unite her with Leonardo in an incestuous marriage, and on the macro-level because it represents the possibility of erasing the line between races.

In the larger context, passing disrupts Iberian perceptions of purity passed down from the time of the Muslim occupation. It also heightens the risk of incestuous relationships, since the children of rich white men and women of color could short circuit the biography-based racial categorization system. Although community-level biography serves to impede passing, once an individual breaks local social bonds, the only biographical means to determine race is the legal biography in the form of official documents. In the case of the infant Cecilia, and other illegitimate children, they are given to the church orphanage, and christened with the name Valdés, effectively occluding the illegitimate child's real paternal origin. Biography generally thwarts passing, yet illicit relationships between the white male elite and women of color can weaken or tear the biographical net. The occluded biography can serve the individual who seeks to pass, but only with physical displacement and sacrifice of local communal ties. Villaverde also emphasizes the potential incest angle, which was certainly a factor, but was more concerned about maintaining the whiteness of the white elite in hopes of maintaining racially divided and hierarchal post-colonial Cuban nation.¹⁰²

¹⁰² I base this assertion on Villaverde's association with the Southern cause in the pre-Civil War United States, and his close ties with *filibustero* Narciso López, (according to Poyo in his article "Evolution of Cuban Separatist Thought in the Emigre Communities of the United States, 1848-1895," p. 491), who had favored the annexation of Cuba to the United States as a slave state. I believe that Villaverde's ultimate goal was to liberate Cuba from Spain while maintaining the privileges of the white slave-owning elite, albeit in a kinder, gentler form, personified by the Isabel character.

Many mulatto characters are simply implied to be mulattos, although they are never directly designated as such in the text. The impression is given that they have failed to pass, although the characters themselves give no indication of an effort to do so themselves. They are depicted as being betrayed by some feature that indicates their African background. Assumed here is a desire on the part of all mulattos to pass as white if they can. Examples of this from Cecilia Valdés are Pancho Sofla, whose race is established by indirect inferences such as “confusión en su frente angosta” (133) and “el estudiante...con aspecto amulatado” (145). Also, the academic Govantes is said to have “un color de tabaco que hacía dudar mucho la pureza de sangre.” (147). Lastly, there is the mayoral Don Liborio, who seems to come close to passing, but not quite. He is described as an “hombre alto, enjuto de carnes...recios miembros, muy moreno de rostro, ojinegro, el cabello crespo y poblado de barba...grandes patillas...parecía de un hombre blanco” yet it is made clear to the reader that he is not white: “La nariz, las mejillas y las manos nadie diría sino que eran de un mulato” (453).

African features are articulated as an accusation, a questioning of purity, deploying terms such as “doubtful,” as if something had been intentionally hidden. Considering that the whole mulatto class in both Brazil and Cuba is, for the most part, a living testimony to generations of Afro-American women violated by white men, it is an affront to blame the mulatto for his existence.

Becoming white

The question arises as to the reality or necessity of passing in Brazil and Cuba. Passing may be a phenomenon peculiar to societies with a “one drop” view of race,

hatch” concept does not imply that they are passing, *per se*, but that in Brazilian culture there existed a social mechanism that allowed people that met these requirements to share the same social privileges as whites.

Haberly links the “mulatto escape hatch” directly to literary production, suggesting that since literary production was so much a preserve of the white elite, writing became a ritual affirmation of whiteness (5). He argues that nineteenth-century Brazilian “non-white” intellectual Tobias Barreto published a highly specialized philosophical journal in German that could only have limited circulation in order to affirm his cultural whiteness. Haberly’s argument that Tobias Barreto published his article in German to display his “whiteness” appears weak, given that the choice of the German language for erudite studies at the time was more practical than ritual. Much like many non-native English speakers who prefer to publish their work in English today in order to have greater exposure, Tobias Barreto possibly published in German, the academic *lingua franca* of the day, for much the same reason. The limited spread of the writing of contemporary critic Antônio Cândido shows that even today a Brazilian academic, no matter how brilliant, will have little exposure if they publish only in Portuguese. Further undermining Haberly’s argument that Tobias Barreto sought to achieve “whiteness” through his writing, was the fact that Tobias Barreto wrote

extensively about the racial identity of what he called the *mestizo*,¹⁰³ which he saw as a race in formation, neither purely Aryan, African, or American. This effort to define and legitimize the *mestizo* hardly indicates an effort on his part to become white, and the fact that history holds him up as a great mulatto, as opposed to simply a great Brazilian, suggests that he never became situationally white.

As an example of the “mulatto escape hatch,” Haberly (6) cites the famous example of Brazilian novelist Machado de Assis. In fact, many contemporary editions of his novels do not mention his racial background in their summaries, although most of the current criticism written about his work mentions his race, perhaps hoping to promote the idea that Brazil did not balk at honoring a man of color. Even if some of Machado de Assis’ contemporaries viewed him as white, it was more about cognitive dissidence in a racist community that could not accept a talented mixed-race individual in their midst. In fact, his mulatto origin seems to be almost intentionally obscured, so as to hide the racial background of one of Brazil’s most respected novelists.

Luiz Gama, a famous nineteenth-century lawyer, journalist, and activist who was also a mulatto, took great pride in his black heritage. He savagely satirized mixed-race Brazilians who tried to pass as white. The idea of the “mulatto escape hatch” is a convenient mechanism unpinning the Brazilian racial harmony myth, promoted by many of Brazil’s white elite, Gilberto Freyre, foremost among them. Freyre attributed the relatively large number mulattos in Brazil to oversexed Portuguese colonists and their predilection for dark-skinned women, which he suggested reminded them of Moorish

¹⁰³ Found in Almeida Pereira’s “Survey of African-Brazilian Literature,” p. 877. Note that Tobias Barreto’s usage of the term *mestizo* varies from the standard in that refers not merely to the Indigenous-European binary, but also includes the African element.

women back home.¹⁰⁴ Degler cites census data¹⁰⁵ that show a marked decline of miscegenation after abolition in 1890, which suggests that these couplings had not been voluntary.

Both literary texts and historical personalities from late nineteenth-century Brazil strongly undermine the notion of an “escape hatch,” from the real life tribulations of Lima Barreto, a talented mulatto writer who died in an asylum, mad from poverty and the cruelty of Brazilian society, to the fictional Raimundo of O mulato, talented and perceived as white, yet murdered by racist extremists. These two examples bear witness to the fact that the “mulatto escape hatch,” if it existed, was limited and rare. Raimundo is the ideal textual example of this, because he possesses ample symbolic capital – European sophistication, money and very light skin – but his destruction exposes limits of situational whiteness. No matter what his achievements may be, or how white his skin, his family history condemns him, strips him of the whiteness he experienced in Europe, a condition he had assumed was his own. His mother was black, which meant that he could not be white.

In Villaverde’s picture of Cuba you find portraits of successful mulattos and blacks such as the poet Plácido, for example, but they are still solidly Afro-Cuban. In fact, Cecilia Valdés almost dismisses the possibility of the “mulatto escape hatch.” Cecilia is perceived as white by those who do not know her background, so much so that Leonardo describes her as white when he looks for her at the prison: “una muchacha blanca, bonita, vestida de luto” (608). Although her phenotype allows her to pass for white, her biography will thwart her from becoming situationally white. Multiple

¹⁰⁴ Degler, p. 226.

¹⁰⁵ Degler, p. 227.

generations of implied racial “cleansing” alone cannot achieve this goal. For Cecilia to become white, she must hide her biography and totally disassociate herself from all Afro-Cuban contact. Again this disassociation is not an escape hatch, where a mulatto can show great talent and become situationally white. The black biography must be eliminated, buried and hidden away, and witnesses must be silenced.¹⁰⁶

In short, Degler’s emphasis on physical markers is excessive, and his argument for the existence of situational whiteness is weakened by Cecilia and Raimundo’s difficult ascension to whiteness as outlined in the texts. Moreover, his uncritical acceptance of the Brazilian racial democracy myth, first articulated by Gilberto Freyre, not only leads to a skewed view of racial constructs in Brazil, but also plays a role in the continuation of social injustices against Afro-Brazilians.

Too white to be made to suffer!

Also related to the concept of “passing” is the trope of the tragic mulatto, a light-skinned, mixed-race person, usually with a slave mother and a white, slave-owner father. Generally, the tragic mulatto is unaware that his/her mother was black. The tragic mulatto believes he or she is free and white until some event exposes their true origin. The tragic mulatto, is pulled back into slavery, deserted by his or her white lover, and females (the majority), are raped by white men and die. Raimundo is a male manifestation of this type, essentially a passive victim overcome by circumstances that he cannot comprehend. His

¹⁰⁶ Genome research has provided fascinating information about the genetic links to race. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. discussed his own genetic testing experience on the PBS program *African American Lives*, which premiered in February 2006. It has been a great help to Afro-Americans in the United States who seek their historic roots. However, the ramifications go beyond genealogy, and my first thought was what the Nazi regime in Germany or the Spanish Inquisition would have done with such a tool. Its conceptual similarity with phrenology and other nineteenth century pseudo-sciences also reminds me of the lengths that the post-abolition white elite went to in order to impede the Afro-American populations from “passing,” and essentially escaping onerous laws and discriminatory practices.

relationship with Ana Rosa parallels the typical tragic mulatto construct in that she initiates their sexual encounter, in which he is a passive participant, and ultimately betrays her love for him by marrying the white man who murdered him.

Examples from the United States can be found in Lydia Maria Childs “The Quadroons” and “Slavery’s Pleasant Homes” in the 1842 and 1843 editions, consecutively, of the Liberty Bell.¹⁰⁷ These stories criticized the slave system, and implied that slavery, as an institution, licensed the sexual abuse of women, and destroyed family bonds. The stories also exposed the failure of white fathers to provide for and protect their mixed-race children. One example of this situation in Cecilia Valdés occurs when Manero tries to buy his own children discreetly at the slave market. A further example can be found through Gamboa, whose failure to recognize his mixed-race daughter publically leads to disaster (including a child born of incest and the death of his son).

Cecilia Valdés is clearly not the hapless victim that one finds in “The Quadroons.” Although a victim on many levels, she retains her agency and is not a victim of circumstances. She achieves a victory, however pyrrhic, in the end with the birth of her child, the reunion with her mother and her eventual independence. Cecilia’s character, created in the Cuban cultural context, already existed as a sexually provocative, controlling mulatta stereotype, quite distinct from her North American counterpart. In fact, Cuba would have to wait until the publication of Sofía by Morúa Delgado before the appearance of the tragic mulatta, a victim of mistaken identity, as it exists in The Quadroons, no matter how inverted it may be. Sofia is a “light-skinned” house slave, who lives as a captive and is raped by her owner’s son. The twist is that she is actually white,

¹⁰⁷ A series of anti-slavery tracks published in Boston from 1839 to 1857.

the daughter of her owner and a white prostitute, whose origin was enshrouded, thus inverting the traditional tragic mulatto model.

In Azevedo's work, young mulatta characters are portrayed as sexually proactive, not helpless victims of misunderstanding and white male sexual violence, but quite the opposite, aggressive sexual predators. One does find the idea of the mulatta as victim in later works such as Clara dos Anjos by Lima Baretto and Rei Congo by Coelho Neto, but nothing as ironic and complex as the interplay of phenotype and genotype of the traditional "tragic mulatto" figure in the United States.

Sterling Brown,¹⁰⁸ and later Werner Sollars,¹⁰⁹ have suggested that the "tragic mulatto" figure, generally construed as a pro-abolition gesture, is essentially racist. The tragic mulatto is pitied precisely for his or her whiteness. There are two different race operations at work, one based on phenotype and culture, through which one can pass, after some generations of race mixing, into white society if the actual genotype or parentage is unknown. However, the second race operation, the legalistic tracing of the lineage or bureaucratic aspect, is the determining factor. This bureaucratic aspect exposes the constructed nature of race, that it is a legal determination, not an essential quality. With the tragic mulatto character those two operations enter into conflict.

On the basic level of perception, the tragic mulatto has become effectively white, and the disparity between legal designation and perceived race is incongruous. In the mind of the observer, the tragic mulatto is white, and by a travesty of the legal system, is being subjected to treatment reserved for blacks. In this sense, the tragic mulatto is a case of mistaken identity, not a strong case for abolition. It argues for a slight altering of the

¹⁰⁸ He comments at length on the mulatto escape hatch concept on p. 145 of his book Negro Poetry and Drama and The Negro in American Fiction.

¹⁰⁹ In Neither Black Nor White Yet Both.

categorical boundaries of race, modifying the concept of whiteness a modicum, so as to include those who are nearly white, as opposed to rejecting prejudicial race categorization directly. This idea of mistaken identity is really the case with Raimundo. The reader is meant to feel the injustice and the horror of discrimination, but Azevedo relies on the familiarity of his character to his reader. Raimundo is the bourgeois reader's ideal, a handsome liberal bachelor, pure of heart and firm of character and phenotypically white. The reader is led to react to the unfairness of marginalizing someone who is so similar to them, not to the unfairness of discrimination as a practice.

Cecilia, although she is presented to the reader as a cynical gold digger, is still portrayed as receiving sympathy for being a "white" cast among blacks. Ironically, those shown feeling pity in Villaverde's narrative are not a sympathetic white readers, but mulattos themselves, who taking her for a white girl at the "colored ball," feel sympathy for her: "podían oírse voces de compasión, pues tomándola por una joven de pura sangre" (381). Villaverde does stop short of urging the reader to feel the same sympathy for Cecilia by undercutting her whiteness, suggesting it was only skin deep and occluded her true nature. He depicts mulatto partygoers as detecting weakness in Cecilia's character when the narrator comments that "creyese de bajos sentimientos a quien consentía en rozarse tan de cerca con gente de color" (381). Her whiteness brings her sympathy, but somehow, through a twisted depiction of self-hatred, the mulatto characters find her to be of poor character for having associated with them. This portrayal not only reinforces the stereotype that people of color regret their heritage and long to be white, but also shows color as a contagion that can be caught.

Most mulatto characters are not seen as white, and consequently seem to get little sympathy from the reader or the other characters. Would a character such as the well-educated Pancho Sofla from Cecilia Valdés be pitied so? Or would his dark looks, so well detailed by Villaverde, repel readers? Would they be scandalized by his pretension to marry someone as white as the white Pescada girl in O mulato? It is precisely Raimundo's whiteness that causes the reader to sympathize with his quest for Ana Rosa. It is this injustice that angers the reader, because he is essentially white and is being treated as a black.

Hidden Afro influence on mulatto characters

What if there is a sub-text that sabotages Azevedo's criticism of Raimundo's treatment? Even in the most sympathetic portrayals of mulattos, there is always a hint of some underlying flaw, some hidden stain. The idea that mulattos, even those who are almost entirely white, harbor some black trait that will be the cause of their undoing is common throughout European and American literature of the nineteenth century.

In Balzac's novella, La fille aux Yeux d'Or, Paquita Valdes, who is perceived as white, is portrayed as still a slave to lascivious passions that are attributed to her African blood. In Twain's Pudd'nhead Wilson, Tom, though he looks white, and due to his mother's machinations, has been raised white, is shown to have failed in life as a result of cowardliness. It is his own mother, a mulatta, who attributes this cowardliness to his black blood, and she literally speaks of the drops of black blood.

This type of depiction narrates a racial essentialism, that, be it the *one drop rule* of the United States or the more negotiated racial identity of Latin America, regards

African blood as amounting to an inescapable stain on the character. This perception condemns and marginalizes the mulatto character in a cultural context where ascension to white status is the only way to achieve sovereignty of the self. Raimundo, in O mulato, in spite of the so-called “mulatto escape hatch,” meets a horrible end. As was the case with Balzac’s Paquita or Twain’s Tom, it appears that, in spite of Raimundo’s European looks, there is some flaw, and some hidden sign that foretells his destruction. Early on in the narrative, Raimundo is marked as exotic. The narrator describes his features as oriental, with skin like rice paper: “as sobrecelhas muito desenhadas no rosto como a nanquim...frescura da epiderme...barba raspada...tons suaves e transparentes de uma aquarela sobre papel de arroz” (28). His difference is marked, perhaps not as an Afro-Brazilian, but as something foreign, exotic, and different from the white elite of Maranhão. He may not be marked with “blackness” as are Afro-Brazilian characters, but his exotic differentiation securely sets him outside of the signifying community, which makes him vulnerable to delegitimization. Even his primary supporter, the Ana Rosa character, contributes to this subtle marginalization by marking him as exotic: “o hibridismo de aquela figura... fidalguia...harmonizavam...com a rude e orgulhosa franqueza de um selvagem” (57). Once Raimundo has been marked as foreign, his foreignness is articulated in terms of weakness. On several occasions he is referred to in the text as displaying “fraqueza”, particularly in terms of his sexuality, as is the case in the scene that foreshadows Raimundo and Ana Rosa’s sexual encounter, wherein his relationship with Ana Rosa is referred to as the “consequências ridículas da sua fraqueza” (151).

The word *fraqueza* stands out because it harkens back to the Roman concept of *virtus*, which, along with self-control, were the hallmarks of a Roman freeman. Weakness justified enslavement. Even in our contemporary capitalist society, those who fail to acquire the necessary material and symbolic capital are designated as weak, and deserving of their humble fate, as if they lack the will to succeed.

Tagging someone as “weak,” particularly associating this tag with biology creates a justification for unequal treatment. In this sense, calling Raimundo weak is more hurtful than the bombastic tag of “savage,” a term already undermined by textual descriptions that portray him as having culture. The weakness accusation, however, will follow Raimundo, leaving the reader with the impression that his culture is just a veneer. Even subtle references such as the one previously mentioned, “*lhe minava o espírito*” (64), describes how social rejection quickly pushed him to drink and gambling; implicit in this is that these inclinations lurked right below the surface and that his spirit was weak and his civilized manner contrived.

Soon after he learns his own biography, he is depicted as immediately shifting his general attitude. Suddenly, he is tagged with traditional mulatto stereotypes, one example being his reaction to an intimate moment with Ana Rosa: “*o contacto sensual daquele carne branca...proibição...tesouro proibido...vertigem*” (151). In this scene, Raimundo goes from being white, feeling white and exercising all of the prerogatives of being a white man in a slave society, and with little transitional text is portrayed as suddenly seeing white female flesh as taboo. The implication is that there has always been some intuited difference that is just brought to the surface now that he intellectually knows his “real” origin.

In the end, Raimundo, like Tom in Puddn'head Wilson, fulfills his biological destiny and becomes stereotypically mulatto, a seducer and would-be destroyer of white women. Suddenly, Ana Rosa, his love, his heart's desire, becomes a simple vehicle for revenge: "queria amarrála a seu destino, como...a um poste de infamante, queria espalhar bien seu sangue" (178). Azevedo has produced a tragic mulatto character, so close to being white, only to be murdered by jealous inferior whites. It is precisely his whiteness that is supposed to affect the reader. Or, did Raimundo's sojourn in Maranhão bring to the surface some hidden African quality, implied in this text to be arrogance and weakness of character? The message is that Brazil was inevitably doomed by the stain of Africa.

The Cecilia character in Cecilia Valdés is characterized from the beginning as "suffering" from black-related character flaws, an "expresión...maliciosa, si no maligna," and showing a "filete oscuro...penumbra" indicating that "[S]u sangre no era pura" and bore traces of "la etiope" (73). For that reason, Cecilia cannot be assigned to the tragic mulatta category, because her portrayal lacks the ironic element that appears in stereotypical black traits typical of characters such as Raimundo. However, if one refers back to the first version of Cecilia Valdés, called "la primitiva," Cecilia is portrayed as an innocent young girl, "tan pura, tan delicada, tan juguetona la linda Cecilia...cándida criatura." (235) and "[d]e índole naturalmente buena y pacífica" (247).

In this version, Cecilia's "tierno corazón" is perverted by the immoral environment of the city, and she is seduced by a rich, white playboy. It is also made clear, however, that it is her black blood that made her vulnerable: "la sangre abrasadora que corría por sus venas era manchada" (248). The African blood in her veins is said to be the

hidden cause of her undoing: “el fantasma de la sangre con mancha...conseguía humillarla” (248).

This earlier version almost seems to be a halfway point between the Romantic and Naturalist visions of human failing. In the “primitiva” Cecilia Valdés, the decadent environment into which she was born draws out her hidden flaws: “su tierno corazón...recibió las lecciones más pervertidas, se nutrió con los excesos de la lascivia e impudicia...ofrece...un pueblo soez y desmoralizado” (235). This blaming of the environment implies that if she had been properly educated, her innate tendencies would have been controlled. In the later version, Cecilia is given all the breaks. Her grandmother strives tirelessly to raise her properly, although even the grandmother is depicted in a way that suggests an innate moral weakness on the part of all Afro-American women: “para mujer de color (era parda) llevó una vida ejemplar ...virtud ...confesaba ...criaba la nieta en el santo temor de Dios” (594). This comment praising Cecilia’s grandmother implies that mixed-race individuals are condemned to moral weakness, evinced by the statement that she had led an exemplary life for a “woman of color.”

In the later version of the novel, Cecilia’s biology, her hidden “black” qualities dominate. Even her own grandmother condemns her: “tú eres una chicuela casquivana...[m]ujer perdida, sin remedio” (328). Cecilia is described as having a flawed character, as having willfully followed her own nature, resisting her father’s and grandmother’s efforts to keep her on the straight and narrow. Her character reflects the Naturalist view of innate moral failings based on race and class.

If one accepts the Amâncio character in Casa de pensão as mulatto, he might be the character with the most highly accentuated “insidious,” hidden “African” characteristics. Even if one does a literal reading, and does not accept the assertion that Amâncio is essentially portrayed as a mulatto character, Amâncio’s moral character flaws, “os lúbricos impulsos,” result from his black wet-nurse’s syphilitic milk: “apareceram-lhe dores reumáticas na caixa do peito e nas articulações...Era o sangue de sua ama-de-leite que principiava a rabear. Bem dizia outora o médico a seu pai, quando este carregou de amamentar o filho” (107). Azevedo directly ties Amâncio’s perverted nature to this breast milk, and the negative influence of house slaves with whom he spent much time: “no quarto dos engomados...comaradagem com as mulatas da casa...o calor quebrava o corpo e punha nos sentidos uma pasmaceira voluptuosa...gostava de meter-se com ellas.” There he was exposed to “conversas picadas de brejeirice” and was “amolentando-se ao calor penetrante das raparigas” that put him into an “êxtase mofino.” Azevedo writes that the mulattas of the household “folgavam en fê-lo perto de si...provocaram-lhe ditos de graça...perguntas maliciosas” (37). Be it the infected breast milk of his wet-nurse or pernicious influence of the mulattas, either way it is the stain of Africa that poisons his prospects, and contributes to purported lascivious temperament. Again, it is the hidden nature of the flaws that makes them so striking. Amâncio is a fresh, handsome young student from the Northeast. Campos, a successful immigrant from the Northeast himself, takes Amâncio in upon his arrival to the capitol, regarding him as a nice kid from back home, unable to perceive the character flaws concealed by his white phenotype: “Seu todo acanhado, fraco e modesto, não deixava transparecer a brutalidad daquele temperamento cálido e desensofrido” (12).

Behind the white face shown by Azevedo, are vices that are attributed by the narrator to an African source, at a minimum the infected breast milk of his black wet-nurse and his proximity to the Afro-Brazilian women in the house, and quite possibly his implied mixed-race origin: “Mas, como se podia conceber tanta perversidade e tanta hipocrasia em uma criatura de vinte e poucos anos?” (174). The answer that the narrative gives is unequivocal; it is the stain of Africa, coming through the blood, either through biology or association. In the end, the hidden stain leads to his undoing. By killing Amâncio, the Coqueiro character not only avenges his sister and family, but eradicates the black strain that Amâncio carried, perhaps expressing, allegorically the desire, and ultimate impossibility, of immediate pre-abolition Brazil to be rid of its Afro heritage.

Mulatto and black relationship

Discussed earlier were the dynamics of the mulatto/white relationship, of the social threat that the white elite perceived in the free mulatto class. Mulattos were caught between two groups, whites on one side and blacks on the other. The latter relationship seems to have been equally as complex as the former. For many in the United States, where the one-drop mentality still seems to dominate thinking, the idea of friction between blacks, defined herein as individuals of pure African extraction, and mulattos, individuals with both white and black heritage, may be hard to grasp. As mentioned earlier, in the United States the tendency of the white community has traditionally been to mark someone with any indication of African blood as black, regardless of his or her degree of white ancestry. To show how important this black/mulatto distinction can be in other cultures, even in the Americas, I will take an example from the Haitian

Revolutionary period. From the earliest moments of the Haitian war for independence, a major factor in the Byzantine alliance building between different groups of French and Haitians was the division between black and mulatto Haitians.

In 1792, Millet, a white, colonialist representative at the Colonial Assembly in Paris highlighted the supposed divisions between black and mulatto Haitians, speaking of mulattos and whites, he argued that there were “bonds of affection and of good feeling which existed between these two classes of men,” and went on to add that “[t]hese coarse men [the blacks] are incapable of knowing liberty and enjoying it with wisdom.”¹¹⁰ These divisions, constructed or otherwise, manifested themselves concretely in June 1799, according to Ott in The Haitian Revolution 1789-1804, when the black General Toussaint L'Ouverture moved to suppress the *de facto* mulatto state in the South, sometimes referred as the War of Knives (112). Toussaint pursued his archrival for power, the mulatto General Rigaud, across the island and in 1800 General Rigaud was defeated and forced to flee the island, while seven hundred of his mulatto soldiers, according to James, fled to Cuba (235). In August of 1800, Toussaint left black General Dessalines in charge of the captured town of Les Cayes, and over the following months, where the black general Dessalines is said to have massacred at least hundreds, and according to some reports, up to ten thousand mulatto men, women, and children (116). According to a report from a certain Captain Riggs, who claimed to be present at the time, Toussaint said “that not one mulatto should be suffered to reside within his territory...[e]veryone of that description that could be shot or drowned” (112).¹¹¹ James contextualizes the purported division between blacks and mulattos, though, when he cites a colonial report that

¹¹⁰ Found in James' The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution, p. 14.

¹¹¹ In the Charleston City Gazette of August 13, 1799, cited in The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution, p. 112.

indicated “blacks and Mulattos were saying that the civil war had been kindled by the whites to weaken both sides and restore slavery” (233). This report shows that Haitian blacks and mulattos were cognizant of the constructed nature of their division, and that the white elite was responsible for generating that perceived division. As is evident in the presentation of Millet before the Colonial Assembly, and the unconfirmed reporting of planned massacres by the Charleston City Gazette, the white elite from North America to Europe, was deploying its symbolic capital to weaken any solidarity between blacks and mulattos as they struggled for freedom from oppression.

When engaging the corpus texts, one must understand the historical context and its implication for inter-group relations, as well as the lingering fear of the Haitian Revolution in the white community. One of the factors that stands out in from the Haitian experience, important to consider when analyzing these texts by white writers, is that there was an active attempt by the French to drive a wedge between black and mulatto Haitians that manifested itself in juridical distinction, as well as in preferential treatment. The group globally referred to as black evinces various important sub-divisions, including the Creole/African-born binary and, of more importance, the free/slave distinction.

The *baile de la gente de color* in Cecilia Valdés serves as a backdrop for the drama played out between mulatto and black characters. These dances are primarily a mulatto affair, the first of two dances said to have been organized by the “ama de casa, mulata rica y rumbosa llamada Mercedes” (95). However, also present are white elite men, as well as some black characters. The white men are portrayed as slumming and on

the look out for attractive women of color, or as the author puts it, they attended, “por motivos de menos puro origen” (96).

In this first dance, or *cuna*, the distinction between mulattos and blacks is less marked, although, the dividing lines are drawn quite clearly during the second dance. Actually, even among the black characters a distinction is made, first of all between historical and purely fictional characters, and then between characters that were welcomed and those who were perceived as interlopers, such as the slave Dionisio, who arrives in his owner’s outdated fancy dress.

Villaverde’s mulatto sphere, with its dances and so on, presents an interracial coexistence that crosses class lines. In a certain sense, the multiracial presence could be taken as an absence of racism. This argument is employed even in the modern day social discourse in Brazil and Cuba, that co-existence equals equality. Azevedo’s *O cortiço* leans toward this interracial coexistence, on a basic level, but only among poor people.

Villaverde’s multi-ethnic *cuna*¹¹² is certainly not a cozy situation, as discerned from Pimienta and Uribe’s earlier conversation about white men wooing mulattas; however, these dances inscribe a functional racial coexistence. These kinds of depictions lay the groundwork for the racial harmony myths that would later appear in Brazil and Cuba. A close reading of the text reveals fissures in that argument. For example, the black character Dionisio manifests resentment toward mulattos during the second dance, and the behavior of the mulattos themselves indicates a bias against blacks. On the

¹¹² According to Sublette in *Cuba and Its Music: From the First Drums to the Mambo*, [T]he *bailes de cuna*... were social dance parties, which began as house parties in private homes, then moved into separate quarters, known as *casas de cuna*. The name literally means ‘cradle houses,’ and it is perhaps appropriate to note that the national orphanage in Havana was the Real Casa de Cuna.” Sublette also mentions that the orphans were surnamed Valdés, after Bishop Don Gerónimo Valdés y Sierra, who founded the orphanage in 1711. This establishes a general link between *bailes de cuna* and mulattos, and a specific link between the *bailes* and Cecilia Valdés, the character.

surface, one could imagine a number of causes for conflict between the two groups. Mulattos had certain privileges and were more likely to be freed from slavery, often due to their biological relationship to their owners. In fact, they are sometimes depicted as fearing the end of slavery as it would bring an end to their privileged intermediate position, particularly in Brazil. Villaverde seems to have a problematic relationship with his mulatto characters. He suggests that the Afro-Cubans accused of participating in the Escalera Conspiracy were innocent of any rebellious activity: “tormento a que sometieron sus jueces para arrancarles la confesión de complicidad en un delito cuya existencia jamás se ha probado lo suficiente” (381). This double-edged comment can be taken to mean that the free mulattos were innocent victims of a white elite that feared their growing wealth and influence. On the other hand, this portrayal of the free mulatto as a hapless victim implies that they had failed to mount any resistance to a repressive regime, and suggests that they just passively enjoyed their wealth and position, caring little for black and mulatto slaves still under the yoke. This argument would support the theory that black Cubans resented the mulattos due to their comfortable life and perceived inaction in the cause of liberation.

Villaverde further distances mulattos from the black population through characters such as Don Liborio, the Gamboa mayoral, and the tailor Uribe, among others, who are depicted as either allying themselves with the white power structure, as was the case with Liborio, or at least being dependent on the white elite, as in the case of Uribe. Mulattos were often shown to have special relationships with the white power structure, and would suffer with its dismantling.

The mulatto/black relationship is multidimensional. In Cecilia Valdés, one of the deciding factors, in terms of the treatment of blacks by mulattos, is the condition of slavery. Even the usually mild-mannered Pimienta character focuses on Dionysius's status as a slave: "[P]erro! Habías de ser esclavo" (384). Pimienta follows up with further degrading slavery-related insults: "Cállate la boca Dionisio Gamboa, vete cocinar en la casa de tu amo... pueden darte un bocabajo que te chupes los dedos" (385). Another mulatto at the dance insults Dionisio, also referring, not so much to Dionisio's blackness, but to his condition as a slave. "No tienes tú la culpa, sino yo que me ocupo de un individuo inferior a mí, cocinero y...esclavo" (380). Cecilia herself manifests her anger at Dionisio by referring to his servitude: "Dionisio...un miserable esclavo, muy bocón...siendo esclavo y cobarde...atacaría a traición" (386).

The difference between slave and free Afro-Cubans plays a determining factor in the treatment of black characters, by the author and his mulatto characters. At the "Colored Ball," where Villaverde whimsically placed a number of prominent historical Afro-Cubans, most who would later be killed during the Escalera persecutions, one encounters several important free black Cubans, among them, the military official Tondá, right hand man of General Vives, and Juan Francisco Manzano, author of Autobiografía de un esclavo, who Villaverde introduces in the following manner: "que acaba de recibir su libertad, gracias a la filantropía."¹¹³ These black characters are shown as being respected by their mulatto companions, and they are toasted as Afro-Cuban heroes along with the mulatto characters during a *brindis* (381-382). However, the race factor does come into play with Cecilia: "la amabilidad empleada por Cecilia...hacía marcada

¹¹³ This reference is a genuflection to Domingo del Monte and his circle, of which Villaverde was a young member. I find it jarring to hear people use the word *philanthropy* in regards to freeing slaves. It casts it as a favor as opposed to correcting an injustice.

diferencia entre los negros y los mulatos.” She is shown dancing with Vargas and Dodge, chatting with Placido and discussing *contradanzas*¹¹⁴ with Vuelta y Flores, all mulattos, but she merely waves to the dashing black military man Tondá and has no contact at all with the famous black poet Manzano (382). It is as if famous and free black Cubans were welcomed into free mulatto social circles, but with limited access. For Cecilia, as she sought to climb the racial ladder, the darker the person, the greater the “contagious” threat.

It could be more unwise to press the division between mulatto and black Cubans too far. Other historical factors balanced out the natural conflicts they encountered. Primary among these unifying force were the *cabildos*, Afro-Cuban support societies theoretically based on common ancestry. These organizations had free and slave members, mulattos and black. The *cabildos* would represent members in official dealing with the authorities, post bail for members who had been arrested, loan money to members, and raise funds for the community. According to Robert L. Paquette¹¹⁵, accused Escalera conspirators, Dodge, Vargas, Tomás y Vuelta, Vargas, as well as the tailor Uribe, all historical individuals present in Villaverde’s novel, were *cabildo* members. To a certain degree, the existence of these *cabildos* and their pan-Afro-Cuban membership begs the question to what degree the depicted friction between blacks and mulattos in Cuba was largely fiction, since *cabildo* ties would tend to break down the barriers established through the multiple racial categories.

¹¹⁴ A short, syncopated piece meant for dancing derived from the French *contredanse* first imported into Cuba in 1790 by Franco-Haitian slaves seeking refuge in Oriente in the eastern part of Cuba. (Definition primarily from http://www.pbs.org/buenavista/music/a_contradanza.html)

¹¹⁵ Paquette, Robert L., *Sugar is Made with Blood*, p. 109.

One can experience a certain pleasance as Cecilia floats from table to table, and can visualize historic characters, including Manzano, Dodge, and Plácido, as they dance, laugh, and joke. By the same token, one must not be overly indulgent with this historical, yet fictional tapestry, since Villaverde, a white Cuban with his own agenda, served as weaver. Even as Plácido's poems serve as points of delight, one must remember that those same poems were published by the white abolitionist Calcagno. Moreover, to highlight this conflict, Manzano's work was contracted and edited by Domingo Del Monte and Richard Madden.¹¹⁶ Calcagno himself promoted the idea of an inter-Afro-Cuban feud in his novel Romualdo, uno de tantos, suggesting that blacks did not like mulattos because they saw and resented the whiteness/superiority in them (37). This tableau of the early nineteenth-century Afro-Cuban elite, all together in one literary space, this marvelous dance, was not written by an Afro-Cuban, but by a white writer with his own motives and biases, a white mediated Afro-Cuban history. In fact, this one man's take on Black Cuba of 1830s has been invested with historical veracity and has become a fetishized commodity, which underpins, to this day, established social roles.

As mentioned earlier, a common white elite stereotype is that Afro-Americans want to "marry up," which suggests that people of color will always want to form romantic or sexual relationships with people lighter than themselves. This implication has traditionally been represented by mulatta characters seeking white partners, although the

¹¹⁶ Sylvia Molloy writes about the "circumstances in which this autobiography was written" in her article "From Serf to Self: The Autobiography of Juan Francisco Manzano," referring to Manzano's Autobiografía de un esclavo. Del Monte requested the autobiography "in order to publish the cause of abolition abroad," and maintained ownership of the manuscript. Madden, a British magistrate and "superintendent of liberated slaves" in the Mixed Commission, sought the autobiography in order to present it to the General Antislavery Convention held in London in 1840. Madden translated it into English himself, and published an "ideologically conditioned" version of it in 1840. Further influencing Manzano's ultimate literary production was the fact that Del Monte organized a collection among his reformist cohorts in order to purchase Manzano's manumission shortly after his initial draft of the autobiography (pp. 393-396).

logical extension would be black women being desirous of lighter mulatto men.

Leonardo, in Cecilia Valdés, provides an example of this inverted perspective when he suggests that black women would be appropriate for Pancho Sofla, since he is a mulatto, when he says: “que no [le] gusta la canela...eso quiere decir que [le] gusta el carbón, género mucho más inferior” (136). The suggestion that Sofla should aspire to *carbón* relies on the understanding that *canela*, or the mulatta, wanted white men, and that *carbón*, or the black woman, desired mulatto men, since all women all aspired to the whitest partner attainable. This structure reinforces the race logic of the whitening program, and places blacks categorically below mulattos in the sexual and social hierarchy. Regardless of whether this is just another divisive fabrication promoted by the white elite, or a social reality, it serves to weaken Afro-Cuban group solidarity.

The mulatto mayoral, Don Liborio, is also given sexual control over black women on the plantation and allowed to keep them as concubines, María de Regla being one of them. He also has general domain over the black slaves and is said to hold the symbols of power, such as the “llave” and “látigo,” both “símbolos del poder señorial cubano” (459). He shows no sense of solidarity with Afro-Cubans and is depicted as crueller than the whites themselves, and fond of torturing slaves. In fact, Tomasa’s stoicism during her beating enrages him: “el estoicismo de la muchacha le privó del placer que se prometía en azotarla.” He further punishes her by ordering her wounds be rubbed with “orines... tabaco” (471).

Erotic language couches the sadistic act of Tomasa’s beating, “con la extremidad del mango del látigo arrolló las faldas del vestido de la esclava hasta más arriba de las caderas...el primer latigazo...trazado un surco ceniciento...saltar pedazos de la piel y

fluir sangre.” She is described as young and quite attractive, “joven, robusta, agraciada ella” (469). Between the *látigo*, a symbol of masculine power, the lifting of the skirts and the flow of the blood, her beauty and his history of sexual violence, Villaverde made a graphic allusion to sexual violence. Already María de Regla spoke of the sexual violence that she suffered at his hands: “Ese era el más temible de mis enamorados. Quería que le quisieran a la fuerza...iba el cuerazo. Por celos...bocabajos y me ha crucificado la espalda con cuero” (513). The Doña Rosa character sums up the vision of the mulatto overseer that Villaverde wants to pinpoint, suggesting that he was only useful to “enamorar las negras y desollar los negros con su cuero. Se deleitaba en dar bocabajos” (498).

By portraying the cruelty of the mulatto with the black, the author not only establishes a distance between the white elite and their crimes, but also implies a great division between mulattos and blacks, as if they were two distinct communities as opposed to part of the diverse membership of the Afro-Cuban community. This depiction of black and mulatto conflict is a reflection of the white power system as it appears in the pages of the novel. The free mulatto mayoral uses black slave *contramayorales* to deliver white orders to mostly black slaves. The white power structure relies on slave collaborators, and mulattos seeking to align themselves with white power. The collaborator system inhibits unity among slaves.

In Brazil, folk history and official documents speak of black animosity toward mulattos, particularly on the part of blacks born in Africa. The late nineteenth-century anthropologist Nina Rodrigues outlined a history of black Brazilian animosity toward mulattos in his book Os africanos no Brasil. Already in 1756, commentators from the

period claimed that the organizers of the Good Friday Rebellion in Minas Gerais not only planned to kill all white men, but all mulattos as well, although all females would be spared.¹¹⁷ The Palmares *Quilombistas* were said to have kidnapped mulattas, and folk history blames a treasonous mulatto for the assassination of Zumbi, king of the Palmares *Quilombo*.¹¹⁸

Rodrigues also cites an official report from the 1835 slave rebellion in Bahia, led by *Nêgo* slaves, that said mulattos were targeted along with whites, and that one young mulatta had been raped during the uprising. Another report claimed that the *Nêgos* planned to kill the *brancos*, *cabras*, and *negros crioulos*,¹¹⁹ while saving the mulattos to serve as their slaves.¹²⁰

Two things become apparent in these reports. The first is that solidarity between blacks and mulattos is shown to be non-existent, at least it is reported that way in historical records. Clearly this view benefited the white elite by creating dissention in the Afro-Brazilian community; therefore, the historical record is suspect. The second is the distinction made between African-born slaves, *Nêgos* in the case of the 1831 rebellion, and slaves born in Brazil. In fact, according to the report, the *Nêgo*-led rebels intended to kill *negros crioulos* along with whites and mulattos. The white elite would benefit from a lack of solidarity among these diverse groups of Afro-Brazilians. In light of this reality, it is better to take these historical texts, not so much as a confirmation of the actual historical existence of this division between blacks and mulattos, but rather as the existence of a discourse that promoted the idea.

¹¹⁷ *Os Africanos no Brasil* p. 94

¹¹⁸ *Os Africanos no Brasil* p. 75

¹¹⁹ According to Scisíno in his *Dicionário da escravidão*, *Nêgo* broadly refers to Yoruba-speaking slaves, *cabra* to the offspring from a black and mulatto union, and a *negro crioulo* to a black person born in Brazil.

¹²⁰ *Os Africanos no Brasil* p. 51.

The three Azevedo novels seldom problematize the black/mulatto interaction. That is not to say that these two groups enjoy a harmonious relationship in his texts; it is simply that black characters are scarce and relegated to secondary positions. In O cortiço, for example, the black presence is almost nil. On one level, the multiracial composition of the slum could be construed as a lack of racism. Whites, mostly immigrants, live and work side by side with the mulattos. The Portuguese immigrant Leocádia is taken with the mulatta Rita Baiana. The divisions between whites and mulattos in the slum seem to be primarily economic, with white characters such as Pombinha living happily with poor mulattos, and with Augusta and Alexandre, respectively white and mulatto, class seems to trump race in terms of their marriage.

However, there is no black presence in the slum. The primary black character, Bertoleza, rarely communicates with other characters, appearing almost as a shadow or a specter. She does not interact with the mulatto characters at all. The majority of information the reader receives about Bertoleza comes from the narrator. In terms of the depicted interactions with other characters, they are almost entirely limited to verbal abuse from her Portuguese “partner.” Even in these interactions she is a silent presence for most of the narrative, presented as an obstacle, an object, not a subject, “sua oscura condição de animal de trabalho” (192). Only at the end does she gain a voice, and her words seem to mirror the narrative absence of blacks: “então a negra servia para tudo; agora não presta para mais nada, e atira-se com ela no monturo do cisco!” (218). These words echo the attitude of white Brazilians in the post-abolition period and explain, perhaps, the absence of a real black presence in O cortiço. The *moleque* Valentim and Leonor, a *negrinha virgem*, are the only other black characters in the novel

and do not have any social interaction with the mulatto community. The muted presence of blacks and the absence of their interaction with the majority mulatto cast speak volumes about the relationship between blacks and mulattos. This implied segregation, however, is not confirmed historically. In fact, there seems to be an effort here to construct an idealized, mechanized model of race evolution toward whiteness to counter the reality of miscegenation that was a fact on the ground.

Bertoleza and João Romão represent, symbolically in the slum, the original miscegenation. As was the case with Brazil itself, the slum was founded with the labor and cooperation of the Africans. For the slum to become a gentrified, European-style neighborhood, Bertoleza, the African-co-builder, must be eradicated. This eradication mirrors the national level “whitening” program, which pushed the whitening of Brazil by massive European immigration. Akin to Bertoleza, the African was seen as a shameful leftover from a less civilized period of their history, one to be hidden and eventually erased so that Brazil could enter with pride into the family of “civilized” nations.

The black presence in the slum, in the person of Bertoleza, is shown as already marginalized from the beginning of the novel. The mulatto population that dominates the community at the beginning becomes displaced by the affluent whites by the end of the novel. Thus, the relationship between blacks and mulattos is not shown due to the fact that they represent different phases of the racial evolution envisioned by the white elite, in which the black population would be gradually subsumed in to an ever whiter population.

In O mulato, set in pre-abolition Maranhão, there is clearly a hierarchy of jobs with mulatto characters such as Mônica, a *cafuzo*, given high-status jobs and black

characters assigned more menial tasks: “Mônica, que amamentara Ana Rosa...lavaba...e mais uma preta só para engomar...outra só para cozinhar...outra sacudir a pó dos trastes e levar recados...o serviço sempre era tardi e malfeito” (47). As in *O cortiço*, there is no depiction of interaction between mulattos and blacks. In fact, one anonymous mulatto character is described as “um mulato pálido de carapinha rente, bem vestido e com um grande brilhante no dedo” (136), clearly separates himself from *negros* while speaking to a group of Portuguese immigrants, “para não consentem que estes negros se metem conosco!” (136).

Ironically, the anonymous mulatto is referring to Raimundo, a mulatto like himself. Yet, the mulatto character felt compelled to distance himself from his African background and associate himself with the whites. By referring to “*estes negros*” and using the term “*conosco*” when speaking with white interlocutors, he asserts his social distance from blacks and his social proximity to whites. His dress and manner demonstrate an attempt to reproduce the dominant white elite cultural codes. The knowing looks exchanged between the white characters suggest that *reproduction* and *hexis* are thwarted by race: “Segiu-se...olhadelas expresivas” (136). The anonymous mulatto distances himself from blacks while being shunned by whites, finding himself in the same intermediate social space that Raimundo will occupy when he becomes aware of his biography. This social distancing not only keeps the mulatto socially isolated from the white and black communities, but also from other mulattos whose blackness they fear as socially contagious, as evidenced by the case of the anonymous mulatto.

CHAPTER IV

White fears and fantasies

This chapter combines three themes that resonate throughout these texts. They can give insight into the objective conditions under which these texts were written. The first section discusses the common trope that slavery is bad for whites, which appears to some degree in all of the texts. The idea had major implications in the development of abolition movements in both Cuba and Brazil. The second section concerns the narrative opposition between good owners of slaves and bad owners of slaves, and the role that this opposition might play sustaining a reformist to abolition. The last section discusses the perception of Brazil and Cuba as mulatto nations, the evolution of the idea, and its social impact.

Whites as victims of slavery

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, members of the Brazilian white elite, such as Silvio Romero, argued that slavery, and more specifically the physical presence of the slaves themselves, was one of the main factors that impeded Brazil from progressing in to the modern industrial age and joining the so-called European family of civilized nations. In this interpretation of the situation, the victim became the perpetrator. It was not the slave-based society that was to blame for Brazil's economic and social woes, but the slaves themselves, a common theme in Brazilian naturalistic novels. In Azevedo's Casa de pensão, as seen above, the syphilitic milk from the breast of his black wet-nurse seals a white child's fate, while Joaquim Manuel de Macedo's As vítimas-

algozes argues that black slaves introduce moral and physical corruption into the white families they serve.

The white as a victim of the slave past commonly appeared in Brazilian literature immediately before and after abolition, and was one of the founding themes that informed the abolitionist movement. João Romão and Bertoleza's relationship in O cortiço can be read as an analogy to this idea. João Romão, a penniless Portuguese immigrant, relies heavily on the aid and income of the slave Bertoleza, but later finds his social mobility limited by her presence. In the end, through trickery and connivance, he is able to liberate himself from her and marry into the elite. Although João Romão is miraculously liberated from the burden of the slave, the freed slave population in post-abolition Brazil was still seen by the white elite to be an albatross around its neck, an impediment.

As earlier stated, the Naturalist novel was the crucible for the construction of these transformed racial stereotypes, and O cortiço has a particularly high concentration of them. This high concentration of stereotypes is very disturbing considering that critics have touted this particular novel for the last one hundred years as being the social novel that best reflected the gritty reality of the Brazilian slum. Rather, its function is constitutive, not mimetic, creating reality, not reflecting it. The role of stereotypes in O cortiço, or in any other text for that matter, as noted earlier, is not solely an academic question. Stereotypes in the dominant media have an effect on human bodies. Stereotypes play a key role in the formation of prejudice. Individuals and groups actively create prejudice to gain/maintain economic or political dominance. This prejudice is institutionalized and passed on to the following generations through the socialization process. The more threatening the target group, the more negative the stereotype. The

extreme negativity of Afro-American stereotypes in the mid to late nineteenth-century Brazilian and Cuban novel demonstrates to what degree the elite white community feared that their hold on power was being threatened by Afro-Brazilians and Afro-Cubans.

The concept that slavery and/or blacks was bad for the nation, manifests itself in distinct ways in the work of these two authors. Azevedo depicts Afro-Brazilians as being an evil in themselves, and that they weakened the white population with their mere presence. Villaverde links his argument against the black presence in Cuba to a general criticism of the impact the institution of slavery itself has on Cuban morals, and that institution's role in the economic failures of the sugar plantation system. Even in Villaverde's work, racism underlies his concern about an increased Afro-Cuban population that would create a white minority and a concomitant loss of privilege, as well as fear of a Haitian-like insurrection.

Villaverde was the inheritor of a lengthy tradition of race thinking and views on slavery from nineteenth-century Cuban academics such as Félix Varela, Domingo del Monte, and José Antonio Saco, who was actually cited in Cecilia Valdés.¹²¹ Varela was really the first Creole to take a position against slavery; his primary argument for rejecting slavery was not ethical or religious (he was a priest), but pragmatic, political, and economic. He believed that blacks on the island would destroy Cuba's agriculture prominence because blacks did not accept they were inferior, and resented being treated as such. He feared black rebellion would ruin the agriculture-based economy.¹²²

¹²¹ José Antonio Saco was mentioned on p. 146 of Cecilia Valdés. The footnote on the same pages argues that he was the best-known historian in Cuba in the nineteenth century. He wrote the Historia de la esclavitud (desde la antigüedad hasta nuestros días).

¹²² Literary Bondage, p. 30.

Del Monte and the secular racist¹²³ Saco demonstrated an apprehension that went beyond just fear of rebellion and economic disruption, and showed that what they feared, perhaps most, was a competent and upwardly mobile Afro-Cuban population. Stating that they wanted to obey the “distinctions of nature,” they had pushed for an end to integrated education and had sought to limit access to education for Afro-Cubans. In fact, they successfully pushed through a directive ending mixed education on June 17, 1841.¹²⁴

Saco’s position on the black presence was primarily that no independent Cuban nation could come to pass while there was still a large population of blacks. This position reflects Creole elite fear of black dominance. As odious as the Spanish presence was, it kept the slave population under control, and many white Creoles feared that without the Spanish military presence, the black population would take over the island. Saco did not criticize the slave trade because it was unethical, but because it increased the number of blacks on the island, which he thought threatened white domination. Luis, in Literary Bondage, suggests that this position was largely based on Saco’s preference for a *Cuba pequeña* with small farms and free white labor, as opposed to a *Cuba grande*, with an economy based on sugar cane and black slave labor. It was more of a chicken and egg issue, with Saco’s fear of a growing black population causing him to favor small farms and immigrant labor, and not the opposite.

Villaverde reflects this vision of a *Cuba pequeña* in Excursión a Vueltabajo, in which he lambastes the plantation system as destructive to the environment and harmful to white Cubans, arguing that “el hombre acostumbrado a mandar esclavos perdía el amor al trabajo, tornándose holgazán, desidioso, rudo” (72). Again, the plantation system is not

¹²³ Paquette’s term, used on p. 119 of Sugar is made with blood, denotes the idea of racial inferiority as a “distinction of nature,” as opposed to a religious or social determination.

¹²⁴ Sugar is made with blood, p. 119.

criticized as immoral due to the fact that humans are enslaved and tortured; there is no fervent fire and brimstone ethical criticism that one finds in the work of British and North American abolitionist writings such as those of Harriet Martineau¹²⁵ and William Lloyd Garrison.¹²⁶ The argument against slavery resides in its inherent badness for the slave owner, that he will become lazy, and forget how to work. The essence of Villaverde's anti-slavery message in Excursión a Vueltabajo is that slavery should be abolished because it was untenable, not because it was evil.

Villaverde criticizes the plantation system as harmful to the social fabric of Cuba, that the unfair distribution of land negatively affects white Cuban peasants, leaving them with poor land from which to grow food crops. He argues that the emphasis on sugar and coffee crops “contribuye al atraso y entorpecimiento de la agricultura, como asimismo a la pobreza y al desaliento de la clase proletaria o labradora de nuestra raza” (56). Although he does not directly blame black slaves for Cuba's failures, they are certainly implicated as part of the problem. He highlights the fact the suffering peasants are from his “raza,” as he points out that agriculture is in the hands of black slaves who are not fit for such an important task: “Y estos, ¿qué género de inteligencia ponen para el mejor laboreo de aquella? Ninguna” (57). He also associates them metonymically with the general failures, implying that because of their labor the “terrenos se vuelven estériles y recios” (57). That is not to say that his depictions of black slaves are overtly negative in the texts; in fact, at one point he shows a black man heroically saving a white peasant

¹²⁵ In the “Morals of Slavery” section of Society in America, Martineau speaks of the “blindness” of religious leaders who “confound” the “highest and purest” with “lowest and foulest,” when they try to justify the coexistence of slavery and the gospel (337).

¹²⁶ Mayer, in his book All on Fire, suggests that Garrison was on the verge of antinomianism, and quoted Garrison as saying that he would “consult no statute-book than THE BIBLE,” and that “he would disobey legal requirements that conflicted with the spirit of the gospel” (224).

from drowning:¹²⁷ “un negro de recios miembros, lucientes carnes, y encendidos ojos, hábil cual un pez. Vímsolo desaparecer y aparecer en un instante, resoplando como una tonina con el guajiro y el perro en hombros, que depositó en la playa cansado por demás” (65).

This Romantic imagery presents a larger-than-life, almost mythical African presence. Antonio Benítez-Rojo has written a fascinating article discussing the presence of Yoruban religious imagery, and figures in Excursión a Vueltabajo.¹²⁸ He takes characters throughout the text and shows their similarity with figures from Yoruba cosmology, suggesting that Villaverde created a reformist fable that will permit for the slaves’ inclusion into Cuban society as some kind of exotic decoration. Black male characters are more mythic than human. By exoticizing the Afro-Cuban male, Villaverde marks him as something foreign with no stake in the Cuban nation. This tagging of the Afro-Cuban male as exotic relegates him to the same status as the Indian in nineteenth-century Brazil— an easily manipulated prop and innocuous symbol of American difference from Europe.

This rewriting of the Afro-Cuban male appears to be the first of many efforts to create a non-threatening cultural space for Afro-Cubans in the new Cuban nation, appropriating certain exotic religious elements, such Chango (Yoruban God of Lightning) and Elegua (Yoruba trickster deity and gatekeeper to the divine), neutralizing them through narrative manipulation, rendering them palatable for white Cubans, and inserting the innocuous form into mainstream Cuban society that continues to this day. In this way,

¹²⁷ The *guajiro* himself went into the torrent to save his dog.

¹²⁸ Cirilo Villaverde, *The Seeker of Origins* in Coded Encounters.

they lose their role as symbols of Afro-Cuban resistance and become caricatures in the unifying national narrative.

In spite of Villaverde's apparent familiarity with Afro-Cuban religion and his occasional use of positive black images, one must view with a jaundiced eye his "objective" statements. His message crystallizes the notion that blacks and the plantation system are bad for Cuba, whereas white peasants and small food producing farms are good for Cuba. In fact, Villaverde praises the white, small-scale farmers as the noblest type of Cuban, speaking of their hard work and generosity. He writes at length of the Paroli family, who are white peasants, holding them up as the ideal for Cuba, speaking of the patriarch of the family in glowing terms: "Al verlo tan afanoso, solícito y vivaz, no pude menos de exclamar entre mí: "¡He aquí el agricultor de la isla de Cuba! ¡He aquí el labriego de los países verdaderamente industriuosos [!]" (72). The conceptual foundation of the whitening program, the idea that the white immigrant (note the Italian name *Paroli*) would be far more productive than the existing Afro-Cuban work force, was based on the idea that the Afro-Cuban is an inferior worker, and by implication bad for the nation. In Excursión a Vueltabajo, Villaverde recapitulates the argument that slavery was bad for Cuba because it brought inferior black workers to its fields and workshops.

This bucolic rendering of Vueltabajo as populated with hearty, white freeholders did not originate with Villaverde. In the Memoria sobre población blanca, already published in 1844, the author Herrera criticizes the plantation system and promotes white smallholders as a superior population. He also offers a racial breakdown of Cuba, including assumed characteristics, laid out in concentric circles based on the distance from Havana. He argues that the existing mixed-race population of Vueltabajo, to which

he refers to as the third zone, had little muscular force and *formas redondas y lucias*, which he argued was due to their consumption of pork and inactive lifestyle. He says they had “*buena fe*” serenity in their eyes and were docile, and that they reminded him of Hawaiians.¹²⁹

These descriptions of Vueltabajo’s existing inhabitants were intended to show that they are not up to the task of establishing a strong presence that would sustain the authority of the white State. The ramifications of this perceived racial inadequacy were great at the time. Vueltabajo was quite wild and had many inaccessible areas, and Herrera argued that such rough countryside aided “la deserción de los esclavos y numerosos palenques un asilo seguro” (8). The high country also served to protect the *palenques*¹³⁰ from white elite attacks: “Las sierras de Cuzco...ofrecen á los palenques de cimarrones garidas casi inaccesibles” (8). The growing number, and potential independence, of slaves in the region was much feared. The Haitian experience still resonated with Cubans because many of the fleeing French slave owners came to the Vueltabajo region, recounting their stories of attacks by organized runaways. Herrera expresses this fear as well: “el mayor peligro, que es el encuentro fatal con una cuadrilla de cimarrones ...no...fuga...es atroz la crueldad con que hacen perecer a sus víctimas” (12). Herrera’s argument was to bring in white colonists, such as Villaverde’s Paroli family, to occupy the land and deny access to the runaway slaves: “el modo de llevar a cabo a la colonización blanca...la expropiación forzosa...aunque algo violento...por sus garitas” (12).

¹²⁹ As a fascinating aside, Herrera’s nineteenth-century knowledge of Hawaiians must have been based primarily on Captain James Cook’s Journals (Third Voyage, 1776-1779) because Fornander’s Account of the Polynesian Race did not come out until 1878.

¹³⁰ Settlements of escaped slaves.

Villaverde's Excursión a Vueltabajo plagiarizes conceptually from Memoria sobre población blanca. His ideas on a *Cuba pequeña* represent a specific school of thought on slavery and blacks, which is predicated on the idea that slavery and blacks are bad for Cuba, and in this case, that slaves are a source of violence and rebellion. In Excursión a Vueltabajo, and even in Cecilia Valdés, slavery and the plantation system harbor a great threat to Cuba. Villaverde's solution is not emancipation, it does not make sense in his frame of logic. It is precisely free and mobile slaves that he fears. The position that comes through these texts is to import hearty whites to work in a converted economy, stop the importation of slaves, and eventually the black population will fade away through miscegenation. The message is clear, as manifested in the Isabel character: slavery is a necessary evil that must be extinguished over time. This idea of the superior white immigrant laborer as an antidote to the evils of slavery, (and the concomitant black presence), was also one of the common assumptions among the Brazilian white elite, an textual example of this being the Portuguese Jerónimo in O cortiço. It is obviously a negative example because he becomes "Brazilianized" through his contact with Rita Baiana.

A more direct criticism of this idea would come later from Lima Barreto in Triste fim de Policarpo Quaresma. The traditional argument for immigration had been that Afro-Brazilians were too lazy and incompetent to take advantage of Brazil's rich land, even though, in this text it is shown to be the inverse. The Preto Velho's knowledge of land cultivation techniques is superior to Policarpo's book knowledge, and the European scientific techniques (89). The idea of the Afro-Brazilian as a competent steward of the land contradicts the conventional argument that the white immigrant was needed to

efficiently exploit the land. The scene depicts an Afro-Brazilian population that is capable of succeeding but denied the means to do so. Afro-Brazilians are not racially incompetent, but victims of discrimination, as becomes evident when the Afro-Brazilian character Felizardo explains that the “terra não é nossa... nós não têm ferramenta... isso é bom para italiano ou “alemão” que o governo da todo... Governo não gosta de nós” (120). He argues that “self-help do governo” is only for “nacionais” and “para os outros todos os auxílios e facilidades” (120).

This scene strongly indicts the pro-immigration argument and defends the competency of mixed-race Brazilians. White elite writers, such as Villaverde, construct a perception of incompetent black workers, associating them with the corrupt past of slavery, as if they were in some way responsible, and exalt the white immigrants such as Paroli as the means to a bright future. Lima Barreto’s work deconstructed the myths and justifications that were being constructed by the writers of Villaverde, and to a lesser degree, Azevedo’s generation.

In Cecilia Valdés, however, Villaverde gets more direct in his statements about the dangers of the black population. He alludes to a subtle, hidden fear of white Cubans that their seemingly loyal slaves actually plotted against them. Leonardo makes this accusation against the gatekeeper Caimán at the Gamboa plantation. He warns the other members of the white elite, especially the sympathetic Isabel, that the kindly old black man was really a terrible threat, despite his innocuous appearance, arguing that: “el taíta Caimán... parece... un viejo inerme y manso esclavo leal” (435), but that he is actually a sinister character: “es lo más astuto, maligno, con ribetes de taimado... ni tan ignorante que no practique ciertas artes que le dan importancia entre ellos,” and that Caimán

“[p]asa por brujo y por hacerse invisible” (435). The implication is that seemingly passive slaves belonged to secret fraternities, often religious or mystical in nature that secretly plotted the overthrow of white dominance. These accusations against Caimán could also be construed as a subtle reference to the *cabildos*, the Afro-Cuban mutual aid societies that had been growing in power. As Paquette¹³¹ notes, the famous Afro-Cuban rebel Aponte was the head of his Yoruban *cabildo*, and used his *cabildo* as a base to organize widespread rebellion. Luis, in his book *Literary Bondage*, suggests that Aponte had been a *Shango Oni*.¹³² Associating Caimán with the Afro-Cuban religious structure suggests he played a role in that parallel social structure of the *cabildos*, which implies that he represented a threat to white power.

Leonardo also associates Caimán with the runaway community to further highlight the threat he represented, telling his companions that the old man had been a *cimarrón*¹³³ in his youth, “la juventud...en el monte huido,” where he had taken refuge in “Palenques de cuzco” and had “hecho amistad con los negros cimarrones” (435). This association of Caimán with *cimarrones* is further supported in the text by his intervention with Doña Rosa on the behalf of the runaway slaves. The importance of *palenques* ‘runaway slave communities’ reverberated in many of the areas mentioned in the text as having runaways, who were actively involved in or related to the slave rebellions of 1812 and 1844. The issue of runaway slaves is central to Villaverde’s portrayal of Vueltabajo. Upon Gamboa’s return, he not only learns that he has lost slaves, but that slaves had fled from other plantations as well: “hayan fugado siete negros, cuando, por la misma época

¹³¹ P. 123.

¹³² According to A.B. Ellis in his *Yoruba-Speaking Peoples of the Slave Coast of West Africa* (1894), a *Shango Oni* is a priest of Shango, pertaining to the second order of the Yoruban priesthood, p. 96.

¹³³ An escaped slave.

se han alzado 12 de San Tomás, 8 de Valvanera, 6 de Santa Isabel, 20 de la Begoña, y 40...de la Angosta” (445). The fear was that these runaways would swell the *palenque* populations, which would, in turn, offer a safe haven for rebels and allow them to foment rebellion. It was a time and place of fear for whites and unrest for blacks, and these apparently straightforward descriptions of plantation life are fictional veneer over troubling historical events. Although subtle, Leonardo’s verbal attack on Caimán reveals the fear that even trusted slaves, and Caimán is a slave trusted by Doña Rosa (460), could belong to some secret conspiracy.

Always hovering in the air was the fear of rebellion. Don Liborio senses it in Julián Arará when he goes to beat Tomasa and the young slave exhibits an “amenazadora ...actitud.” Don Liborio looks about him and sees that Julián is not alone: “la mayoría de sus compañeros allí...armado de machete” (467). This simmering hatred among the enslaved, as well as their sheer numbers, highlights the precarious situation of white masters and their henchmen, and exposes the underlying fear of rebellion that they had seen in Haiti and with Aponte in Cuba.

Despite Villaverde’s heroic depiction of Pedro Briche, the message remains clear: the black slave is a threat, and a courageous, competent slave is the greatest threat of all. Even though Pedro was a reliable slave, who had never been punished, “nunca la mano encima, ni dende que vino de África” (448), he was also a leader among his compatriots: “Pedro briche es el cabecilla de sus carabelas” (448). Villaverde clarifies that those superior qualities in Pedro make him a threat. When Pedro does not appear in the morning formation, Don Liborio assumes he was a runaway: “Pedro briche no se presentó en la *jila*” (448). Upon Pedro’s capture Don Liborio punishes the respected

slave: “D. Liborio... lo coge sotaventao y le da unos cuerazos...lo puso en el cepo por unos días...le quitó el mando de contramayoral y lo sopló al campo a chapear” (448).

The repercussions are almost immediate because Pedro displays courage and refuses to submit to the slave system and repent when punished. It is said that Pedro “se emperrió más” (448) when punished.

His acts of defiance display a potential for the spread of resistance. Pedro had been a slave with authority, a *contramayoral*, and respected in his community. Pedro is accused of serving as a “mal ejemplo a sus compañeros” (455). Don Liborio sought to keep him isolated, because “no quería que lo viesen los negros mansos, porque le daban el soplo a los cimarrones” (455). He did not want the influential runaway slave to be seen by submissive slaves because he might give them ideas, as with a contagion. While the narrative treats Pedro as a noble victim, ultimately he is an eliminated threat. If one looks at the objective facts of the narrative, one simply finds rebellious slaves that are either killed or tortured into submission, and the arrival of the white master who restores peace to the plantation. Apart from sentimental commentary, the tale of a totalitarian system staves off a threat and resumes ordinary function. The plantation and its black slaves portend imminent disaster, a continual threat to the white elite control of Cuba.

Villaverde’s preferred approach was gradual reform, in order to lessen the dangers of the explosive situation until white immigration could whiten the island and decrease the black threat.

Isabel’s¹³⁴ coffee plantation represents the intermediary, reformist approach to the slavery issue. Humane treatment of slaves is not an ethical imperative, but an effective social control mechanism to avoid the feared explosion of black rage that would destroy

¹³⁴ Leonardo’s white fiancée, a wealthy plantation owner in her own right.

white privilege. Isabel is shown as the humane slave owner: “Ya por no concordar con sus sentimientos filantrópicos, la humillación, ni en el esclavo” (416). In return, in this world of ideal slavery that Villaverde designs for the reader, she earns the extreme, almost mystical love of her slaves: “la influencia de Isabel sobre...seres...no creían menos sus esclavos sino que Díos le había dotado de una especie de encanto o poder secreto, el cual no cabía eludir ni repeler” (411). Isabel, and her form of plantation administration, represent a middle way, where a reduction of physical abuse and moral outrages serves as a buffer against slave rebellion. Due to Villaverde’s relationship with Southern landowners in the United States, and his annexionist leanings, he seemed to be less of an abolitionist, and more of a slavery reformer, pushing for a “gentler” slavery, not out of a moral concern, but as practical prevention against black rebellion.

Aluísio Azevedo takes a distinct tack in regards to the idea of blacks and slavery as bad for the country. Whereas Villaverde frames the issue basically in economic and social terms, speaking primarily of the institution of slavery, Azevedo marks the Afro-Brazilian presence as a contagion. For Azevedo the association with Afro-Brazilian people weakens whites. This weakening is shown to take place on two levels: the moral and the physical. In O mulato, the Freitas character says it directly:

São necesarios...mais...imorais...As negras, principalmente as negras...muruxabas...de abaixo a rede das filhas...lhes contam historias indecentes!...uma imoralidade...piolhos indecoroso, que pegara de uma negra” “...uma escrava que contagiou a uma familia inteira de impigens e datros de character feio!” “Contam a suas sinhazinhas...a que practiquem aí por essas ruas...Ficam...suja de corpo e alma...corja (46).

Present in this scene is a theme that will be repeated: that of the wet-nurse or personal servant as corrupting agent for young charges. This accusation of corruption is the charge leveled against Amâncio’s wet-nurse, the purported source of his illness in Casa de

pensão, and implied with Mônica, Ana Rosa's personal servant in O mulato. The moral aspect is made clear in Freitas's statement above: the moral weakness of the black woman is called a contagion. This representation plays into the black woman sexual stereotype again, where the convenient accusation of the black female uncontrolled sexuality justifies widespread violation of black women by white owners.

This inversion of guilt is raised a level, not only blaming the black woman for miscegenation, but also for weakening social mores. Effectively, putting the blame on black women serves as form of misdirection, shifting the blame away from the institution of slavery and the moral repercussions of buying and selling humans, and the concomitant violence against them. This accusation of the black woman's sexuality as a corrupting force in society is paramount to blaming the rape on the rape victim. Also tagging these women as moral failures serves to reinforce the stereotype of Afro-Brazilians as inferior and deserving of their slave status.

Azevedo's Rita Baiana, in O cortiço, is the character through which he most strikingly demonstrates the "corruption" and gradual decadence of white immigrant. Rita represents a pessimistic view of the whitening program because her purported corruption of Jerônimo undermines the white elite program to populate Brazil with theoretically morally superior whites. When Azevedo wrote O mulato, abolition was yet to come and, in a perverse way, the white elite wins out over the Afro-Brazilian element. Raimundo is murdered. Ana Rosa miscarries his child as a result and goes on to find great happiness with the Portuguese immigrant Luis. By the time Azevedo wrote O cortiço, however, the dust had settled on post-abolition Brazil; he presents his vision of its future. Azevedo portrays white Brazil, in the form of the European immigrant, the "great white hope" of

the whitening program, as capitulating to Afro-Brazil. Jerónimo is said to have become Brazilian, which by no means is meant to be flattery, as if he has successfully become “integrated,” as said in modern parlance. In this text, his integration means disaster for white Brazil. Jerónimo “abrasileirou-se...fez-se preguiçoso, amigos das extravagâncias e dos abusos, luxurioso e ciumento...fora-se de vez o espírito da economia e da ordem...perdeu a esperança de enriquecer” (196). Jerónimo becomes Brazilian and takes on qualities normally attributed to blacks. In a way, he is disenfranchised, stripped of all positive European qualities (the desire to make money, the desire for order), and becomes decadent and jealous. White characters are “blackened” on a linguistic level when they “go over” and establish contact/intimacy with blacks. Note, however, that João Romão is not “blackened” by his relationship with Bertoleza. The relationship plays out on the narrative level to be a social hindrance, but on linguistic level there is no adjective change. Romão objectifies Bertoleza, appropriates her, but does not embrace her cultural milieu. He resists the “decadent environment” that brought down Jerónimo and is able to maintain his European values and continue in the construction of the white elite narrative.

One must remember that when Jerónimo arrived in Brazil, he had no love for or interest in black Brazil; in fact, he resented his forced co-existence with Afro-Brazilians: “tinha de sujeitar-se a emparelhar com os negros escravos e viver com eles no mesmo meio degradente, encurralado como uma besta, sem aspirações, nem futuro, trabalhando eternamente para outro” (60). Soon after meeting Rita, however, he changed: “parecia embeijada por ela” (121). Jerónimo’s wife, Piedade, makes the accusation directly, couching it in race-based terms: “cigana,” “maleficiaste-me o homen,” “cabra do inferno” (180). Interestingly, Piedade combines a traditional racist epithet that has a long history

of hatred and violence in Europe, *cigana* or gypsy, which stereotypically implies cunning and slyness, with the Brazilian *cabra* that, in addition to the race element, implying one is “darker” than one claims, as well as hinting at violence and ignorance.¹³⁵ In terms of *hexis*, the newly arrived immigrant passes through a period of transition during which he or she holds onto received traditions and perceptions from the old institution, as he or she struggles to learn the new “game” of the new society. In terms of race imagery, Piedade is still at an intermediary phase.

Rita’s seductive draw is only a sexual thing; it is also her way of life, the parties, the dancing, and the carefree lifestyle that she and Firmo represent. Even the Portuguese Leocádia falls victim to Rita’s charms, and more importantly, her lifestyle. This kind of depiction attacks the Afro-Brazilian presence, positing blacks as bad for Brazil. It ceases to be a question of the degrading impact of slavery, or the corrupting nature of the institution of slavery, as perceived in Villaverde’s work. Rita and Firmo are free mulattos, free from the degradation of slavery. Firmo actually has a good profession, and, in a certain sense, is socially integrated. The depiction suggests that there is an intrinsic flaw in the Afro-Brazilian that spreads to whites upon contact.

Amâncio in Casa de pensão is also a victim of Afro-Brazilian female sexuality. The sensual and bawdy mulatta slaves in service at his father’s house are blamed for further wearing down any remnant of morality that had resisted his wet-nurse’s infected blood. Azevedo clarifies that the failure of white Brazil, and white Brazilians, can be laid at the feet of the black slaves: “Costumes atrofiados, bárbaros, viciados do Brasil...pelo hábito de lilar com escravos” (13). However, mentioned earlier, in the case of Amâncio, the contagion of black decadence is not just a question of moral laxitude, but rather is

¹³⁵ Dicionário da Escravidão by Alaôr Eduardo Scisínio, p. 75.

biological, which foreshadows the social hygiene movement that will target Afro-Brazilians a few years down the line. Amâncio's moral and physical failure is directly linked to the infected breast milk of his black wet-nurse: "com semelhante esterco...desabrochar...seu temperamento...o leite, que lhe deu a mamar uma preta de casa" (15). The warning comes early on in the text, when the doctor cautions Amâncio's father against letting the black wet-nurse breast-feed him: "O médico ...não...deixassem amamentar o pequeno...Esta mulher tem reuma no sangue...o menino pode vir a sofrer para o futuro" (15). Although the term *reuma* is employed to show the biological threat represented by the Afro-Brazilian, it is a notoriously imprecise term, as Luiz Claudio da Silva notes in his article *Reumatismos não existem* in the Revista Brasileira Reumatol:¹³⁶

Reumatismo: expressão incorreta, mas insubstituível, arraigada nas linguagens médica e popular. Designa um conjunto de afecções diferentes, agudas ou crônicas, tendo como caracteres comuns a sua localização eletiva nos tecidos mesodérmicos e o fato de produzirem fenômenos dolorosos no aparelho locomotor e nas estruturas que o inervam e revestem. Sua etiologia é desconhecida ou apenas suspeitada; sua patogenia, obscura; sua anatomia patológica, pouco específica. Traduz-se, clinicamente, por sinais gerais, viscerais e pelas dores (com seus fenômenos associados), que podem ser cambiantes, migratórias, fixas, contínuas ou em crise.

Reuma can also be construed to mean syphilis given the context, or just as bad blood. Either way, Amâncio's illness and moral failings are born in the blood of the black woman.

The virtuous slaveowner

One of the common techniques for naturalizing the institution of slavery in the social sphere revolves around the construction of a set of false parameters. A context is established with certain assumptions, for instance that slavery is evil, but necessary.

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Implied in this position is that the economy would fail, and/or that the country would face a rebellion along the lines of the one in early nineteenth-century Haiti.

The acceptance of these assumptions reduces the sphere of debate, limiting the actions taken within the established parameters. Once immediate abolition has been eliminated from the debate, the next step for the continuing naturalization of slavery is to make slavery more palpable in an environment where the institution is increasing criticized, particularly by outside actors.

The novel, as a form, is the vehicle for this naturalizing process. In the case of slavery, it starts with the assumption that slavery is necessary and proceeds to operate within the parameters of this assertion. It does not address the evil of slavery *per se*, or discuss how to end it. Instead, strategies are deployed to reduce slavery's negative perception without actually promoting qualitative changes to the institution. A principal "reformist" strategy creates a false opposition between good slave owners and bad slave owners. In this strategy, the bad owner is not only portrayed as brutal and cruel, and unethical, but also ineffective in organizing slave labor. In contrast, the "good" owner is portrayed as not only kind and well loved by his/her slaves, but also as creating an effective slave labor force. The apparent contradiction, that this good person owns slaves, does not figure into the debate, effectively quashing criticism of the institution as a whole.

The starkest example of this false binary appears in Cecilia Valdés with the comparison between Isabel and her "humanely-run" coffee plantation and the Gamboa family's hellish sugar plantation. Cándido and Rosa Gamboa are represented as unrepentantly cruel and inhuman with their slaves. Cándido refers to slaves as *bultos*,

fardos, and *sacos de carbón* (267). Although these code words disguised the nature of the cargo from prying British eyes, Cándido also demonstrates that he does see slaves as things: “tú has figurado que los sacos de carbón sienten y padecen como nosotros. No hay tal” (273). Rosa’s position is more complex and contradictory; she begins by arguing that slaves are things: “no atino comprender por qué se ha de oponer Inglaterra a que nosotros traigamos salvajes de Guinea. ¿Por qué no opone que se traiga de España aceite, pasas y vinos?” (269). However, she immediately goes on to contradict herself, implying they are humans, or at least potential humans, when she uses evangelism to justify slavery: “Pues halla más humanitario traer salvajes para convertirles en cristianos y hombres” (270).

Through this characterization Villaverde also highlights the arguments to justify slavery. Although he seems to insert these justifications into the narrative in a way that they appear unconvincing, by emphasizing their cynical, self-serving nature, he furthers his reformist agenda by creating the bad owner *persona*. While rejecting the characters’ cynical arguments for slavery, he grants that slavery is a necessary evil, thus pushing his reformist agenda. Within the bad owner category, one also finds some important subdivisions. Cándido Gamboa’s white associates on the plantation are shown to be less sophisticated in regards to the science of exploiting slaves. Science, in the form of ethnology, is precisely what Cándido pretends to use to control his slaves. He discusses, at length, the different types of Africans and their supposed characteristics: “Mas todos éstos son congo real, congo loango o congo musundi, raza humilde, sumisa, leal, la más propia para la esclavitud, que parece su condición natural” (445). The narrator underscores the point: “Gamboa de achaque de etnología africana...tráfico constante de esclavos por muchos años...le habían enseñado según su raza eran más sumisos o

levantiscos” (445-446). Gamboa, in spite of being Spanish, and assigned the role of the villain by most critics, is actually treated quite positively in the text. Here, he is shown as perceptive and scientific in his approach, and as being very practical in his use of violence against slaves.

The other white characters are shown as brutal and rustic. Moya responds to Cándido’s ethnological analysis with a sweeping generalization: “negros...que no sirven pá esto y no sirven pá lo otro...toos los negros son lo mesmo cuando la Guinea se les mete en la cabeza” (446). Capitán Peña is also shown to be ignorant of the “science” of slavery, making an all too familiar generalization: “V. sabe que todos los negros se parecen” (444). The depiction of these unsophisticated slavers accentuates the characterization of Cándido as a clear-headed, hard-hearted businessman, removed from the cruel brutality of the lower class whites and mulatto overseers.

The Creole Rosa Gamboa character is the worst of the bad masters. Very early on in the text she is portrayed as unconcerned about Leonardo’s beating of the coachman Aponte. When asked by her husband about the scandalous noise outside she responds: “Nada, Leonardo castiga a Aponte” (260). Cándido’s response is hardly sympathetic, and he is angrier at being awakened, but there is an essential coldness in Rosa’s response, perhaps reinforced by the reader’s stereotypical view of women as more sensitive and gentle.

Rosa, also depicted as petty, persecutes and mocks the cook Dionisio, seemingly as a diversion. Villaverde further accentuates the contrast between what one expects from a woman and a mother when he addresses the irony of a Christian woman enjoying the spectacle of a savage beating: “Doña Rosa, mujer cristiana y amable con sus

iguales...confesaba a menudo...daba limosna...al ver las contorsiones de aquéllos a quienes la punta de látigo de cuero...abría surcos en sus espaldas o brazos, se sonreía” (457). Rosa almost seems to redeem herself when Goyo seeks her intervention on behalf of runaway slaves. He comes to her because she would be “más indulgente con las faltas de sus esclavos” (461). Rosa agrees to protect them, although her motivation belie kindness or sympathy. Her actions are part of a power play between herself and Cándido, perhaps an allegory for the Creoles and the Spanish. She is shown to be the real, legitimate inheritor of the plantation, a member of the Creole elite, and her generosity to some slaves is part of her resistance to Cándido’s power. In fact, one could easily construe her hatred of Don Liborio, in part, as a result of his accidental subversion of her authority.

Even Rosa’s moments of kindness are called into question. In fact, her cynical, calculating nature is exposed later when she bases her plea to end the beating because it might frighten off the gentle Isabel. She appears heroically kind during the audience with her slaves when she has Isidoro’s chains removed: “quítenle ahora mismo los grillos a este negro” (480), but again this gesture is cynical. This act of kindness by Rosa plays an important social control function, a kind of safety valve that lets off steam in an emergency. It is that faint hope for some recourse that keeps slaves from rebelling or running away. On the surface, Rosa has turned sweet suddenly, which stands in conflict with her prior statements and actions. Rosa appears aware of the importance of leaving a ray of hope, a safety valve for slaves, regardless of the slave owner’s contempt for them. Total brutality with no hope led to the fleeing of “good” slaves in the first place; the return of owners, and hope for a reprieve brought them back. She understands how to

control people effectively. Rosa's generous act is immediately deconstructed in the text. Villaverde emphasises that this is all cynical manipulation, and that Rosa and Cándido represent two facets of a failed slave system.

Isabel, of course, opens the reader's eyes to Rosa and Cándido's evil, to their failed system. She laments the existence of "un estado permanente de guerra, guerra sangrienta de negro contra el blanco, del amo contra el esclavo" (478). She complains that the *látigo* is the only argument that bad slave owners use to make slaves work, and she speaks of *castigos injustos y atroces* and the *horrores de la esclavitud* (478). Isabel's position is a perfect example of the subtle argument for improved slavery, as opposed to no slavery. Instead of questioning the idea of slave labor, she debates how to make slaves work more efficiently by not relying on force. When she speaks of unfair punishments she fails to mention that all punishments against slaves are unjust. Villaverde frames the issue in a way that these questions are never asked. Isabel furnishes her own justification for slavery, in a backhanded fashion, "[c]omo si el negro fuese malo por negro y no por esclavo...[c]omo si tratado como bestia se extrañara que portara...como fiera" (479). One can infer that slaves are *a priori* bad, which then only permits the question: what made slaves bad? The options are intentionally limited.

Isabel further affirms the inferiority of the slaves by debating how they got that way: "¿Cuál podría ser la causa original...de cosas...opuesto a todo...justicia y moralidad? ¿Hábito...educación? ¿...cristiana? ¿antipatía instintiva de raza?" (479). Again, this "good owner," kindness personified, creates a justification for slavery, that slaves are inferior. Her position is reminiscent of Rudyard Kipling's idea of the "white man's burden:" "Take up the White Man's burden—/ The savage wars of peace—/ Fill full

the mouth of Famine/ And bid the sickness cease.”¹³⁷ She also uses more practical arguments to support slavery, and the statements are so direct that they seem out of character, as if an editorial voice interjected them into the narrative. It appears as if Villaverde felt limited by his character’s capacity to clearly articulate his program to restructure slavery in a more effective manner, and put his direct thoughts into her mouth: “¿No estaba en el interés del amo la conservación o la prolongación del esclavo, capital viviente?” (479). Isabel continues the trend of arguing that slavery is bad for whites: “pero eso tenía de perversa la esclavitud, que...infiltraba su veneno en el alma de los amos, trastornaba sus idea de lo justo y de lo injusto” (479). This argument recapitulates the view that the presence of slaves is a corrupting influence on whites. It also implies that the mere owning of slaves is not unjust, and that there exists the possibility of being a good slave owner.

Villaverde reaffirms Isabel’s saintly nature, important if the reader is expected to accept her kinder gentler form of slavery, with an assertion of self-sacrifice and empathy with slaves: “si me viera en el caso...de escoger entre ama y esclava, preferiría la esclavitud...creo más llevadera la vida de una víctima que la del victimario” (481). Isabel is one of the good guys, and the reader should respect her and her position on reformed slavery because she has the slaves’ best interests at heart. Her entry into the convent at the end of the novel also shows that her delicate spirit is too fragile for this world.

¹³⁷ Often taken as a muscular paean to British imperialism, this poem actually appears to be sober warning to the United States as it embarked on its first imperial adventure in the Philippines and Cuba. In fact the original subtitle was *The United States and the Philippine Islands* when it was published in McClure's Magazine in 1899. Even though the first part of the cited stanza is in line with Isabel’s view of slaves being unable to fend for themselves and in need of white guidance, at the end of that same stanza Kipling comments on the futility of white efforts: “And when your goal is nearest/ The end for others sought/ Watch sloth and heathen Folly/ Bring all your hopes to nought.” Once again, the white exploiter presents himself as a martyred victim, and the exploited are designated as the guilty ones (Rudyard Kipling’s Verse, pp. 321-323).

However, before she goes, she proclaims that Cuba is dominated by a poorly administered slave society that she cannot bear, and her betrothed is part and parcel of that cruel system, “porque...de amante no logro suspender los terribles castigos...a los negros” (634). Her position is clear: since she cannot reform the system and make the slaves’ lives easier, she will withdraw. However, it is important to reaffirm that she never speaks about the abolition of slavery, and as a result, the impression her character leaves is that slavery is a natural and necessary evil that must be conducted as humanely as possible.

The most ironic twist, in this rather black and white description of good versus bad slave owners, is the allegation that the most evil member of the Gamboa hierarchy is not shown to be Cándido, Leonardo, or Rosa, but the mulatto *mayoral*, Don Liborio, a character blamed for all the brutality and ills of the plantation. Rosa places the responsibility for the cruelty on the plantation and the disruption of work on Don Liborio, arguing that he was only useful “para enamorar las negras y desollar los negros con su cuero. Se deleitaba en dar bocabajos” (498). Rosa also argues that Don Liborio’s cruelty leads to the work disruptions due to runaways: “El tuvo la culpa de que se huyeran tantos” (498). The owners may be bad, but the mulatto overseer is the real evil, that his cruelty is the problem, not slavery itself. In fact, Cándido is depicted as knowledgeable about African slaves and efficient, albeit totally ruthless.

Taking the irony to an even higher level, the black *contramayoral* Pedro from Isabel’s plantation is shown as being held back from abusing slaves by the kind Isabel: “que guardes el látigo...mientras le tengas en la mano has de querer usarlo...no quiero que se levante el látigo en mi ausencia” (400), to which Pedro responds: “Le negre etá

perdio – dijo Pedro sonriéndose – por mor da niña.” In this improbable scene, the black overseer is portrayed as disappointed that he cannot beat the slaves, and resentful that the slaves get a break for Easter. In addition to displacing the locus of responsibility from the slave owner Isabel to the black overseer, this depiction also conforms to the stereotype that Africans were traditionally despotic in their treatment of other Africans.

Cândido emphasizes this stereotype as part of his justification for slavery: “Todos han nacido para la esclavitud...es su condición natural, en su mismo país no son otra cosa que esclavos ...de...amos o del demonio...Necesitan rigor...el látigo” (447). Earlier in the text he also suggests a lack of human bond between Africans, which is implied in the behavior of *mayorales* Pedro and Don Liborio, and key in justifying slavery. Cândido recounts a story where African royalty trade away children for baubles and treats “un moleque de 12 años... que le dio el Rey de Gotto a cambio de un cunete de salchichas y dos moleques de 7 a 8 años que le regaló la reina...por un pan de azúcar y una caja de té” (273). This comparison between plantations and owners serves as a mechanism to preserve the slave system, by presenting slavery as a necessary evil that needed reform. By suggesting a correct way to practice slavery, one can avoid the ethical question of slavery.

In Azevedo’s novels one does not find the good versus bad dichotomy, but rather many bad and brutal owners. None could be described as being good, or even moderate for that matter. Amâncio’s wet-nurse in Casa de pensão, for example, is emancipated, but for a price: “o senhor consentiu em passar-lhe a carta de alforria por seiscentos mil-réis, que ela ajuntara durante quinze anos” (15). Not only did she have to buy her own freedom with fifteen years of labor, it is also clear that they were not easy years. Her

owners had shown little kindness: “aturava o maior castigo sim... palavra...áspera, sem...gesto mais desabrido... Enquanto o chicote lhe cantava as costas, ela gemia apenas... lágrimas... silenciosamente” (15). In fact, all the owners in Casa de pensão display a cynical and pragmatic attitude. Apart from the wet-nurse, Cora and Sabino are the only slave characters developed to any degree; although abused, they are not brutalized, just rented out to perform income-generating tasks. Slavery in this novel results from questions of economics, and the owners are portrayed as business people looking to gain an advantage. Consider the case of Amâncio’s father as he speaks of his acquisition of the wet-nurse: “uma verdadeira pinchincha...o demônio de negra...valia duas patacas...dera-lhe...garrafadas de laranja-da-terra, e a preta...começou a deitar corpo e a endireitar” (15).

As horrible as it is frank, this depiction of the social conditions that existed lacks the strategic motivation in Cecilia Valdés. If Villaverde outlines a strategy for maintaining slavery under a gentler reform regime, Azevedo treats it in neutral terms, as business as usual, the *status quo*. Azevedo really makes no attempt at a symbolic rearguard action to prolong slavery in a modified form, since abolition was a *fait accompli*. Lilia Moritz Schwarcz’s comments in her working paper “Not black, not white: just the opposite. Culture, race and national identity in Brazil” support that view:

When Princess Isabel abolished slavery on May 13, 1888, many captives had already procured their own freedom. From the start of the 1880s the numbers of slaves escaping increased, and it became common to read in the newspapers of São Paulo state that large slave-owners had ‘gone to sleep’ in possession of all their slaves and ‘awoken’ to find they had all fled. The army also began to refuse to pursue runaway slaves, and the chances of recapture became increasingly slim. The slave-owners themselves, faced with the total loss of their labour force, took the initiative of freeing their slaves, but retaining them on their estates (8).

Perhaps the reality of this *de facto* abolition partially motivates the extremist views on slavery that were found among the characters in O mulato; however, the novel still lacks the oppositional relationship between good and bad owners. In fact, there are only bad owners, and very bad or worse owners. The most highly developed bad owner characterization is that of Maria Bárbara, but she has no good counterpart.

José, Raimundo's father, is described as a bad man. He impregnated Raimundo's mother, Domingas, a black slave girl that saved his life during a slave uprising, and did not repay her in kind, as she suffered horribly as a result of his inaction. The fact that he inspired a slave uprising also suggests that he was less than beloved to his slaves. On the contrary, Ana Rosa would be the most likely counterpart to good owner Isabel. Ana Rosa is kindly toward her *mãe-preta*, and is ready to accept Raimundo's "blackness," even as she takes no action that could qualify as helpful to slaves.

If the characters in Casa de pensão have recognized the *de facto* end of slavery and are simply cynically squeezing the last proverbial drops out of their urban slave labor force, then those of O mulato are on the same historical page, but with more resentment. No attempt is made to attenuate symbolically the institution of slavery; the textual mission seems to be the establishment of a clear line between the races in preparation for the new social order where Afro-Brazilians, ex-slaves and free, would be marginalized under a new race regime in which those who suffer poverty and oppression are not limited to Afro-Brazilians, but only whites can access wealth and elite status.

O cortiço, even though the action takes place when slavery is legally still in effect, was written two years after its abolition and its treatment of slavery is literally historical. As was the case with O mulato, O cortiço was far more oriented toward writing the place of

the Afro-Brazilian in the new Brazilian nation. The only slave owner that appears in Q cortiço is Bertoleza's old owner, out of the distant past, and his function in the text amounts to assisting in the symbolic death of black Brazil in the text, manifested by Bertoleza, which allows for the birth of a new white society in the form of João Romão. Slavery, as an issue, is finished by the time this text appears. There is no good or bad owner, just a shameful past. The focus is on the future, and the slave past is just an inconvenient memory to be excised, just as Bertoleza was "excised."

There is no good owner-bad owner dichotomy Azevedo's novels, because the objective conditions in which the author found himself did not require such a representation. Villaverde's good owner depiction responded to an objective condition, the possibility of extending slavery. There was a strong case in Cuba at the time for the gradual extinction of slavery, during which the worst of the abuses would stop, but the institution would carry on until it could be phased out without economic repercussions.

Brazil and Cuba as mulatto nations

The characterization of Brazil and Cuba as mulatto nations has been an undercurrent that runs subtly through the literary, journalistic and scientific discourse of the late nineteenth century, and has influenced policy decisions in Latin America, the United States, and Europe for many years. There existed a recognizable anxiety among the white elites of Cuba and Brazil over this perception that they were perceived as mulatto nations. This notion surfaced most strongly in the writings of racist writers such as Gobineau, who says in a letter to Adalbert von Keller on March 23 of 1865 that

[n]ot a single Brazilian is of pure blood, but the combinations of marriages between White, natives and Negroes are so multiplied that there are innumerable

variations in complexion and all this has produced, in higher and lower classes alike, the saddest form of degeneration (202).¹³⁸

It also appeared in the work of writers such as Agassiz, who, in his A Journey in Brazil¹³⁹ suggested that the Brazilian legal practices would contribute the increase of mixed-race Brazilians:

The hybrid class, although more marked here because the Indian element is added, is very numerous in all the cities and on the large plantations; perhaps the fact, so honorable to Brazil, that the free negro has full access to all the privileges of any free citizen, rather tends to increase than diminish the number (293).

However, Agassiz carefully expresses in a footnote, which seems to conflict with his earlier statement referring the act of “granting” of freedom to people of color as an honorable act, that he views miscegenation as negative.¹⁴⁰

Saint Hilaire, in his Viagem às nascentes do rio São Francisco e pela província de Goiás: tomo primeiro, also commented on the large and growing mulatto population in the Goiás province: “uma população permanente, composta de brancos..., e de muito maior número, ainda, de mestiços” (301). Saint-Hilaire suggests that in Goiás that there were few Africa-born slaves, and that most residents were born in Brazil, most of them of mixed-race: “Não havia mais quase, no país senão crioulos, negros o mulatos, nascidos na maioria de uniões passageiras e ilegítimas” (303). He also suggested that their numbers would increase because, and he relied on the science discourse of his day for this belief, because they were better adapted to Brazil’s climate: “os progressos da população se fizeram muito menos sentir entre os brancos do que entre os negros e

¹³⁸ In Biddiss’ Father of Racial Ideology: The Social and Political Thought of Count Gobineau.

¹³⁹ A Journey in Brazil, Ticknor and Fields, Boston, 1869.

¹⁴⁰ “Let anyone who doubts the evil of this mixture of races and is inclined from a mistaken philanthropy to break down all barriers between them come to Brazil. He cannot deny the deterioration consequent upon an amalgamation of races, more widespread here than in any country of the world, and which is rapidly effacing the best qualities of the white man, the Negro and the Indian, leaving a mongrel, nondescript type deficient in physical and mental energy” (293).

mulatos livres, o que provaria...que o clima da América Tropical convém mais aos homens de cor que á raça caucásica” (302-303). The view from Europe was that Brazil was a mulatto nation and would become more so, in time.

In similar fashion to Saint Hilaire, Silvio Romero, author of Estudos sobre a poesia popular do Brasil (1888) and the Brazilian literary critic and historian, most strongly lauded and encouraged *branqueamento*, the program promoting European immigration and racial inter-breeding. He recognized that Brazil had become a mulatto nation when he recounted the “imensa mistura do português com o africano. Basta lançar os olhos sobre as populações brasileiras para ter-se a prova” (60).

These above mentioned texts cannot be taken as objective historical truth, but rather show that this idea of a mulatto Brazil has a long history in the Brazilian national discourse, and that it had bearing on, and is reproduced in the texts herein analyzed. Evidence demonstrates that early on the white elites of both Brazil and Cuba were concerned about the perceptions of these foreign travelers, and often valued their analysis more than their own practical experience. In a monograph that appears to have heavily influenced Villaverde titled Memoria sobre población blanca en la Vuelta de Abajo, Costa del Norte, the author Desiderio de Herrera uses the travel writer Humboldt as an authority when writing about his native Cuba, as if this outside view was more reliable (5). This vision of Brazil and Cuba as mulatto nations has been alternately rejected and embraced by their white elites. In the late nineteenth century, miscegenation was encouraged by academics such as Silvio Romero and José Antonio Saco as a means to whiten the populations of Brazil and Cuba. Of course this encouragement of miscegenation was coupled with a massive white immigration program, and underpinned

by the assumption that the race mixing would consist of white men producing offspring with women of color, not a multiracial free for all with white women taking Afro-Brazilian male partners, as well. This strategy assumes an already mulatto nation, and proposes strategic miscegenation as a means to become whiter.

It is also an idea that refuses to die, a type of epistemological itch that cannot be scratched. Even today, Brazilian academics seem to see the view of Brazil as a mulatto nation as an accusation, not as an affirmation of the multi-ethnic origins of their Nation. As evidenced in an article by Tania Regina de Luca,¹⁴¹ who complains about the “not very flattering opinions that Agassiz, Couty or Gobineau had about the inhabitants of the country” (3). These opinions refer specifically to the miscegenated nature of Brazil. It is an anxiety that seeps into discourse at many levels, and evidence that Brazil itself is still caught up in a Euro-centric cultural system where the *habitus* of the elite class is drawn from institutional *reproduction* generated in Europe and the United States.

Villaverde, in Cecilia Valdés, does not seem to reprise this idea of a mulatto Cuba directly. He focuses on the repercussions of illicit interracial relationships, and he treats, apparently, miscegenation as a *fait accompli*. He does demonstrate a certain amount of anxiety about the fading of the color line, and seems to base his criticism of the sexual antics of the white male elite on that specific repercussion. The fear of a darkening population was widely discussed at the time, and is clearly articulated by Antonio Saco. Saco sought to address the issue with Cuba’s own whitening program, underpinned by the massive importation of whites in the latter nineteenth century.

Azevedo directly engages the issue in Casa de pensão, O mulato, and O cortiço. The Amâncio character in Casa de pensão subtly references this subject. On one level, the

¹⁴¹ *Ethnic Question in Brazil* (p. 3).

syphilitic milk of his black wet-nurse symbolizes his failings, but his physical descriptions compare to mulatto descriptions, as does his psychological profile; essentially leaving the reader the impression that the “officially” white Amâncio is actually less than white.

In *O mulato*, fanatical fear of race mixing was based on the anxiety about Brazil becoming a mulatto Nation. The obsession with whiteness, and the importance of being seen as *pure* white, is most pronounced in the Maria Bárbara character, who views practically everything in a race optic that consists only of black and white. Her hatred of Raimundo seems linked to her fear of race mixing. She often comments on the lack of racial certainty in wholly negative terms. Her first words relate this obsession when she says: “Ao menos tenho a certeza de que é branco” (12).

Maria Bárbara’s sister, already deceased at the time of the action, had shared her rabid fixation on racial purity. Speaking of the benefits of marrying a Portuguese immigrant, she argued that “[o]s portugueses são brancos de primeira água” (30), a questionable statement given the historical Moorish presence in Portugal. The idea of Portuguese *whiteness* is indeed challenged in the text when the narrator refers a Portuguese friend of Manuel Pescada’s as “um portuguesinho trigueiro como um caboclo” (106), which implies that he is no “whiter” than the officially mulatto Raimundo.

The other character whose views reflect the terror of race mixing, Sebastião Campos, tries to make a clear division where none exists: “Preto é preto, branco é branco! Moleque é moleque, menino menino” (49). Ironically, the text describes Campos himself as a *tipo de norte*, the implication being that he might be somewhat less than

white, which perhaps could be the source of his anxiety about race mixing and the existence of an intermediary category. Much of Campos' rage is oriented toward the Portuguese, who settled Brazil, at one point suggesting that "Brasil ganhou muito, se perdesse a Guerra de Guararapes" (49). This comment referred, in a general sense, to the failure of the Dutch to maintain their foothold in Pernambuco, and specifically to their perceived reluctance to involve themselves romantically with women of color. The criticism of the Portuguese is based on the perception that they were more likely to produce mixed-race offspring, and were therefore responsible for the mixed-race nature of Brazil.

Also, as mentioned earlier, the perception from abroad, of foreigners like Gobineau and Agassiz, that Brazil was a mulatto nation, was a social issue. Azevedo demonstrates that Brazilians were aware of that perception. He shows Portuguese immigrant characters joking about the perceived mulatto nature of Brazil: "estas pancadas cá na terra dos papagaios! E ainda se zangam quando queremos limpar-lhes a raça sem cobrar nada por isso" (62). This comment also spotlights the whitening program that motivated the increase in European immigration with the comment "limpar-lhes a raça sem cobrar nada" (62). This depiction reflects the white Brazilian anxiety about miscegenation, while at the same time demonstrating resentment toward the white immigrants brought in, who saw all Brazilians, including the white elite, as mulatto, or "branquinho nacional" (62), as one of the Portuguese labeled Raimundo.

The reference "branquinho nacional" exposes a contradiction in the process of self-identification for the white elite. On one hand, they constructed a stereotypical representation of the Afro-Brazilian, a linguistic structure of negative images that served

to highlight the contrasting positive images they projected as representing themselves. In this sense, the Afro-Brazilian was the inverted image of the white Brazilian: where the white was shown as industrious, the Afro-Brazilian was shown as lazy, for example. However, there was the practical issue of a large and increasing Afro-Brazilian population in a post-slavery and post-monarchy Brazil, with Afro-Brazilians becoming free labor and gaining suffrage. The ability to maintain white power waned, and the white elite sought to remedy the situation through white immigration.

The white elite had for generations carefully constructed their whiteness *vis-à-vis* negative recreations of Afro-Brazilians, and realized that they were not perceived as white by these immigrants who abided by a distinct structuring of whiteness that served their own group interests. This earlier exchange captures the irony of this situation. Later in the text, Portuguese immigrants put a finer point on their assertion that Brazil was a mulatto nation, suggesting it was true at the highest levels: “a conversa ...indo cair sobre as celebridades da raça escura...preconceito da cor, citaram – se pessoas gradas da melhor sociedade maranhenses que tinham um moreno bem suspeito” (136). Even though he laments miscegenation, Azevedo also recognizes it as a fact of life. For instance, the Eufrásia character suggests that Raimundo, even as a mulatto, might attract a white spouse from a poorer family (137). Amância argues that in her time it would not have happened. Freitas reacts to her “decadence” argument, saying that even in the past poor white girls would marry darker: “Era a mesmíssima coisa...as raparigas pobres” (137). This interchange seems to recognize the effort on the part of white Brazilians to rewrite racial history as part of the physical and narrative whitening of Brazil. However,

Azevedo adopts a nihilistic attitude toward the possibility of a successful rewriting and accepts miscegenation as an unfortunate *fait accompli*.

Even though Raimundo appears in relatively positive terms, Azevedo's later texts show mulattos negatively, which also implies that the reality of Brazil as a mulatto nation is a forgone and unfortunate conclusion. In fact, the character most closely tied to Brazil itself is Rita Baiana, who is described in imagery specifically related to Brazil. The majority of terms used in reference to Rita are tied to Brazilian nature, for example; she is referred to as the

luz ardente do meio-dia, o calor vermelho das sextas da fazenda, o aroma quente dos trevos e das baunilhas que atordoara as matas brasileiras, a palmeira virginal e esquiva que não torce nenhuma outra planta, o açúcar gostoso, o sapoti mais doce que o mel, castanha do caju que abre feridas com o seu azeite de fogo, a cobra verde e traiçoeira, a largarta viscosa, and a muriçoca doida (82).¹⁴²

These descriptions foreground the exotic, non-European aspect of Brazil, palm trees and sugar plantations, exotic animals and fruits; even the mosquito emphasizes a difference. Brazil is not only mulatto in its people, but in its nature, and this juxtaposition of exotic flora and fauna with the plantation, with its European structure and cash crops, serves as a perfect metaphor. In this description, Azevedo not only presents Brazil as mulatto, but rural, as opposed to the urban setting of the novel. The association of the mulatto with Brazilian nature seems to set up the binary of real Brazil, rural and mulatto in nature, versus the new urban space with its European immigrants.

Although Azevedo exiles Rita, the symbol of mulatto Brazil, from the slum, this Cadmean victory leaves an indelible mark on the soon to be Europeanized neighborhood

¹⁴² "...blazing hot light of midday, the red heat of siestas on the farm, the hot aroma of clover and vanilla that plunge the Brazilian countryside into a stupor, the virginal and timid palm that crowds no other plant, the mouthwatering sugar, the sapoti sweeter than honey, the cashew nut that wounds with its fiery oil, the green and treacherous snake, the sticky caterpillar, and the mad mosquito." (My translation).

and the immigrants themselves, signaling a failure in the whitening program, as with the immigrant Jerónimo. Silvio Romero supports this idea that even if Brazil is not totally mulatto in body, it has become so in spirit: “Os brancos e negros puros que existem no país, e ainda não estão mesclados pelo sangue, estão mestiçados pelas idéias e costumes” (60-61).

If Rita Baiana is tied to the Brazilian land, almost as an extension of nature, Amâncio represents the real hybrid nature of Brazil, and of the Northeast, in particular. Northeasterners in general are subtly tagged as a mixed race throughout Azevedo's novels. Apart from the suggestion that the Amâncio has a hybrid character due to his contact with his black wet-nurse, there are subtle hints that he is less than white throughout the text. The first reference to Amâncio in Casa de pensão describes him as a “tipo do Norte, franzino, amorenado, pescoço estreito, cabelos crespos...olhos vivos e penetrantes...um leve estrabismo” (7). Immediately, the Northern type is described as dark, with curly hair. Characters from the South of Brazil and Europeans rarely have detailed physical descriptions, and when they do they are vague and positive. When discussing the white child, Cesar, the text uses generalities: “pela fisionomia de César...adivinjava inteligência...Esta fronte não engana” (53).

The white character's features are quantified and described as good according to phrenological standards that place Northern European features at the top of the hierarchy. It is useful to compare this description with that of the Northeasterner: “Seu tipo indeciso, cearense do interior, uma dessas fisionomias confusas e duvidosas” (65). The terms “confused” and “doubtful” signal “mixed-race,” those who are not entirely white. Northeasterners are accused of being weak in character and having a proclivity toward

black women: "...noristas...um deles..chegara a raptar com escândolo uma crioula, e crioula feia!" (69). Amâncio himself is described immediately after that as having a "termperamento excessivamente lascivo" (73). The adjective *lascivo* refers to mulatto characters, Rita Baiana (169) in particular. This fascinating array of self-identifications clash and react with each other. The white Northeasterner, Maria Bárbara, tries to consolidate her self-image by making racial distinctions that set her apart from Raimundo. Southern Brazilians try to assert their superiority over Northeasterners based on their degree of whiteness, and the Portuguese, themselves perceived as less than pure white by their Northern European neighbors, assert their whiteness by contrasting themselves with Brazilians. Color or race ceases to be an objective category and becomes a means to an end, a tool in the service of group identification.

As the narrative reaches its dénouement, not long before his murder by Coqueiro, Amâncio is seen by the mob as "aquele moreno, de cabelo crespo" (178). In the end he is not Amâncio, a subject, but rather just hair and skin color, and the reader is properly prepared for his elimination. He has simply become an icon of mulatto Brazil, sex obsessed and bearing bad blood. Azevedo eliminates this phantom, the embodiment of his anxiety about the proclivity toward miscegenation in his native Maranhão.

Raimundo, Firmo, and Amâncio are murdered, and Rita is exiled. Each character that represents the mulatto nature of Brazil is destroyed. However, Azevedo clarifies that this elimination will not save Brazil; it is already in the blood, spread by black wet-nurses and seductive mulattas. For Azevedo, the mulatto nature of Brazil does not celebrate diversity

The idea of Brazil as a mulatto nation will go on to be debated in Brazilian literature for some time, and will take on greater relevance as scientific racism gains more social currency. The delineation of this issue reaches its apex in Graça Aranha's Chanaan in 1902, where Milkau speaks of Brazil's *futuro povo*" (31) forming a great race from two defective ones.¹⁴³ He explains that mulattos, as a type, evolved to fit Brazil's nature and environment (329). This view of the mulatto as an evolutionary response to the environment fits with Aranha's universalistic and evolutionist views. However, many of his contemporaries viewed miscegenation as a weakness, a traditional view voiced by the Lentz character, who states that "a falta de homogeneidade" is "a causa de desequilíbrio" (325). Milkau counters that "[e]ra preciso formar-se do conflicto de nossas especies humanas um typo de mestiço, que se conformando melhor com a natureza, com o ambiente physico, e sendo a expressão das qualidades médias de todos" (329). He states that no race is incapable of civilization, but that any race that remains pure, white, black or other, will remain savage, a concept that effectively turns Eurocentric racism on its head. This perspective foreshadows Gilberto Freyre and his passion-based racial democracy that will appear in the 1930s. However, Aranha, through the Milkau and Lentz characters, takes that first step beyond, lamenting the mulatto nature of Brazil, as in the work of Azevedo, and establishes a dialog that continues to this day.

¹⁴³ José Vasconcelos' La Raza Cósmica popularizes this idea of combining "depressed races" to form a superior, "cosmic race." Graça Aranha's Chanaan, however, introduces this idea some twenty-three years prior to that.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The performative nature of Villaverde and Azevedo's texts stands out, seen in the optic of the creation of a national narrative. The authorization and prohibition of a variety of race interactions in the textual world create a roadmap for the articulation of these relationships in the physical world. The performative nature of these texts is of particular importance given that the national narratives in both Brazil and Cuba were works in process. How Brazilians and Cubans of the day would see themselves and their place in the new nation was determined in great part from the cues received from literary texts, one of the dominant forms of mass communications at the time, along with newspapers. For the most part, the target audience for these messages was not just whites, but elite whites. At the time these texts were written, one percent of Brazilians were active consumers of literature, according to Haberly, and the vast majority of that diminutive literate population was white (4-5). This medium and its message, therefore, did not reach 99% of the population. The one percent of the population that did read these texts were the decision makers in those two societies, those who could effect real change in social and political reality. Hence, even if these performative texts were only altering the race perspective of a small minority of readers, the actions of those readers had a resounding impact on the majority of the population, since the small elite wielded the *symbolic capital* and controlled the process of *reproduction* of cultural values through institutions such as the State and academia.

Conceptual slippage and contradictions in the texts, however, undercut the monolithic power of these meaning making machines. Strictly speaking, Cecilia Valdés relates the total failure of interracial relations and the whitening potential of Cuba.

Villaverde's actual intention in these depictions is clearly unknowable, but it is a historical fact that as he was writing this novel, Cuba was embarking on its whitening program, which was based on the idea that massive white immigration and intermarriage would whiten Cuba. Cecilia Valdés rejects the basic premise of this whitening program through the Cecilia character; her blackness could not be washed out, even after generations of intermixing, an application of the one-drop rule so common in the United States. Some trace of Africa would always remain, as in the case of Cecilia, and the mixed race person was doomed to fail. It was the same idea expressed with Raimundo in O mulato and Tom in Mark Twain's Pudd'n'Head Wilson. The message was clear: regardless of environment, in spite of wealth and good upbringing, mulattos, even mulattos with an extremely small amount of African blood, would fail due to some "hidden" racial flaw. By extension, their failure also predicts the failure of mixed race nations. It is in this manner that the white elite narrative, which articulates a view that their mixed race nations would become white through a combination of white immigration, intermarriage and the perceived sterility of mixed-race individuals, is disrupted. This instability of the social text mirrors the antagonism between individual experience of writers such Villaverde and Azevedo and the ever-shifting official versions of reality sanctioned by the dominant group.

Furthermore, just as the needs of the dominant elite change, the manner in which they incorporate texts also varies. Once independence was realized in Cuba, for example, social stability became a greater priority than whitening. As a result, the whitening paradigm was abandoned and the official line promoted racial harmony, where Cuba would become one big, happy mixed race nation. In practice, the white elite only offered

equivocal support of this ideal, if at all, although interracial relations would become common in the working classes, which indicates a shift of focus from race to class. This shift is easy to understand if one takes into account that race is one of the many social mechanisms used by the elite to oppress the underclass, and as the twentieth-century turned, class-based movements such as Anarchism and Marxism became far more threatening to elite interests. What better way to counter this type of movement than for the elite to portray itself as a champion of racial harmony, rejecting a shameful past of slavery and discrimination? It is at this point that Cecilia Valdés is recycled to fit the then-current need. Ignoring the actual textual arguments against race mixing and the fatalistic prognosis for a mixed race Cuba, Cecilia Valdés is taken up as an interracial love story, a version that has appeared in both popular music and film. The relationship between the text, a unit of symbolic capital, and the “field” or social context, remains in a flux state. The only constant is that the symbolic system exists to maintain the dominant groups in power, in this case the white elite.

Another salient feature of the corpus texts revolves around the unstable concept of the mulatto. It is a figure that can represent many things, but is difficult to quantify and cast in a mode that allows the white elite to assert white difference and superiority. The mere existence of a mulatto class produces evidence that whites themselves had failed to respect a strict division between the races. This intermediate category of human between the officially “superior” whites and officially “inferior” blacks produced a great amount of anxiety for the white elite. For a society that based its enslavement of an entire group on the assertion of difference and inferiority, the evidence of interrelations between the two-theoretically opposing groups manifested by the existence of the mulatto class belies

the contradiction in their own racial assertions. The anxiety caused by this inexplicable interrelation between two supposedly distinct types of being reverberates in the texts analyzed in this dissertation. For example, the mulatto is pitied for his whiteness, as in the case of the tragic mulatto figure, as per O mulato, in which the reader's outrage is solicited not because of the unfair treatment of Raimundo, but because Raimundo is nearly white and is unfairly treated. Sympathy for his whiteness moves the nineteenth-century reader. That someone so white should suffer disturbs the reader, whereas the suffering of the plethora of black characters leaves the reader unmoved. However, the mulatto is also rejected due to his blackness, no matter how slight it might be, as in the case of Cecilia in Cecilia Valdés and Casa de pensão's Amâncio, whose moral failures are directly linked to small touch of blackness in their background.

The mulatto's "indeterminate nature" is a motif commonly deployed in the representation of the mulatto, supposedly representing a source of anxiety for the mulatto himself, and for the white elite as well. This lack of a social place is articulated clearly by the anonymous mulatto, who mocks Raimundo's blackness in order to demonstrate his own racial and social proximity to the white characters, only to have them reject him because of his blackness. The mulatto is portrayed as being uncomfortable within both groups, and within his own skin, literally. This stress on the indeterminate nature of the mulatto reflects both the inability of the white writing elite to find a place for the mulatto in the social narrative and also reflects the white elite's growing fear of an educated and increasingly wealthy mulatto elite, as articulated through the highly competent and euphonic Pancho Sofla character in Cecilia Valdés.

This issue of the mulatto, as it appears in Cuban and Brazilian novels, is less prominent in North American literature of the same period. In the United States, the one-drop rule view of race effectively preempted the idea of the indeterminate nature of the mulatto by designating him as black, one side of a simple black/white binary view of race. This situation derives not from contemporary conditions of slavery of the day, but from deep cultural divisions that affect race thinking even today. The basic distinction can be traced to Anglo-German views of race versus Hispano-Roman views of race. As shown earlier, the Anglo-German model is based on purity and authenticity, a view of race as inviolate and impermeable, which assigns people to one of two categories, *us* and *not us*. Those in the *outgroup* category are permanently on the outside with no possible access to the dominate group; the *outgroup* is denied rights and privileges, and in the extreme is enslaved or eliminated through genocide. The Hispano-Roman model, on the other hand, is more permeable, not to suggest that it is fair or humane. The Hispano-Roman concept is based on *virtus*, basically defined as the ability to maintain your freedom. Cynically, a man, specifically a Roman, is defined as someone who can resist slavery; and a slave is defined as one who is conquered. Within limits, though, a slave can earn or be granted freedom, thus becoming “human” and even a Roman citizen, regardless of ethnicity or national origin. Unlike the Anglo-German model, in which there is no crossing the group divide, the Hispano-Roman system offers, albeit rarely, the possibility of ascending to the dominant group.

Historically, in Brazil and Cuba, the Hispano-Roman system was in effect, particularly in extreme cases such as Félix da Souza and Domingo Martins, slaves who not only became freemen, part of the power elite, but traders of slaves themselves. This

fact does not mean they had become “white,” in an absolute sense, but they were granted white prerogative. There are cases of the mulatto escape hatch, as in the case of Brazilian novelist Machado de Assis, for example, who was socially “whitened” due to his talent and success. However, the fact that he is still referred to as a great mulatto novelist exposes the weakness of this claim. The essential difference between the Anglo-German and Hispano-Roman visions of race is that the Anglo-German system truly uses ethnic criteria to distribute privileges, whereas the Hispano-Roman system is a class system that simply, in the Latin American case, uses race as its primary justification for exploitation.

The predominance of the Hispano-Roman model does not mean that race does not play an essential role in Brazil and Cuba. The Hispano-Roman race model has its limits, evidenced by the impossibility of characters such as Cecilia and Raimundo to benefit from the mulatto escape hatch and the abject failure of Dolore Santacrú in Cecilia Valdés to parlay her freedom and wealth into a stable position in Cuban society. She played by the rules of the game; but although she possessed the financial capital, she lacked the symbolic capital to survive and fell prey to an onslaught of white elite lawyers and bureaucrats. Dolore Santacrú finishes her days wandering mad through the streets of Havana. Cecilia, the nearly white mulatto, fails in her attempt to integrate into white society and is left with her bastard child, who faces no brighter future than her own; these scenarios are Villarverde’s vision of the future of Afro-Cuba.

In Azevedo’s world, Afro-Brazilians do not fare much better; Bertoleza kills herself with a fish knife, an implement representative of her enslavement, Rita Baiana is exiled and Firmo, Amâncio, and Raimundo are murdered by whites. The final vision that Azevedo presents of Brazil, with a rhetorical flourish, is that of Raimundo and Ana

Rosa's miscarried mulatto child lying in a pool of blood. These pessimistic visions that Villaverde and Azevedo offer of their mixed-race societies are feeble attempts to write away, or at least diminish the Afro-American presence in their nascent nations when they could have laid the symbolic groundwork for a vibrant and racially diverse national narrative. That narrative could have supplied the psychological underpinnings of confident and dynamic new nations born from detritus of slavery. It was not to be the case, and Cuba and Brazil, to this day, struggle with the symbolic legacy these authors left in their wake.

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CURRICULUM VITA

Lyle Scott Nash

2008	Doctor of Philosophy in Spanish, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.
2006-2008	Spanish Instructor, Towson University, Department of Modern Languages, Towson, Maryland.
2006, 2007	ESL Teacher, Towson University, Summer Program, English Language Center, Towson, Maryland.
2002-2008	Spanish Instructor/Coordinator, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, Department of Modern Languages, Baltimore, Maryland.
2000-2001	Spanish Instructor, Rutgers University, Department of Spanish and Portuguese, New Brunswick, New Jersey.
1997-2000	Freelance Interpreter and Translator, Recife, Brazil.
1998	Program Consultant and English Teacher, Catholic Relief Services-Internal English Language Program, Recife, Brazil.
1996-1997	English Teacher, Gbgamey Secondary School, (Fulbright Program), Cotonou, Benin.
1995-1996	English Teacher, American English Language Program, (USIS), Cotonou, Benin.
1995	English Teacher, American English Language Program, (USIS), Dakar, Senegal.
1995	Master of Arts in Spanish Language and Literature, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.
1992-1994	Spanish Instructor, Rutgers University, Department of Spanish and Portuguese, New Brunswick, New Jersey.
1991	English and Spanish Teacher, Albatross English College, Kishiwada, Japan.
1990	English Teacher, Colegio Presbiteriano Pablo Casassus, Mayagüez, Puerto Rico.
1988-1990	Head Spanish Teacher, Staff English Teacher, Atty Language Institute,

Osaka, Japan.

1988 Bachelor of Arts in Spanish, San Francisco State University.

1986-1987 Universidad Iberoamericana, México D. F., Exchange Program.