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SUBJECTED TO FEELING: SLAVERY AND PERSONHOOD IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY
BRAZIL AND CUBA

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I've been operated on several times
I've had several operations
I'm all operated
I've been operated mainly on the brain
I thought it was going to show
That I have something in my brain
No, it showed that I have a brain
A device that thinks well-thought thoughts
that thinks positive
And that is linked to another that does not
think
That is not able to think about anything and
does not work
They ripped out what is thinking
And what is not thinking
And they went to examine this device of
thinking and not thinking
Bound to each other in my head, in my brain
Studying outside of the head
Functioning on top of the table
They are studying outside of my head
I'm already at that point of study, of category

*Eu já fui operada várias vezes
Fiz várias operações
sou toda operada
Operei o cérebro, principalmente
Eu pensei que ia acusar
Se eu tenho alguma coisa no cérebro
Não, acusou que eu tenho cérebro
Um aparelho que pensa bem pensado
Que pensa positivo
E que é ligado a outro que não pensa
Que não é capaz de pensar nada e nem
trabalhar
Eles arrancaram o que está pensando
E o que está sem pensar
E foram examinar esse aparelho de
pensar e não pensar
Ligados um ao outro na minha cabeça, no
meu cérebro
Estudar fora da cabeça
Funcionar em cima da mesa
Eles estudando fora da minha cabeça
Eu já estou nesse ponto de estudo, de
categoria*

Stella do Patrocínio, *Reino dos bichos e dos animais é o meu nome* (2001)

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the ways in which slave owners sought to depict and manage the inner life of the enslaved in the two most lucrative coffee- and sugar-producing regions of the nineteenth-century Atlantic world. Through a comparative analysis of medical, literary, and anthropological texts, this study shows that feeling, on the one hand, informed theories and practices of slave management as much as it inspired sentimental accounts of the institution of slavery. Captives, on the other hand, were not mere objects of a white imagination. In poetry and in autobiographical writings, enslaved and formerly enslaved authors made their own incursions into the culture of feeling that permeated nineteenth-century Cuban and Brazilian societies. In so doing, they articulated conceptions of bondage and emancipation that challenged the affective registers and epistemological regimes of their times.

The six chapters of this dissertation trace a century-long genealogy of writings concerned with the affective lives of enslaved and free people of African descent—from the expansion of the slave trade in the late-eighteenth century through the emergence of reformist and abolitionist rhetoric in the mid-nineteenth century to the aftermath of emancipation in Cuba (1886) and Brazil (1888). Drawing from studies on the relationship between the Church, the law, and mercantilism in the early modern Iberian empires as well as from works on sentimentalism in nineteenth-century Cuba, this dissertation investigates the ways in which religious discourses developed into a particular rhetoric of feeling and affect that was central to the emerging Brazilian and Cuban bourgeoisies from the late eighteenth century onwards.

INTRODUCTION: MANAGING SELVES

CW // Suicide

On an August afternoon in 1843, the enslaved Juan María and José Carabalí were working in their master's charcoal pile in Matanzas, Cuba, when Juan went to the paddock. He came back to the pile, but José was no longer there. Looking and calling for him, Juan went to the chicken coop and found José's body hanging from the rafters. José had committed suicide. Juan reported the incident to their master, Ambrosio González de Chávez, who communicated it to the local authorities. An investigation ensued to understand the possible causes of the incident: Was José Carabalí suffering from some sort of illness? Was he severely punished or badly treated? What could have caused such a sudden act of voluntary death?¹

As part of the *diligencias* that aimed at establishing if Chávez was responsible for mistreating or neglecting his captives, the physician José Antonio Díaz interviewed people who knew José Carabalí, including Juan María and the overseer Antonio Bacalla[d]o.² Díaz found nothing that justified the suicide but “the black's will” [*la voluntad del negro*]. “He did not lack food or clothes” [*No faltaba a este comida, ni vestir*], added the physician.³ Likewise, local

¹ “Comunicaciones sobre el suicidio del negro José Carabalí en el potrero de su amo, Ambrosio González de Chávez,” dated August 6 to September 29 (1843), Legajo 23, n. 40-b, Fondo Esclavos, Archivo Histórico Provincial de Matanzas.

² Since the eighth-century body of law *Las siete partidas*, enslaved subjects could go to the authorities and complain from excessive violence on the part of their slavers. After many attempts to further regulate the power of slave owners—and after a turbulent period of slave revolts in the 1830s—in 1842 the Captain General of the island promulgated the *Reglamento de esclavos* (put into effect on January 1st, 1843), regulating the amount of food, clothes, and free time allowed to the enslaved, as well as the kinds (and severity) of punishments the slavers could perpetrate. Adriana Chira, “Ampliando los significados de Sevicia: Los reclamos de protección corporal de los esclavos en Santiago de Cuba (1810-1870),” *Páginas* 13, no. 33 (Sept-Dec. 2021): 12-13. See also Alejandro de la Fuente, “Slaves and the Creation of Legal Rights in Cuba: Coartación and Papel,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 87, no. 4 (2007): 659-692.

³ “Comunicaciones sobre el suicidio del negro José Carabalí en el potrero de su amo, Ambrosio González de Chávez,” folio 10.

authorities did not find evidence of bad treatment or disease. In the end, they all concluded that José Carabalí had been “driven by an instinct, which predominates so much in his kind” [*llevado de lo instinto, que tanto predomina en los de su clase*]. Such instinct was the “belief” that “all Blacks who hang or die go back to their homeland” [*creencia en que están todos los negros que todos los que se ahorcan u mueren van a parar otra vez a su tierra*].⁴ As his last same states, José Carabalí was African—particularly, from the Bight of Biafra region in West Africa. The belief that enslaved Africans would go back to their homeland through death is well documented in most slave-holding societies in the Americas.⁵ José Carabalí’s death was only one of the 1,171 deaths by suicide among the enslaved population in Cuba from 1839 to 1845, as per the records of the island’s Western department.⁶

José Carabalí’s unexpected act and the reaction on the part of the ones involved in his enslavement point to the intangible, subjective processes that undergirded nineteenth-century racial slavery in the Americas. José Carabalí’s body did not provide explanations for his voluntary death: allegedly, he was healthy, well treated, and did not lack access to food or clothes. Puzzled, local authorities then resorted to probing José’s mind, conjecturing about his thoughts, feelings, and faith. They determined that José’s death was the result of his will and belief in the transmigration of his soul (and perhaps body) to his kin and land. This sort of

⁴ “Comunicaciones sobre el suicidio del negro José Carabalí en el potrero de su amo, Ambrosio González de Chávez,” folio 6b.

⁵ See, for instance, Louis A. Pérez, *To Die in Cuba: Suicide and Society* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); and María Poumier Taquechel, “El suicidio esclavo en Cuba en los años 1840,” *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 43 (1986): 69-86. About the suicide of enslaved subjects in Brazil, see Joé Alípio Goulart, *Da fuga ao suicídio: aspectos da rebeldia do escravo no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Conquista/ INL, 1972); and Clóvis Moura, *Dicionário da escravidão negra no Brasil* (São Paulo: Edusp, 2004).

⁶ Pérez, *To Die in Cuba: Suicide and Society*, 41-2. These statistics do not include the Eastern department, which comprised localities that were not under Havana’s jurisdiction. Colonial authorities and those involved in the slave trade considered the *lucumis* and the *carabalís* (such as José) the African ethnicities most prone to suicide. According to Pérez, hanging was one of the most common forms of suicide among the enslaved in nineteenth-century Cuban plantations. Pérez, *To Die in Cuba*, 34.

speculation about the subjectivity of the other—particularly when the other was deemed racially or spiritually different—was one of the foundations of chattel slavery since the early moments of the Iberian colonial project.

Let us look at another example, this time in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. In March of 1872, the slave seller José Moreira Veludo was violently attacked by twenty enslaved men led by a Bahian captive named Bonifácio, all of whom were waiting to be sold. After the police collected testimonies from witnesses and from some of the captives who had allegedly orchestrated and perpetrated the attack, authorities decided to charge Bonifácio and a few others with aggravated assault. For Veludo, however, losing ownership of those men would entail a significant financial loss since they were to be sold—some of them had already been “chosen” by potential buyers and were to be sent to work on coffee plantations.⁷ In order to avoid such a loss, Veludo minimized his injuries and hired a lawyer to represent the defendants. In trying to establish a reasoning for the attack, the attorney argued that in favor of the captives there was

the stultification of their spirits and their utter lack of manners—evils which arise from their forced condition as slaves, and which, by numbing their consciousness of merit and demerit, considerably diminishes their moral responsibility and imputability.

o embrutecimento de seus espíritos e falta absoluta de educação; — males que são provenientes de sua forçada condição de escravos, e que, embotando-lhes a consciência

⁷ In fact, some of the captives justified their participation in the attack saying they did so in order not to go to the coffee plantations to which they had been sold. Some of them even planned on going to the police after the attack, preferring prison to plantation work. Sidney Chalhou, *Visões da liberdade: Uma história das últimas décadas da escravidão na Corte* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1990), 47-9.

*do mérito e do demérito, lhes diminui consideravelmente a responsabilidade moral e a imputabilidade.*⁸

In his argumentation, the lawyer attempted to expose the captives' minds and spirits to the jury by rhetorically depriving them of "any remnants of conscience or rationality," to use Sidney Chalhoub's words.⁹ According to this logic, Bonifácio's and his co-conspirators' spirits were impaired because they were enslaved—they could not tell right from wrong. As a result, the captives were less imputable than free men and therefore should not be prosecuted for their alleged crimes. This case holds a remarkable parallel with a judicial case in the United States that might help us organize the elements at stake in this discussion. In *United States v. Amy* (1859), Amy, a woman enslaved by Samuel W. Hairston, was indicted for stealing letters from the post office. Amy's defense attorney (hired by her enslaver, just like Bonifácio's) argued that she was not liable for those acts because of the "utter civil non-entity of the slave."¹⁰ In other words, the attorney argued that Amy was a "legal chattel" instead of a "legal person"¹¹ and therefore could not be imputed—even though she was a "human being—a human body inspired with intellect, feeling, volition," all of which made her "so valuable a chattel" in the eyes of the attorney.¹²

In both Bonifácio's and Amy's case, the defense attorneys hired by their enslavers claimed that the captives were not imputable because they were enslaved. Still, the connection

⁸ Arquivo do Primeiro Tribunal do Júri da cidade do Rio de Janeiro (APTJ), maço 2, 1872, A111, in Chalhoub, *Visões da liberdade*, 42-52.

⁹ Chalhoub, *Visões da liberdade*, 52.

¹⁰ "Mail Robbery by Slave. *United States v. Amy*," *Quarterly Law Journal* IV, no. 3 (1859): 177.

¹¹ As Jeannine Marie DeLombard states, both parties insisted that Amy, as an enslaved person, was human. That is, Amy's humanness was never a point of contention in that judicial dispute, just her legal personhood. Jeannine Marie DeLombard, "Dehumanizing Slave Personhood," *American Literature* 91, no. 3 (Sept. 2019): 501-2.

¹² "Mail Robbery by Slave. *United States v. Amy*," 176.

between enslavement and unimputability is different in each case. While in Amy's trial the attorney makes an argument based on her legal personhood or lack thereof, in Bonifácio's case the lawyer anchors his argumentation on the supposed impairment of Bonifácio's "spirit." As an enslaved subject in Brazil, Bonifácio's legal personhood was hardly up for contention, as we are going to see later in this Introduction. Simply put, Bonifácio's attorney focused on a depiction, albeit dismissive and belittling, of his state of mind. Just like in the investigation about José Carabali's suicide, local authorities—all white men—resorted to imagining and depicting the captives' inner lives in order to support their antiblack claims.¹³

Of course, the nature of colonial and imperial archives is such that we scholars in the Western tradition have much more access to records of what European or European-descended peoples had in their minds than to the feelings and thoughts of enslaved peoples.¹⁴ In that sense, we can more or less know what those benefitting from the institution of slavery thought about the thoughts and feelings of the enslaved. Furthermore, when looking closely at those records we can find more than conjectures. We also encounter prescriptions on how to approach, imagine, and manage the inner lives of the enslaved and free Afro-descendants in the Atlantic world. From evangelizing manuals to medical treatises to anthropological texts and legal cases, the inner lives of enslaved peoples in the Americas have been a constant object of attention and concern—whether this inner life was called soul, spirit, mind, emotions, or psyche. Needless to say, the ways in which white authors have imagined Black subjects say much more about the authors

¹³ Ultimately, such arguments only served to benefit slave owners. In José Carabali's case, his master was not accused of bad treatment and the case appears to have been closed; in Bonifácio's case, Veludo succeeded in not letting any of the indicted captives go to prison.

¹⁴ About archives and silencing of enslaved voices, see, for instance, Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2015); and Marisa Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

themselves than of the subjects they supposedly depicted. As Toni Morrison famously argued in *Playing in the Dark*, the “fabrication of an Africanist persona is reflexive, an extraordinary meditation of the self; a powerful exploration of the fears and desires that reside in the writerly unconscious.”¹⁵

This is already clear in fifteenth-century texts such as *The Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea* (1453), penned by Portuguese royal chronicler Gomes Eanes de Zurara. Zurara displays his own sadness in retelling the despondency of newly enslaved Africans when they are separated from their families near the Portuguese port of Lagos:

But what heart could be so hard as to not be pierced with piteous feeling to see that company? For some kept their heads low and their faces bathed in tears, looking upon another; others stood groaning very dolorously, looking up to the height of heaven, fixing their eyes upon it, crying out loudly, as if asking help of the Father of Nature; others struck their faces with the palms of their hands, throwing themselves at full length upon the ground; others made their lamentations in the manner of a dirge, after the custom of their country. And though we could not understand the words of their language, the sound of it well accorded with the measure of their sadness.¹⁶

Mas qual seria o coração, por duro que podesse, que não fosse pungido de piedoso sentimento, vendo assim aquela companha? Que uns tinham as caras baixas e os rostros

¹⁵ Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 17. It is true that Morrison refers here to literary practices, and we cannot neglect the fact that Bonifácio, José Carabali, and Amy were historical subjects and not literary characters. Still, what I propose we examine is how texts about them—legal documents in both cases—also produced, or at least informed, their existences and experiences in the world.

¹⁶ Edgar Prestage and Charles Raymond Beazley, *The Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea. Written by Gomes Eannes De Azurara: Volume I* (Surrey: Hakluyt Society, 2010), 81.

*lavados com lágrimas, olhando uns contra os outros; outros estavam gemendo mui dolorosamente, esguardando a altura dos ceus, firmando os olhos em eles, bradando altamente, como se pedissem acorro ao Padre da natureza; outros feriam seu rosto com suas palmas; lançando-se tendidos no meio do chão; outros faziam suas lamentações em maneira de canto, segundo o costume de sua terra, nas quaes, posto que as palavras da linguagem aos nossos não pudesse ser entendida, bem correspondia ao grau de sua tristeza.*¹⁷

While Zurara’s description focuses on the pain and suffering inflicted upon the captives, three kinds of subjectivities, so to speak, operate within this passage: that of the captives he describes, Zurara’s own subjectivity in conveying his emotional reaction to the scene, and that of his potential readers. As the first depiction of a large-scale sale of enslaved Africans perpetrated by Europeans, Zurara’s chronicle shows that those involved in the institution of racial slavery were attentive to the affective registers of enslavement since its earliest moments.¹⁸

In this dissertation, I will draw a common thread connecting Zurara’s depiction of the slave trade sale at Lagos in 1444 to the death of José Carabalí in Cuba in 1843 and to the case against Bonifácio in Brazil in 1871. This common thread is the semantic field that these three narratives share: that of feeling, subjectivity, interiority, sentiment, inner life, emotion, sensibility, belief—all of which fall under the umbrella of “affect.” While I am not using these terms interchangeably, I treat each of them as part of a wider epistemology of affect that

¹⁷ Gomes Eanes de Zurara, *Crónica de Guiné*, ed. José de Bragança (Porto: Livraria Civilização, 1973), 122.

¹⁸ For a discussion on this scene as an early instance of the emergence of racial capitalism, see Anna More, “Necroeconomics, Originary Accumulation, and Racial Capitalism in the Early Iberian Slave Trade,” *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 19, no. 2 (2019): 75-100.

permeates writings about and by people of color in slave-holding societies in the Americas. As we will see, the terms that make up this semantic field are at times mobilized as to ascribe a higher degree of humanity, or personhood, to the subjects discussed in specific texts and practices.¹⁹

In the six chapters that follow, I examine the ways in which subjects involved in the institution of slavery sought to depict and manage the inner life of the enslaved and formerly enslaved in Brazil and Cuba, the two most lucrative coffee- and sugar-producing regions of the nineteenth-century Atlantic world. Through a comparative analysis of medical, literary, and anthropological texts, I show how feeling informed theories and practices of slave management as much as it inspired sentimental accounts on the institution of slavery. Captives, on the other hand, were not mere objects of a white imagination. In poetry and in autobiographical writings, enslaved and formerly enslaved authors made their own incursions into the culture of feeling that permeated nineteenth-century Cuban and Brazilian societies. In so doing, they articulated conceptions of bondage and emancipation that challenged the affective registers and epistemological regimes of their times.

Human Commodities

While depictions of slavery tend to emphasize bodily sufferings, this dissertation examines figurations of the captive's mind, where no scars could be seen, painted, or

¹⁹ I use the terms humanness and humanity to refer to “the quality and state of being human,” treating them almost interchangeably since they are the equivalent of the Spanish and Portuguese term *humanidad* and *humanidade*. Personhood, on the other hand, refers to the quality of being an individual person rather than part of a collective “humanity” and, therefore, is more related to the concept of subjectivity. Although there is no direct translation to either Spanish or Portuguese, I use the term personhood here because it holds a distinct referent that is not necessarily attached to the biological baggage of the term “humanity.”

photographed to sensitize domestic and foreign audiences to the inhumanity of slavery. Yet the mind, soul, and heart of the enslaved did become *loci* that abolitionists and reformists sought to access in order to demonstrate the humanness of African and African-descended captives. After all, were they not women and sisters, men and brothers? The idea that enslaved Africans and Afro-descendants were treated as or turned into commodities has been a common argument in reformist, abolitionist, and pro-slavery rhetoric throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as well as in the contemporary historiography and literature on the Atlantic slave trade.²⁰

In the Iberian tradition, statements claiming the (in)humanity of the enslaved marked debates around the legitimacy of the slave trade and the institution of slavery in the nineteenth century, usually mobilizing the commodifying or animalizing effects of enslavement. In 1825, for instance, the Brazilian statesman José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva asked, “where is the benefit for the slave in losing all their natural rights, in changing from person into thing ...? What they [pro-slavery authors] want to defend is not the right to property, but the right to coercion, because man, being unable to be a thing, cannot be anyone’s property” [*e qual he o bem que tira o escravo de perder todos os seus direitos naturaes, e se tornar de pessoa a cousa ...? Não he pois o direito da propriedade, que querem defender, he o direito da força, pois que o homem, não podendo ser cousa, não pôde ser objecto de propriedade*].²¹ The animalizing effect of enslavement also became a common trope in anti-slavery fiction, such as Antonio Zambrana’s

²⁰ Stephanie Smallwood’s *Saltwater Slavery* is a well-known example. In order to turn people into slaves, Smallwood claims, “the economic exchange had to transform independent beings into human commodities whose most ‘socially relevant feature’ was their ‘exchangeability’.” Stephanie Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007), 35.

²¹ José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva, *Representação à Assembleia Geral Constituinte e Legislativa do Império do Brasil sobre a escravatura* (Paris: Typographia de Firmin Didot, 1825), 21.

reformist novel *El negro Francisco* (1875). In the novel, the Cuban overseer Eulojio sees the enslaved as “a harmful animal, unfortunately indispensable for the work in the fields, but for which the most severe and ruthless treatment was always the healthiest” [*un animal dañino, indispensable por desgracia para el trabajo de los campos, pero con el tratamiento más severo i despiadado era siempre el más saludable*].²² As an heir to this abolitionist or reformist rhetoric, much of the twentieth- and twenty-first-century scholarship on slavery in Latin America and in the United States has committed to “proving” the dehumanizing power of chattel slavery and antiblackness on the one hand, and the humanity of enslaved and formerly enslaved peoples on the other.

Yet, as Saidiya Hartman, Walter Johnson, Sidney Chalhoub, Moreno Fraginals, and other scholars have claimed, the institution of slavery has always depended on the humanness of enslaved people.²³ To quote Hartman’s famous words, “the barbarism of slavery did not express itself singularly in the constitution of the slave as object but also in the forms of subjectivity and circumscribed humanity imputed to the enslaved.”²⁴ Recently, scholars in Black studies have followed up on Hartman’s claim to further question the ways in which Black humanness has been exploited and appropriated by antiblack thought. In *Becoming Human*, for instance, Zakiyyah Iman Jackson argues that African diasporic cultural production “challenges the abjection of animality and highlights alternative modes of being.”²⁵ Jackson claims that instead

²² Antonio Zambrana, *El negro Francisco, novela orijinal de costumbres cubanas* (Santiago: Imprenta de la Librería del Mercurio, 1875), 94.

²³ Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Walter Johnson, “To Remake the World: Slavery, Racial Capitalism, and Justice,” *Boston Review* (Feb. 20, 2018), <https://bostonreview.net/forum/walter-johnson-to-remake-the-world>; Jeannine Marie DeLombard, “Dehumanizing Slave Personhood;” Sidney Chalhoub, *Visões da liberdade*; Manuel Moreno Fraginals, *El Ingenio* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2001).

²⁴ Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 6.

²⁵ Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, *Becoming Human: Matter and Meaning in an Antiblack World* (New York: New York University Press, 2020), 14.

of denying enslaved or Black humanity, liberal humanism “casts black people as ontologically plastic.”²⁶ As we will see in Part III of this dissertation, the identification of Blackness with plasticity was a key feature of post-abolitionist criminology in Cuba and Brazil.

In other words, even if the enslavement of Africans by Europeans since the fifteenth century entailed commodification as a crucial part of the colonial enterprise, this process was never absolute nor complete. On the contrary, slavers acknowledged their captives’ humanness either for managerial reasons or because of their intimate relationships with them. But what did this dependency and these human capacities consist in? This dissertation claims that feeling was one of these human capacities on which slavers relied to pursue their economic, political, and moral goals.

From Soul to Mind to Psyche

Although scholars examining the relationship between feeling and slavery have largely focused their attention on the Anglophone North Atlantic world, British and North American abolitionists extended their intellectual networks throughout the Atlantic world, informing literary practices and anti-slavery activism in territories of Iberian colonization such as Cuba and Brazil. Indeed, the sentimental rhetoric aimed at demonstrating the humanity of the enslaved was one example of these connections.

That said, analyses of the Anglophone Protestant context are not easily extendable to Ibero-America, where discourses on feeling and the contours of legal personhood operated differently. From the onset of colonization in those regions of the world that would become Brazil and Cuba, enslaved indigenous and Black men and women were endowed with a soul and

²⁶ Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 19.

a legal personality as subjects of the Catholic Church and the law. Jesuits and Dominicans wrote evangelization manuals, economic and agronomic treatises with the goal of instructing members of the clergy and slave owners to better manage the souls and bodies of the enslaved.²⁷ In seventeenth-century Cartagena de Indias, for instance, Alonso de Sandoval wrote *Naturaleza, policia sagrada i profana, costumbres i ritos, disciplina i catechismo evangelico de todos los etiopes*, also known as *De instauranda Aethiopum salute* (1627), an evangelization manual that aimed to help members of the Church to establish the “health of the souls” [*salud de las almas*] of newly arrived enslaved Africans.²⁸ Likewise, in Portuguese America, Father Antônio Vieira wrote and delivered sermons directly aimed at enslaved populations in Northeastern Brazil; in his twenty-seventh sermon addressed to the brotherhood of Our Lady of the Rosary in Salvador, Bahia, Vieira taught his audience (many of whom were enslaved) how to avoid the “greatest and weightiest slavery, which is that of souls” [*o maior e mais pesado captiveiro, que é o das almas*] while preaching that not much could be done about their bodily enslavement.²⁹ Later on, in the eighteenth century, the Jesuits would become the first to write exclusively about slave governance in the Portuguese colonies, as illustrated by Jorge Benci’s *Economia cristã dos senhores no governo de escravos* (1700) and André João Antonil’s *Cultura e opulência do Brasil por suas drogas e minas* (1711).³⁰

²⁷ See also Herman Bennett, *Africans in Colonial Mexico: Absolutism, Christianity, and Afro-Creole Consciousness, 1570-1640* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003); and Anna More, “Necroeconomics, Originary Accumulation, and Racial Capitalism in the Early Iberian Slave Trade,” *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 19, no. 2 (2019): 75-100.

²⁸ Alonso de Sandoval, *Un tratado sobre la esclavitud: De instauranda Aethiopum Salute*, ed. Enriqueta Vilar (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1987), 55.

²⁹ Antônio Vieira, “Two Slaveryes-The Sermons of Padre Antonio Vieira, Salvador, Bahia (ca. 1633) and Sao Luis do Maranhao (1653),” in *Colonial Latin America: A Documentary History*, ed. Kenneth Mills, William B. Taylor, and Sandra Lauderdale Graham (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 2002), 224. Antônio Vieira, “Sermão vigésimo-sétimo,” in *Obras completas do Padre Antonio Vieira: Sermões*, Vol. XII (Porto: Lello & Irmãos), 356

³⁰ See Rafael de Bivar Marquese, *Feitores do corpo, missionários da mente: Senhores, letrados e o controle social dos escravos nas Américas, 1660-1860* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2004).

That enslaved men and women had a soul was never in contradiction with the institution of African slavery or with the demands of an early capitalist economy. In fact, the Jesuits were the first to articulate a theoretical legitimation of the slave trade anchored on a theory of self-possessive individualism and on the logic of the market. As Daniel Nemser has demonstrated, Jesuits such as Luis de Molina (1535-1600) developed formulations of freedom as alienable property by arguing that “man has *dominium* over not only his ‘external goods’ but also his more intangible ones, such as his honor, fame, and freedom.”³¹ By inscribing the possibility of self-enslavement in natural law, Molina proposes a separation between territories ruled by Roman law (which imposes limitations in self-enslavement) and those that are not, such as Africa. Consequently, as Nemser tells us, it is the “‘African in Africa’ who paradoxically has the most freedom to sell himself into slavery.”³² The result is that the European in Africa can freely buy enslaved Africans, attending “not to the value of man insofar as he is a man, nor insofar as he has been redeemed by the blood of Christ ... but to the advantage (*commoditas*) that the merchant acquires from the slave”—that is, his freedom.³³

In other words, the Catholic Church not only accepted the legitimacy of African slavery but it was also one of its main ideological proponents. However, in the second half of the eighteenth century, the Church had to maintain the importance of the captives’ evangelization while responding to an increasingly industrialized plantation system and to an unprecedented

³¹ Daniel Nemser, “Possessive Individualism and the Spirit of Capitalism in the Iberian Slave Trade,” *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 19, no. 2 (2019): 111. In this article, Nemser argues against the common idea that self-possessive individualism is a Protestant invention.

³² Nemser, “Possessive Individualism and the Spirit of Capitalism in the Iberian Slave Trade,” 111-12. Nemser cites Molina’s *De iustitia et iure opus sex tomos divisum*, which first appeared in 1593.

³³ In Nemser, “Possessive Individualism and the Spirit of Capitalism in the Iberian Slave Trade,” 112. The aforementioned Sandoval would later bring Molina into his own justification of slavery, by saying that Portuguese merchants in Africa are not at fault for purchasing potentially unjustly enslaved Africans since they buy them “in good faith.”

expansion in the slave trade to territories such as Cuba and Brazil. This tension between priests and planters is clear in the *Explicación de la doctrina cristiana acomodada a la capacidad de los negros bozales* [Explanation of the Christian doctrine accommodated to the capacity of black *bozales*] penned by the Cuban priest Nicolás Duque de Estrada in the late-eighteenth century. Duque de Estrada stated that, while “blacks have a rational soul”³⁴ [*los negros tienen un alma racional*], priests should teach the enslaved about Catholic doctrines and practices without disrupting their work.³⁵ In other words, Duque de Estrada tended to the souls of the enslaved but acknowledged the slave owner’s total jurisdiction over their bodies. A similar case is that of Manuel Ribeiro Rocha, a Portuguese priest who lived most of his life in Salvador (Brazil), where he published *Etiópe resgatado, empenhado, sustentado, corregido, instruído e libertado* [Ethiopian Redeemed, Pledged, Nurtured, Corrected, Educated, and Emancipated] in 1758. Although he harshly criticizes the slave trade as unjust and illegal, Rocha does not propose the immediate abolition of slavery. To him, Africans “have a soul just like the whites”³⁶ [*também têm alma como os brancos*] but that did not warrant them immediate right to freedom. As Célia Azevedo and others have argued, Rocha chooses a “middle way” [*vias médias*] between an immediate abolition of slavery and the indiscriminate support and justification of the institution, simultaneously defending the right to freedom and the slave owners’ and the Crown’s interests. In this middle way, the master who bought the “unjustly” enslaved African without knowing

³⁴ Nicolás Duque de Estrada, *Explicación de la doctrina cristiana acomodada a la capacidad de los negros bozales* (Havana: Biblioteca Nacional José Martí, 2006): 41. Duque de Estrada is echoing the Dominican Fray Antonio de Montesinos who, in 1511, complained about the Spaniards’ cruel treatment of native peoples in the Americas: “Are these not also men? Do they not have rational soul?” See Patricia Seed, ““Are These Not Also Men?”: The Indians’ Humanity and Capacity for Spanish Civilisation,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 25, no. 3 (1993): 629–52.

³⁵ See Javier Laviña, *Cuba: Plantación y doctrinamiento* (Santa Cruz de Tenerife: Ediciones Idea, 2007).

³⁶ Manuel Ribeiro Rocha, *Etiópe resgatado, empenhado, sustentado, corregido, instruído e libertado* (São Paulo: UNESP, 2017), 218.

would gradually emancipate them while teaching them the doctrines of the Church—a sort of “Lockean contractualism in which individuals adhere to social pacts by their free will.”³⁷

As Rocha’s work demonstrates, the Iberian legal system had close ties with the Church. Specific bodies of laws inherited from medieval and early modern times regulated the relationship between masters and slaves first in Iberia, and later in its American colonies. It was the case of *Las siete partidas*, finalized in 1265 by Alfonso X, parts of which continued to underwrite later regulations such as the 1784 “Código negro carolino,” and the “Real Cédula de su Majestad sobre la educación, trato, ocupaciones de los esclavos en todos sus dominios de Indias e Islas Filipinas,” promulgated in 1789 by the Spanish Crown.³⁸ The “Código negro carolino,” for instance, stated that “Blacks should not be considered as mere physical entities incapable of virtue and reason, or as simple machines, only useful for the painful work of agriculture” [*no deben considerarse los negros como unos entes puramente físicos incapaces de virtud y de razón, o como puros autómatas útiles solo para los penosos trabajos de la agricultura*].³⁹ In other words, the legal code that was supposed to regulate the institution of slavery in the Hispanic world recognized the inner lives of the enslaved as a matter of concern, describing them as capable of virtue and reason.

In Portugal this role was played by the Ordenações, the first of which were promulgated during the reign of d. Afonso V (1438-81) and later reformed by d. Manuel (1495-1521) and

³⁷ Célia Azevedo, “Rocha’s ‘The Ethiopian Redeemed’ and the Circulation of Anti-Slavery Ideas,” *Slavery and Abolition* 24, no. 1 (2003): 114. Many scholars read Rocha as an early proponent and circulator of anti-slavery ideas.

³⁸ See Agnes Lugo-Ortiz, “On the Spectrality of the Law: Visuality and the Contest for Slaveholding Sovereignty,” in *The Plantation Gaze: Slavery and Visual Culture in Colonial Cuba* (forthcoming).

³⁹ Javier Malagón Barceló, *Código negro carolino 1784* (Santo Domingo: Editora Taller, 1974), 166. Cited in Ana Hontanilla, “Sentiment and the Law: Inventing the Category of the Wretched Slave in the ‘Real Audiencia’ of Santo Domingo, 1783–1812,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 48, no. 2 (Winter 2015): 188.

Filipe II (1598-1621). According to Hebe Mattos and Keila Grinberg, the Ordenações Filipinas “regulated the relationship between masters and slaves at least until Brazil’s independence.”⁴⁰ After that, new laws slowly substituted colonial legislation, but the texts of the Ordenações still operated in practice until the abolition of slavery in Brazil, in 1888. Cuba and Brazil therefore recognized a “centrality of the law,” as Frank Tannenbaum called it in his famous critique of racial relations in Latin America and the United States.⁴¹

As Ana Hontanilla argues, most of the legal texts promulgated from the second half of the eighteenth century onward employed a “language of humanness” that depicted captives as “poor, wretched souls” in order to elicit sympathy and to promote the Crown as humane and pious.⁴² Endowed with a soul and a legal subjectivity, enslaved peoples in Brazil and Cuba faced particular experiences which remain unaccounted for by most of the scholarship on the subject produced in the United States—where the legal systems barely dealt with enslaved peoples.⁴³ The Church and the law therefore fostered practices of interiority which were both placed upon the enslaved by priests and legislators, and claimed by the enslaved and formerly enslaved themselves.

Within and beyond law and religion, I argue, there was a rhetoric of feeling and sentiment that drew from Catholic sources as well as from Enlightened legal discourses. This

⁴⁰ Hebe Mattos and Keila Grinberg, “Código penal escravista e Estado,” in *Dicionário da escravidão e liberdade: 50 textos críticos*, org. Lilia Moritz Schwarcz and Flávio dos Santos Gomes (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2018), 164. See also Brodwyn Fischer, Keila Grinberg, and Hebe Mattos, “Law, Silence, and Racialized Inequalities in the History of Afro-Brazil,” in *Afro-Latin American Studies: An Introduction*, ed. Alejandro de la Fuente and George Reid Andrews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 130–176. Brazil became independent in 1822 by a promulgation of d. Pedro I, son of d. João VI, king of Portugal. D. Pedro I then became the Emperor of Brazil. In 1898, Brazil ceased to be an empire and became a republic.

⁴¹ See Frank Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas* (New York: Vintage Books, 1946).

⁴² Hontanilla, “Sentiment and the Law,” 183-4.

⁴³ Alejandro de la Fuente and Ariela Gross, *Becoming Free, Becoming Black: Race, Freedom, and Law in Cuba, Virginia, and Louisiana* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 25.

rhetoric fashioned captives as subjects not only of litigation and salvation, but of feeling—subjectivities to which the emerging colonial bourgeoisie could (at times) relate. To address the need for scholarship on this topic, my project traces a century-long genealogy of writings concerned with the affective lives of enslaved and free blacks from the expansion of the slave trade in the late-eighteenth century through the emergence of reformist and abolitionist rhetoric in the mid-nineteenth century to the aftermath of emancipation in Cuba (1886) and Brazil (1888). Drawing from studies on the relationship between the Church and the law in the early modern Iberian empires as well as from works on sentimentalism in nineteenth-century Latin America, this dissertation investigates the ways in which religious discourses developed into a particular rhetoric of feeling and affect that was central to the emerging Brazilian and Cuban bourgeoisies from the late-eighteenth century onwards.⁴⁴

My argument does not solely focus, however, on the investments of colonial and imperial authorities in the inner life of those they enslaved. Grounded in close readings of printed and archival sources from Cuba, Brazil, Spain, and Portugal, this dissertation also demonstrates how enslaved and formerly enslaved Afro-descendants responded to this investment—particularly, through lyric poetry and autobiographical writings. To that end, I examine these two genres of literary texts as constructive and performative modes of subjectivity within the context of enslavement. Black poets in nineteenth-century Brazil and Cuba used lyric poetry both as an

⁴⁴ On religion, mercantilism, the slave trade, and the law, see for instance Michelle McKinley, *Fractional Freedoms: Slavery, Intimacy, and Legal Mobilization in Colonial Lima, 1600–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Herman Bennett, *African Kings and Black Slaves: Sovereignty and Dispossession in the Early Modern Atlantic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019); Bianca Premo, *The Enlightenment on Trial: Ordinary Litigants and Colonialism in the Spanish Empire* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017); Daniel Nemser, “Iberian Slave Trade and the Racialization of Freedom,” *History of the Present* 8, no. 2 (Fall 2018): 117-139. On sentiment and emotion in Latin America, see Gerard Aching, *Freedom from Liberation: Slavery, Sentiment, and Literature in Cuba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015); and Ana Peluffo, *En clave emocional: cultura y afecto en América Latina* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros, 2016).

expression of their individual subjectivities and as a universalizing enunciation of feeling with which they could connect with their white, mostly upper-class peers. Yet, their experiences as enslaved subjects in the context of the Second Slavery added another layer to their relationship with the lyric, and to their own poetic practices. Through lyric poetry, Black writers produced antislavery imaginaries anchored in early modern traditions and registers that offered alternatives to the self-possessive, autonomous subject at the center of Enlightened epistemologies.

Affective Orders

“Feeling” in this dissertation means an ability to feel, a capacity to be subjectively affected by (and to affect) others. As such, it is a disputed property that confers value or legitimacy to certain discursive practices or social and racial groups. It involves but is not limited to sentiment, sentimentalism, and affective intimacy, in part because it can also encompass other non-secular notions such as soul and spirit and aesthetic concepts such as sensibility. In the following chapters, I argue that feeling played a central role in helping slavers advance their economic and moral goals, in shaping abolitionist agendas, and in informing captives’ conceptions and experiences of bondage and freedom.

As the title of this dissertation suggests, this argument is informed by a Foucauldian understanding of subjectivity according to which subjects come into being through subjection to power. This means that power or power relations are not simply external forces that repress or coerce individuals or groups, but rather networks that shape, mold, and fabricate specific kinds of subjects and, therefore, subjectivities.⁴⁵ As Judith Butler defines it in her reading of Foucault,

⁴⁵ See, for instance, Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité*, vols. I, II, III (Paris: Gallimard, 1976-1984); and Michel Foucault, “Subject and Power,” in *Power*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 2000), 326-348.

the term *subjection* “signifies the process of becoming subordinated by power as well as the process of becoming a subject.”⁴⁶ Butler also amplifies Foucault’s approach to subject formation by examining the “psychic form that power takes.”⁴⁷ This dissertation is thus an attempt to understand one of these psychic forms of power within the slaveholding societies of Brazil and Cuba: affect. To say that the subjects I examine here are subjected to *feeling* is to point to the centrality of affective practices in the formation of subjects who are already subjected.

But what is the relationship between affect and feeling? Although I am using affect as an umbrella term under which the concept of feeling operates, affect encompasses a broader range of processes that bridge mind and body. Scholars of affect theory tend to use the concept of affect as a form of the Spinozian *affection*, which in turn involves a capacity to be affected by and to affect others.⁴⁸ Such understanding of affect goes hand-in-hand with my definition of feeling in the previous paragraph insofar as it is relational, that is, it exists only when bodies (and minds, as we will see in Part III) are in touch. As Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg argue, “Affect marks a body’s belonging to a world of encounters.”⁴⁹ Yet this understanding of affect poses a challenge because, as Michael Hardt claims, “affects straddle these two divides: between the mind and body, and between actions and passions.”⁵⁰ The texts I examine here contribute to this challenge, but I hope that my focus on the intangible manifestations of affect help avoid too much confusion.

⁴⁶ Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 2.

⁴⁷ Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*, 2.

⁴⁸ Benedictus de Spinoza, *Spinoza's Ethics*, trans. by George Eliot and ed. By Clare Carlisle (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020); Brian Massumi, *Politics of Affect* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015).

⁴⁹ Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, “An Inventory of Shimmers,” in *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 2.

⁵⁰ Michael Hardt, “Foreword: What Affects are Good for,” in *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, ed. Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean Halley (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), xi.

Most recent studies in affect theory rely on a psychoanalytical distinction between affect and emotion as third- and first-person feeling, or on a Spinozian-Deleuzian approach according to which affect is different from emotion insofar as it does not require a subject or individual, and therefore it is “unstructured.”⁵¹ This is not the line of thought that I am pursuing here. As we will see in the following chapters, I am less interested in defining the substance of affect than I am in tracing the affective registers that have emerged in a context of slave-holding liberal humanism produced within medical, literary, and anthropological discourses. In that regard, I follow Sianne Ngai’s cue of purposely not relying too much on a distinction between affect and emotion since they serve to distinguish “feeling that is contained by an identity from feeling that is not.”⁵² Given my specific interest in the category of “feeling” broadly conceived rather than in possible distinctions between its multiple manifestations, I treat feeling and emotion as part of the same semantic field involving mental processes and subjectivities, however dissolved or individualized. Unlike Ngai and other literary and affect studies scholars, however, I not only analyze affect and feelings in a given text or discourse but also trace how certain texts or discourses conceive of feeling as it is felt (or not) by racialized individuals or groups. In other words, I am particularly interested in the ways in which, on the one hand, white supremacists tried to read the thoughts and feelings of captives and former captives as a form of domination and, on the other, enslaved and free Afro-descendants fashioned their own theories of feeling, which did not necessarily fit the affective regimes or epistemological expectations of their time.

⁵¹ I say “Spinozian-Deleuzian” because most authors of contemporary affect theory are informed by Gilles Deleuze’s and Felix Guatarri’s reading of Spinoza’s *Ethics* in *A Thousand Plateaus*, particularly their conception of affect: “affect is not a personal feeling, nor is it a characteristic; it is the effectuation of a power of the pack that throws the self into upheaval and makes it reel.” Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guatarri, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1987), 240.

⁵² Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 27.

Very recently, two books about the power of emotion within slaveholding societies have been published within the field American slavery studies. In *Mastering Emotions: Feelings, Power, and Slavery in the United States*, Erin Austin Dwyer focuses on the “emotional politics of slavery” in the antebellum South in order to examine “the emotional power dynamics between enslaved people and slaveholders.”⁵³ Ultimately, Dwyer argues that emotions were not only produced by white elites, but also functioned for enslaved individuals as “social capital” in their daily negotiations with slaveholders.⁵⁴ Similarly though with a broader scope, Dannelle Gutarra Cordero’s *She is Weeping: An Intellectual History of Racialized Slavery and Emotions in the Atlantic World* examines philosophical, scientific, and legal texts from the Ancient world to contemporary times in order to argue that “the intellectual history of racialized slavery in the Atlantic world has always been and still is defined by the inescapability of emotional policing of racialized bodies.”⁵⁵ In spite of sharing with these works an interest in affect and emotions as a form of racial domination, my dissertation differs in that it does not aim to be a contribution to the history of emotions. Indeed, I do not claim to show evidence of how emotions or affect, as stable categories, have been employed by specific groups to exert or resist domination. Rather, by looking into specific fields of knowledge production—medicine, literature, and anthropology—I demonstrate the ways in which the semantic field of feeling informed debates over the personhood of enslaved and formerly enslaved peoples, even in fields where the enslaved body has been historically more visible.

⁵³ Erin Austin Dwyer, *Mastering Emotions: Feelings, Power, and Slavery in the United States* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021), 11.

⁵⁴ Dwyer, *Mastering Emotions*, 4

⁵⁵ Dannelle Gutarra Cordero, *She is Weeping: An Intellectual History of Racialized Slavery and Emotions in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 4.

In discussing post-Enlightenment processes of racialization in European science and philosophy, Denise Ferreira da Silva points to a moment in which “exteriority (laws, the body, etc.) replaced interiority (culture, religion, etc.) as the basis for establishing the universality of (human) differentiation.”⁵⁶ According to this narrative, the post-Enlightenment moment would have produced a move from a “stage of interiority” to a “stage of exteriority” in its processes of racialization. In the twentieth century, however, Ferreira da Silva argues that anthropology and sociology returned “the study of human difference to the stage of interiority.”⁵⁷ This dissertation, however, demonstrates that processes of racialization never really abandoned the mind as a space for the production of human difference. Rather, the “stage of interiority,” as we are about to see, has been the a privileged locus for the fashioning (of the other) and self-fashioning (of universal categories of feeling), even during the heydays of the so-called scientific racism.

The range of primary texts that I analyze here can seem somewhat arbitrary at first. Why medicine, literature, and anthropology? On the one hand, medicine and anthropology were the disciplines within which enlightened elites attempted to fashion and manage the interiority of the enslaved and formerly enslaved. On the other, lyric poetry and autobiographical writings were the mediums of choice of enslaved and formerly enslaved authors to participate in the culture of feeling that permeated their societies while producing conceptions of slavery and freedom that did not rely on the autonomous personhood required from modern, enlightened subjects.

By examining texts produced in both Brazil and Cuba, my dissertation contributes to a growing scholarship on the shared history of these two slave societies, where a strong planter class was able to build a political and ideological platform capable of preserving the institution

⁵⁶ Denise Ferreira da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 130.

⁵⁷ Ferreira da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*, 133

until the late 1880s.⁵⁸ As Michael Zeuske reminds us, parallels between Cuba and Brazil have been mobilized early on by Cubans and Brazilian themselves, along with travelers who visited both territories.⁵⁹ This dissertation, however, is not a comparative project. My goal is not to create or establish similarities and differences between the Portuguese and Spanish slave regimes in order to create a comparative depiction of Brazil and Cuba. Instead, this dissertation offers a transnational account of exchanges between empires, countries, and territories—namely, Brazil, Cuba, Portugal, Spain, Britain, France, and the U.S. These exchanges come in various forms: medical, legal, literary, and rhetorical. If we agree that to compare is to identify two or more elements and to list their similarities and differences, then we must acknowledge the limits of such an endeavor as it neglects attention to processes and narratives in favor of static descriptions.⁶⁰ In that sense, my analyses are not framed by a teleological narrative of nation-building, even though many of the texts I investigate purportedly aim to take part in this

⁵⁸ For works that examine Brazil and Cuba, see for instance Márcia Regina Berbel, Rafael de Bivar Marquese, and Tâmis Parron, *Slavery and Politics: Brazil and Cuba, 1790-1850* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2016); Dale Torston Grade, *Disease, Resistance, and Lies: The Demise of the Transatlantic Slave Trade to Brazil and Cuba* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2014); Octavio Di Leo, *El descubrimiento de Africa en Cuba y Brasil, 1889-1969* (Madrid: Editorial Colibrí, 2001); Manuel Barcia, *West African warfare in Bahia and Cuba: soldier slaves in the Atlantic world, 1807-1844* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Camillia Cowling, *Conceiving Freedom: Women of Color, Gender, and the Abolition of Slavery in Havana and Rio de Janeiro* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

⁵⁹ For instance, Zeuske points to the case of Ramón Ferrer, the captain of the *Amistad*, who previously had been captain of the Portuguese/Brazilian ship *Bella Antonia* and which profited from smuggling enslaved peoples from Africa to Cuba. Cuban intellectuals such as Arango y Parreño (*Discurso sobre la agricultura*, 1792) and Jose Antonio Saco also used Brazil as a point of reference and comparison for the slave trade and for the institution of slavery more generally. See José Antonio Saco's "Análisis por Don José Antonio Saco de una obra sobre el Brasil, Intitulada: *Notices of Brazil in 1828 and 1829 by Ver. R. Walsh Author of a Journey from Constantinople, etc.*," in *José Antonio Saco: Obras*, vol. 2 (La Habana: Imagen Contemporanea, 2001), 28-77. Michael Zeuske, "Comparing or interlinking? Economic comparisons of early-nineteenth-century slave systems in the Americas in historical perspective," in *Slave Systems: Ancient and Modern*, ed. Enrico Dal Lago, and Constantina Katsari (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). See also Ynaê Lopes dos Santos, "Irmãs do Atlântico: Escravidão e espaço urbano no Rio de Janeiro e Havana (1763-1844)" (Ph.D. diss., Universidade de São Paulo, 2012).

⁶⁰ I am inspired here by Micol Seigel, "Beyond Compare: Comparative Method after the Transnational Turn," *Radical History Review*, no. 91 (Winter 2005): 65.

construction. Ultimately, like Micol Seigel, my hope is to “illuminate the complex, global, network of power-inflected relations that enmesh our world, including those connections generated by academic engagement and observation.”⁶¹ In other words, I aim to show how the discursive production of feeling in Brazil and Cuba was part of a broader, transatlantic system of exchanges between empires, countries, and colonies.

Chapter Outline

This dissertation is organized in three Parts, each of which examines one kind of discourse or field of knowledge on the inner lives of enslaved and free Africans and Afro-descendants in Brazil and Cuba: medicine, poetry, and anthropology. Within each part, one chapter analyzes materials produced in and about Cuba, and the other focuses on Brazil. Situated between them for chronological purposes, Part II examines enslaved and formerly enslaved authors who engaged with lyric poetry and autobiographical writings.

Part I, “The Malady of Nostalgia,” explores late-eighteenth and nineteenth-century medical discourses on the illness of nostalgia and its Luso-African counterpart, *banzo*. Nostalgia and *banzo* were diseases of the mind caused by forced estrangement from one’s homeland and broken kinship. The main symptoms were apathy, deep sadness, and ultimately death. Initially European and African in their conceptions, nostalgia and *banzo* re-emerged as colonial illnesses in the last decades of the eighteenth century, afflicting newly arrived Africans in Cuba and Brazil. Chapter 1, “Cuba, the Nostalgia Laboratory,” examines the first known treatise to address nostalgia as an illness that particularly afflicted enslaved Africans in the Americas: Francisco Barrera y Domingo’s *Reflexiones Histórico Físico Naturales Médico Quirúrgicas* (1798).

⁶¹ Micol Seigel, “Beyond Compare,” 78.

Chapter 2, “A Luso-Brazilian Genealogy of Longing,” examines two texts that discuss the illnesses of banzo and nostalgia in the Portuguese and Brazilian empires: Luis Antônio de Oliveira Mendes’s “Memória a respeito dos escravos e tráfico da escravatura entre a costa d’África e o Brasil” (1793) and Joaquim Manuel de Macedo’s *Considerações sobre a nostalgia* (1844). Since the main symptom of nostalgia and banzo among enslaved populations was the inability to work, Part I argues that the disease allowed white physicians and lawyers to theorize “Black feeling” as a threat to emerging capitalist practices in the Americas.

Part II, “Slavery in Poetry, Liberation in Feeling,” examines the writings of two Black writers whose lyric poetry elaborates particular conceptions of bondage and emancipation: Cuban poet Juan Francisco Manzano (1797-1854) and Brazilian poet, lawyer, and journalist Luiz Gonzaga Pinto da Gama (1830-1882). Chapter 3, “Juan Francisco Manzano and the Lyric Against Slavery,” analyzes Manzano’s autobiographical narrative and poetic writings. After publishing two collections of poems in 1823 and 1830, Manzano was urged by Domingo del Monte—the host of one of Cuba’s most important literary *salons*—to write an autobiographical narrative. As the only known slave narrative in the Hispanic world, Manzano’s autobiography has received significant scholarly attention. His poetic works, on the other hand, remain largely underexamined. Breaking this critical silence, this chapter analyzes Manzano’s poetry along with his autobiography so as to demonstrate how he appropriated and contributed to a rhetoric of sensibility integral to the Cuban literary sphere. Specifically, I argue that Manzano fashioned himself as a man of feeling *and* reason, thereby proposing an articulation between the “love-as-bondage” trope of courtly poetry and an Enlightened critique of slavery based on the self-possessive, autonomous individual.

Chapter 4, “Luiz Gama and the Insurgent Politics of Intimacy,” examines the writings of formerly enslaved Brazilian lawyer, journalist, and poet Luiz Gama (1830-1882). Unlike Manzano, Gama was already a free man when he published his own poetry collection, *Primeiras trovas burlescas de Getulino* (1859). Just like Manzano, however, Gama was asked by a white colleague, Lúcio de Mendonça, to narrate his life as an enslaved person, which he did in the form of an overtly sentimental letter dated July 25, 1880. Most scholarship on Gama has focused on his satirical poems criticizing Brazilian elites. Building on this scholarship, this chapter analyzes Gama’s lyrical poems and paratexts (such as epigraphs) to situate him within an Iberian poetic tradition centered on the figure of the woman of color. Positioning himself within the nineteenth-century culture of feeling, Gama’s lyrical poems and autobiographical letter appropriate and resignify literary tropes born out of earlier Iberian colonial projects at a moment when the institution of slavery in Brazil was being increasingly disputed.

Part III, “Seeing Criminals and Madmen,” moves us further into the late-nineteenth century, when a new field of criminal anthropology emerged and solidified around unprecedented concerns for the participation of Afro-descendants in the post-emancipation future of Cuba and Brazil. Specifically, it examines the work of two social scientists who drew from European theories of racial determinism and positivist criminology: Nina Rodrigues (1862-1906) in Brazil, and Fernando Ortiz (1881-1969) in Cuba. Chapter 5, “The Failures of Nina Rodrigues,” analyzes Nina Rodrigues’s craniological examinations as well as his pioneering ethnographical work on Afro-Bahian religions. It argues that Nina Rodrigues’s career was founded on a dual failure: first, a series of failed attempts at finding markers of criminality, madness, and degeneration in Afro-Brazilian skulls; second, a failure in making a case for white

superiority through the affirmation of the pervasiveness and power of Afro-Brazilian religious practices.

Chapter 6, “Fernando Ortiz in the (Psychic) Flow,” delves into the late-nineteenth-century discussions at the Sociedad Antropológica de la Isla de Cuba as well as into the early works of Fernando Ortiz, who was deeply invested in identifying, fixating, understanding, and ultimately annihilating the Afro-Cuban *brujo* or sorcerer that dominated Havana’s so-called “low life” and jeopardized the future of the Cuban republic. By examining the semantic field that Ortiz created to discuss the “problem” of the *brujos*, this chapter argues that although the body figures prominently in Ortiz’s work, it appears mainly as a hermeneutic metaphor to understand an Afro-Cuban subjectivity, which emerges as a liquid substance that can be transfused from one psyche to the other.

PART I

THE MALADY OF NOSTALGIA

Introduction to Part I

Alfonso Congo was only seventeen years old when he died on May 7, 1860. He was enslaved to María del Carmen Cabanillas, a Cuban woman who owned with her husband some of the most important sugar plantations in the Cienfuegos region, southeast of Havana. Before Alfonso's death, Cabanillas had taken out an insurance policy of 560 pesos on him, as a valuable piece of property, with the company La Providencia. In its monthly bulletin, La Providencia published five lines about Alfonso's passing, thus rendering a sort of unintentional, apathetic obituary.¹ The note stated the cause of Alfonso's death: nostalgia—an illness that was not apathetic in the slightest.²

Nostalgia was, according to the 1854 Spanish *Enciclopedia moderna*, a “moral affection” [*afeccion moral*] consisting of “a melancholic and imperious desire to see again the place of one's childhood, to the objects of one's tenderness” [*deseo melancólico é imperioso de volver á ver los lugares donde pasamos nuestra infancia y donde habitan los objetos de nuestra ternura*], which afflicted mainly “soldiers..., servants and slaves” [*los soldados ..., los criados y los esclavos*].³ In Brazil, the best-seller *Diccionario de medicina popular* claimed in 1851 that nostalgia was a “very common affliction” [*afecçao mui frequente*] burdening mainly the “newly

¹ La Providencia started in 1860 with 22,897 insured slaves. See Claudia Varela, “El fracaso de las compañías de seguros de esclavos: Cuba a partir de la experiencia norteamericana,” *International Journal of Cuban Studies* 10, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 105.

² The complete note reads, “Cienfuegos. Número 2,018—Mayo 7 de 1860. Alfonso congo, póliza núm. 16,892, de 17 años, asegurado por doña Maria del Cármen Cabanillas, de *nostalgia*. Liquido indemnizable \$560.” *La Providencia*, September 1st, 1860. Source: Biblioteca Nacional José Martí, Colección de Publicaciones Periódicas del Siglo XIX, Colección Cubana “Antonio Bachiller y Morales.”

³ Francisco de Paula Mellado, “Nostalgia,” in *Enciclopedia moderna: diccionario universal de literatura, ciencias, artes, agricultura, industria y comercio* 28 (Madrid: Establecimiento Mellado, 1854), 857-61. All translations are mine unless noted otherwise.

arrived blacks from the coast of Africa” [*os pretos recém-chegados da costa d’Africa*].⁴ The cause was “the absence from one’s motherland and the irresistible, undying desire to go back to it” [*produzida pela ausencia do paiz natal e pelo desejo irresistivel e incessante de voltar a elle*].⁵ In the French empire, the physician Félix Renouard, the Marquis of Sainte-Croix, blamed mainly nostalgia for the death of “at least a third of black individuals transferred to the colonies ... within six to eighteen months” [*un grand tier au moins des individus Nègres, transferé aux colonies ... du sixième au dix-huitième mois*] after arriving in Martinique.⁶ The nostalgic death of Alfonso Congo, then, would not have surprised anyone in the Hispanic, Luso-Brazilian, or Francophone worlds at the time.

Many captives died from nostalgia while still aboard slave ships. In 1841, the counter-admiral of the isle of Bourbon (now Réunion) reported an astounding mortality rate provoked by nostalgia on a Spanish slave ship that displayed a Portuguese flag off the coast of Mozambique.⁷ From the 220 Africans on board who would be sold as slaves in Cuba, he said, it was likely that very few would survive. According to the counter-admiral, “they all die of nostalgia. Their countenances are overcome with sadness, and they retire to a corner; their stomachs refuse all food and reject what they are forced to eat. After a few days they expire.” The threat posed by nostalgia was such that, as the captain of this Iberian vessel explained, “when the slaves do not

⁴ Pedro Luiz Napoleão Chernoviz, “Nostalgia, in “*Diccionario de medicina popular em que se descrevem, em linguagem acomodada á intelligência das pessoas estranhas á arte de curar*, v. 3 (Rio de Janeiro: Eduardo & Henrique Laemmert, 1851), 92.

⁵ Chernoviz, *Diccionario de medicina popular*, 92.

⁶ Félix Renouard, *Statistics of Martinique, Decorated with a Map of this Island, with the Authentic Records of Its Population, Its Commerce, Annual Consumption and Income, Etc., Etc.* vol. 1 (Paris: Chaumerot, Librairie, Palais-Royal, 1822), 256.

⁷ As Marquese and others have argued, from 1815 onward Portugal (later joined by Brazil) and Spain combined efforts to confront the strong pressure from England to abolish the transatlantic slave trade. Since Spain had officially prohibited slave trade in 1831 in an agreement with Britain, it was common for ships to display flags from other countries to divert British and French patrols. See Rafael Marquese, *Feitores do corpo, missionários da mente: senhores, letrados e o controle dos escravos nas Américas, 1660-1860* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2004).

have scabies, we purchase the blacks most afflicted by it so that they infect the others and distract them from nostalgia, and the mortality is greatly reduced.”⁸ Ship captains and slave traders used physical ailments to distract enslaved individuals from nostalgia and reduce the average mortality in slave ships, thus pointing to the gravity of this illness in their eyes.

Moral affliction, melancholy, desire, tenderness, fatherland: nostalgia mobilized a vocabulary that sharply contrasts with the semantic field of other common diseases among enslaved populations, such as fevers, parasites, dysentery, hemorrhages, scabies, scurvy, measles, and smallpox, to name a few.⁹ Physicians defined nostalgia as pathologized feelings and emotional behavior, even though its symptoms also manifested physically. They described the illness as a somatic reaction to captivity and to abusive treatment, as well as an expression of a deep yearning for the homeland. As the cases above illustrate, nostalgia cast the afflicted captives into despondency, refusing to work or eat until they died or committed suicide.

Nostalgia erupts in a vast, albeit scattered archive of Iberian slavery from the late-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries: medical essays and dissertations, anti-slavery reports, newspapers, public speeches, economic treatises, literature, correspondence, and even financial records such as the ones provided by La Providencia. It appears much more often in the Hispanic, Luso-Brazilian, and French territories in the Americas than in the Anglophone world.¹⁰

⁸ *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*, 21 Jan. 1841. This story was translated into English and published in the *Anti-Slavery Reporter* of January 27, 1841. See *The British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Reporter* vol. 1 (London: Kraus Reprint, 1840), 28.

⁹ The scholarship on the illnesses that afflicted enslaved peoples in the transatlantic slave trade is abundant and expanding. See, for instance, Manuel Barcia, *The Yellow Demon of Fever: Fighting Disease in the Nineteenth-Century Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020); and Sowande' M. Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea: Terror, Sex, and Sickness in the Middle Passage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016).

¹⁰ According to Jonathan Schroeder, the first link between nostalgia and enslaved peoples appears in a 1792 text by British naval physician Thomas Trotter, through the neologism “scorbutic nostalgia.” Still, except for a handful of mentions, “anglophone writers never again gave the slave’s spectacular death the name ‘nostalgia.’” Jonathan Schroeder, “What Was Black Nostalgia,” *American Literary History* 30, no. 4 (Winter 2018): 653-676. See also Thomas Trotter, *Observations on the scurvy; with a review of the*

The main role played by Iberian territories of Cuba and Brazil in this scenario is not accidental. In fact, Luso-Brazilian and Hispanic men of letters were the first to make use of the word *nostalgia*—and its counterpart *banzo* in the Portuguese empire—to name this mental illness that particularly afflicted enslaved Africans in the Americas.¹¹ One of them was Francisco Barrera y Domingo, a Spanish surgeon based in Cuba who in 1798 completed his *Reflexiones Histórico Físico Naturales Médico Quirúrgicas* [Historical, Physical, Natural, Medical, Chirurgical Reflections], an 892-page medical treatise in which nostalgia occupies a prominent space. Another was Luís Antônio de Oliveira Mendes, a Luso-Brazilian lawyer whose 1793 speech at the Lisbon Royal Academy of Sciences listed *banzo* (an African nostalgia, as it was later defined) as one of the most serious chronic illnesses to burden newly enslaved Africans through the Middle Passage and in Brazil. In the nineteenth century, it seems that nostalgia was the word of choice among medical practitioners, such as writer and soon-to-be physician Joaquim Manuel de Macedo, who in 1844 defended the medical dissertation *Considerações sobre a nostalgia* [Reflections on Nostalgia]. Better known for his foundational role in the emergence of the urban and social novel in Brazil (*A moreninha*, 1844), Macedo was the first to write about nostalgia in

opinions lately advanced on that disease, and a new theory defended, on the approved method of cure, and the induction of pneumatic chemistry (London: T. Longman & J. Watts, 1792), 45.

¹¹ It is telling that “nostalgia” appears in the Spanish edition of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, translated by Don Wenceslao Ayguals de Izco in 1852 (*La choza de Tom*), while being completely absent in the original text by Harriet Beecher Stowe (1852). In chapter XXX, “The Slave Warehouse” (“El almacén de esclavos”), the narrator describes the practices of slave dealers: “because some [slaves] incline to pine, a fiddle is kept commonly going among them....” In the Spanish edition, the translator chose to change the verb “pine” for a noun—nostalgia—thus making up a much more verbose sentence: “y como suele haber entre ellos algunos a quienes ataca y deteriora la nostalgia o enfermedad del país, todos los días también se toca el violín para que bailen” [and since among them there are usually those who are afflicted by nostalgia, or mal du país, every day there is violin music for them to dance]. See Harriet Beecher Stowe, *La choza de Tom, ó sea Vida de los negros en el Sur de los Estados Unidos, novela escrita en ingles*, trad. Wenceslao Ayguals de Izco (Madrid: Impr. de Ayguals de Izco Hermanos, 1852), 350.

the Rio de Janeiro Medical School, citing the multiple French sources that circulated at the time.¹²

For Barrera, Mendes, and Macedo, nostalgia was a cause for the high mortality rates among newly arrived Africans, as well as a vehicle to display their sentimentality and Christian compassion. From the late-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries, a soaring number of slaves were forcibly brought from Africa to supply labor for the sugar plantations in Cuba, and for the gold mines and coffee plantations in Brazil.¹³ Between 1790 and 1860, approximately 717,488 African captives disembarked in Cuba, almost 690,000 more than in the previous three decades (1720-1790), which saw the arrival of 25,149 captives. Similarly, Brazil received around 2,365,191 African slaves between 1790 and 1860, almost double the number of slaves imported between 1720 and 1790 (1,390,882).¹⁴ Although the reasons for such increases were specific to each colony,¹⁵ they are related to the monopoly of the slave trade in the hands of Spanish and Luso-Brazilians, which resulted in a massive arrival of enslaved Africans.¹⁶

¹² Macedo is considered the father of the Brazilian sentimental novel. His *A moreninha* [The Little Brunette] was so popular that a second edition was published a year after the first one. See Mary L. Daniel, "Brazilian Fiction from 1800 to 1855," in *Cambridge History of Latin American Literature* vol. 3, ed. Roberto González Echevarría and Enrique Pupo-Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 133-134.

¹³ Although Brazil was an important sugar producer in the seventeenth century, Cuba only started playing a major part in the sugar market in the late eighteenth century, when Brazil had lost part of its market to the English Caribbean (and then to Cuba itself) and was focusing on gold and gems extraction in Minas Gerais. For most of the nineteenth century, the country's main export was coffee, and Cuba modernized its sugar production. See Marques, *Feitores do corpo*, 3.

¹⁴ Source: <http://www.slavevoyages.org/assessment/estimates>.

¹⁵ These same slaves were also the main source of fear for the colonies' white elites, especially after 1791, when the slave revolts in Saint-Domingue began. In fear of a repetition of the Haitian Revolution on Cuban soil, the Spanish government prohibited the entrance of captives that did not come straight from Africa in 1796. That, added to the liberalization of the slave trade in 1789, tripled the numbers of enslaved Africans that arrived in Cuban ports. See Moreno Fragnals, *El ingenio: Complejo económico social Cubano del azúcar* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2001), 185; and Sibylle Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

¹⁶ Although British, French, Danish, and North American slave traders participated in the Cuban trade from the late eighteenth-century on, the trade was mostly controlled by Iberian traders from 1808 onwards, after Britain's prohibition. In Brazil, the biggest importer of enslaved Africans in the Americas,

Nevertheless, the crucial importance of enslaved labor in the economies of Brazil and Cuba did not escape these authors. In the words of the Barrera, captives were “essential to agriculture, society, and to the Monarchy’s interests and commerce” [*tan esencial y útil a la agricultura, sociedad, y a los intereses de la monarquía y comercio*].¹⁷ For Mendes, they were “as precious as [...] necessary for the stability and promotion of agriculture and manufactures in the [Portuguese] overseas domains” [*tanto ou mais preciosos como necessários para a estabilidade, e promoção da agricultura e diferentes manufaturas dos domínios do Ultramar*].¹⁸ Writing fifty years later in the already independent Brazilian empire, Macedo conflated the enslaved with the product of their labor, asserting that “the country’s agriculture has nostalgia as its fatal enemy” [*a agricultura do paiz haja por fatal inimiga a nostalgia*].¹⁹ In order to preserve these essential commodified subjects, then, it was important to provide new ways of avoiding their loss. When punishment and discipline were not effective, medical diagnoses provided new methods to put the enslaved back to work.

By studying nostalgia in the Luso-Brazilian and Hispanic empires, I hope to uncover unexpected connections within the slave-holding Atlantic that go beyond overtly economic and political ties, showing that in two parts of the Iberian world a similar effort was in progress within the realm of colonial science: the creation of a new medical tool to manage growing

most of the trade was controlled by the Portuguese and then by the Brazilians themselves. See Sean Kelley, “New World Slave Traders and the Problem of Trade Goods: Brazil, Barbados, Cuba and North America in Comparative Perspective,” *The English Historical Review* 134, no. 567 (April 2019): 328.

¹⁷ Francisco Barrera y Domingo, *Reflexiones Histórico Físico Naturales Médico Quirúrgicas: prácticos y especulativos entretenimientos acerca de la vida, usos, costumbres, alimentos, bestidos, color y enfermedades a que propenden los negros de Africa, venidos a las Américas* (La Habana: Ediciones C&R, 1953), 378.

¹⁸ Luís Antonio de Oliveira Mendes, *Memória a respeito dos escravos e tráfico da escravatura entre a costa d’Africa e o Brazil* (Salvador: Teatro XVIII, 2004), 7.

¹⁹ Joaquim Manuel de Macedo, *Considerações sobre a nostalgia. These que foi apresentada á Faculdade de Medicina do Rio de Janeiro e sustentada em 11 de dezembro de 1844* (Rio de Janeiro: Typographia Imparcial de Francisco de Paula Britto, 1844), 2.

enslaved populations and to reduce their mortality. Although this tool ultimately helped enslavers manage the enslaved bodies, its substratum was their souls.

The following two chapters address nostalgia and *banzo* as tools to manage and control the growing enslaved populations in Cuba and Brazil. In doing so, they argue that nostalgia and *banzo* allowed for an early theorization of Black feeling as a pathology and, therefore, as a threat to Cuba's and Brazil's emerging capitalist practices. Since enslaved Africans afflicted by nostalgia or *banzo* were unable to work even though they showed no signs of physical injury, the illness prompted the authors examined here to imagine and depict why and how the enslaved felt and suffered, posing their subjectivities as an epistemological and managerial object. Moreover, I will contend that in order to provide the diagnosis, treatments, and prophylaxis for nostalgia and *banzo*, Barrera, Mendes, and Macedo attributed a particular conception of personhood to the ill slave: one grounded in the ability to feel, to suffer, and to process these feelings on a cognitive level. This conception of personhood anchored in feeling went beyond the figure of the enslaved herself. If nostalgia was a pathological reaction to what they called "inhuman treatment," the cure ought to be achieved through physical and verbal displays of sympathy on the part of merchants, masters, and overseers towards the suffering captive; that is, through the performance of slavers' own sensibility and, therefore, humanness.

As I explained above, Barrera's and Mendes's are the earliest two instances of nostalgia and *banzo* as a disease particular to enslaved Africans. Macedo's medical dissertation on nostalgia, on the other hand, marks the entanglement of a Romantic rhetoric with what had by then become a Romantic illness. Nostalgia was a tool of biopower through which these three authors ascribed the ability to feel to enslaved people of color, thus positioning "the body's differential capacity of feeling as the object and method of state power and capitalist

development,” as Kyla Schuller argues for sentimentalism in the late nineteenth-century United States.²⁰ While Schuller points to sentimentalism as a tool of “unevenly assigning affective capacity throughout a population” through racialization and sex difference, however, I am gesturing towards a moment in which white authors ascribed the commodified bodies of enslaved Africans impressible, sensitive minds, thus approximating them to their own civilized selves.²¹ As we will see, this attribution is never complete or balanced, since it happens through pathologization.

Barrera, Mendes, and Macedo build their authority as medical practitioners and men of letters not only by showing their medical and juridical knowledge, but also by expressing sentiment in the retelling of the “inhumanities” of slavery manifested through these illnesses. That is, in fashioning themselves as “men of feeling” who witness the horrors of slavery, Barrera, Mendes, and Macedo reaffirm their conception of humanity based on sensibility and sentiment.

The analysis that follows starts with the illness of nostalgia as it was conceived in late-seventeenth century Switzerland and then translated to the Cuban plantations by the Spanish surgeon Francisco Barrera y Domingo in the last years of the eighteenth century. We then move to the Portuguese empire, where, around the same time as Barrera y Domingo, Luís Antônio de Oliveira Mendes instructed his Lisbon audience about *banzo*—a word that emerged in early modern West Africa which was later defined as a kind of “nostalgia” that afflicted the enslaved in Brazil. In spite of *banzo*’s appeal to European scientists throughout the nineteenth century, as we will see, nostalgia seemed to be the word of choice for most medical practitioners in Brazil. It

²⁰ Kyla Schuller, *The Biopolitics of Feeling: Race, Sex, and Science in the Nineteenth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 20.

²¹ Schuller, *The Biopolitics of Feeling*, 13.

is the case of writer and soon-to-be physician Joaquim Manuel de Macedo, who presents nostalgia as “the deaf scourge” of Brazilian agriculture.

Barrera’s, Mendes’s, and Macedo’s texts operate within a framework that Rana Hogarth has called the “medicalization of blackness,” that is, the process through which “physicians in slaveholding societies of the Greater Caribbean defined blackness as a surrogate marker of difference to stabilize and reify racial differences.”²² However, if the diseases Hogarth examines mark Black bodies as physiologically different from white bodies, the illnesses of nostalgia and *banzo* prompt physicians and colonial authorities to examine the similarities between Black and white *minds*. Such an acknowledgement of racial similitude, however, does not beget a challenge to the institution of slavery itself, posing Black humanity as an object of managerial concern.²³

²² Rana Hogarth, *Medicalizing Blackness: Making Racial Differences in the Atlantic World, 1780-1840* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 2.

²³ Barrera was not alone in his concern for the illnesses that afflicted the enslaved and free Afro-descendants in Cuba. Throughout the late-eighteenth and especially the nineteenth centuries, physicians, colonial authorities, and men of letters continuously debated the relationship between slavery and medicine. See, for instance, Tomás Romay y Chacón, “Exposición dirigida a la Real Junta del Consulado en la que reclama se impongan medidas de aseo en los buques negreros por razón de humanidad, ya que ha podido comprobarse la horrorosa cifra de muertes que entre los esclavos se padece con motivos de las enfermedades que se originan por las condiciones de falta de salubridad,” *Obras*, vol. 1 (Havana: Imagen Contemporanea, 2005), 259.

Chapter 1

Cuba, the Laboratory of Nostalgia

When it was coined in 1688, nostalgia was an exclusively European disease with a modest place of birth, namely the pages of a medical thesis penned by a nineteen-year-old Swiss medical student at the University of Basel.²⁴ In his dissertation, *De nostalgia, oder Heimweh*, Johannes Hofer not only “identified” the symptoms of nostalgia; he also gave them a name, creating a neologism by binding together the Greek *Nosos* (“return to the native land,” or homecoming) and *Algos* (“suffering or grief”).²⁵ To Hofer, nostalgia was a “wasting disease” most common among “certain youths” that had been sent to foreign lands.²⁶ As Thomas Dodman remarks about the emergence of nostalgia as a clinical illness in late seventeenth century, “unlike melancholia, [nostalgia] did not seem to target idle scholars and men of letters ...; instead, it affected peasants, domestic servants, and soldiers—in other words, a sampling of society’s laboring and increasingly mobile lot.”²⁷

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the populations mainly afflicted by nostalgia remained almost the same, and plenty were the medical dissertations, dictionaries, and encyclopedias offering various etiologies, causes, and treatments for an illness that devastated many European armies—mostly the French during the Napoleonic wars. In the Americas,

²⁴ Johann Jakob Harder, Hofer’s advisor, later published his advisee’s thesis in a local press, and after that *De nostalgia* was reprinted identical to the original but with its publication antedated to 1678 under only Harder’s name. According to Dodman, it is more likely that Hofer was the real conceptual author of nostalgia. See Thomas Dodman, *What Nostalgia Was: War, Empire, and the Time of a Deadly Emotion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 43.

²⁵ Carolyn Kiser Anspach, “Medical Dissertation on Nostalgia by Johannes Hofer, 1688,” *Bulletin of the Institute of the History of Medicine* 2, no. 6 (Aug. 1934): 380.

²⁶ Carolyn Kiser Anspach, “Medical Dissertation on Nostalgia by Johannes Hofer, 1688,” 380.

²⁷ Dodman, *What Nostalgia Was*, 33.

however, physicians noticed that nostalgia afflicted a different kind of population: enslaved peoples (mostly enslaved Africans), who were epitomes of “society’s laboring and increasingly mobile lot.”²⁸ If since its conception nostalgia’s etiology implied an experience of involuntary travel to a foreign country, in the case of enslaved Africans this compulsory character went beyond mere coercion, resulting in extreme violence and dispossession.

As López Denis has claimed, Barrera y Domingo’s text seems to be the first to “translate” this European disease to a colonial context.²⁹ Barrera thus inaugurates a new way of conceiving Black suffering as something legible: a medical diagnosis.³⁰ According to Barrera, nostalgia is “a melancholic sadness that suddenly attacks them [the enslaved] without delirium, fury or fever, born of a tenacious aversion to anything that can subtract them from their imagination, as long as it is not a return to their beloved homeland” [*una tristeza melancólica que les acomete repentinamente, sin delirio, furor ni calentura, nacida de una tenaz abersión a quantas cosas puedan abstraerlos de su imaginatiba, como no sea la vuelta a su amada patria*].³¹

Barrera’s treatise, a 892-page manuscript divided in many sections, chapters and subsections, comprises other diseases such as the “padrejón” (hypochondria), cachexia, atrophy, infections, inflammations, erysipelas, tumors, ulcers, etc. Barrera never published his

²⁸ Dodman, *What Nostalgia Was*, 33.

²⁹ Adrián López Denis, “Melancholia, Slavery, and Racial Pathology in Eighteenth-Century Cuba,” *Science in Context* 18, no. 2 (2005): 182.

³⁰ Throughout the *Reflexiones*, Barrera repeatedly claims that no other medical practitioner has addressed the illness of nostalgia among enslaved populations. For instance, in one of his many *captatio benevolentiae*, Barrera states, “Because although until now (I’m referring exclusively to the Blacks) no physician has addressed this medical matter, nor has sustained or assessed a hypothesis like this. Certainly, I offer my trivial discourse to the enlightened barons, to those knowledgeable in matters of nature, and to practitioners of true medicine; see that the subject of the Blacks is new and freshly proposed” [*Pues aunque hasta de aora, (havlo con solos los negros), nadie de los médicos ha tocado semejante asunto médixio, ni ha sostenido ni menos juzgado de semejante hipótesis. Desde luego, rindo a los barones ilustres y sabios en la naturaleza y prácticos en la verdadera medicina, mis tribiales discursos; vien que de este asunto de los negros, es nuevo y recién puesto en planta*]. Barrera, *Reflexiones*, 77.

³¹ Barrera y Domingo, *Reflexiones*, 69.

Reflexiones, and its manuscript remained relatively unknown until 1953, when researchers Lydia Cabrera y María Teresa de Rojas prepared the only known edition of the book.³² In spite of this archival absence, the *Reflexiones* gives us an early glimpse of the discourse on nostalgia as a racialized affect that informed slave management practices and policies in the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1831, for instance, the French physician Honoré Bernard de Chateausalins published the *El vademecum de los hacendados cubanos*, in which nostalgia appears as a development of “Blacks’ Caquexia, or dirt-eating addiction” [*Caquexia de los negros ó vicio de comer tierra*], also known in the Atlantic world as Cachexia Africana. Caquexia, according to Chateausalins, at times manifested itself as a “true nostalgia or illness arising from the burning desire to return to their homeland” [*una verdadera nostalgia ó enfermedad dimanada del deseo ardiente de volver á su patria*]. In this case, the physician added, “there is no remedy: the sick sometimes plunge into a deep and incurable melancholy that leads them to the destruction of their miserable existence” [*ningun remedio admite en este caso: los enfermos sumergen á veces en una profunda é incurable melancolía que los conduce á la destruccion de su miserable existencia*].³³ As these archival sources demonstrate, concern for nostalgia as a disease that

³² The original manuscript is nowadays kept by the Cuban National Library José Martí.

³³ Honorato Bernard de Chateausalins, *El Vademecum de los hacendados cubanos, o guía práctica para curar la mayor parte de las enfermedades. Obra adecuada a la zona tórrida y muy útil para aliviar los males de los esclavos* (Havana: Imprenta de Manuel Soler, 1854), 144. The first edition was published in 1831 in New York, and the second came out in 1854 in Havana. The conflation or association between the two illnesses had started in the eighteenth century, when the Scottish physician George Davidson wrote that when enslaved Africans were afflicted with Cachexia Africana “the mind, partaking of the sufferings of the body, is affected with nostalgia, brooding over their ill treatment, separated for ever from their friends and relations, and doomed to suffer without daring to complain.” George Davidson, “Account of the Cachexia Africana, a disease incidental to Negro Slaves lately imported into the West Indies,” *Medical Repository* 2 (1799): 265. For a thorough account of Cachexia Africana in the Anglophone world, see Rana Hogarth, *Medicalizing Blackness: Making Racial Differences in the Atlantic World, 1780-1840* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 2017.

particularly affected enslaved Africans circulated across slave societies and empires well into the nineteenth century.³⁴

According to López Denis, Barrera used at least 34 sources to write the *Reflexiones*—all of them Spanish translations from French, English, German, or Latin texts—often replicating word for word.³⁵ Although literal appropriations from established works were fairly common in medical texts throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century, Barrera demonstrated an “invasive technique of reading, appropriation, and rewriting” that went beyond the standard use of scientific and literary sources of the time.³⁶

One of Barrera’s most cited sources, William Buchan’s *Domestic Medicine or a treatise on the prevention and cure of diseases by regimen and simple medicines* (translated into Spanish in 1792 as *Medicina doméstica*), distinguishes between melancholia, madness, and nostalgia, but places the three illnesses in the same spectrum.³⁷ Barrera follows Buchan’s vague distinction, recognizing that it is difficult for him to make a clear distinction between nostalgia and melancholy. “The true and correct distinction between this sadness [nostalgia] and melancholy cannot be verified among blacks” [*No se puede entre los negros comprobar la verdadera y*

³⁴ In the Lusophone world, planters, travelers, physicians, and slave traders also referred to *banzo*, described by the Bavarian naturalist Carl Friedrich Philipp von Martius in 1844 as a kind of “nostalgia characterized by a deep depression . . . that almost always ends up with death.” Karl Friedrich Philipp von Martius, *Natureza, doenças, medicina e remedios dos índios brasileiros* (1844), trad. Pirajá da Silva (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1939), 31-32.

³⁵ Adrián López Denis, work in progress. In an ongoing endeavor which has not yet been published, López Denis has accumulated convincing evidence that these sources were not mere intellectual inspirations for Barrera: almost all the *Reflexiones* is taken from these works, either copied *ipsis litteris* or paraphrased. I thank López Denis for enlightening me about Barrera’s sources.

³⁶ López-Denis, “Melancholia, Slavery, and Racial Pathology in Eighteenth-Century Cuba,” 186.

³⁷ For Buchan, melancholia, madness, and nostalgia are kinds of “nervous illnesses” and madness is the final stage of melancholia. See Guillermo Buchan, *Medicina doméstica ó tratado completo sobre los medios de conservar la salud, precaver y curar las enfermedades por um régimen y remedios simples*, Vol. 3 (Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1792), 241-251.

acertada distinción de esta tristeza y melancolía], acknowledges Barrera, at times employing the two words interchangeably and at others describing nostalgia as a kind of melancholy.³⁸

Contributing to López Denis's genealogical study of the text, there is convincing evidence that Barrera's source for his chapter on nostalgia was chapter thirty-five of Juan Martínez Salafranca's *Memorias eruditas para la critica de artes y ciencias* (volume I, 1736), which was itself a translation of Johann Jakob Scheuchzer's "De Nostalgia," published in Latin in *De Bononiensi Scientiarum et Artium Instituto atque Academia* (Bologna, 1731).³⁹ Scheuchzer's work is one of the most well-known texts about nostalgia after Hofer's, and, as we will see, his proposed iatromechanical etiology (which involved a correlation between atmospheric change and nostalgia) would remain in fashion for a while.⁴⁰ However, if for Scheuchzer nostalgia was a mainly "Helvetic" illness, for Barrera it was definitely not, since it afflicted mostly enslaved Africans in the Spanish Caribbean. This shift carried along with it an understanding of the enslaved as particularly sensitive subjects, just as the Swiss were for Scheuchzer. In other words, Barrera granted the nostalgic Africans a subjectivity similar to their European counterparts.

Imagining and Governing Enslaved Subjectivity

That Barrera took most of his chapter on nostalgia from Johann Jakob Scheuchzer's essay is more than an interesting piece of information. The "us" used by Scheuchzer (he was talking about his own people) becomes a third person plural in Barrera's text—they, the enslaved Africans. This shift indicates an understanding of the enslaved as particularly sensitive subjects,

³⁸ Barrera y Domingo, *Reflexiones*, 69.

³⁹ The actual first edition of Scheuchzer's essay was published in German as "Von dem Heimweh," in the *Natur-Geschichten des Schweizerlandes* 1 (Zurich: David Gegner, 1746 [1705]), 86-92.

⁴⁰ Dodman, *What Nostalgia Was*, 25.

just as the Swiss were for Scheuchzer. In other words, Barrera understood the nostalgic African's subjectivity to be comparable in nature to that of the European. Barrera replicates Scheuchzer's more technical paragraphs without much change, occasionally mimicking Scheuchzer's style and rhetoric. In appropriating Scheuchzer's text, however, Barrera displaces nostalgia onto the "spectacle of slavery" [*espectáculo de la esclavitud*], substituting Africa for the Swiss alps and Africans for the Helvetic.⁴¹ Barrera seems to have even taken the Spanish title of Scheuchzer's work as it appeared in Salafranca's translation (*Inquisiciones Historico Naturales*) as his *Inquisiciones Historico Naturales Medico Chirurgicas*. This new geographical and bodily allocation of nostalgia allowed for a shift in the functionality of the illness, which produced a particular kind of enslaved subject at the same time as it facilitated their very enslavement.

By introducing the illness of nostalgia into a new context—that of chattel slavery—Barrera had to not only explain this disease, but also prove that Africans were able to suffer from it. That is: in order to feel the deep sorrow, sadness, and melancholy of being displaced from one's homeland that was characteristic of nostalgia, African captives had to be able to feel, to constitute memories, and, more importantly, to have a mind of their own. Scheuchzer did not have to explain why his people suffered from nostalgia, having merely added that "it is an illness which, if not specific to the Helvetic (Swiss) is at least more familiar to them than to other people..."⁴² There was no need for justifying why and how the Swiss were sensitive to nostalgia. Barrera's nostalgic subject, on the other hand, was an enslaved African, who—as the author himself frames it—was believed not to *feel*:

I confess that they will tell me that the blacks and Indians are insensitive to them [natural pleasures], but this very evidence denies this conclusion.... For are they guilty of

⁴¹ Barrera y Domingo, *Reflexiones*, 64.

⁴² Barrera y Domingo, *Reflexiones*, 189.

observing indifferently the works of nature, as are the rest of men who have different morals and another education?

*Confieso que me dirán, que los negros e yndios son insensibles a ellos, pero esta mesma prueba rechaza mi conclusión ... ¿Y acaso ellos tienen la culpa de mirar indiferentemente las obras de la naturaleza, como la tienen el deniás resto de los hombres, que tienen otra moral y otra educación?*⁴³

As Schuller states, the racialized body of the enslaved African, which is of course the case of the “negros esclavos” in Barrera’s text, “was a disabled body... deemed unfit for social life due to its reduced cognitive and corporeal capacities, which rendered it incapable of self constitution.”⁴⁴

According to Barrera, most slave owners in Cuba saw the enslaved African as incapable of reason and of self-constitution. Barrera shares this preconception, claiming that Africans and Afro-descendants had “limited speech” [*limitados discursos*] and “limited reason” [*limitadas luces*]; that their “reasoning” [*entendimiento*] was “lacking;” and that they were rude, incapable, and brutes. And yet, if for Barrera Africans’ reason was limited, their ability to feel was nonetheless plentiful. Africans, according to Barrera, were capable of experiencing “pleasures offered by the wise nature in their countries” [*los placeres que les ofrece la sabia naturaleza en su pays*], although they “do not know how to distinguish the works of nature, like philosophers do” [*no saben distinguir las obras de la naturaleza, como hacen los filosofos*].⁴⁵ In bringing “philosophers” into play, Barrera differentiates the philosophical sensibility—that is, one that

⁴³ Barrera y Domingo, *Reflexiones*, 68.

⁴⁴ Schuller, *The Biopolitics of Feeling*, 14.

⁴⁵ Barrera y Domingo, *Reflexiones*, 66.

requires reason—from a “natural” sensibility, grounded in bodily sensations and in feeling. In this sense, Barrera’s main argument is based on a distinction between “natural pleasures” and other kinds of joy, rhetorically constructed as artificial, ephemeral, and deceitful. According to López Denis’s genealogy of Barrera’s ideas, this line of thought was inspired by Comte de Buffon’s main work, *Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière*, and its depiction of Africans as naive savages, “ignorant but highly sensitive.”⁴⁶ Barrera, however, goes further by reducing the relevance of European knowledge in favor of “simpler” pleasures: “The great science of Europeans should be the rejoicing of everything around them, and knowing how to seize everything, knowing the art of being happy and sociable, like those miserable men [the Africans]” [*La gran ciencia de los europeos debía de ser, el disfrutar inocentemente de quanto le rodea, y saberse aprovechar de todo, teniendo el arte de hacerse feliz y sociable, con estos miserables*].⁴⁷ In situating the enjoyment of these natural pleasures as superior to European science, Barrera rhetorically relativizes the absolute value of European reason in favor of what he sees as African sensibility.

Although in this moment of the *Reflexiones* the hierarchy of values that Barrera proposes places the ability to feel above reason, the author also formulates sensibility as a precondition to the psychic ailment he later describes as nostalgia. In other words, in acknowledging the Africans’ ability to enjoy and *be impressed* by the nature in their homeland, the author reiterates Hofer’s (and Scheuchzer’s) classic definition of nostalgia, namely: an idyllic memory of the “fatherland.” In the case of the *Reflexiones*, the appropriation of a European sensibility in the context of New World slavery grants its victim a human subjectivity that is obviously European. After all, in employing the term “nostalgia,” Barrera mobilizes Scheuchzer’s and Hofer’s

⁴⁶ López Denis, “Melancholia, Slavery, and Racial Pathology in Eighteenth-Century Cuba,” 187.

⁴⁷ Barrera y Domingo, *Reflexiones*, 68.

conceptual apparatus: just like their young Swiss patients, Barrera's subjects must first be able to love their homeland and produce a memory of it, to then suffer from estrangement from it. The enslaved Africans have the same "animal spirits" that ran through Swiss veins, and which were a trademark of seventeenth-century Western physiology, especially *via* William Cullen (an important source for Barrera, as we have seen). The "animal spirits", as historian George S. Rousseau defined them, imply a "specific site where the interconnection between memory and imagination, mind and body, would be made," and "a fundamental facet of humanity."⁴⁸ It is through this animal economy that the newly-enslaved Africans feel the coerced shift from their countries to the hold of a slave ship—the very epitome of enslavement. As Barrera describes it,

To treat correctly this illness of the blacks, it is necessary first of all to know the pleasures nature offers in their country. [Secondly,] the difference they feel in their animal economy with the change from a country of delights to the narrowness of a merchant ship, where they are faced with new customs.

*Para tratar con acierto de esta enfermedad de los negros, es necesario ante todas cosas, saber primero los placeres que les ofrece la sabia naturaleza en su pays. 2o. La diferencia que hallan en su economía animal con la mutación de un país de delicias, a la estrechez de un barco mercante, en donde se hallan con el principio de nuevas costumbres advenedizas.*⁴⁹

As we have already discussed, in order to treat the pathology of nostalgia one had to understand that the Africans enjoyed nature in their "country of delights." The physical move to a slave

⁴⁸ Rousseau, *Nervous Acts*, 12.

⁴⁹ Barrera y Domingo, *Reflexiones*, 66.

vessel, euphemistically called a “merchant ship” by the author, impacted the enslaved’s “imagination”⁵⁰ and triggered the illness. Like Cullen, Barrera saw the mind as part of the individual’s physiology, because “the most considerable functions are connected with particular operations, and a particular state of our immaterial part.”⁵¹ Barrera’s use of “animal spirits” shows that the interconnection between mind and body is essential for developing an idea of humanity that is based on sensibility. This interconnectedness of body and mind allows for a somatic approach to nostalgia that is expressed in Barrera’s etiology of the disease.

In this sense, as Adrián López Denis suggests, pathology in the *Reflexiones* is a direct result of place—or, to be more precise, of displacement.⁵² As Barrera had already shown in his accounts of the relationship between freedom and “natural pleasures,” this displacement is twofold: it is simultaneously physical (bodily) and ontological, enacted through the geographical dislocation of the Middle Passage and the process of enslavement on the “merchant ship.”

The ontological displacement becomes clearer when Barrera moves to his case studies (“Observaciones”), which are some of the few fragments in his whole book that are not directly paraphrased or fully replicated from other works. They are Barrera’s most empirical moments, supposedly drawing from his own “trivial method of healing in many houses of great sugar plantations, where I have saved thousands of miserable black slaves” [*mi trivial método de curar en muchísimas casas de grandes yngenios, en las que se han salvado millares de miserables negros esclavos*].⁵³

⁵⁰ Barrera y Domingo, *Reflexiones*, 68.

⁵¹ William Cullen, *The works of William Cullen: containing his physiology, nosology, and first lines of the practice of physic; with numerous extracts from his manuscript papers, and from his treatise of the materia medica*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1827), 6.

⁵² López Denis, “Melancholia, Slavery, and Racial Pathology in Eighteenth-Century Cuba,” 182.

⁵³ Barrera y Domingo, *Reflexiones*, 11.

In the second observation, Barrera tells the tragic story of an anonymous slave owned by the Marquis of Peñalver y Calvo, who was “young, stocky, very healthy, with a good complexion, and very hardworking” [*joven corpulento y muy sano, y de buena complexión, muy laborioso en el yngenio*]. In urging him to get inside the barracks, an overseer called the enslaved young man a “dog.” “I am not a dog,” the offended man replied, “I am a Christian just like you; the dogs are the *judíos*” [‘*yo no soy perro, soy christiano como usted; los perros, son los judíos*’].⁵⁴ Following this tense exchange, the slave suddenly refused to eat, speak, or leave his bed. Such refusal ultimately led to his untimely death, forty hours later, “in the greatest sadness and profound melancholy” [*con la mayor tristeza y profunda melancolía*] that characterizes nostalgia.⁵⁵ The insulted slave of the Marquis of Peñalver y Calvo who died of nostalgia suffered an ontological displacement in his condition of humanity—he was called a “dog”—which reproduces in a verbal level what is experienced physically.

When the Enslaved Becomes More Human

Nostalgia’s privileged position as the first illness addressed in the *Reflexiones* is symptomatic of the disease’s status within the vast realm of pathologies that afflicted enslaved peoples in the Luso-Hispanic Americas. Unlike “organic diseases” [*enfermedades orgánicas*] such as fevers, parasites, scurvy, dysentery, and hemorrhages which expressed themselves in

⁵⁴ Saying that the actual “dogs” are the Jews, this slave—whose story we cannot verify—complicates the picture of racial relations in eighteenth-century Cuba. As Stephen Silverstein notes in *The Merchant of Havana: The Jew in the Cuban Abolitionist Archive*, “an anti-Semitic tropology was indeed pervasive in nineteenth-century Cuba.” From what we can see in this story, it seems that this tropology was already existing in the second half of the eighteenth century.

⁵⁵ Barrera y Domingo, *Reflexiones*, 81.

physical symptoms, nostalgia was an “affection” [*afecto*].⁵⁶ The assessment of its symptoms, therefore, was subjective. To diagnose the occurrence of nostalgia among the enslaved in the Middle Passage, Barrera offers a long list of symptoms that, left untreated, build up to “a violent death” [*una muerte violenta*]:⁵⁷

... they get suddenly sad, hiding in the ship’s hatches, refusing to eat or dance, which they very much like; they look indignantly at what the whites do to them, their capital enemies ... a great sadness takes over their understanding (albeit small), that builds on a veiled grudge by not being able to revenge the contempt or injuries they get from whites ... they have a furious passion to go back to their countries ...

*... se ponen repentinamente tristes, se esconden entre las escotillas de el barco, no quieren comer ni menos bailar, a lo que son sumamente afectísimos, miran con indignación quanto hacen los blancos, sus enemigos capitales ... una tristeza grande que se apodera de su entendimiento, (aunque poco) que depende de un oculto rencor en no podersen vengar de el desprecio, que reciben de los blancos o injurias que les hacen estos. ... Itenen una pasión furiosa de querersen volver a su país ...*⁵⁸

Sadness, indignation, lack of will, resentment, furious passion: these symptoms of nostalgia are projections of what Barrera assumes as the slaves’ desires and feelings. The symptomatology of nostalgia in the *Reflexiones* is an attempt to imagine Africans’ psyche in a moment when they

⁵⁶ Ibid. Although it translates literally to “affect,” the medical term *afecto* in eighteenth-century Spanish meant “some illnesses or diseases, such as an affection of the chest, or of the head, &c.” *Diccionario de Autoridades*, Vol. I (1737), <https://apps2.rae.es/DA.html> (accessed on September 1, 2021).

⁵⁷ Barrera y Domingo, *Reflexiones*, 73.

⁵⁸ Barrera y Domingo, *Reflexiones*, 72.

appear to refuse the subjection to the white “capital enemy.”⁵⁹ Psychic suffering, therefore, becomes one of the few lenses through which the author can observe (and shape) the enslaved mind, a lens only possible because this suffering manifests itself in non-complying behavior: “they pretend not to hear, and if one forces them to pay attention to what one is saying, they get impatient and imperious ... [they] do not want to eat, not even drink, even though they have enough hunger and thirst to kill them” [*hacen como que no oyen, y si se les fuerza a que atiendan a lo que se les dice, se impacientan y ensoverbecen ... se emperran en no querer comer, ni menos vever, aunque tengan hamvre y sed que los mate*].⁶⁰ In other words, the diagnosis of nostalgia is prompted by Barrera’s incapacity to apprehend a subjected being that rejects the interpellation from their master—the white man—even when “forced” to do what they say. The state of enmity between master and slave therefore allows for the construction of a psyche that feels pain, grudge, and anger.

The verb *emperrarse*, which translates more literally as “being stubborn” or “digging one’s heels,” comes from *perro* (dog), and was commonly used in reference to disobedient slaves in Iberia. According to the *Diccionario de Autoridades* from 1732, *emperrarse* meant “to become stubborn [*terco*], rabid [*rabioso*], and almost desperate: as do bad slaves when they do not fear punishment, like dogs (from whose name this verb originates) when they fight.”⁶¹ Although not exclusively used in reference to enslaved peoples, then, Barrera’s use of the verb *emperrarse* implies the captive’s active disobedience in its association with an angry dog. Along with the adjective “rabid”, this is one of the many instances in the *Reflexiones* of an animal

⁵⁹ Barrera y Domingo, *Reflexiones*, 72.

⁶⁰ Barrera y Domingo, *Reflexiones*, 72.

⁶¹ *Diccionario de Autoridades*, Vol. III (1732), <https://apps2.rae.es/DA.html> (accessed on May 5, 2021).

analogy operating to translate the captive's resistant or unyielding behavior.⁶² Throughout the chapter on nostalgia, Barrera resorts to animality in its different connotations as a way to build what he saw as enslaved subjectivity.

Another of these instances emerges when Barrera describes the difficulty that medical practitioners faced when diagnosing nostalgia, given the subjective character intrinsic to its symptoms. The mere observation of a being in pain is not enough: according to Barrera, it is imperative to know the trigger of nostalgia in order to treat it, which can only be achieved through some sort of communication between the medical practitioner and the sick captive. Here is where the enslaved African's lack of reason and language, in Barrera's eyes, becomes an obstacle to the exertion of his power. In this logic, the impossibility of communication on the part of the enslaved African is understood by Barrera as sign of a beast-like nature and incivility:

The prognostic of this illness among the blacks is utterly impertinent, wearisome and annoying because of their rudeness, incapacity and brutality ... it is a very dangerous disease, and the physician cannot even know the origin of the black's affliction to suggest the treatment for it, because they [the enslaved] cannot explain themselves, [and] neither has the doctor the patience to subject himself, even through gestures, to ask the origin of such illness... the truth is that it is much worse for the physicians to attend to and heal these miserable people than it would be if they were a donkey.

Es sumamente impertinente, cansado y molesto, el pronóstico de esta enfermedad en los negros, a causa de su rudeza, incapacidad y brutalidad, pues además de ser una enfermedad en ellos peligrosísima, y el médico, no poder, ni menos saber, el origen de

⁶² *Rabioso*, as its English equivalent “rabid,” meant an “animal afflicted with rabies.” *Diccionario de Autoridades*, Vol. V (1737), <https://apps2.rae.es/DA.html> (accessed on August 31, 2021).

*su primera causa que aflige a el negro ... lo cierto es, que los facultativos curan y visitan a estos desgraciados, mucho peor que si fuera un jumento.*⁶³

The animal analogy (that a donkey would be easier to treat) puts the enslaved African in an ambivalent position between the animal and the human, between a subjectivity that suffers and refuses to be subjected, and an animality that, in Barrera's understanding, implies a lack of subjectivity.⁶⁴ Since the enslaved subject is unable to communicate in Spanish (and, most importantly, since Barrera is unable to communicate in their languages), their interaction triggers annoyance and impertinence on the part of the surgeon. A donkey, for Barrera, would be easier to treat not only because language would not be necessary for communication, but also because there would not be any subjectivity to be conveyed: there would be no possibility of nostalgia or psychic suffering. As a reader of Comte de Buffon's natural history, Barrera believed that the main difference between animal and "man" was that man had a soul that guided its sensory apparatus through human traits such as imagination, passion, judgement, and reason, while animals were guided by their "purely material internal sense."⁶⁵

Since the *bozal*, in their ambiguous status between human and beast, could not communicate with the white doctor, Barrera suggests that this interview should be conducted "through another black interpreter" [*otro negro intérprete*].⁶⁶ The ultimate diagnosis for

⁶³ Barrera y Domingo, *Reflexiones*, 73.

⁶⁴ Another possible interpretation of this passage is that Barrera is comparing the medical practitioner to the donkey, emphasizing the amount of work the surgeon or physician has to do. Since "jumento" is singular and both "los facultativos" and "estos desgraciados" is plural, in either case there is a syntactical issue. My interpretation is that Barrera is saying that it is worse to treat this illness among enslaved peoples "mucho peor que si [el paciente] fuera un jumento."

⁶⁵ Elizabeth A. Williams, *Appetite and Its Discontents: Science, Medicine, and the Urge to Eat, 1750-1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 56-7.

⁶⁶ Barrera y Domingo, *Reflexiones*, 74. *Bozales* were newly-arrived enslaved Africans who did not speak Spanish or Portuguese, unlike the *ladinos*, who could produce speech in the language of their enslavers.

nostalgia, therefore, depends on a mediated dialogue with the afflicted *bozal*.⁶⁷ To make this “impertinent, wearisome and annoying” task of communication somewhat easier, Barrera suggests some questions that must be asked to the sick slave, namely what kind of amusement they used to enjoy “when they were healthy” in their countries; if they were in love; what kinds of food they were more used to, and which they liked the most; which kind of diseases they were more prone to contract. This sort of eighteenth-century anamnesis had the goal of providing the physician with the right prognostic of the disease in order to “correctly treat them” [*para tratar con acierto*].⁶⁸

Humanity in the 1790s, however, was not necessarily the stable category it came to be in the following century. If, as López Denis argues, Barrera was a reader of Compte de Buffon’s natural history, then for him humanity is a scale from the savage to the civilized (European, we must not forget), rather than a stable taxonomical category as established by his contemporary Linnaeus. As David Bindman claims, for Buffon there was “a clear separation between man and animal, but also ... all forms of life are part of the same natural history, placing humanity and all living things on a continuous scale, with infinite and potentially fluid variations in-between.”⁶⁹ In adapting Buffon to the late-eighteenth century Cuban plantations, Barrera allows for the possibility of transitioning through these “fluid variations.” If the *bozal*, newly arrived in Cuba from Africa, is closer to the animal than to the European, then the process of adjustment to the new environment, climate, food, work, life, religion, etc. would also be a process of de-

⁶⁷ That whites would employ black interpreters to address the *bozales* was not a novelty in the eighteenth century: already in 1627, the Spanish Jesuit Alonso de Sandoval states the importance of these mediators in evangelizing the newly-arrived enslaved Africans in Cartagena. See Larissa Brewer-García, *Beyond Babel: Translations of Blackness in Colonial Peru and New Granada* (Cambridge University Press, 2020).

⁶⁸ Barrera y Domingo, *Reflexiones*, 66.

⁶⁹ David Bindman, *Ape to Apollo: Aesthetics and the Idea of Race in the 18th Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 61.

animalization, or domestication.⁷⁰ The longer the enslaved lived in Cuba in contact with Europeans—the longer they were enslaved—the more civilized they would become. The illness of nostalgia, in this sense, functions as a step from barbarity towards civilization: that is, toward a higher degree of civility. In this pernicious contradiction, slavery humanizes the enslaved at the same time that it commodifies them. As the sickness of becoming human, nostalgia gave enslavers access to the enslaved’s interiority, enabling managerial efficacy for the process of enslavement.

The Body Meets the Mind

One of the lengthiest and mostly paraphrased moments in Barrera’s *Reflexiones* is the section on the causes of nostalgia. To him, the “nostalgic illness” [*enfermedad nostálgica*] had a multiple etiology. The immediate, physical cause is the same as that of Hofer’s nostalgia, which Scheuchzer quotes and Barrera replicates: “the continuous vibration of those medullar brain fibers to which are still attached the engraved vestiges of the country’s images” [*la continua vibración de aquellas fibras medulares de el cerebro a que está pegados, aún los vestigios impresos de las ideas de la patria*].⁷¹ Still, there are also other causes, both internal and external. The external causes, also taken directly from Scheuchzer, are the “change in season, weather, food” [*mutación de estaciones, climas, alimentos*] as well as the “change of air”

⁷⁰ As Brewer-García and other scholars have shown, in Spanish and Portuguese colonies conversion to Catholicism was as important element in this process of “civilization.” See Larissa Brewer-García, *Beyond Babel: Translations of Blackness in Colonial Peru and New Granada* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020). Barrera does not seem very concerned with the evangelization of enslaved Africans in the *Reflexiones*, although the subject does emerge in one of his many complaints about the inhumanity of Cuban planters who did not invest in teaching Catholic doctrine to enslaved *bozales*. These, according to Barrera, learned from the *ladinos* “not knowing what they are doing, although an inner light leads them to understand all the things that are needed for a Christian to save himself.” Barrera y Domingo, *Reflexiones*, 173-174.

⁷¹ Barrera y Domingo, *Reflexiones*, 69-70.

[*mutación de aires*], which “pervert the disposition of the blood and spirit, as does the daily contact with foreigners” [*perbertir la disposición de la sangre y de los espíritus, como también el trato diario con los extranjeros*].⁷² This physical displacement is to Barrera the “first origin” of nostalgia. He explains that this movement resulted in a change in atmospheric pressure as captives journeyed from the land to the sea in the slave ships. As López Denis and other readers of Barrera have observed, this kind of theory is called “iatromechanical,” and was clearly paraphrased from Scheuchzer, the first to propose a correlation between atmospheric change and nostalgia.⁷³ If in Europe the iatromechanical explanation for nostalgia was quickly losing ground to a more “monistic theory of human nature premised on the structuring principle of ‘sensitivity...’,” Barrera’s new contribution to the etiology of nostalgia—namely, enslavement—is much more up to date to the emerging scientific theories of the time.⁷⁴

Following his idyllic descriptions of the African climate, Barrera compares it to the weight of the air in the “vessel where they [the Africans] embarked,” [*en el barco a donde lo traen embarcado*] which is lighter.⁷⁵ The absence of this “portion of air,” [*porción de aire*] according to Barrera, is the reason why “blacks ... contract this illness” [*los negros ... contraigan la enfermedad mencionada*].⁷⁶ That is, while it is triggered by the cruel treatment dispensed to the Africans and by the process of enslavement, nostalgia’s primeval cause is the change in air pressure in the slave ships—the physical act of enslavement itself.

This becomes more evident when Barrera adds other “internal” causes to nostalgia. If the iatromechanical explanation is a replication of Scheuchzer’s etiology, slavery itself comes into

⁷² Barrera y Domingo, *Reflexiones*, 70.

⁷³ López Denis, “Melancholia, Slavery, and Racial Pathology in Eighteenth-Century Cuba,” 184.

⁷⁴ Dodman, *What Nostalgia Was*, 48.

⁷⁵ Barrera y Domingo, *Reflexiones*, 71.

⁷⁶ Barrera y Domingo, *Reflexiones*, 72.

play: “the feelings of suffering, to which they are not accustomed” [*los sentimientos de las injurias, a que no están acostumbrados*] caused by “the change of life, from the bosom of one’s country, among his friends and mothers, to a forced slavery” [*el mudar de vivir, de el seno de su país, entre sus amigos y sus madres, por una esclavitud forzada*].⁷⁷ In treating the “forced slavery” as part of the geographical displacement “from the bosom of one’s country,” Barrera again conflates two different categories, displacement and enslavement. The result is a deep impact on the slave’s emotional structure—“the feelings of suffering”—from which emerges a wounded subjectivity. As López Denis puts it, in the *Reflexiones* “the question of altitude became almost irrelevant and slavery itself emerged as the ultimate cause of slave nostalgia.”⁷⁸

In linking the subjective reaction to slavery to the atmospheric explanation taken from Scheuchzer, Barrera demonstrates that the iatromechanical theory was not enough to account for the variety of reactions to the financial problem that was a non-productive slave. In this double etiology, the physical meets the mental, and the change inflicted upon the body meets the change inflicted upon the mind. Further along in the *Reflexiones*, Barrera summarizes this double etiology:

All of these things and many more make their blood circulation and breathing not to happen as they should, and [lead to] the very fine [blood] vessels to respond to their homeland, etc. Since the sea air penetrates their hearts' ventricles and their animal spirits, their imagination becomes torpid, full of abstract ideas ... [another factor is] the many outrages committed by the English, French, etc. towards them, of which it results that they become sad and melancholic ... and taken by these ideal impressions, they jump to

⁷⁷ “... los sentimientos de las injurias, a que no están acostumbrados ... pues el mudar de vivir, del seno de su país, entre sus amigos y sus madres, por una esclavitud forzada...” Barrera y Domingo, *Reflexiones*, 70.

⁷⁸ López Denis, “Melancholia, Slavery, and Racial Pathology in Eighteenth-Century Cuba,” 185.

the sea, hang themselves from anywhere with whichever instrument they find; all this with the goal of resurrecting and enjoying their ancient freedom and the pleasures of their beloved country.

Todas estas cosas y muchas más, son las que concurren, a que el círculo de su sangre, y la respiración en ellos, no se haga con el debido arreglo, para que los tenuísimos vasos de toda la periferia, en la mar, correspondan con los de su patria, &. Pues los aires marinos de tal modo se les influyen en los penetrales ventrículos de su corazón y en sus espíritus animales, que continuamente se halla su torpe imaginación, llena de ideas abstractas, ya concurra también a esto varios ultrajes que les hacen los ingleses, franceses, &. de cuyos resultados, resulta el que se vuelven tristes y ponen melancólicos ... y arrebatados de estas impresiones ideales, se precipitan y arrojan a la mar, se ahorcan de cualquiera parte y con cualquiera instrumento; todo, con el fin de que han de resucitar y gozar de su antigua libertad y de los placeres de su amada patria.⁷⁹

As a plantation surgeon, Barrera cannot offer the final treatment for nostalgia that Hofer proposed in 1688 which was the return to the homeland. Neither does he propose the other logical treatment for enslavement-induced nostalgia which would be manumission or abolition. Instead, Barrera's therapeutic approach addresses the twofold etiology of nostalgia by focusing on the verbal or performative trigger of the ontological displacement—that is, on verbal and physical mistreatment.

⁷⁹ Barrera y Domingo, *Reflexiones*, 76.

The first treatment suggested in the *Reflexiones* is a spatial measure to account for the iatromechanical theory for nostalgia, that is, change in air pressure that causes the illness. In order to “increase the elastic force of the internal air, reducing the pressure of the external air that compresses him” [*aumentar la fuerza elástica de el ayre interno, disminuyendo la presión de el externo que lo comprime*], the enslaved individual should be brought to “some more ventilated part of the air, ... where the sight, the imagination and the mood of the black gain new vigor and are boosted from their depleted and consumed spirits” [*alguna parte más ventilada de el ayre ... a donde la vista, la imaginación y el ánimo de el negro, tomen nuevo vigor e incremento, en sus depauperados y consumidos espíritus*].⁸⁰ These recommendations are again paraphrased from Scheuchzer as it appears in Salafranca’s translation, with a few adaptations to account for the specificities of the Cuban landscape.

Performative Humanity

The second part of the treatment accounts for both the specificity of the enslavement-related nostalgia and to the new medical trends gaining strength in Europe at the time. The latter addresses what I have called the ontological change suffered by the enslaved, namely, enslavement itself. However, Barrera obscures the actual cause of this displacement (enslavement) by addressing instead its secondary cause: bad treatment. To Barrera, the masters and overseers treat the enslaved “so inhumanely, and with a harshness that is not appropriate for Catholics,” [*tratan tan inhumanamente, y con un rigor indigno entre católicos*]⁸¹ and are so “inhuman, legitimate sons of the scum of the people, without principles and fear of god,” [*inhumanos, hijos legítimos de la hez del pueblo faltos de principios hábiles y del temor santo de*

⁸⁰ Barrera y Domingo, *Reflexiones*, 79.

⁸¹ Barrera y Domingo, *Reflexiones*, 39.

Dios].⁸² The ship captains and crews are no better, because they “don't treat them [the slaves] better than if they were a herd of rams or even worse” [*no cuidan más de ellos en sus navegaciones que si fuera una manada de carneros y aun mucho peor*].⁸³ If, as we saw, the diagnosis of nostalgia calls for a projection (or imagination) of the enslaved's subjectivity by the white gaze, its treatment is also grounded on that wounded subjectivity, demanding that the captive imagines his captor's inner self, which is done through displays of affection. As he did with the donkey when discussing the difficulty of treating enslaved individuals because of their supposed lack of language, Barrera is again here activating the non-human as devoid of subjectivity. In other words, if a donkey, to Barrera, does not have a subjectivity to convey and therefore would be easier to treat than an enslaved subject, then treating captives as *carneros* enacts the ontological displacement of enslavement. Animality is the language through which Barrera builds the conception of personhood he acknowledges in enslaved Africans.⁸⁴

The ontological cure thus requires the unproductive slave to see the master's humanity, which is achieved through demonstrations of “affability, humanity, tenderness and good treatment” [*afabilidad, humanidad, cariño y buen trato, etc.*].⁸⁵ The master, overseer or ship captain must “please [the enslaved] and give them some loving satisfaction, with which the offended *negro* understands that the offender regrets having treated him like that” [*pronto acariciarlo y darle alguna satisfacción amorosa, con la cual, el negro ultrajado, venga en conocimiento, que al injuriante, le pesa haberlo así tratado*].⁸⁶ In physically showing that he

⁸² Barrera y Domingo, *Reflexiones*, 11.

⁸³ Barrera y Domingo, *Reflexiones*, 65.

⁸⁴ For an interesting discussion on animality, slavery, and African-American writing, see Joshua Bennett, *Being Property Once Myself: Blackness and the End of Man* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2020); and Zakiyyah Iman Jackson. *Becoming Human: Matter and Meaning in an Antiracist World* (New York: New York University Press, 2020).

⁸⁵ Barrera y Domingo, *Reflexiones*, 80.

⁸⁶ Barrera y Domingo, *Reflexiones*, 74.

regrets mistreating the slave, the “injuriante” is then giving proof of his own humanity to the nostalgic African. It is a performative humanity, because it has to be displayed in order to exist in the eyes of the other. This performative humanity is thereby proposed by Barrera as a healing technique for the captive’s afflicted mind and, therefore, for recuperating his labor power and the master’s workforce.

One can think of nostalgia therefore as a medical manifestation of what later came to be called “buen tratamiento” (or “buen trato”), an ameliorative policy envisioned by Cuban planters in the first half of the nineteenth century with the goal of extending the lives of the enslaved population in the face of increased prices and trade restrictions. As Moreno Fragnals and Karim Ghorbal have claimed in separate studies, “buen tratamiento” was the most visible indication of the dissolution of slavery, since it was a consequence of the imposed prohibition of the slave trade by Britain (1817) and the abolition of slavery in other former Spanish colonies.⁸⁷ Barrera’s *Reflexiones* and the illness of nostalgia, however, demand a “more humane” [*más humano*] treatment of enslaved peoples in Cuba in a moment when the importation of enslaved Africans was rising and long before planters themselves advocated for reform in order to avoid the imminent end of slavery. What were Barrera’s motivations for advocating for amelioration in the end of the eighteenth century?

One of Barrera’s contemporaries might help us address this question: Francisco Arango y Parreño, the “master-ideologue of the Cuban planter class.”⁸⁸ Arango has been considered the pioneer of *buen tratamiento* in Cuba, even though he only articulated an explicit claim for a

⁸⁷ Moreno Fragnals, *El ingenio: Complejo económico social cubano del azúcar* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2001), 337. Karim Ghorbal, “La política llamada del ‘buen tratamiento’: reformismo criollo y reacción esclavista en Cuba (1789-1845),” *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos* [Online], Débats (November 30, 2009). Available at <http://journals.openedition.org/nuevomundo/57872>.

⁸⁸ Agnes Lugo-Ortiz, “On the Spectrality of the Law: Visuality and the Contest for Slaveholding Sovereignty,” work in progress.

change in the way planters treated enslaved peoples in an 1811 address to the Cádiz Courts.⁸⁹ In the 1790s, he was more interested in calling for a free trade between Cuba and other territories which would entail a free entry of enslaved Africans in the island. However, as Dale Tomich notes, Arango was a reader of Adam Smith, Montesquieu, and Raynal and thus was familiar not only with European Enlightenment thought but also with its critiques of slavery.⁹⁰ Two of Arango's letters to the Spanish Crown in 1791 and 1792 (that is, in the early days of the slave revolts in Saint-Domingue) show his awareness of the negative outcomes planters could face by mistreating their enslaved workforce. Initially, however, Arango insists that such outcomes were not to be expected in Cuba, where planters allegedly treated their slaves with care, providing for their every need. For instance, in his 1791 "Representación hecha á S. M. con motivo de la sublevación de esclavos en los dominios franceses de la isla de Santo Domingo," Arango blames the French planters for the insurrections that were taking over the neighboring island. To him, while the French "look at them [enslaved subjects] as beasts, the Spanish look at them as men."⁹¹ Arango adds that Spanish legislation also provided many opportunities for enslaved peoples in Cuba to change masters, manumit themselves, or demand good treatment.⁹² His fierce defense of

⁸⁹ Ghorbal, "La política llamada del 'buen tratamiento'," 45.

⁹⁰ Dale Tomich, "The Wealth of Empire: Francisco Arango y Parreño, Political Economy, and the Second Slavery in Cuba," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45, no. 1 (Jan. 2003), p. 5.

⁹¹ Francisco Arango y Parreño, "Representación hecha á S. M. con motivo de la sublevación de esclavos en los dominios franceses de la isla de Santo Domingo," in *Obras del Excmo Sr. Dr. Francisco de Arango y Parreño*, vol. 1 (Havana: Howso & Heinen, 1888), 49.

⁹² This fierce defense of Cuban planters goes hand in hand with the "Representación" that the main Cuban planters addressed to the King in 1790, in which they vehemently criticized the set of rules promulgated by the Spanish Crown the year before (1789) that regulated the power of masters and put them under the Crown's supervision—called the *Real Cédula des su Majestad sobre la educación, trato, ocupaciones de los esclavos en todos sus dominios de Indias e Islas Filipinas* and known as "Real Instructiva". Delivered by Don Diego Miguel de Moya, the "Representación" sought to demonstrate the "humanity" and "charity" with which Cuban planters treated the enslaved, thus asking the King to revoke the "Real Instructiva." The planters were successful, and in 1794 the Royal Council determined that the "Real Instructiva" should be suspended in all its effects. "Expediente instructivo para suavizar la suerte de los negros esclavos," in Gloria García Rodríguez, *La esclavitud desde la esclavitud: la visión de los siervos* (México: Centro de Investigación Científica Ing. Jorge L Tamayo, 1996), 77, 79. See "Real Cédula e

Cuban planters' good behavior, however, seems to become more and more hesitant over the years with the rise of slave insurrections in the surrounding islands and in Cuba.

Arango's argument in the "Representación" is an early instance of Frank Tannenbaum's 1946 thesis on the differences between slave systems across the Americas. According to Tannenbaum, Iberian slave regimes endowed captives with a moral and legal personality which informed race relations in these areas after emancipation.⁹³ Imbued in Tannenbaum's claims is the idea that Iberian slave regimes were more "humane" and benevolent than others because of the higher rates of manumission and captives' opportunities to claims-making.⁹⁴ As María Elena Díaz has argued, after all, "the discourse of comparative *de facto* and *de jure* forms of slavery and, above all, the humanitarian/brutal, good/bad, slave regime dichotomies found in the historical part of Tannenbaum's argument were in fact not even his creation."⁹⁵ Of course, Arango's strategic comparison between the French and Spanish slave systems served to strengthen his argument for the liberalization of the slave trade. There is no doubt that Arango and his fellow planters knew all too well the conditions in which their enslaved workforces lived and died.⁹⁶

In the "Discurso sobre la agricultura de la Habana y medios de fomentarla" (1792), Arango's discourse on slave management becomes more prescriptive and less descriptive. This document consolidates the claims made in the previous "Representación," expanding on the

instrucción circular a Indias sobre la educación, trato y ocupación de los esclavos," in Gloria García Rodríguez, *La esclavitud desde la esclavitud: la visión de los siervos*.

⁹³ Frank Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas* (New York: Vintage Books, 1946).

⁹⁴ For a thorough revision on the so-called "Tannenbaum debate," see Alejandro de la Fuente, "Slave Law and Claims-Making in Cuba: The Tannenbaum Debate Revisited," *Law and History Review* 22, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 339-369.

⁹⁵ María Elena Díaz, "Beyond Tannenbaum," *Law and History Review* 22, no. 2 (Summer, 2004): 374.

⁹⁶ Arango was also fully aware of the 1789-1790 strife between Cuban planters and the Spanish Crown about the "Real Cédula de su Majestad sobre la educación, trato, ocupaciones de los esclavos en todos sus dominios de Indias e Islas Filipinas." See note 78.

main reasons why Cuba's agriculture was still underdeveloped in comparison to the British, French, and Portuguese colonies. One important reason, according to Arango, was that Spain's competitors in the sugar market spent less on their enslaved workforce and made them work more. The slave insurrections in Saint-Domingue that were ongoing at the time, however, function here as a cautionary tale for Cuba.⁹⁷ Arango is careful enough to state that he is *not* proposing that Cuban planters "match" [*igualemos*] the French, British, and Portuguese in the little they spent on their enslaved workforces. Rather, Arango proposes that his fellow *hacendados* organize their enslaved labor more efficiently. "Humanity and religion seal my lips, and instead of envying them [the French] because of this advantage, they excite my compassion," asserts Arango. "That is: [we should] organize the slaves' labor, but not add to the suffering that afflicts the most miserable portion of the human species" [*más desgraciada porción de toda la especie humana*].⁹⁸

Arango's rhetoric in describing the enslaved as the most miserable portion of humanity resonates in Barrera's sentimental rhetoric, as previously demonstrated, both of which were informed by Raynal's critiques of slavery. Although Barrera also echoes Arango's claim that the Spanish treatment of captives "never reaches the barbarous cruelty of other European nations," he still maintains that "Spanish America treats them [the enslaved] inhumanly," which is the

⁹⁷ As Ada Ferrer, Sybille Fischer and others have claimed, the Haitian Revolution was one of the main reasons that led to Cuba's increased dependency on slave labor. As Ferrer states, "[t]he Cuban slave system that emerged at the turn of the nineteenth century, then, was one that had internalized the Haitian Revolution and the liberation it represented: as model, as warning, and sometimes as concrete possibility." Ada Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolutions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

⁹⁸ Arango y Parreño, "Discurso sobre la agricultura de la Habana y medios de fomentarla", in *Obras del Excmo Sr. Dr. Francisco de Arango y Parreño* vol. 1 (Havana: Howso & Heinen, 1888), 82.

ultimate cause of nostalgia.⁹⁹ The illness, then, operates within a framework that encompasses not only the captives' subjectivities, but also that of the Cuban planters.

A similar movement is present in the Luso-Brazilian lawyer Luís Antônio de Oliveira Mendes, for whom *banzo*, the African nostalgia, is one of the main chronic illnesses that afflicted newly enslaved Africans in Brazil. Like Barrera, Mendes also sees in enslavement itself a cause for *banzo*, and his treatment also involves a display of affection and, therefore, humanity, on the part of the master and ship crew. Unlike Barrera, however, Mendes produces a legal argument rather than a medical one, his solution being a complete reform in the laws and regulations of slavery and the slave trade.

⁹⁹ Barrera y Domingo, *Reflexiones*, p. 18.

Chapter 2

A Luso-Brazilian Genealogy of Longing

Luís Antônio de Oliveira Mendes: Legal Humanitarianism

Just as nostalgia was initially exclusively suffered by Europeans, so was banzo. The verb “banzar” was registered in 1712 by the Jesuit priest Rafael Bluteau, who defined it in his dictionary as “to mournfully mope” [*psamar com pena*].¹⁰⁰ As Kananoja shows, the verb had been used in the Portuguese world since the early eighteenth century to refer to members of the clergy who went to Angola and suffered from “banzare.”¹⁰¹ The etymology of the term is not clear, even according to the most updated Portuguese dictionaries.¹⁰² Some trace the word’s root to the kimbundu *mbanza*, which means “village.”¹⁰³ Although the origins of the word are still unstudied, the fact is that the word and the illness “banzo” both have African origins, most likely Angolan.¹⁰⁴

From the extant records, we can see that it was in the end of the eighteenth century when the Angola-based Portuguese physician Francisco Damião Cosme first associated the verb

¹⁰⁰ Rafael Bluteau, *Vocabulário Portuguez e latino* vol. 2 (Coimbra: Collegio das Artes da Companhia de Jesu, 1712), 37.

¹⁰¹ Kalle Kananoja, “Melancholy, Race and Slavery in the Early Modern Southern Atlantic World,” in *Encountering Crises of the Mind: Madness, Culture and Society, 1200s-1900s* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2018), 88-112.

¹⁰² The *Dicionário etimológico da língua portuguesa* states different origins for the term “banzo” and “banzar.” Banzar (“espantar, psamar, surpreender”) would have origins in the Latin *bilanceãre*, from *bilância* (balança). “Do significado primitivo de ‘oscilar, mover-se como balança’, passaria ao de ‘ondear’, que resultaria o de ‘ficar estonteado’; da significação intransitiva passaria à transitiva de ‘espantar’. According to the dictionary, the first appearances of *banzear* are from the fifteenth century. *Banzo*, on the other hand, would have “origem africana” and “relaciona-se, provavelmente, com ‘povoação dos negros africanos’, em alusão às ‘saudades da banza, da terra natal’.” António Geraldo da Cunha, *Dicionário etimológico da língua portuguesa* (Rio de Janeiro: Lexikon, 2010), 80.

¹⁰³ Clóvis Moura, *Dicionário Da Escravidão Negra No Brasil* (São Paulo: Edusp, 2004), 63.

¹⁰⁴ Ana Maria Galdini Raimundo Oda, “Escravidão e nostalgia no Brasil: o banzo,” *Revista latino-americana de psicopatologia Fundamental* 11, no. 4 (2008): 738.

“banzar” to enslaved Africans.¹⁰⁵ In his 1770 *Tractado das queixas endêmicas, e mais fataes nesta conquista*, he explained that “he who lives *banzando* is very sad; and that *banzar* and to die are the same thing” [*anda banzando o que anda muy triste; e que banzar e morrer é tudo um*].¹⁰⁶ Damião Cosme also equated *banzar* to melancholy when he argued that the enslaved Africans’ melancholy is one of their main causes of death, besides the bad treatment they received in Africa and in the ships. Cosme prescribed the slave dealers in Angola to “take care in dissuading them [the enslaved] from the terrors that sadden them or make them *banzar*” [*cuidar para dissuadi-los dos terrores que os entristecem ou os fazem banzar*].¹⁰⁷ In order to reduce the death rate among the young Africans for whom these “amorous passions and great longing” [*paixões amorosas e grandes saudades*] were a common cause of death, Damião Cosme also recommended “making them play and dance to the drums, marimbas, zangas, hungos, etc.” [*fazê-los brincar e dançar aos batuques marimbas, zangas, hungos, etc.*].¹⁰⁸ Prescribing music, dance, and party had been and would continue to be the main prescribed treatments for nostalgia and banzo since Hoffer in the 1680s.

Although we can only speculate whether Luís Antônio de Oliveira Mendes knew Cosme’s work or if his knowledge of banzo came exclusively from his Angolan informers, it seems likely that Cosme’s *Tractado* informed Mendes’s text, even if indirectly. Besides presenting similar ideas on the personhood and subjectivity of enslaved Africans, Mendes’s suggested treatments and prophylaxis for banzo are the same as the ones Cosme had

¹⁰⁵ Kalle Kananoja, “As raízes africanas de uma doença brasileira – o banzo em Angola nos séculos XVII e XVIII,” *Ponta de Lança: Revista Eletrônica de História, Memória & Cultura* 12, no. 23 (Dec. 2018): 69-94.

¹⁰⁶ Francisco Damião Cosme, “Tractado das queixas endêmicas e mais fataes nesta Conquista,” *Stvdia*, no. 20-22 (April-Dec. 1967): 183.

¹⁰⁷ Damião Cosme, “Tractado,” 146.

¹⁰⁸ Damião Cosme, “Tractado,” 147.

recommended, albeit more systematic in the form of specific prescriptions and regulations. A historical fact adds to these similarities: Mendes's main informant, whom he quotes many times in his text, was a Portuguese sailor named Raimundo Jalamá, who was based in Angola around the same time as Cosme was writing his treatise.¹⁰⁹

The Ability to Feel

Mendes gave his speech at the Lisbon Royal Academy of Sciences in 1793, in response to the Academy's request to "Determine with all its symptoms the acute and chronic illnesses that most afflict the newly-arrived Africans" [*Determinar com todos os seus sintomas as doenças agudas e crônicas que mais frequentemente acometem os pretos recém-tirados da África*].¹¹⁰ His speech, titled "Memória a respeito dos escravos e tráfico da escravatura entre a costa d'África e o Brasil" ("Memory on the Slaves and the Slave Trade between the African Coast and Brazil") has six chapters that follow the Africans' homeland—its nature, air, water, traditions, habits, customs, etc.—their enslavement still in Africa; their transportation in the slave ships through the Middle Passage; and their arrival in Brazil. All these cruelties "freeze the blood in the veins of this faithful and experienced writer" [*fazem gelar o sangue nas veias ao fiel e experimentado escritor*], says Mendes, portraying himself as a seasoned writer who, in spite of all his experience, claims not to be insensitive to the horrors of slavery.¹¹¹ As we have already seen in

¹⁰⁹ There are at least two documents that demonstrate the historicity of Raimundo Jalamá as "character" in Mendes's narrative. According to a civil action preserved at the Torre do Tombo National Archive (Portugal), I can safely say that Jalamá was a Portuguese navigating officer in the late eighteenth century, and that he sued a ship owner for the wages owed to him before a shipwreck. See Jalamá, Raimundo; José da Silva, Pedro. "Acção cível de juramento de alma reduzida a condenação de preceito," 1785.

¹¹⁰ "Determinar com todos os seus sintomas as doenças agudas e crônicas que mais frequentemente acometem os pretos recém-tirados da África." Mendes, "Memória," 6.

¹¹¹ Mendes, "Memória," 8.

Barrera's text, this sentimental rhetoric is a prominent feature of the three texts analyzed here, and of eighteenth-century abolitionism/reformism more generally.

Mendes's speech was only published in 1812 in the *Memórias econômicas* series of the Lisbon Royal Academy, eleven years after it was orally delivered.¹¹² By then, Mendes was a lawyer. Born in Salvador, Bahia, he went to Portugal as a young man, where he studied philosophy, medicine, and graduated in Law in 1777. There, he worked as a lawyer for the Casa da Suplicação in Lisbon, the "most important judiciary court of the Portuguese crown" that had jurisdiction over the whole Portuguese empire.¹¹³ He was also member of the Lisbon Royal Academy of Sciences and continued to be so even after he moved back to Brazil in the first years of the nineteenth century.¹¹⁴

When he delivered his speech to the Academy in 1793, the expansion of sugar production and gold mining in Brazil throughout the eighteenth century had caused the numbers of African *boçais* to soar. All of them had to go through what was called "seasoning," that is, the period of adaptation to the new land, climate, and language. Mendes's text, then, had the purpose of "sympathizing with the most miserable portion of the human species" [*amiga desta porção mais*

¹¹² The delay in publishing the speech might have been caused by its heavy tone regarding the cruelties and violences of slave masters. According to Oda, the version of Mendes's speech published in 1812 was an "abridged" version, in which many instances of critique were rewritten to a smoother tone. Oda, "O banzo e outros males: o *pathos* dos negros escravos na *Memória* de Oliveira Mendes," *Revista Latinoamericana de Psicopatologia Fundamental* X, n. 2: 35. The version consulted for this chapter is the original speech given by Mendes in 1793, republished in 1977 in Portugal. Robert Slenes noted that there are two versions of the text published in 1812, with identical covers and table of contents. One of them, however, is the longest and seems to be the one Mendes read in the Academy in 1793. Robert Slenes, "African Abrahams, Lucretias and Men of Sorrows: Allegory and Allusion in the Brazilian Anti-Slavery Lithographs (1827–1835) of Johann Moritz Rugendas," *Slavery & Abolition* 23, no.2 (2002): 167.

¹¹³ Nuno Camarinhas, "A Casa da Suplicação nos finais do Antigo Regime (1790-1810)," *Cadernos do Arquivo Municipal* 2, no.2 (Dec. 2014): 223.

¹¹⁴ Throughout his life, Mendes published works that range from legal, economical and historical matters up to plays, poems and novels. Although his writings suggest that he may have travelled through the Portuguese possessions in Africa, there is no direct evidence of that. In fact, there is very little historiography on Mendes, all of which seem to draw their bibliographical information from the same source (*Diccionario Bibliographico Portugues*).

desgraçada da espécie humana] by “looking after the interests of the blacks recently brought from the African kingdoms to Brazil” [*consultando em geral os interesses dos pretos recém-tirados dos Reinos africanos para o Brasil*] while also “looking particularly after the interests of their masters” [*consulta também em particular os dos seus senhores*].¹¹⁵ Although balancing such incompatible interests was of course impossible, it was nevertheless a common verbalization of the reformist ideology.

Most historians nowadays see the “Memória” as one of the first instances in which the word “banzo”—as a noun, not as a verb as Cosme used it—comes to mean a melancholic illness that afflicted the enslaved Africans who were taken from their homeland. This meaning of banzo would circulate throughout the nineteenth century, mostly within but also beyond the borders of the Portuguese empire.¹¹⁶ Little by little, however, banzo and nostalgia conflated into one, often used interchangeably—although “nostalgia” tended to be more common in an international scientific context, and “banzo” would mostly appear in works referring specifically to enslaved Africans in the lusophone context.

By the time Mendes read his speech on the most common illnesses that afflicted enslaved Africans in the Portuguese slave trade, then, banzo was new to many of those who sat in the audience at the Lisbon Academy of Sciences. All other illnesses Mendes listed in his speech were supposed to be well known, “except for *bichos*, and for *banzo*” [*à exceção tão somente ... dos bichos ... e do banzo*].¹¹⁷ Mendes defined banzo as:

¹¹⁵ Mendes, “Memória,” 6.

¹¹⁶ The French doctor Joseph François Xavier Sigaud talks about banzo in his *Du climat et des maladies du Brésil* (1844); and the Bavarian naturalist Carl Friedrich Philipp von Martius also mentions it in *Das Naturell, die Krankheiten, das Artzthum und die Heilmittel der Ueberwohner Brasiliens* (1844). See Oda, “Da enfermidade chamada banzo,” 2008.

¹¹⁷ Mendes, “Memória,” 82. *Bicho* was a skin parasite.

a resentment ingrained by any principle, such as, for example, the longing for one's family, for one's homeland, the love of someone, the ingratitude, and treachery that another had committed towards them, the deep thought about the loss of freedom, the continuous meditation about the tyranny, with which they are treated, the same mistreatment they endure, and all that which can cause melancholy. It is a passion of the soul to which they surrender, which they only find extinct with death. That's why from a competent place it has been said that black Africans were passionate, faithful, resolute, constant, and susceptible to the last extreme of love, and of hate.

um ressentimento entranhado por qualquer princípio, como por exemplo, a saudade dos seus, da sua pátria, o amor devido a alguém, à ingratidão, e aleivosia, que outro lhe fizera, a cogitação profunda sobre a perda de liberdade, a meditação continuada da tirania, com que os trata, o mesmo mau trato que suportam, e tudo aquilo, que pode melancolizar. É uma paixão da alma a que se entregam, que só dão por extinta com a morte, por isso em o seu competente lugar disse, que os pretos africanos eram extremosos, fiéis, resolutos, constantíssimos, e susceptíveis no último extremo do amor, e do ódio.¹¹⁸

Let us unravel this layered definition to reveal the gradation in Mendes's rhetoric: Banzo starts as a common feeling (resentment) triggered by another common situation (yearning for the homeland and loved ones, that is, for people and place). The causes for such yearning, however, were more specific to the enslaved. They entail not only the loss of freedom and bad treatment,

¹¹⁸ Mendes, "Memória," 57.

but also the meditation on it. Banzo thus required a deep level of self-reflection in which the enslaved pondered over their lack of freedom. It was not only the process of enslavement or the mistreatment themselves that caused the illness, but the specific reaction that the enslaved African had to it: meditation, reflection, contemplation.

Like in Barrera's *Reflexiones*, the enslaved Africans in Mendes's text must be able to feel resentment and yearning; they must be able to love people and their place of birth. Throughout the *Memória*, Mendes builds this ability to feel through long descriptions of African nature, societies, and its inhabitants. However, unlike Barrera's text, the nature that native Africans so deeply yearned was not beautiful nor pleasant. Rather, African nature for Mendes was "intemperate, poorly conditioned, and extremely hot" [*intemperado, desabrido e ardentíssimo*] and the atmosphere was "the densest, and the air is the heaviest, and least pure, that one might consider" [*a mais crassa, e o ar o mais pesado, e menos puro, que se pode considerar*].¹¹⁹ Nevertheless, Mendes notices, Africans in their home countries do not feel any of that. In fact, they are much healthier and satisfied:¹²⁰

However, the blacks, born in the bosom of their country, inside which they find the maternal cradle, there live in the utmost satisfaction, taking this climate as the best because they don't know any other, and because of the effects of the correlation between birth and climate, in an almost toxic air they have a perfect health, and are proportionally less afflicted by the great and cruel diseases than any other people who go there ...

¹¹⁹ Mendes, "Memória," 11.

¹²⁰ Although he does not specify, Mendes is referring to sub-Saharan Africa, since most of his informants are from the region known today as Angola.

*Porém os pretos, que no seu seio nasceram, e que dentro dele têm o berço maternal, ali vivem com satisfação plena, tendo este clima pelo melhor, porque outros não conhecem, e por efeitos da correlação que o nascimento tem com o clima, em um ar, quase empestado, logram no seu tanto uma perfeita saúde, e são proporcionalmente menos acometidos das grandes, e cruéis enfermidades, do que outros quaisquer, dos que lá entram...*¹²¹

“Birth and climate” is another way to say environmental determinism, one of the mainstream scientific explanations for bodily difference since Hippocrates.¹²² Mendes is here explicit about his own subjective description because he is not a native African and, therefore, not able to thrive in African nature like its native inhabitants. Nevertheless, he goes one step further, associating birth and climate with freedom. That is, in the intemperate climate where Africans thrive, they “have all the freedom of their living, and their only inalterable and unlimited rule is their will” [*têm toda a liberdade do seu viver, e têm como uma regra inalterável, e sem limites, tão somente a sua vontade*].¹²³ We may think, then, that it is precisely because they are free that native Africans take so much pleasure from their homelands. Freedom is geographically restricted, in an iteration of environmental determinism that takes into account not only the physiological or subjective traits of specific peoples but also their metaphysical experience.

This almost absolute freedom, however, does not make them “brutes.” Echoing Enlightenment ideas of humanity and civilization, especially John Locke’s, Mendes is quick to explain that the Africans are not in a state of nature, because they have a (primitive) law system

¹²¹ Mendes, “Memória,” 12.

¹²² Bindman, *From Ape to Apollo*, 62.

¹²³ Mendes, “Memória,” 14.

that somehow resembled the Roman one: “In spite of this rudeness of their way of living, they have certain laws, albeit very few, by which they live” [*Não obstante esta franqueza do seu viver têm certas leis, ainda que muito poucas a que vivem circunscritos*].¹²⁴ Still, they lived “in the center of barbarity and gentilism” [*no centro da barbaridade, e do gentilismo*].¹²⁵ Mendes’s depiction of the Africans in their homeland is very similar to Locke’s African “savage.” As Bindman claims, Locke’s “distinction between those in a state of nature and in slavery was in non-philosophical discourse generally merged into the loose category of ‘savage,’ applied to Africans and the native peoples of the Americas, North and South.”¹²⁶ Like Locke’s, Mendes’s barbaric peoples are also savages, but of the “noble” kind:

Although they live in the center of barbarity and gentilism, these people’s character is resolute, docile, ... and of good faith, and that is why they indulge in everything, and are susceptible to everything, they are extreme and constant. They are lovers in the highest degree: they are vindictive when given the reason to be so ...

*O caráter desses povos, ainda que vivedores no centro da barbaridade, e do gentilismo, é o serem por gênio resolutos, dóceis ... e de boa fé, por isso a tudo que se entregam, e de tudo que são susceptíveis, são extremosos, e constantes. São amantes em último extremo: são vingativos, quando desenganados lhes dão causa ...*¹²⁷

This description of the Africans’ passionate “nature” echoes Damiano Cosme’s in his *Tractado* (“possessed by amorous passions and great yearning”). While the excess of impressionability

¹²⁴ Mendes, “Memória,” 14.

¹²⁵ Mendes, “Memória,” 14.

¹²⁶ Bindman, *From Ape to Apollo*, 30.

¹²⁷ Mendes, “Memória,” 14.

distances the native Africans from the civilization that characterizes the European or Europeanized societies, it is precisely this emotional susceptibility which allows banzo to take root in the captives' minds.¹²⁸ Banzo is possible, therefore, because of an apparent contradiction: the trait that puts Africans "in the center of barbarity" is also what ultimately allows them to be afflicted by banzo. In other words, at the same time as the African' impressibility or susceptibility makes him a "barbarian," it is also what allows him to demonstrate that he "also has a soul, and who also feels" [*bárbaro, que tem alma, e que também sente*].¹²⁹ Such ability to feel, however, appears in the eyes of Mendes as a pathology (banzo), thus restricting the potential outcomes of the situation.

In Mendes's descriptions of African nature and society, we can find the three gradations of his definition of banzo: because they are natives and free, Africans are able to yearn for their homelands; because they are passionate they are able to miss their loved ones; because they love their freedom, they are deeply affected by its loss; and because they are susceptible to impressions they pathologically react to bad treatment. That is: although Africans are predisposed to banzo because of their (excessive) sensibility, it is the coerced, violent change in climate that causes the disease. In other words, it is enslavement itself.

An Affective Master-Slave Dialectic

The bad treatment that causes banzo, alongside enslavement, allows Mendes to lengthily discuss the forms in which it occurs. Echoing, like many at his time and after, the rhetoric of "tyranny" and "inhumanity" made famous by Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas in depicting the "conquest" of the New World, Mendes questions the legitimacy of the slave trade as it was being

¹²⁸ Schuller, *The Biopolitics of Feeling*, 16.

¹²⁹ Mendes, "Memória," 65.

handled. He defines slave masters, physicians and overseers as “tyrants and cruel masters” [*tiranos e cruéis senhores*]; “traitors” [*traidores*] and “enemies” [*inimigos*] of humanity who mistreated the slaves with “cruelty and inhumanity” [*crueidade e desumanidade*]; the sick slaves are abandoned to “inhumanity;” and the physicians who refuse to treat them are moved by “extremely perverse and inhumane feelings” [*perversíssimos, e desumanos sentimentos*].¹³⁰

Like Las Casas and Fray Montesinos before him, Mendes thus formulates an argument for reform in the slave trade that is both legal and affective because it appeals to the realm of knowledge and to the sensibility of his audience—all men of letters at the Lisbon Royal Academy of Sciences. On the one hand, Mendes suggests that physicians, masters, and the ship crew “should from the beginning treat them [the enslaved] with all gentleness and endearment, to make the captive less sensitive ... and to dissipate the banzo, that never quite abandons them” [*Deviam por isso mesmo desde logo começar a tratá-los com toda a brandura, e agrado, par afazer o cativo menos sensível ... e desvanecer pouco a pouco o banzo, que não os desacompanha*].¹³¹ Towards the end of the “Memória,” the author synthesizes the proposed treatment in four stages:

... in the first place, a treatment capable of bringing the slaves to *unimagine* that they do not live nor were brought to a known and certain disgrace in which they found themselves buried. In second place, masters must behave towards them in a benign, soft, affable, and cheerful way, showing the slaves that they are well-served, and inspiring in them the feelings that they [the masters] have in them ... a good slave, so that in return similar feelings are born in the slave, who will think that they had the luck of finding a good master. In third place, the slaves must be taken away from rigorous and severe

¹³⁰ Mendes, “Memória,” 8, 40, 45.

¹³¹ Mendes, “Memória,” 65.

punishments. In fourth place, they must be allowed to have fun in their own way, alongside with their compatriots and peers, so that they enjoy the just pleasure and necessary joy, which is the only thing capable of eradicating banzo and its morbid meditations, to which they easily abandon themselves.

*... deve ter o primeiro lugar um trato que seja capaz de desimaginar, que ela não vive, e que não for a trazida para uma positiva, e reconhecida desgraça, na qual se acha sepultada: deve ter o segundo lugar, em os seus senhores se comportarem para com ela de um modo benigno, brando, afável, e risonho, indicando-lhe que se acham bem servidos, inspirando na escravatura os sentimentos, de que têm eles por acerto, e por fortuna a um bom escravo, para na recompensa nascerem os outros correlativos sentimentos no escravo de que tivera a dita de encontrar a um bom senhor: deve ter o terceiro lugar, o afaste dos servos, e rigorosos castigos: deve ter o quarto lugar, a permissão de ela se divertir, e folgar ao seu modo, e ainda com a convocação dos seus compatriotas, e semelhantes para lhe influir um justo prazer, e a necessária alegria, o que só é capaz de fazer desterrar o banzo, e as cogitações fúnebres, a que com facilidade se entregam.*¹³²

If the cause of banzo is inhumane treatment, then the cure proposed by Mendes involves a human(e) behavior on the part of the masters and ship crew—they must become human themselves in the eyes of the nostalgic Africans. The four stages of this proposed treatment refer to different aspects of banzo that Mendes had examined until then. The first part addresses the

¹³² Mendes, “Memória,” 94-95.

aforementioned degree of self-reflection required for nostalgia to take root in the enslaved African's mind: the enslaved has to "unimagine" that their fate is disgraceful; in other words, they ought to stop pondering and meditating on their enslavement. Self-reflection, then, appears here as an aggravating cause for banzo. By asking that the enslaved cease to meditate on their own lives and selves, Mendes thus demands that they stripe themselves of a layer of humanness, since self-consciousness had been considered one of the "fine" intellectual traits that would posit certain human varieties above others.¹³³

The second, third, and fourth measure (benign, soft, affable, cheerful treatment; less punishments, and fun) would generate a process of mutual recognition between the enslaved African and their slaver. This is not a mere recognition of subjectivity or consciousness between the enslaved and their slaver, but also of morality—they should see each other, respectively, as a "good slave" and a "good master." In other words, the slaver should demonstrate that they think they have a "good slave;" and in turn the enslaved would return the gesture of recognition, thinking that they have a good master. Since it is supposed to happen through a moment of affection and not in a life-and-death struggle, this mutual recognition of the master and slave could not be less Hegelian.

The Hegelian master-slave dialectic poses that the autonomous self-conscious subject emerges from mutual recognition between two forms of consciousness that take the form of a life-and-death struggle: if neither of them dies, one necessarily masters the other, and they thus become "lord" and "bondsman," master and slave.¹³⁴ Hegel's master-slave dialectic has been

¹³³ Denise Ferreira da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2007).

¹³⁴ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. by Peter Fuss, and John Dobbins (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019). My reading of Hegel's life-and-death struggle and the figures of lord and bondsman follow Alexandre Kojève's *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* (New York: Basic Books, 1969).

read both phylogenetically (that is, literally, as if slave and master were historical actors) and ontogenetically (metaphorically, as if slave and master represented different parts of one's self-consciousness). While the specificities of these debates go beyond the scope of this chapter, I do think it can be helpful to analyze Mendes's suggestion of mutual recognition as a treatment of banzo among enslaved Africans. By relying on a moment and display of affection instead of a struggle, such recognition sublimates the violence intrinsic both to the Hegelian master-slave dialectic and to the master-slave relationship itself. The point of recognition is also relevant here: Mendes does not ask slaver and enslaved to recognize each other as subjects, but rather as "good" master and "good" slave, respectively. A good slave is an obedient slave, one who works and does not resist their subjection. A good slave, therefore, is a slave who in some level renounces their freedom and thus subjects themselves to their own (self-)enslavement. In spite of Mendes's proposition, a question remains: does the enslaved in fact renounce their freedom even when there is no physical struggle?

Such a question invokes a reading of subjection through the lenses of Foucault and Butler, insofar as it involves the process of becoming a subject through submission to power.¹³⁵ From the mutual recognition that Mendes asks slaver and enslaved to perform, therefore, there emerges the subject of the enslaved who is dependent on the very subjection that shaped them. This is why Gerard Aching asks us to ponder the "psychic work of grappling with internalized forms of oppression" that the enslaved had to do in order to survive enslavement.¹³⁶ By focusing on the psychic work instead of the physical work of the enslaved, Aching argues, "we can evaluate the range of psychic strategies that were at the disposition of most slaves in their

¹³⁵ Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

¹³⁶ Gerard Aching, "The Slave's Work: Reading Slavery through Hegel's Master-Slave Dialectic," *PMLA* 127, no. 4 (2012): 916.

stubborn willingness to survive slavery.”¹³⁷ We can thus understand banzo (and nostalgia, for that matter) as one of these psychic strategies of grappling with enslavement, the moment of self-reflection and meditation that slavers pathologized as banzo, or nostalgia. The treatment Mendes proposes then is a treatment to deepen the affective bonds between slaver and enslaved so that these moments of meditation do not lead to a more fatal, or aggressive form of self-reflection.¹³⁸

Needless to say, Mendes’s prescription does not usually go to (his) plan. This failure is clear in the empirical proof he gives of the seriousness of banzo—the story of Lucrecia. In the late 1760s, an Angolan woman and her young daughter boarded a ship on the shore of Luanda. Their final destination was Brazil, but they weren’t migrating willingly. They were captives recently bought by a Portuguese slave-trading company along with hundreds of other bonded Africans. Once embarked, the woman fell into a deep agony, refusing to eat and keeping her head between her legs. Mendes describes the woman’s eyes as “two rivers” [*dois rios*], emphasizing her crying and thus illustrating the main feature of banzo: sadness.¹³⁹ Like most “unhappy slaves” [*infeliz escravo*] who suffered from the disease, the Angolan woman died, anonymously. Her daughter, however, did survive. She was later named Lucrecia, “a love heroine,” [*heroína de amor*] as Mendes calls her, adding a touch of sentiment to an already dramatic story that evoked the Roman legend of Lucretia—who had chosen death over dishonor after being raped by Sextus Tarquinius, son of the last king of Rome.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Aching, “The Slave’s Work,” 917.

¹³⁸ This humane treatment means not only the eradication of rigorous and cruel punishments, but also moments of “fun;” a prescription already recommended by Cosme in his *Tractado*, as we have seen.

¹³⁹ Mendes, “Memória,” 58.

¹⁴⁰ Mendes, “Memória,” 79, 58. Lucretia’s rape supposedly caused the rebellion that overthrew the Roman monarchy and installed the Republic. For a comparative analysis of Mendes’s story and the Roman legend, see Slenes, “African Abrahams, Lucretias and Men of Sorrows: Allegory and Allusion in the Brazilian Anti-Slavery Lithographs (1827–1835) of Johann Moritz Rugendas,” *Slavery & Abolition* 23, no.2 (2002): 147-168.

When discussing Barrera's *Reflexiones*, we saw that he claimed to have had first-hand experience with the nostalgic captive whose story he told. In Mendes's case, however, Lucrécia's story comes from the testimony of his informant, Raimundo Jalamá. It was Jalamá who went through the actual experience of encountering an enslaved African woman suffering from banzo, and who attempted to discover the etiology of the illness. Mendes tells us that Jalamá

wanted to unsuspectingly extract ... in a conversation the possible cause [for the banzo]; and indeed became sure that her husband, whom she loved very much, had been ungrateful to her, and had abandoned her through separation and displacement, leaving her to the hardship and cruelty of slavery...

*que em conversa quisesse insuspeitavelmente extrair dos sentimentos da mãe, qual vinha a ser a causa; e com efeito veio a adquirir a certeza, de que seu marido, a quem tanto amava, havia nomeado a ela com ingratidão, com separação, e desterro, à dura e cruel escravidão...*¹⁴¹

Through Jalamá's experience, Mendes suggests yet another layer for the process of recognition between slaver and enslaved, which could provide the cure: understanding the precise cause of banzo. The symptoms are a first sign, but only the dialogue can provide a final answer. As Fred Moten says in his reading of Douglass with Marx, the commodity that feels—the slave—“must be made to say.”¹⁴² However, talking in this case does not lead to a cure. Jalamá's attempts to

¹⁴¹ Mendes, “Memória,” 58.

¹⁴² Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 9.

heal Lucrecia's mother were frustrated, since "nothing was capable of undoing her imagination" [*nada foi capaz de lhe desfazer a imaginação*]. The sick woman kept crying, "had her head continuously between her legs, did not want any food, and passed away" [*de continuo tinha a cabeça entre os joelhos; continuou a não querer comer; faleceu*].¹⁴³ The process of recognition that would result in the slaver recognizing the "good slave" and the enslaved recognizing the "good master" failed. The "psychic work" that Lucrecia's mother does in grappling with her condition leads her to "choose" death.

In the end, Mendes's "Memória" falls short of proposing medical treatments for banzo or for most of the illnesses it describes. Mendes, after all, is no trained medical practitioner. Instead, he resorts to his own professional formation, taking the legal route of reform. Although he acknowledges that "the humble writer should not get involved in the political system" [*o simples escritor se não deve misturar com o sistema político*],¹⁴⁴ his proposition would have made Frank Tannenbaum proud. Mendes recommends a "municipal law" [*lei municipal*] that would regulate the institution of slavery and slowly manumit all the enslaved in Brazil. The law would be organized in six chapters, which would basically state possible situations in which the slave could get manumission: having been enslaved for ten years; suffering cruel mistreatment or punishment; having four or more children; proving (in a case of an enslaved woman) that she lived in concubinage with her master; etc. The main goal, says Mendes, is not immediate abolition, but to reduce "the dependency on the slave trade." Most of all, Mendes's goal in proposing such law is the "perpetual banishment of tyranny" [*desterro perpétuo da tirania*] and

¹⁴³ Mendes, "Memória," 58.

¹⁴⁴ Mendes, "Memória," 99.

the service to the “most miserable portion of humanity.”¹⁴⁵ Instead of medical treatments, then, Mendes chooses a legal-humanitarian rhetoric as his tool to fashion himself as a “man of feeling.”

The Textual Life of Banzo

As an illness that was mostly known in the Portuguese empire and then in Brazil, banzo had an interesting medical and literary life after Mendes. In the nineteenth century, it was a common point of interest to two foreign scientists who came to Brazil in scientific expeditions and published their works in the same year (1844): The French physician Joseph François Xavier Sigaud, in his *Du climat et des maladies du Brésil* (1844); and the Bavarian naturalist Carl Friedrich Philipp von Martius, in his *Das Naturell, die Krankheiten, das Artzthum und die Heilmittel der Ueberwohner Brasiliens* (1844). Martius mentions banzo when comparing the “plastic system” of Black subjects in comparison to the native indigenous populations in Brazil. Banzo, “so well-known by slave owners,” [*tão conhecido dos possuidores de escravos*], is a kind of “nostalgia characterized by a deep depression... that almost always ends in death” [*Essa nostalgia manifesta-se ... por um profundo abatimento que na maioria dos casos acaba com a morte*].¹⁴⁶

Such plasticity, as we will see in Part III, will become important as the nineteenth century progresses. Most of all, Martius notes that the plasticity of Africans and Afro-Brazilians is remarkable particularly in relationship with native inhabitants of the Brazilian territory. While the native Brazilian does not demonstrate any sort of affection “and appears to become an automaton who does not have any other ideas besides escaping, in the case of blacks with banzo

¹⁴⁵ Mendes, “Memória,” 103.

¹⁴⁶ Karl Friedrich Philipp von Martius, *Natureza, doenças, medicina e remedios dos índios brasileiros* (1844), trad. Pirajá da Silva (São Paulo: Companhia editora nacional, 1939), 31-2.

there is an extraordinary excitation of all sensations” [*parecendo ter-se tornado um automato que não tem outra idéa sinão talvez fugir, no banzo do negro, se reflete uma excitação extraordinaria de todas as sensações*].¹⁴⁷ If indigenous peoples in Brazil are not civilized because they cannot be affected by exterior influences, enslaved Africans are overly affected. Banzo, for Martius, is then evidence of the lack of “sensorial discipline” that is “placed on the civilized races” such as the European.¹⁴⁸

Sigaud, on the other hand, did not travel throughout Brazil like Martius, but lived in the country for thirty years as the emperor’s personal physician. His work, then, is not based on empirical observation but on other medical and scientific sources.¹⁴⁹ One of them is Mendes himself, whom Sigaud praises. In the section “Illnesses of Blacks” [*Maladies des noirs*], the French author disagrees with other European scientists, such as Thévenot, who claimed that nervous illnesses were rare among blacks. Like Mendes and Barrera, Sigaud had to argue that Africans and Afro-Brazilians were also susceptible to affections such as “a kind of consumption triggered by starvation, and due to a moral cause” [*espèces de consommations produites par l'inanition, et dues à une cause morale*], which he identifies in a footnote as banzo.¹⁵⁰ Sigaud also explicits the link between banzo and humanity. When arguing that Black and indigenous peoples were susceptible to mental illnesses, the French physician claims that whoever said otherwise wanted to “separate these two races from the inevitable conditions of humanity” [*séparer ces deux races des conditions inévitables de l'humanité*].¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ Karl Friedrich Philipp von Martius, *Natureza, doenças, medicina e remedios dos índios brasileiros*, 31-2.

¹⁴⁸ Schuller, “Taxonomies of Feeling,” 18.

¹⁴⁹ Ana Maria Galdini Raimundo Oda, “Da enfermidade chamada banzo: excertos de Sigaud e de von Martius (1844),” *Revista latino-americana de psicopatologia fundamental* 11, no. 4 (Dec. 2008): 763.

¹⁵⁰ Joseph François Xavier Sigaud, *Do clima e das doenças do Brasil: ou estatística médica deste império*, trans. Renato Aguiar (Rio de Janeiro: Fiocruz, 2009), 142.

¹⁵¹ Sigaud, “Do clima e das doenças do Brasil,” 357.

The year of 1844, however, was a productive year for physicians and naturalists concerned with the inner life of the enslaved in Brazil. On that year, the writer soon-to-be physician Joaquim Manuel de Macedo defended his thesis at the Rio de Janeiro Medical School in which he discussed at length an illness that was, according to him a “deaf scourge” [*flagelo surdo*] of Brazilian agriculture: nostalgia.

Joaquim Manuel de Macedo: The Biopower of Sentiment

One of the first works in Portuguese to address the illness of nostalgia was the peculiar *Medicina theologica*, a medical treatise penned in 1794 by Francisco de Melo Franco.¹⁵² A controversial physician of the Portuguese court, Franco wrote the *Medicina theologica* in order to give Catholic confessors a different set of tools with which to treat sins, since the salvation of the soul demanded a healthy body and moral treatments were not enough. In Chapter VII of the *Medicina*, titled “A nostalgia, ou Saudades he enfermidade” (“Nostalgia, or Longing as Illness”), Franco describes his nostalgic patients as “young people of either sex who have received a cushioned education” [*gentes moças de qualquer sexo que sejam, que tiverão huma educação molle*], members of the Portuguese clergy who had to travel to Italy, or cloistered nuns who, because of their complete alienation from worldly life, deeply missed their “country.”¹⁵³ The cure was to be achieved by “sending these penitents to their countries and reestablishing them to their original state” [*enviar estes penitentes para as suas patrias, e restabelecellos no seu estado*

¹⁵² The full title was *Medicina theologica; ou Supplica humilde, feita a todos os senhores confesores, e diretores, sobre o modo de proceder com seus Penitentes na emmenda dos pecados, principalmente da Lascivia, Cólera e Bebedice*.

¹⁵³ Francisco de Melo Franco, *Medicina theologica; ou Supplica humilde* (Lisboa: Oficina de Antonio Rodrigues Galhardo, 1794), 45.

antigo].¹⁵⁴ If that was not possible—as with cloistered nuns, who made a vow to isolate themselves—then the healing was to happen through “the change of objects, the use of narcotics, walking, exercising, lessons on natural and civil history” [*mudança de objetos, o uso de narcoticos, o passeio, o exercicio, a lição da Historia natural, e civil*].¹⁵⁵ Confessors should also prescribe specific elixirs and remedies to the disease, such as mixtures of saffron with cinnamon and myrrh.

Throughout the first decades of the nineteenth century, nostalgia appears in Portuguese texts concerning mainly sailors and the military, at the same time as France was experiencing “nostalgia epidemics” in its armies.¹⁵⁶ Enslaved Africans in Portuguese colonies—especially in Brazil—also suffered from the illness. One example is *The British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Reporter*, a British periodical created in 1825 which involved members dispersed throughout the slave-holding Americas. In a short article dated September 1841, a Mr. George Pilkington reports the frequency of suicides among enslaved peoples in Brazil, narrating a story told by one of his informants about “an acquaintance” who had purchased thirty enslaved Africans. These newly-purchased bondsmen “were so affected by nostalgia (a disease arising from a vehement longing to return to their country) that one and another, day after day, hanged themselves, till he thus lost sixteen of their number.”¹⁵⁷ The same Pilkington mentions nostalgia yet again in the following report (dated November 1841), claiming that among the newly-arrived enslaved Africans in Brazil “numbers [are] suffering from nostalgia, in other words, dying broken-hearted

¹⁵⁴ Franco, *Medicina theologica*, 47.

¹⁵⁵ Franco, *Medicina theologica*, 47-8.

¹⁵⁶ Dodman, *What Nostalgia Was*, 13.

¹⁵⁷ George Pilkington, “Slavery in Brazil,” in *The British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Reporter* vol. 1 (London: L. Wild, 1969), 210.

from separation from kindred and country.”¹⁵⁸ The disease also appears occasionally in Brazilian media throughout the nineteenth century, most times referring to foreign medical texts.

When Macedo writes and defends his thesis in 1844, therefore, he does not have substantial original sources in Portuguese or published in Brazil on nostalgia. Instead, he has at his disposition a whole body of foreign medical works written mainly by physicians who worked on the epidemics of *mal du pays* that devastated French armies. Before 1844, a total of 14 medical dissertations on nostalgia were defended at both the École de Médecine de Paris and at the Faculté de Médecine de Montpellier, in France. Macedo would have at least heard of them, and surely had access to French medical journals and dictionaries in which nostalgia was also a common appearance—as we will see, he even copied a whole paragraph from the “nostalgia” entry in the *Dictionnaire des sciences médicales* (1819).¹⁵⁹

Among these sources, at least seven of them directly mention—albeit very briefly—slavery as a pre-condition or aggravating factor for nostalgia. Others do not mention slavery per se, but state that blacks (*nègres*) are particularly prone to nostalgia—another instance of the conflation of blackness and slavery. One of the most vocal of these physicians to make the connection between slavery and nostalgia was, not by accident, a Portuguese man from Lisbon, José Feliciano de Castilho. In his 1831 *Dissertation sur la nostalgie* defended at the Paris Medical School Castilho devoted a full paragraph to the subject of slavery, substantially more than his fellow physicians-to-be. He asked, “[t]his half of the human race whom the other half has enslaved, what becomes of them in the land of their executioners? They can only find peace on the tip of a dagger” [*cette moitié du genre humain que l’autre moitié a vouée à l’esclavage,*

¹⁵⁸ George Pilkington, “Slavery in Brazil,” in *The British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Reporter* vol. 1 (London: L. Wild, 1969), 234.

¹⁵⁹ Oda was the first to note this act of what she calls “student practice” of referring to certain authors but actually using a more generic source for their quotes. Oda, “Escravidão e nostalgia no Brasil.”

que devient-elle sur le sol de ses bourreaux? Elle ne trouve la paix que sur la pointe d'un poignard].¹⁶⁰This sort of rhetoric, tragic and sentimental, will also be a prominent feature in Macedo's dissertation.

Drawing mostly on these French sources in order to fulfill academic expectations from the Rio de Janeiro Medical School, then, Macedo does not “translate” nostalgia to a slave-holding territory like Barrera, nor does he present a “new” illness to a cultured audience, as Mendes had done with *banzo*.¹⁶¹ Rather, being the first to choose nostalgia as a subject for a medical thesis in the Brazilian empire, he uses slavery and the image of the suffering enslaved African as a rhetorical-political frame to his authorship and ideology: “we will focus on paying homage to one sole page of history,” he writes. “It is the one about Africans brought from foreign lands to live [in Brazil] in servitude” [*nos contentaremos de pôr em tributo uma única pagina da historia. É aquella que trata dos Africanos conduzidos a alheia terra para viver na servidão*].¹⁶²

Talking through Ellipsis

Although Macedo's “focus” is to “pay homage” to enslaved Africans in Brazil, this tribute is not consistent throughout his *Reflections*. Slavery inundates the Preface and the first two chapters of the text (“General Reflections” and “Nostalgia,” which comprise almost half of the work) but completely disappears in the seven following sections, which are strictly medical

¹⁶⁰ José Feliciano de Castilho, *Dissertation sur la nostalgie* (Paris: L'Imprimerie Didot Le Jeune, 1831), 7.

¹⁶¹ The Rio de Janeiro Medical School was founded in 1808, when the Portuguese royal family moved to Brazil fleeing from Napoleon.

¹⁶² Joaquim Manuel de Macedo, *Considerações sobre a nostalgia. These que foi apresentada á Faculdade de Medicina do Rio de Janeiro e sustentada em 11 de dezembro de 1844* (Rio de Janeiro: Typographia Imparcial de Francisco de Paula Britto, 1844), 19.

and appear in all medical dissertations of the time—“Causes,” “Symptoms,” “Prognostic,” “Locus,” “Treatment,” “Pathological Anatomy” and “Conclusion.”

This clear distinction between a first and the second moments in the text is also visible in Macedo’s references. As Ronald Polito notes, the first part overflows with historical and literary quotes (including from British poets like Edward Young), while the latter is much more populated with the main scientific names of the time, such as Jean-Étienne Esquirol, Franz Joseph Gall, François de Sauvages, Johann Spurzheim, etc.¹⁶³ The divide is also overtly noticeable in Macedo’s rhetoric, which is marked by sentimentalism and romanticism in the first part and becomes more scientific and technical towards the second. In numbers, this rhetorical divide makes for an astounding 27 instances of words such as “slave”, “slavery”, “African”, “Africa,” and “black” in the first chapters to absolutely zero in the last seven sections of the text. The Romantic references that impregnated the first part of the *Reflections on nostalgia* are also mostly left behind. The change is so drastic and abrupt, however, that the ellipsis of the main victims of nostalgia becomes eloquent. One cannot help but see indirect references to slavery everywhere.

The mobilization of slavery as a rhetorical frame, allied to the overwhelming use of French sources, places Macedo’s dissertation at a moment when, “in the French case at least, ... nostalgia entered a field of cultural production spawned by the economic expansion and rampant commercialism that characterized the reign of Louis-Philippe, the so-called bourgeois king.”¹⁶⁴ Even though Macedo references the main French physicians who examined nostalgia through

¹⁶³ See Joaquim Manuel de Macedo, *Considerações sobre a nostalgia*, ed. Ronald Polito (Campinas: Editora Unicamp, 2004).

¹⁶⁴ Dodman, *What Nostalgia Was*, 138. According to Moacyr Scliar, from the 38 references mentioned by Macedo, 31 are French. Moacyr Scliar, “Resenha de ‘Considerações sobre a nostalgia’ de Joaquim Manuel de Macedo,” *Revista Latinoamericana de Psicopatologia Fundamental* VIII, no. 1 (March 2005):161-163.

clinical lenses (such as Baron Dominique Jean Larrey, François-Joseph-Victor Broussais, François Boissier de Sauvages, etc.), he also invokes authors who pushed nostalgia out of medicine and into a more cultural framework. By not mentioning concrete cases of enslaved Africans afflicted with nostalgia in Brazil, Macedo's lucubrations are not based on experience, but on information from other two authors: the French physician Jean-Louis Alibert's treatise *Physiologie des passions* (1825), and the French historian Emmanuel de las Cases's *Le Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène* (which is not a scientific piece).

Alibert's case is the pastoral story of Couramé, a young Guianese girl who is found by hunters in the jungle of Guiana and adopted by a French woman in the city of Cayenne. While being raised among the French, Couramé is sad and melancholic like "the bush that grows by force on a soil that repels it" [*como arbusto que se cultiva a força em terreno, que o repele*].¹⁶⁵ She only brightens up when she reunites with her own people, who were in Cayenne by invitation of the French governor. While spending time with them, Couramé shows "the most ardent desire to return to her forests" [*o mais ardente desejo de voltar a seus bosques*] on which she finally acts, running away in the middle of the night back to the arms of her people.¹⁶⁶ According to Dodman, "Alibert's moral tale illustrates a different kind of benign re-employment of nostalgia in the early nineteenth century, one that swapped the dangerous excesses of *mal du pays* for more benevolent feelings of *l'amour du pays*."¹⁶⁷ Las Cases's example tells the story of a British sailor who, avoiding his duties in France, tries to build a small boat to go back to England. He gets caught and, while in prison, is visited by Napoleon himself. In Macedo's words, after this meeting of "two elevated souls, capable of noble and ardent sentiments, [who]

¹⁶⁵ Macedo, *Considerações sobre a nostalgia*, 15.

¹⁶⁶ Macedo, *Considerações sobre a nostalgia*, 16.

¹⁶⁷ Dodman, *What Nostalgia Was*, 139.

always understand each other” [*almas elevadas, capazes de sentimentos nobres e ardentes, compreendem-se sempre*], Napoleon ordered that the English sailor receive money and clothes to return to his homeland.¹⁶⁸

Inserted in the first part of Macedo’s thesis, this positive redressing of nostalgia is also an approximation of the enslaved African to a European subjectivity, which was already embedded in the myth of the *bon sauvage*. Like Barrera and Mendes, Macedo had to convince his readers that Africans were also capable of feeling and of reacting to psychic suffering. In approximating the figure of the enslaved African to the sentimental figures of Couramé or the British sailor, Macedo demonstrates to his potential readers that yes, Africans forcefully brought to Brazil were also potential victims of nostalgia. They were also capable of the “noble and ardent sentiments” that the British sailor and Napoleon shared.

Potential victims yes, but potential patients? Probably not. The divide in content and in rhetoric within the “Reflections” complicates this assertion, since these enslaved Africans disappear after the second chapter. All elements related to slavery or which could be even indirectly associated to the lives of enslaved Africans in Brazil also vanish. The causes Macedo offers for nostalgia are climate (cold predisposes one to nostalgia more than heat); season (winter is worse); age (puberty is when nostalgia is more likely to develop); temperament (the melancholic is more predisposed to nostalgia); gender (both men and women can suffer from nostalgia); professions and lifestyles (people who devote more of their lives to studying and to the mind are more predisposed to suffer from nostalgia). Among the physical causes, Macedo mentions hunger, dairy, opium, hot drinks, alcoholic liquors, onanism, and constipation. That is, even if the reader is eager to transpose the enslaved African to any of these categories, they do

¹⁶⁸ Macedo, *Considerações sobre a nostalgia*, 18.

not fit. The medical literature to which Macedo resorts does not account for the main character in his dissertation; the one who, according to himself, is the main victim of nostalgia in Brazil.

Such incongruity continues in the chapters on symptoms, locus, treatment, pathological anatomy, and the conclusion. Following other physicians such as the French surgeon Dominique Jean Larrey, Macedo divides the symptoms of nostalgia in “pyrexia, collapse, and asthenia,” and his descriptions of the nostalgic patients do not include any specificity of the nostalgic African.¹⁶⁹ There is, however, one indirect reference. The epigraph to this chapter is a citation of Pierre Camper, who also penned the lectures “On the Origin and Color of Blacks,” in which he refuted the thesis on the inferiority of people of African descent.¹⁷⁰ Besides that indirect mention, however, Macedo fails to mention any symptoms that enslaved Africans could experience when suffering from nostalgia.

The chapter on treatments is the one where the absence of the enslaved African is the most eloquent.¹⁷¹ The prescriptive character of this section allows for a sort of “fill the blanks” exercise, in which the general “nostalgic patient” to which Macedo constantly refers becomes in my reading the enslaved African in Brazil. In order to cure or treat nostalgia, Macedo proposes three kinds of treatments, one for each stage of the illness: moral, hygienic, and pharmaceutical. The first and safest cure, Macedo says, is obviously the “satisfaction of the ardent desires to

¹⁶⁹ Macedo, *Considerações sobre a nostalgia*, 32.

¹⁷⁰ Ronald Polito, Note 2, *Considerações sobre a nostalgia*, 80.

¹⁷¹ The chapter on the anatomical site of nostalgia (*sede*) is an interesting reflection on the long-lived difficulty in trying to pin down mental illnesses to the body. Even though, Macedo says, physicians from Franz Joseph Gall on have associated psychological (mal)functions to the brain, the fact is that “one cannot yet achieve the desired degree of certainty” on the subject. Even though the French physician Philippe Pinel argued for the stomach as the site of insanity (mania), Macedo points to the first symptom of nostalgia (“prolonged sadness”), which is necessarily related to the brain. He concludes with three assertions: that the current state of science could not determine the site of nostalgia; that pathological anatomy would solve the issue in the future; and that the brain is probably the site of nostalgia. Macedo, *Considerações*, 68.

return to the homeland” [*a satisfação dos ardentes desejos de tornar à pátria*].¹⁷² Without naming a specific context, however, the author soon acknowledges that “sometimes, however, it is impossible to make these wishes come true” [*Às vezes porém é impossível fazer realizar tais desejos*].¹⁷³ As any contemporary reader of Macedo would know, this impossibility was the case of the enslaved African. Still, Macedo does not lose hope: “It is here that a vast field opens up to the physician’s ability” [*É aqui que se abre vasto campo à habilidade do médico*].¹⁷⁴ In other words, it is the impossibility of the simplest and surest cure for nostalgia that allows for the physician to shine. Is the nostalgic African then a playground, or rather a laboratory, for Macedo’s literary and medical examinations?

If the nostalgic patient cannot go back home, the doctor should then move to a sort of psychic anamnesis:

Aware of this high mission that is incumbent on him by his very noble ministry, the physician must study and probe all the torments and secrets in his patient’s sensibility: he must understand his moans, guess what they want to express as well as the source from where it flows, so that with a sure hand he annihilates the source, or sweeten its effects: It is not enough to comfort the wretched; many times it will be necessary to moan with them so that, later, from the flame of hope, which one wants to ignite, beneficial rays can more easily go on to lighten the shadowy night of the afflicted soul.

Conscio da alta missão, que lhe incumbe seu muito nobre ministério, o médico deve estudar, esmerilhar todos os tormentos, e todos os segredos da sensibilidade do seu

¹⁷² Macedo, *Considerações sobre a nostalgia*, 41.

¹⁷³ Macedo, *Considerações sobre a nostalgia*, 41.

¹⁷⁴ Macedo, *Considerações sobre a nostalgia*, 41.

*doente: cumpre, que compreenda seus gemidos, que adivinhe mesmo, o que eles querem exprimir, e qual a fonte, donde dimanam, para que com certa mão vá extinguir a causa, ou adoçar os efeitos: não basta consolar o infeliz; muitas vezes será preciso gemer com elle, afim de que, depois, da chamma da esperança, que se queira acender, possam ir mais facilmente raios benéficos esclarecer a noite obumbrada da alma aflicta.*¹⁷⁵

Like Barrera and Mendes before him, Macedo suggests an exercise of empathy and of understanding the patients “sensibility,” their feelings and afflictions, as crucial parts of the treatment. But to understand the patients’ moans is not enough; the physicians must also “moan with them,” thus partaking in the suffering himself. It is by putting himself in the place of the nostalgic patient that the physician will get closer to achieving a cure. It is a medical prescription of sentimentalism, or a medical articulation of sympathy. Macedo thus mobilizes sensibility in its two main connotations: that of the ability to be impressed by others (the nostalgic patient) and the “fellow-feeling or sympathy, as opposed to reason, as the basis for our moral and social life,” as Michael Ferber describes it.¹⁷⁶ As we have seen in the Introduction, sympathy is at the very base of abolitionist rhetoric. Yet, what happens when sympathy becomes a medical prescription, rather than a rhetorical tool?

Things get even more complicated when we examine the following steps that Macedo prescribes as part of the treatment for nostalgia. “It is then understood that the first step in treating a nostalgic patient is to win and deserve their trust” [*Fica portanto entendido, que o*

¹⁷⁵ Macedo, *Considerações sobre a nostalgia*, 41.

¹⁷⁶ Michael Ferber, *Romanticism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 16.

primeiro cuidado do assistente de um nostálgico deverá ser ganhar e merecer a confiança dele].¹⁷⁷ The second step is to excite in the nostalgic patient’s mind images and sensations as strong as the ones that afflict them through different kinds of activities, such as games, parties and soirées, love, exercising and riding, and music—European music, nonetheless, with a special mention to the flute, guitar, and the harp. Here, the examples and cases Macedo mentions are all French, British, Greek (the Iliad and the Odyssey), and Biblical. One wonders how a doctor would prescribe parties and games of this sort to a nostalgic enslaved African in a Brazilian plantation. The dissonance between these proposed treatments and the scenario Macedo had depicted in the first sections of his thesis becomes even louder when Macedo refers to the “change of climate” as a necessary step in the treatment of nostalgia.

It is imperative, whenever possible, to take the diseased from the cold, humid places, from the countries where society suffocates them and seizes the spirit in their prison of flesh, and bring them to warm, airy regions, to the bosom of the free and noble people, where the healthy Favonius of a righteous liberty ensures the rights of the soul and brings a smile to men’s life.

*Cumpra, sempre que for possível, arredar o enfermo dos lugares úmidos e frios, dos países, onde a sociedade sufoca, e prende ainda mais o espirito no seu cárcere de matéria; e conduzi-lo para outras regiões, que sejam quentes e arejadas, e para o seio dos povos livres e nobres, em que o saudável favonio de uma justa liberdade zela os direitos da alma, e faz sorrir a vida do homem.*¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷ Macedo, *Considerações sobre a nostalgia*, 41.

¹⁷⁸ Macedo, *Considerações sobre a nostalgia*, 44.

The disconnection between the thesis' theme and its prescription reaches its limit when Macedo brings "liberty" into the equation. It is hard to imagine that he supports moving nostalgic enslaved Africans from slavery to freedom, since Macedo's tone throughout the first part of his dissertation was, while critical of slavery, apologetic of slave masters.¹⁷⁹ In activating the terminology of freedom, however, one cannot help but to question what that "freedom" means to the problem of nostalgia in Brazil. Is nostalgia a necessary condition of the institution of slavery in Brazil? Or does the impossibility of that liberty in the Brazilian case make the question void of meaning?

The Africanist Element

I would like to argue that in Macedo's thesis the nostalgic enslaved African plays the role of a literary character rather than that of a potential medical subject. Even though Macedo presents enslaved Africans as the ones who suffer the most from nostalgia in Brazil, their complete disappearance halfway through the thesis erases any possibility for them to be potential clinical patients who could be treated either by Macedo or by other physicians. Rather, in the *Considerações*, this nostalgic, bonded Africans serve a specific purpose: they are an "Africanist" element, to use a term coined by Toni Morrison in *Playing in the Dark*. This means that they are a "surrogate and an enabler" for Macedo to meditate on himself as a (white) national writer, as well as a rhetorical tool upon which the author conceives the notion of freedom. Going even further, we will see that medial knowledge and discourse are also characters that serve Macedo's

¹⁷⁹ For instance, in the second chapter of his thesis Macedo states that "in Brazil the masters are usually good and kind; perhaps lighter is the work demanded from the Africans than the labor to which many classes of free men are subjected in Europe" [*No Brasil os senhores são geralmente bons e humanos: quiçá menos pesado é o trabalho, que se exige dos Africanos, do que aquelle a que estão sujeitas muitas classes de homens livres da Europa*]. Macedo, *Considerações sobre a nostalgia*, 19.

self-fashioning as a man of feeling—hence the prescription of sympathy as a medical remedy for nostalgia.

Endowed with “self-reflective properties,” as Toni Morrison defines the Africanist element, the enslaved African is entangled with the rhetoric and concept of sensibility, which Macedo provides as the moral justification for his subject of choice.¹⁸⁰ Right in the Preface, Macedo states,

This choice [of nostalgia] was confirmed by our sense of duty and by sensibility. By sensibility because we understand the bitterness found in the bread of exile, and we feel the tears that are strained from a crushed soul, such as the ones the virgins cried at the convent at Val Demone longing for their lost Byzantium, or as the ones the miserable captives gushed at the margins of Babylon rivers for their desired Zyon.

*E essa escolha foi confirmada pela consciência do dever, e pela sensibilidade. Pela sensibilidade, porque nós compreendemos o amargor do pão do desterro, e sentimos que espremidas da alma devem coar-se lagrimas, como essas que choravam no cenobio do valle de Demona as saudosas virgens da perdida Byzancio, como essas que nas margens dos rios de Babylonia jorravam pobres captivos pela suspirada Syão.*¹⁸¹

Macedo’s reasons for choosing nostalgia as the subject of his thesis are not medical: they are moral (“duty”) and affective (“sensibility”). The two examples he gives to explain his own sensibility are cramped with Christian references to historical and Biblical separations from the

¹⁸⁰ Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 51.

¹⁸¹ Macedo, *Considerações sobre a nostalgia*, 1.

homeland (“the bread of exile,” as he defines it). In the first example, the “virgins” are Byzantine cloistered nuns who inhabited the many convents spread throughout the Val Demone in Italy during the sixth century, in what is today known as Sicily. They were longing for their home, Byzantium (now Istanbul), the capital of the Byzantine empire. That is: indirectly, Macedo connects nostalgia to cloistered nuns away from their homes the same way as Francisco de Melo Franco had done in his *Medicina theologica* in the end of the eighteenth century.

The second reference is a famous Biblical episode: the invasion of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar, and the subsequent enslavement of its survivors. It is the first time Macedo mentions a term related to slavery (“captives”), although these bondsmen and women are people from Jerusalem, not Africa. It is through them, however, that Macedo presents the main character in his medical thesis: enslaved people.

The Brazilian empire and the institution of slavery on which it depended starts to emerge in the following paragraphs, albeit through a very odd metonym. When explaining why “duty” is one of the reasons that led him to choose nostalgia as a subject for his thesis, Macedo states, “our duty is fulfilled by taking as subject an illness always cruel and not rarely fatal, which ... has been a deaf scourge in our country” [*E o nosso dever era satisfeito, porque tomávamos por mote uma enfermidade sempre cruel, e não poucas vezes fatal, que ... quiçá em nosso paiz haja sido flagello surdo*].¹⁸² Nostalgia is a scourge, he explains, because it has “the country’s agriculture ... as its fatal enemy” [*a agricultura do paiz haja por fatal inimiga a nostalgia*].¹⁸³

Although a contemporary Brazilian reader would immediately understand that “agriculture” here is a metonym for “enslaved Africans,” Macedo then explains the relationship between them, stating that since Brazil does not have enough workforce to exploit the country’s

¹⁸² Macedo, *Considerações sobre a nostalgia*, 16.

¹⁸³ Macedo, *Considerações sobre a nostalgia*, 2.

abundant wealth, “arms from African lands have been coming to cultivate ours” [*das terras da África nos teem vindo braços para o cultivo das nossas*], a situation which causes “harsh suffering” [*sofrimento mais azerbo*] for the Africans from the moment when they are taken away from their beaches.¹⁸⁴ Suffering translates to feeling and memory, the two key words to understand the illness of nostalgia. Macedo endows enslaved Africans with these two properties, located in the soul.

Separated from their family ..., cramped together in filthy hatches of small ships, malnourished and badly treated, witnessing the suffering and death of some of their partners in misfortune and finally disembarking to enter forever their lives in captivity ... How can one hesitate that their time in freedom and in their homelands would be present in their spirit, ignited with the fire of longing, which is many times fatal? To deny this one would mean to also deny them a soul, a soul that feels and remembers.

*Separados de famílias ..., sotopostos uns aos outros nos imundos porões de pequenos barcos, mal nutridos, e pior tratados, testemunhando os padecimentos e a morte de alguns de seus sócios no infortúnio, e finalmente desembarcando para entrar na vida do captiveiro ... como exitar em crer que o tempo da liberdade e a terra da pátria devem estar presentes a seu espirito com todo o fogo das saudades, que lhes serão muitas vezes fataes? para negal-o fora mister negar-lhes também uma alma, que sente e que lembra.*¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ Macedo, *Considerações sobre a nostalgia*, 2.

¹⁸⁵ Macedo, *Considerações sobre a nostalgia*, 2.

Macedo's question is rhetorical: no one at his time and place would hesitate in denying newly-enslaved Africans a soul because this was a moot point since the beginning of the Portuguese slave trade. To accuse his readers, even indirectly, of thinking that Africans did not have souls would be the same as accusing them of not being Christians. The Thomistic separation between body and soul which Macedo reproduces here means that, while the body is a possession and therefore can be owned by another, the soul is unenslaveable. The soul had been governed and legislated by the Catholic Church since the beginning of colonization—by law, for instance, slaves had to be baptized as soon as they arrived in Brazil, and the first manuals that circulated in the Portuguese empire about the governance of slaves were written by Jesuits.¹⁸⁶ In the seventeenth century, Father Antônio Vieira, a Jesuit priest well known for his sermons to slaves in Northeastern Brazil, had already immortalized the untouchable quality of the human soul even when in slavery. The conclusion of that, in Vieira's words, was that

Every person consists of a body and a soul, but that which is a slave and called a "slave" is not the entire person, but only one half. ... You are enslaved in that exterior and less noble part of you, which is the body; but the other, interior, and most noble part of you, which is the soul, and in everything that belongs to it, you are not enslaved but free.¹⁸⁷

Todo o homem é composto de corpo e alma; mas o que é e se chama escravo, não é todo o homem, senão só metade d'elle. ... E qual é esta metade escrava e que tem senhor, ao qual é obrigada a servir? Não há dúvida que é a metade mais vil, o corpo. ... Quem

¹⁸⁶ See, for instance, Jorge Benci's *Economia cristã dos senhores no governo de escravos* (1700) and André João Antonil's *Cultura e opulência do Brasil por suas drogas e minas* (1711).

¹⁸⁷ Antônio Vieira, "Twenty-Seventh Sermon, with the Most Holy Sacrament Present," in *Colonial Latin America: A Documentary History*, ed. Kenneth Mills, William B. Taylor, and Sandra Lauderdale Graham (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 2002), 221-222.

*cuida que o que se chama escravo, é o homem todo, erra e não sabe o que diz: a melhor parte do homem, que é a alma, é isenta de todo o domínio alheio, e não pode ser captiva.*¹⁸⁸

Although a clear heir of Vieira (as were most of Brazilians at the time), Macedo does not equate the soul to the spirit, but to sensibility. Within the medical field of his time—and in Europe since the late seventeenth century—a “sensibility craze” thrived, in the words of George Rousseau.¹⁸⁹

Addressing the legislators and the slave masters, Macedo states how “unfair, inhuman and many times fatal is to disrespect and wound slaves’ sensibility in their generous affects, [that is,] in what one cannot enslave, which was not bought when one purchased their bodies” [*deshumano e não poucas vezes fatal é desrespeitar, é ferir a sensibilidade dos escravos em seus afectos generosos, naquillo, que se não pôde escravisar, que se não comprou, quando se comprou seu corpo*].¹⁹⁰ Echoing Vieira with a touch of nineteenth century-physiology, then, Macedo claims that nostalgia is caused by the disregard for the enslaved’s sensibility that leads to mistreating them and separating their families. Since one cannot enslave affects, hurting them can be fatal because it causes nostalgia.

The somatic character of nostalgia, however, allows for a direct connection between the enslaved body—which is not owned by the enslaved person—and the soul or mind, which cannot be enslaved. The disregard for the enslaved Africans by overseers and masters, according to Macedo, leads to nostalgia, this “poignant longing of their homelands” [*acerbas saudades de suas terras*]. Masters do not “treat them [slaves] with affability, and burden them with heavy

¹⁸⁸ António Vieira, “Sermão vigésimo sétimo,” in *Obras completas do Padre Antonio Vieira: Sermões*, vol. XII (Lisboa: Lello & Irmão, 1951), 337-8.

¹⁸⁹ Rousseau, *Nervous Acts*, 33.

¹⁹⁰ Macedo, *Considerações sobre a nostalgia*, 21.

work” [*não tratat-o com docilidade e favor, carregal-o de trabalhos pesados*],¹⁹¹ which can cause “a comparison between their time of freedom and their time in captivity, between the past in their homeland, the present in the foreign land and the future of unending slavery” [*uma comparação entre o tempo da liberdade e o do captiveiro, entre o passado da terra da pátria, o presente da terra estrangeira, e o futuro sempre de escravidão*].¹⁹² That is by, acting upon the enslaved bodies, the bad treatment leads to a pathology in the soul or mind. Significantly, these supposed causes for nostalgia among enslaved populations in Brazil do not appear in the “Causes” chapter of Macedo’s dissertation. The bad treatment is not linked to nostalgia as an etiology in the medical sense, but as a moral cause that harms the slave owners themselves, economically and affectively.

The behavior of whites, however, is not a mistake, according to Macedo, but a “miscalculation.” Without pointing fingers, Macedo is very careful not to offend slave owners—most likely because he himself was one. The only direct criticism to his own social class emerges through the words of a classic French source, Guillaume-Thomas Raynal’s *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes* (1780): “We will now make a citation, and we will write it in a foreign language” [*Faremos ainda uma citação, e aqui adrede a escreveremos em estranho idioma*], he warns.¹⁹³ The quote describes the commonality of slaves committing suicide in the French Caribbean in the late eighteenth century, and the cruel practices of slave masters at the time.

Quickly after this derogatory commentary that he borrowed from another writer’s pen, Macedo comes to the slave owners’ rescue: “In Brazil, masters are usually good and humane;

¹⁹¹ Macedo, *Considerações sobre a nostalgia*, 22.

¹⁹² Macedo, *Considerações sobre a nostalgia*, 20.

¹⁹³ Macedo, *Considerações sobre a nostalgia*, 19.

maybe the labor they demand from the Africans is less heavy than the one that subjugates many classes of freemen in Europe” [*No Brasil os senhores são geralmente bons e humanos: quiçá menos pesado é o trabalho, que se exige dos Africanos, do que aquella a que estão sujeitas muitas classes de homens livres da Europa*].¹⁹⁴ Still, he adds, even though the number of suicides among slaves in Brazil is “not very high,” it requires attention because of the “more or less serious flaws in the behavior of the masters towards their slaves” [*defeitos mais ou menos graves do proceder dos senhores para com os escravos*].¹⁹⁵ These flaws are the cause for nostalgia that Macedo elliptically addresses.

As an “Africanist element,” then, enslaved subjects in Macedo’s *Considerações sobre a nostalgia* are little more than tools that he uses in order to fashion himself as a Romantic author, as a man of feeling. As I hope to have shown, however, the same could be said about medical knowledge itself. By prescribing sympathy as a remedy for the illness of nostalgia in the more medical chapter on “Treatments,” Macedo conflates sentimentalism and medicine, thus articulating the de-medicalization of nostalgia that happens throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. Such de-medicalization, however, did not mean that nostalgia simply disappeared. Instead, as Thomas Dodman shows, nostalgia became a “general cultural category, a universal—if not quite a “basic”—emotion that lies ‘at the very core of the modern condition,’ in the words of one of its foremost contemporary scholars.”¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ Macedo, *Considerações sobre a nostalgia*, 19.

¹⁹⁵ Macedo, *Considerações sobre a nostalgia*, 20.

¹⁹⁶ Dodman, *What Nostalgia Was*, 5. Dodman quotes here the renowned scholar Svetlana Boym, author of the equally famous *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001).

Conclusion to Part I

In Barrera's *Reflexiones*, Mendes's "Memória," and Macedo's *Considerações*, the display of humanity is part of a broader sentimental scenario that encompasses the whole slaveholding Atlantic. This display entails another level of theatrical humanity, a rhetorical one. As such, it is performed by the authors themselves, through a melancholic discourse.¹⁹⁷ To show that they are "men of feeling" and that they are better than the other slave masters, Mendes, Barrera, and Macedo display their "melancholy property" by expressing their own pain watching slaves die and suffer.¹⁹⁸ In this sense, the authors fashion themselves as "sentimental heroes," a term used by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century scholars referring to the context of sentimental rhetoric, which was widespread in the eighteenth-century Anglophone world. The sentimental hero, in Carey Brycchan's scenario, could either be a victim or "a benefactor who alleviates the sufferings of others."¹⁹⁹ In this discourse, "their superior sensibility is highlighted, their suffering—or their joy at relieving suffering—is dwelt upon, and the audience is asked, directly or indirectly, to share in their feelings."²⁰⁰ Although Carey is referring to sentimental novels in

¹⁹⁷ An emotional rhetoric when describing New World slavery was not a novelty in the eighteenth century. Already in 1493, the Portuguese chronicler Gomes Eanes de Zurara thus describes a slave auction enacted by king Henry in Guiné: "Mas qual seria o coração, por duro que ser podes se, que não fosse pungido de piedoso sentimentos, vendo assim aquela companhia?" Gomes Eanes de Zurara, *Crónica De Guiné*. (Porto: Livraria Civilização, 1973),

122. The difference is that Barrera and Mendes's sentimental tones are inscribed within a broader sentimental rhetoric associated with abolitionism or reformism, whose goal was to sensitize the reader and to propose some sort of change—which, in the British case, was abolition, but for Barrera and Mendes was reform. Unlike Zurara, whose aim was to paint a hagiographic picture of the king, our authors want to intervene in the pragmatics of slavery.

¹⁹⁸ Ian Baucom, *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 205.

¹⁹⁹ Brycchan Carey, *British Abolitionism and the Rhetoric of Sensibility: Writing, Sentiment, and Slavery, 1760-1807* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 41.

²⁰⁰ Brycchan Carey, *British Abolitionism and the Rhetoric of Sensibility*, 41.

the Anglophone world, his definition more than fits the Spanish surgeon's and the Brazilian physician's accounts of nostalgia.

As sentimental heroes, however, Mendes, Barrera and Macedo are not Ian Baucom's British abolitionist "sympathetic observers" who vicariously witness the cruelties of chattel slavery through the consumption of sentimental literature on the other side of the ocean.²⁰¹ Rather, they had "day-to-day empirical knowledge" that made them "not vicarious but actual witnesses to the torments and distressed lives of *their* slaves."²⁰² They were not abolitionists who, from a distance, consumed the horrors of slavery, but men of the colonial elite whose life was grounded in the very institution that shocked them. In fact, since they do not blame the institution of slavery itself for nostalgia or *banzo*, they do not propose the abolition of slavery. The authors here analyzed would be better categorized as reformists than abolitionists, to whom the cruelty of chattel slavery could be reduced through changes in the treatment of the slaves and in how they are seen by their masters or overseers. This distinction between reform and abolition is key in understanding how slaves' subjectivities are constructed and confronted by these texts through the acknowledgement of sensibility and impressibility. Mendes insists time and again that he himself had "observed this *banzo* in the Portuguese America, which has killed many slaves," [*Este mesmo banzo observei na América portuguesa, que matara muitos escravos*] and that "the many cruelties experienced by the slaves ... freeze the blood in the veins of this faithful and experienced writer" [*as diversas crueldades experimentadas pelos pretos escravos ... fazem gelar o sangue nas veias ao fiel e experimentado escritor*].²⁰³

²⁰¹ Ian Baucom, *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 218.

²⁰² Gerard Aching, *Freedom From Liberation: Slavery, Sentiment, and Literature in Cuba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 55.

²⁰³ Mendes, "Memória," 58, 2.

In the case of Barrera, as a plantation surgeon, slavery was his bread and butter. He expresses this tension between his financial dependence on the institution of slavery and his criticism of the slave trade numerous times when describing enslaved Africans as “pobrecitos” and “infelices” and providing extensive detail about the horrors they suffer:

[I] sympathize with the miseries, nudity, hunger and indignity of the slaves, their suffering of beating with sticks, vines, and whipping while they are tied to a piece of wood on the floor, until the skin in their body breaks in many pieces, and the external and internal illnesses of so many thousands of unhappy negroes, who moan under the hard servitude of this barbaric slavery...

*Pero condolido de las miserias, desnudez, hambre, esclavitud llena de ultrajes, golpes de palos, vexucos, azotes atados a una tabla en el suelo, hasta saltar la carne a pedazos de todo el cuerpo, y enfermedades externas e internas, de tantos millares de infelices negros, que gimen bajo la dura servidumbre de una bárbara esclavitud, no sólo de ingleses, franceses, portugueses, holandeses y españoles, etc. sino de todas las demás naciones del mundo.*²⁰⁴

In this passage, Barrera employs two classic tools of sentimental rhetoric: the display of his own suffering as an empirical witness to the horrors of slavery, and descriptions of physical and psychic violence—torture, punishment, diseases, etc.—provided in order to achieve his political goal of sensitizing the reader to the suffering of others. According to Levecq, this mixture of

²⁰⁴ Barrera, *Reflexiones*, 18.

interiority and bodily attributes is characteristic of the “multiplicity of forms of sensibility in the eighteenth century.”²⁰⁵

Even though he does not address an observed instance of a nostalgic enslaved African, Macedo gives empirical advice to slave masters and legislators in the first part of his thesis, framed within a sentimental rhetoric that appeals to the *pathos* of his intended audience. The scene he chooses for it is the slave auction. Macedo declares:

We want to say that religion, morals, civilization, and even hygiene are hurt when the law does not forbid that ... an auctioneer asks who wants to buy a slave that will have to leave his wife and children forever! That is: who wants to divide in half the soul of a man! ... Who wants to put a dagger through the heart of a wretched man!...

*Nós queremos dizer, que a religião, a moral, a civilização, a higiene mesma se ressentem, quando a lei não proíbe, que n'uma praça judicial o pregoeiro chame, e pergunte, quem quer comprar um escravo, que tem e que deve para sempre deixar mulher e filhos! isto é: quem quer dividir pela metade a alma de um homem !... quem quer enterrar um punhal no coração de um desgraçado!...*²⁰⁶

By employing a common trope of anti-slavery texts in other parts of the Americas, Macedo activates reader's the sentimental anguish over the prospect of devastated families. The suffering he describes here is not physical but subjective, resorting again to the idea of the enslaved soul in order to sensitize his readers without offending them.

²⁰⁵ Christine Levecq, *Slavery and Sentiment: The Politics of Feeling in Black Atlantic Antislavery Writing, 1770-1850* (Durham: University of New Hampshire Press, 2008), 16.

²⁰⁶ Macedo, *Considerações sobre a nostalgia*, 21.

The audience's imagination, however, is not only provoked so that they might picture the other's suffering, but also that they might recognize the possibility of their own demise. Barrera's whole epistemological framework, for instance, is based on these negative outcomes. The epitome of such outcomes was happening while Barrera was writing the *Reflexiones*: the slave insurrections in Saint-Domingue which a few years later led to the end of slavery and Haiti's declaration of independence. Barrera warns planters, overseers, and colonial authorities of the possible consequences of mistreating the growing enslaved populations in Cuba. One of these consequences was particularly dangerous for the slavers themselves:

In the end, deprived of all human remedy, condemned to continued work in the sugar mills, or, to be more precise, in the living hell (because this is what a sugar mill is); exposed to the harshness of a brutal overseer or a greedy and fierce master. Some of them live such a miserable life that they stick their hands in the *trapiches* to hurt themselves, others burn or cut their own arms, others slit their own throats, others throw themselves in the boilers full of boiling sugar, others murder the overseers and take out their hearts and eat them, others hurt whomever has dominance over them, turning into maroons afterwards, running away to the bushes and stealing whatever they can.

En fin, privados de todo humano remedio, condenados a un trabajo continuo en los ingenios, o por mejor decir infiernos en vida, pues así es un ingenio; expuestos continuamente, a experimentar siempre los rigores de un mayoral brutal o de un amo codicioso y feroz. De esta vida tan miserable depende que unos, meten las manos en los trapiches para que se estrujen, otros se queman los brazos o se los cortan, otros se degüellan, otros se arrojan en las calderas hirviendo del azúcar, otros asesinan los

*mayorales, y les sacan el corazón y las entrañas y se lo comen, otros asaetean a cuantos tienen dominio en ellos, haciéndose después cimarrones o montaraces, huyendo a los bosques y robando cuanto encuentran.*²⁰⁷

The rhetorical progression here is clear: captives slowly stop hurting themselves and start attacking their aggressors. If the sentimental rhetoric of exposing the captives' physical and psychic sufferings will not convince colonial authorities of the danger of the slave trade, Barrera resorts here to the planters' personal fears in order to affect them more directly. Instead of imagining ruined Black bodies, the potential reader—whom we imagine is a white Creole involved in one way or another with the institution of slavery—imagines himself on the receiving end of this violence.²⁰⁸ As is the case in most of the *Reflexiones*, the paragraph that contains this passage is also replicated word for word from a previous source, this time the *Historia geográfica, civil y política de la isla de S. Juan Bautista de Puerto Rico*, by Iñigo Abbad y Lasierra (1788).²⁰⁹ To his citation of Abbad, Barera adds the additional language about self-harm and revenge. It was Barrera himself, and not Abbad, who chose to mobilize the planters' fear of being killed by their own slaves who would then eat their masters' hearts.

This gradation from self-harm to the killing of the masters is also present in Mendes's "Memória." In a passage surprisingly similar to Barrera's, Mendes warns of the possible consequences of such horror:

²⁰⁷ Barrera, *Reflexiones*, 40.

²⁰⁸ This "potential" reader is important because, as previously stated, the *Reflexiones* was not published until 1953. Scholars are still to determine how Barrera's manuscript circulated among Cuban planters if it did at all. Nevertheless, Barrera definitely had in mind a readership for his work, which is the one we also try to picture in this article.

²⁰⁹ López-Denis, work in progress.

The slaves who are forced to live in this torture, embodying the terrible combat between life and death and forced to live as defendants everyday, sometimes gather courage and die; sometimes slit a knife through their throats; sometimes throw themselves in wells, or from high windows; and sometimes they finally kill their masters.

*Os escravos metidos nesta tortura, sustentando o horrível combate da vida com a morte, tremendo, e sendo obrigados todos os dias a comparecerem como réus, umas vezes tomam o fôlego, e morrem, outras vezes passam a navalha às goelas; outras lançam-se nos poços; outras precipitam-se das janelas, das grandes alturas; outras finalmente matam a seus senhores.*²¹⁰

The similarities between this passage and Barrera's text are astounding. The gradation from self-harm and suicide to revenge against masters is symptomatic of the fear that Africans might not be obedient, as racial theories of the eighteenth century claimed.²¹¹ Even the specific kind of suicide (cutting one's own throat) that Barrera mentions is also present in Mendes's text. We have already examined the affective life-and-death struggle that banzo represents, but here this struggle is more literal.

The juridical vocabulary characteristic of the "Memória," however, portrays slaves as defendants of a crime they have not—yet—committed. Mendes's logic is that the unnecessary punishment and mistreatment of slaves, and the tyranny of masters, are the reasons why slaves steal or kill their owners. The fault, according to him, is also that of the judiciary system's,

²¹⁰ Mendes, "Memória," 47.

²¹¹ From the Curse of Ham to protoscientific theories, since the sixteenth century Africans were widely considered more prone to obedience and naturally inclined to slavery. See Zurara (1453), Kant (1777) and others.

whose judges, “in the theater of cruelty . . . write sentences to kill the slave so many times insulted as a dominicide” [*no teatro da crueldade, escrevem sentenças tremendas de fazer morrer o escravo tantas vezes insultado a título de dominicida*] without investigating the actual facts.²¹² These judges would better use their time writing a municipal law that would regulate the matter. This legal-humanitarian rhetoric is the medium chosen by Mendes to convey himself as a “man of feeling.”

The planter’s personal fears are also triggered in Macedo’s text, although again through the writing of others. In the citation from Raynal we have previously addressed, the author plants the seeds for the portrayal of enslaved Africans as potential perpetrators of violence. In that quote, slaves are “knowledgeable in the art of poisoning” and can “kill . . . all the beings that are used to exploit the lands of their oppressors.”²¹³ Macedo’s readers in the mid-nineteenth century were more than familiar with the news and rumors about the Haitian revolutions and the fear of slaves poisoning their masters. Macedo will further explore the trope of the slave as a perpetrator later in his work, especially in *As vítimas-algozes* [*The victims-perpetrators*, 1869], in which he uses short stories to warn slave owners of the dangers of slavery for their own lives (see Chapter 5).

With the articulation of nostalgia as a slave disease, therefore, Barrera, Mendes, and Macedo build a conception of personhood based on mental sensibility to slavery. The emotional vulnerability of the slave is the site for visualizing and constructing of their humanity. The enslaved Black subject who is unable to work while showing no signs of physical injury or illness thus allows for the exploration of the Black psyche, here represented as ill and, as a result, resistant and disobedient. A docile, healthy Black body would not trigger a recognition of

²¹² “Dominicide” is a person who kills their master. Mendes, “Memória,” 47.

²¹³ Macedo, *Considerações sobre a nostalgia*, 21.

subjectivity in the eyes of the slaver in the same way a suffering, ill Black mind does—if it does at all. As Saidiya Hartman remarks about the performances of slave joy in nineteenth-century American plantations, Barrera’s, Mendes’s, and Macedo’s discourses on nostalgia do not redress the abuses of slavery, but rather complement them. In spite of their acknowledgement of the captives’ ability to feel, form memories, and love, Barrera’s, Mendes’s and Macedo’s discourse aimed to replace “the collar with a guilty conscience,” the whip with medical treatments, and insults with sentimentality.²¹⁴ In this sense, although the authors’ sentimental rhetoric ostensibly acknowledges and engages the subjectivity of the enslaved, this subjectivity has a specific managerial function aimed at improving the efficacy of Cuban and Brazilian plantations.

As Kyla Schuller states in her *The Biopolitics of Feeling*, “sentimentalism stimulates the moral virtuosity and emotional release of the sympathizer and her affective attachment to the nation-state at the expense of the needs of the individuated Human: often the impoverished, the racialized, the conquered, the orphaned, and/or the animalized.”²¹⁵ Although they address the humanity of the nostalgic enslaved Africans through an affective pathology which grants them a *sensitive* soul, the texts examined here are ultimately all about *white* feelings. In “assigning affective capacity”²¹⁶ to enslaved Africans through the pathologies of nostalgia and *banzo*, these authors approximate them to a European subjectivity, as I have argued. But this approximation is only possible because the ontological difference of enslavement is enough for the equivalence to fail before it happens. The equation between the enslaved African and the European author is stillborn, because, as Macedo’s *Considerações* shows in its most evident form, the enslaved Africans are a frame to the authors’ self-fashioning as men of feeling and, therefore, civilized

²¹⁴ Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-making in Nineteenth-century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 6.

²¹⁵ Schuller, *The Biopolitics of Feeling*, 2.

²¹⁶ Schuller, *Biopolitics of Feeling*, 13.

subjects. In other words, ameliorating the conditions of the institution by treating the slaves' illnesses had the simple goal of putting the slaves back to work.

Nostalgia in the late-eighteenth century was a privileged rhetorical space where medical practitioners involved in the governance and treatment of slaves shaped a conception of subjectivity based on feeling and sensibility instead of reason. Nostalgia instantiates the tool, rhetoric, and conception of feeling negotiated on three levels: the enslaved Africans who are the potential medical patients of nostalgia; the masters, overseers, and others involved in their enslavement; and Barrera, Mendes, and Macedo themselves. Because they were enslaved, however, the Africans afflicted by nostalgia that these authors describe and imagine were also at some level commodified. Alfonso Congo, who died of nostalgia half a century after Barrera's text and whose life was insured by the company La Providencia, epitomizes precisely this ambiguous status of the (nostalgic) enslaved subject. The pathology caused Alfonso's death granted and acknowledged his interiority at the same time as La Providencia, a manifestation of finance capital, commodified him and provided one of the only registers we have of his life.

PART II

POETRY IN BONDAGE, LIBERATION IN FEELING

Introduction to Part II

*Mas no penséis, señor, que mi laúd
Olvidase el afecto de mi dueño;
Ni que odiase mi dulce esclavitud,
Pues gracia a su bondad, vivo risueño,
Que si anhelo ser libre, es por virtud,
Quizás por cantar com más empeño:
Oh! Nunca imagineis que aunque sea libre
Mi esclavitud del alma a vos no vibre.*
Ambrosio Echemendía (1843-?), “A mi señor [iv]”¹

While the mid-nineteenth century marked the last iterations of nostalgia as an illness afflicting enslaved Africans in the Americas, the image of the melancholic captive did not disappear from cultural imaginaries. Far from fading along with the medical diagnosis, the feeling of longing for freedom and for loved ones permeated Cuban and Brazilian literatures at the very moment when they were maturing into national projects.² The *pathos* of the enslaved, which medical practitioners had diagnosed as the illnesses of nostalgia and *banzo*, was slowly depathologized, becoming a central feature in the literary forms that privileged the fabrication and expression of subjectivity and personhood: lyric poetry and autobiographical narratives.

It was in the nineteenth century, after all, that the lyric became the uttermost form of subjective expression. Literary historians and theorists seem to agree that it was Hegel, in his *Lectures on Aesthetics* delivered in the 1820s and 1830s, who first defined the lyric as the genre

¹ In Ambrosio Echemendía, *Poesía completa*, ed. Amauri Gutiérrez Coto (Leiden: Almenara, 2019).

² About the constitution of Cuban literature, see Cintio Vitier, *Lo cubano en la poesía* (Havana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1998); Irma Llorens, *Nacionalismo y literatura: constitución e institucionalización de la "república de las letras cubanas"* (Lérida: Edicions de la Universitat de Lleida, 1998); and Max Henríquez Ureña, *Panorama histórico de la literatura cubana* (New York: Las Americas Pub. Co., 1963). About the constitution of Brazilian literature, see Antônio Cândido, *Presença da literatura brasileira: História e antologia* (São Paulo: Difusão Européia do Livro, 1964); Alfredo Bosi, *Dialética da colonização* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1992); and Roberto Schwarz, *Misplaced Ideas: Essays on Brazilian Culture*, trans. by John Gledson (London: Verso, 1992).

of poetry most associated with subjectivity.³ The content of the lyric, said Hegel, is the “subject, the inner world, the mind that considers and feels, that instead of proceeding to action, remains alone with itself as inwardness, and that therefore can take as its sole form and final aim the self-expression of the subjective life.”⁴ Such understanding of the lyric as the ultimate expression of subjectivity became prevalent from thereon, especially with the not-so-gentle push of romantic authors who posited the poet as the greatest vessel for spirit and natural matters.⁵

The subjectivity at the center of the lyric, however, is not necessarily an individual, modern subjectivity which we nowadays define as the inner life and the feelings of one particular subject—at least not to Hegel and the romantics. “[H]owever intimately the insights and feelings which the poet describes as his own belong to him as a single individual,” says Hegel, “they must nevertheless possess a universal validity.”⁶ Describing the balance between individual subjectivity and the ability to create a shared subject experience through lyric poetry, Hegel employs the language of slavery. In its subjective yet universalizing form, the goal of lyric poetry is to “deliver the heart from this slavery to passion by making it see itself;” that is, to express itself in its totality and not in fragments of ideas and feelings. Such liberation, however, is “not *from* but *in* feeling.”⁷

³ Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins, “General Introduction,” in *The Lyric Theory Reader: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014); Jonathan Culler, *Theory of the Lyric* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015).

⁴ G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Arts*, Vol. II (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 1038.

⁵ As Charles Taylor argues, the notion of the “inner voice” is paramount in Romantic poetry and literature: “Sometimes the voice or impulse is seen as particular to the person himself; it is the voice of one’s self . . . Sometimes it is also seen as the impulse in us of nature, as the larger order in which we are set.” Charles Taylor, *The Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 369.

⁶ Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Arts*, 1111.

⁷ Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Arts*, 1112.

I gesture towards Hegel's choice to define the lyric's task as liberation in feeling because it is also through lyric poetry that enslaved and formerly enslaved poets tackled issues of bondage. Writing verses in Cuba and Brazil in the mid- and late-nineteenth century, these poets wrote their verses within a Hegelian, or romantic understanding of poetry and the poet's role. The chapters of this Part explore the literary works of two of such writers: Cuban poet Juan Francisco Manzano (1797-1854) and Brazilian poet, lawyer, and journalist Luiz Gonzaga Pinto da Gama (1830-1882). Manzano and Gama saw poetry as both an expression of their individual subjectivities and as an universalizing enunciation of feeling. Yet, their experiences as enslaved subjects in the context of the Second Slavery in Cuba and Brazil complicated their relationship to this "liberating" potential of lyric, and to their own poetic practices. Not only did Manzano and Gama connect their own experiences—racial slavery and poetry—but so did their bourgeois, white peers, associating Manzano's and Gama's poetic works with their enslaved past or present.

Hegel definitely did not have poets such as Manzano or Gama in mind when he wrote his *Lectures on Aesthetics*. The heart that would achieve freedom from the passion to slavery through lyric was definitely a European one. It was not the first time (nor the last) that Hegel used the metaphor of slavery in his philosophical writings. A decade and a half before his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, Hegel had published the *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, where the struggle between master and slave was the path to the spirit's self-realization.⁸ Still, even if, as Susan Buck-Morris has convincingly argued, Hegel "used the sensational events of Haiti as the linchpin in his argument in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*," he never hid his extreme bigotry and antiblackness towards Africa and Africans.⁹ To Hegel, Africa was "the land of childhood",

⁸ I will discuss Hegel's lord-bondsman dialectic on Chapter 3.

⁹ Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), 59.

where the African had not reached self-consciousness because his consciousness “has not yet attained to the realization of any substantial objective existence—as for example, God, or Law—in which the interest of man’s volition is involved and in which he realized his own being.”¹⁰ To read Manzano’s and Gama’s poetry in light of Hegel’s theory of the lyric, therefore, means not only to “include” them in the pantheon of white lyric poets that Hegel validated, but also to ask along with Andrea Brady, “what lyric modalities might come to light if the liberal humanist figure of the white poet is displaced by those poetic subjects whose practices and experiences were crucial to, but also erased from, the theorisation of poetry?”¹¹

Affective Interpellations

As published authors and men of letters, Manzano and Gama were well-acquainted with the white bourgeoisie who constituted Cuban and Brazilian literary circles, many of whom were invested in their condition as enslaved or formerly enslaved writers. Seeing Manzano and Gama as “living proof” of the civility of Afro-descendants as well as potential evidence for the horrors of slavery, these acquaintances—namely, Cuban literary critic Domingo del Monte and Brazilian writer and lawyer Lúcio de Mendonça—asked for written accounts of their lives. Both authors responded to this interpellation in the form of autobiographical texts elaborating on their years lived in slavery: Manzano finished his manuscript in 1837, and Gama sent his autobiographical letter to Mendonça in 1880. These narratives consolidated Manzano’s and Gama’s constitution as subjects in the literary, legal, and affective orders of their time.¹²

¹⁰ G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (Kitchener: Batoche Books, 2001), 109, 111.

¹¹ Andrea Brady, *Poetry and Bondage: A History and Theory of Lyric Constraint* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 24.

¹² Julio Ramos, “La lei es otra: Literatura y constitución de la persona jurídica,” *Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana* 20, No. 40 (1994), 305-335.

While scholars have scrutinized both Manzano's and Gama's autobiographical narratives, they have not given much attention to their poetry, and even less to their lyric poetry. I thus propose to examine both poetry and autobiographical writing as modes of fabrication and performance of subjectivity that emerged from within the context of enslavement. In the chapters that follow, I will first examine each author's biographical narrative, which is bursting with affective rhetoric. As Manzano's and Gama's most examined texts, these autobiographies provide the best gateway to understand their writers as authors and as racialized subjects in their respective societies.

I propose a reading of their autobiographical writings as responses to affective interpellations by Manzano's and Gama's white peers, arguing that this subjectification happened not only through *logos* but also through a (depathologized) *pathos*—feeling, suffering, emotion. Translated to English and published in Britain in 1840, Manzano's autobiography entered Anglophone abolitionist circles early on, thus receiving the label of the only “slave narrative” ever written in Spanish America, a label that persists to this day.¹³ In the case of Luiz Gama, scholars have also examined more consistently his work as an attorney for illegally enslaved individuals and as an abolitionist journalist, which led to his celebration as “the pioneer of abolition in Brazil.”¹⁴

When it comes to poetry, however, it seems at first that slavery is neither Manzano's nor Gama's preferred subject. Jerome Branche comments on Manzano's “relative autonomy and distancing afforded by the lyric voice” that “would be lost due to the heightened self-

¹³ Some scholars even use the label “autor de la Autobiografía” when discussing Manzano's other poems, even though in chronological terms Manzano was a poet before the author of his autobiography.

¹⁴ Sud Mennucci, *O precursor do abolicionismo no Brasil: Luiz Gama* (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1938).

referentiality of the autobiographic mode.”¹⁵ Critics have also commented on Gama’s *Primeiras trovas burlescas* privileging satire and as a “counter ideology to the dogmas of the dominant racial thought,” in which direct references to slavery appear only in few of his lyrical poems.¹⁶

In the second part of each chapter, I will offer a close reading of some of Manzano’s and Gama’s lyrical poems in order to highlight an articulation between the emergence of an individual subjectivity and an autonomous subject—in a post-Enlightenment context—and pre-modern conceptions of love and voluntary dispossession. On the one hand, I address Manzano’s and Gama’s poetry as part of a “Black antislavery archive in writing that is available for recovery” and, therefore, as products of Enlightened abolitionist and antislavery thought.¹⁷ On the other hand, I will argue that this antislavery imaginary is anchored in early modern traditions and registers that push back against the self-possessive, autonomous subject that is at the center of Enlightened epistemologies.

It is through the lyric’s potential to “time travel,” so to speak, that Manzano and Gama are able to elaborate particular conceptions about bondage and emancipation that are specific to their context of enunciation while making use of a long-standing tropologic tradition of lyric poetry, therefore holding an alleged universalist claim. As we will see in the following pages, it is this tension between the individual or particular, on the one hand, and the universal or transhistorical, on the other, that allowed for Manzano’s and Gama’s poetry to be at the same

¹⁵ Jerome Branche, “‘Mulato entre negros’ (y blancos): Writing, Race, the Antislavery Question, and Juan Francisco Manzano’s *Autobiografía*,” *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, vol. 20, n. 1 (2001): 77. Along the same line, William Luis says that most of Manzano’s known poetry “se refiere directamente a la esclavitud.” William Luis, “Introducción,” in *Autobiografía del esclavo poeta y otros escritos*, ed. William Luis (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2007), 62.

¹⁶ Ligia Fonseca Ferreira, “Introdução,” in Luiz Gama, *Primeiras Trovas Burlescas*, org Ligia Fonseca Ferreira (São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2000), XXIII.

¹⁷ Branche, “‘Mulato entre negros’ (y blancos): Writing, Race, the Antislavery Question, and Juan Francisco Manzano’s *Autobiografía*,” 68.

time overlooked *and* overdetermined by most of literary history and criticism of the nineteenth and twentieth century. Their poems were overlooked as original pieces of literary writings while overdetermined because of the authors' site of enunciation—that of an enslaved Black man.

In his *Theories of the Lyric*, Jonathan Culler suggests that we abandon the prevalent model of reading lyric poetry since the twentieth century. Heavily informed by theories of the novel, this model treats the lyric as fictional discourse, in which we see the poetic voice as a character in a novel, “whose situation and motives one must reconstruct.”¹⁸ Instead of reading lyric poems as novels, therefore, Culler suggests we pay attention to characteristics of the lyric that are not at all present in fictional discourse, or at least not commonly so: its “ritualistic” aspect (that is, the lyric is made to be repeated and reproduced); its “materiality” (that is, rhythm, rhyme, metric, etc.), and “the rich texture of intertextual relations that relates it to other poems rather than to worldly events.”¹⁹ By focusing on these elements—particularly the lyric's intrinsic intertextuality—I will thus propose that Manzano's and Gama's poetic creations open new avenues of approaching them as authors who were, or had been, enslaved.

In examining Manzano's and Gama's poems, I will focus on their love poems. Love poems, as we will see, offer a “particular organization of affective experience,”²⁰ as Culler puts it, or a template for how love is and should be felt and expressed. However, their odes to their beloveds are also verses about slavery. This articulation of love and bondage, as we will see, will be crucial to their performance of subjectivity before their audience of mostly white peers.

In Part I, I have discussed the conception of feeling as the “cause and effect of civilization,” which was asymmetrically ascribed to men, women, whites, and people of color in

¹⁸ Jonathan Culler, *Theory of the Lyric* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015), 2.

¹⁹ Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, 119.

²⁰ Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, 21.

the late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Americas.²¹ I have also explored how sentiment was a tool for white instrumentalization of the enslaved's personhood, allowing for the use of "others"—in this case, enslaved blacks—as objects to trigger one's own feeling. In this Part, the location and orientation of feeling shift. Here, feeling is not something ascribed to a racialized other in order to incite political action from the reader/spectator. Rather, it is a tool appropriated by (formerly) enslaved writers of color as evidence of their "civility" before their white peers; as a way to become part of societies that denied them precisely these two attributes—civility and belonging. Of course, one should not lose sight of the fact that Manzano's and Gama's writings were also instrumentalized by their white peers in Cuban and Brazilian reformist and abolitionist circles.

Critics have claimed that Manzano and Gama used literacy and the act of writing as evidence of their civility and autonomy, thus arguing against nineteenth-century racist discourses about the inferior character of African descendants and their "natural" incapacity for *logos*.²² To Sylvia Molloy, for example, the act of writing his own autobiography demonstrates Manzano's change from "serf" to "self." Gama was also "conscious of embodying a counterexample of the scientific theories long disseminated in the West about racial inequality."²³ Following Aristotelian thought, these critics understand that writing indexes reason and, therefore, humanness. Other scholars have gestured towards the marks of otherness in Manzano's and

²¹ Kyla Schuller, *The Biopolitics of Feeling: Race, Sex, and Science in the Nineteenth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 16.

²² See, for instance, Sud Mennucci, *O pioneiro do abolicionismo no Brasil: Luiz Gama*; Antonio Vera-León, "Juan Francisco Manzano: El estilo bárbaro de la nación," *Hispanérica*, vol. 20, n. 60 (Dec. 1991): 3-22; Sylvia Molloy, "From Serf to Self: The Autobiography of Juan Francisco Manzano," *MLN*, vol. 104, n. 2 (Mar. 1989): 393-417; Julio Ramos, "La ley es otra;" José Paulo Paes, "Luís Gama, poeta menor," in *Mistério em Casa* (São Paulo: CEC, 1961), 39-45, Fonseca Ferreira, "Introdução."

²³ Ligia Fonseca Ferreira, "Luiz Gama autor, leitor, editor: revisitando as Primeiras Trovas Burlescas de 1859 e 1861," *Estudos avançados*, vol. 33, n. 96 (2019): 110.

Gama's works. According to Antonio Vera-León, writers in the Delmontian circle would try to appropriate Manzano's scruffy style and "retórica de la barbarie" as part of their project of a white, national Cuban literature.²⁴ Gama's use of an African-inspired terminology, among other stylistic and thematic choices, would make him inventor of a "black poetics" in Brazil²⁵, or the first self-identified "black poet" in the country.²⁶

This chapter does not aim to contradict or undermine these arguments, but to suggest an alternative end of the same thread: it was not just writing, or not just any writing, but the writing *about* and *from* feeling that allowed Manzano and Gama to take part in and push back against the literary conventions of their times. As people of African descent in a mostly white milieu, Manzano and Gama were never detached from their racial and social otherness—to the hegemonic white gaze, they were always "mulato," "de color," "bode," "slave." In other words: if operating in the same framework of sensibility and feeling as their literary benefactors granted Manzano and Gama recognition from their white peers, it also changed the implications and meanings of these concepts within Cuban and Brazilian societies.

In tracing affect in Manzano's and Gama's work, I will focus on the re-signification of these elements within the realm of slavery and blackness that marked their work. This re-signification happens through referents that mobilize different "affective and cognitive registers" of slavery, freedom and race, to use the words of Mary Nyquist—namely, courtly love and Petrarchan traditions; political slavery and amorous bondage.²⁷ On the one hand, I address Manzano's and Gama's poetry as part of a "Black antislavery archive in writing that is available

²⁴ Vera-León, "Juan Francisco Manzano: el estilo bárbaro de la nación," 19.

²⁵ Sílvio Roberto dos Santos Oliveira, "Gamacopeia: Ficções sobre o poeta Luiz Gama," Dissertation defended at the Universidade Estadual de Campinas (2004), 225.

²⁶ Ferreira, "Introdução," ix.

²⁷ Mary Nyquist, *Arbitrary Rule: Slavery, Tyranny, and the Power of Life and Death* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 16.

for recovery” and, therefore, as products of Enlightened abolitionist and antislavery thought.²⁸ On the other hand, I will argue that this antislavery imaginary is anchored in early modern traditions and registers that push back against the self-possessive, autonomous subject that is at the center of Enlightened epistemologies. In promoting a joint, transimperial approach to their poems and autobiographical writings, I also hope to unfold the shared dimensions of feeling in the (self-)constitution of enslaved and racialized subjects in the Americas.

²⁸ Jerome Branche, “‘Mulato entre negros’ (y blancos): Writing, Race, the Antislavery Question, and Juan Francisco Manzano's *Autobiografía*,” 68.

Chapter 3

Juan Francisco Manzano and the Lyric against Slavery

When Cuban poet Juan Francisco Manzano (1897-1854) learned in 1834 that his work might be published in Europe, he could not hide his astonishment. In a letter to his literary patron and benefactor Domingo del Monte dated December 11 of that year, Manzano described his surprise at the new direction that his “poor rhymes” would take:

When I think about [these rhymes] sailing to such distant climates to see the public light in the emporium of European enlightenment, where so many poets rightly compete for primacy, it all seems like a dream to me. Born in the torrid zone under the darkness of my destiny, they fly from the bosom of my misfortunes bearing the name of their unhappy author beyond where he deserves to be heard; to the truth, sir: *I expected a lot, but not so much.*

*Cuando las considero [estas rimas] navegando a climas tan distantes para ver la luz pública en el emporio de la ilustración europea, donde tantos vates con razón se disputan la primacía, todo me parece un sueño. Nacidas en la zona tórrida bajo la oscuridad de mi destino, vuelan desde el seno de mis infortunios llevando el nombre de su infelice autor más allá de donde merece ser oído; a la verdad señor: Mucho bien esperé pero no tanto.*²⁹

²⁹ Juan Francisco Manzano, “Cartas,” in *Autobiografía del esclavo poeta y otros escritos*, ed. William Luis (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2007), 122. Emphasis in the original.

Manzano's letter expresses the contradictory position he occupied in Cuban colonial society in the first half of the nineteenth century. On the one hand, Manzano was enslaved and therefore "a dead being before his master" [*un ser muerto ante su señor*] as he himself described it.³⁰ He was part of the growing population of Africans and Afro-descendants forced to provide labor for a colonial plantocracy devoted to the production and exportation of sugar and very little else.³¹ He was writing from the "torrid zone" and from the "darkness" of slavery, while Europe was the land of temperate climates, light, and renowned poets. Between these opposites, the distance—geographical, social, and racial—seemed unsurmountable.

On the other hand, Manzano was a published poet contemplating the circulation of his writings within the "emporium of European enlightenment." His poems had already appeared in important Cuban periodicals such as the *Diario de la Habana*, *Diario de Matanzas*, and *El Faro Industrial de la Habana*, as well as in two single-authored collections *Poesías líricas* (1821) and *Flores pasajeras* (1830). Not only was Manzano the first known enslaved writer to publish in

³⁰ Juan Francisco Manzano, "Cartas," in *Autobiografía del esclavo poeta y otros escritos*, 125. A general tone of meekness permeates Manzano's narrative, appearing again in the earlier letters he sent to Domingo del Monte (such as the one opening this chapter). Manzano's servility was not only the deference with which a slave was expected to treat a white person in nineteenth-century Cuba, but also a strategy, in that he probably expected Del Monte to help him out of his condition. In a letter dated shortly after his marriage in February 1835, Manzano tells his "protector" that "J.F. will not be in any way happy unless he is F[ree]. And now more than ever" [*J. F. no será de ningún modo feliz sino siendo L[ibre]. y ahora con más razón.*] Manzano, "Cartas," in *Autobiografía del esclavo poeta y otros escritos*, 125.

³¹ From 1791 on, Cuba was on the path to become the largest sugar producer in the world. It was already true in 1856, when the island dominated 25% of the total world production. See Javier A. Galván, "Sugar and Slavery: the Bittersweet Chapter in the 19th Century Cuba, 1817-1886," *Revista de Humanidades: Tecnológico de Monterrey* 16 (2004): 211-231. Particularly in the 1830s, Cuban planters aspiring to become part of the global bourgeoisie were invested in modernizing and industrializing their sugar mills with steam engines and other technical innovations while increasing the number of enslaved workers on their plantations. This is the start of what Dale Tomich has called "second slavery," that is, the shift from a patriarchal mode of production to a capitalist one. Throughout the end of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries, Cuban planters either let go of religious education of enslaved peoples or clearly formulated its necessity as a way to promote discipline and obedience ("la saludable influencia en la obediencia de los esclavos y el conocimiento de sus deberes," as the *síndico* of the Real Consulado stated in 1835). In Moreno Friginals, *El ingenio: Complejo económico social cubano del azúcar* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2001), 101.

the island, but also the author of “the first collection of Cuban verse published by anyone, black or white.”³² It was precisely this exceptional character that called the attention of one of the most prominent white creoles of the island, the literary critic Domingo del Monte. The two met in 1830 and, a year later, del Monte published some of Manzano’s poems in *La Moda o Recreo Semanal del Bello Sexo* (1829-31), a publication he co-founded with Jesús Villarino.³³

Del Monte was the head of an intellectual circle composed of young members of the island’s colonial bourgeoisie who were committed to the consolidation of an autonomous Cuban literature. In his efforts towards the “advancement of the Cuban civilization, as well as its literary reputation” [*adelanto de la civilización cubana, bien por su nombradía literaria*³⁴], Del Monte co-founded some of the most important literary publications of his time—such as the aforementioned *La Moda o Recreo Semanal del Bello Sexo* and the *Revista Bimestre Cubana* (1831). He also pushed colonial institutional boundaries from within the Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País. Between 1830 and 1834, del Monte presided over the Educational Section as the head of its Permanent Literary Commission. In 1834, he managed to get the Regent María Cristina’s approval to turn the Permanent Literary Commission into an autonomous Cuban Literary Academy, only to be suppressed a few months later by the Sociedad Económica itself.³⁵ After

³² Matthew Pettway, *Cuban Literature in the Age of Black Insurrection: Manzano, Plácido, and Afro-Latino Religion* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2020), 12. Of course, after Manzano there were a number of enslaved poets and writers of color in Cuba, such as Ambrosio Echemendía (1843–c.1880s), José del Carmen Días (?-?), Juan Antonio Frías (1830-c.1870s), Manuel Roblejo (?-1872), Néstor Céspedes (?-?), among others. See Carlos M. Trelles, *Bibliografía cubana del siglo XIX* (Matanzas: Impr. de Quirós y Estrada, 1911), 15; Amauri Gutiérrez Coto, “Una escritura afrodescendiente en la Cuba colonial,” in Ambrosio Echemendía, *Poesía completa* (Leiden: Almenara, 2019), 11-72; Francisco Calcagno, *Poetas de color* (Havana: Impr. Militar de la V. de Soler y Compañía, 1878); and *Diccionario biográfico cubano* (New York: Impr. y Librería de N. Ponce de León, 1878).

³³ See William Luis, “Introducción,” in Juan Francisco Manzano, *Autobiografía del esclavo poeta y otros escritos*, 15.

³⁴ Domingo del Monte, *Escritos de Domingo del Monte*, Vol. 1 (Habana: Cultural, 1929), 244.

³⁵ Del Monte’s move was frustrated by his conservative peers at the Sociedad Económica—planters and members of the creole oligarchy who saw in the Academia Cubana de Literatura a possible venue for the critique of slavery and the slave trade on the island. This was a position that del Monte had moderately

this frustration with colonial institutions, del Monte started a private literary salon—a *tertulia*—where he and other Creole liberals such as Anselmo Suárez y Romero and Félix Tanco y Bosmeniel would meet and discuss literary works and the future of the island’s literary productions.³⁶

Through del Monte, Manzano’s verses did eventually get published on the other side of the Atlantic—in Britain, more specifically. *Poems by a Slave in the Island of Cuba, recently liberated* (1840) included seven of Manzano’s poems, translated and edited by Irish abolitionist Richard Robert Madden, who lived in Havana from 1836 to 1839 while working as Superintendent of Liberated Africans on the Mixed Court of Arbitration. As the book’s title states, by that time Manzano was no longer enslaved. In 1836, he had been invited by del Monte to read his sonnet “Treinta años” in a *tertulia* session. The attendees were so moved by the reading that a month later they raised more than 800 pesos to purchase Manzano’s freedom from his then-mistress, María de la Luz de Zayas.³⁷

Madden’s volume included another text by Manzano: “the history of the Early Life of the Negro Poet, written by himself.”³⁸ It was Manzano’s autobiography, which he had penned in

voiced, but that others close to him—particularly Jose Antonio Saco—had vehemently argued. We will tackle this later on, but it is important to note that del Monte criticized slavery and the slave trade not because he wanted to abolish it but because he saw it as a risk for the white population in Cuba. Still, his visions were considered subversive at the time, and he ultimately was exiled to Spain in 1842. For more details on Del Monte’s involvement with these institutions, see Sophie Andioc Torres, “Presentación” in *Domingo del Monte: Centón epistolario*, vol. II, pp. V-XXXIV.

³⁶ In 1835, del Monte moved back to Havana, where he continued his *tertulia*. Del Monte lived in Havana until he left for Spain in 1842.

³⁷ Ignacio Valdés Machuca and Del Monte himself orchestrated the crowdfunding. There are different accounts on the actual amount of money raised to buy Manzano’s freedom. In a letter to José Luis Alfonso dated 23 July, 1836, del Monte mentions 800 pesos. Abdeslam Azougarh, “Destino y obra de Juan Francisco Manzano,” in Juan Francisco Manzano and Abdeslam Azougarh, *Juan Francisco Manzano: Esclavo poeta en la isla de Cuba* (Valencia: Episteme, 2000), 11. However, William Luis notes the abolitionist Nicolás Azcárate says in his manuscript *Obras completas de Juan Francisco Manzano esclavo de la Isla de Cuba* that the group raised 968 pesos. Luis, “Introducción,” 17.

³⁸ The book also included an appendix with interviews about the slave trade to Cuba and the presence of the Catholic church in the island, articles about the conditions of enslaved populations in Cuba, the laws

1837 as a response to Domingo del Monte's request. The narrative spanned Manzano's birth to his escape from his second mistress, the Marchioness of Prado Ameno—a "picture of so many calamities" [*un cuadro de tantas calamidades*] as he famously described it.³⁹ Published in Spanish only in 1937,⁴⁰ Manzano's autobiographical text is nowadays considered the only known "slave narrative" in Spanish America, a label that has drawn significant attention from historians and literary scholars alike. The scholarly emphasis on Manzano's autobiography has led to a certain marginalization of his poetical productions. "Very little has been said about the poem," literary critic Abdeslam Azougarh claimed in 2000, when he published *Juan Francisco Manzano: esclavo poeta en la isla de Cuba*. Twenty-one years later, Azougarh's assessment still holds. Although a growing number of critics have examined some of Manzano's verses,⁴¹ most of his 48 known poems remain understudied.

It is not that critics ignore that Manzano was a poet. The fact that he wrote verses is usually at the center of most analyses, although most times as a counterpoint to Manzano's autobiographical narrative. Sylvia Molloy, for example, argues that Manzano's poetry had an

related to slavery, and the path to emancipation; the opinion of a Cardinal A. Lambroschini about the relationship between the Irish and slavery; and a short laudatory article on Bartolomé de las Casas.

³⁹ Juan Francisco Manzano, Letter to Domingo del Monte (June 25, 1835), in *Autobiografía del esclavo poeta y otros escritos*, 125. Manzano might have written the second part of his autobiography, but it was lost.

⁴⁰ Juan Francisco Manzano, *Autobiografía, cartas y versos de Juan Fco. Manzano, con un estudio preliminar por José L. Franco* (Havana: Municipio de La Habana, 1937).

⁴¹ See, for instance, Matthew Pettway, *Cuban Literature in the Age of Black Insurrection*; Rachel Price, "Enemigo Suelo: Manzano Rewrites Cuban Romanticism," *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos*, vol. 38, no. 3 (Spring 2014): 529-554; Irene Gómez-Castellano, "Punto de fuga: 'visión panorámica' en 'Un sueño' de Juan Francisco Manzano," *A contracorriente*, vol. 16, no. 1 (Fall 2018): 71-99. Robert Richmond Ellis, "Reading through the Veil of Juan Francisco Manzano: From Homoerotic Violence to the Dream of a Homosocial Bond," *PMLA*, vol. 113, no. 3 (May 1999): 422-35; Garrett Alan Oleen, *19th Century Plantation Counter-Discourses in Juan Francisco Manzano, Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés (Plácido), and Eleuterio Derkes* (Ph.D Diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 2010); Rex Hauser, "Two New World Dreamers: Manzano and Sor Juana," *The Afro Hispanic Review* 12, no. 2 (1993): 3-11; William Luis, "Introducción," Azougarh, *Esclavo poeta en la isla de cuba*; Adriana Lewis Galanes, *Poesías de J.F. Manzano, esclavo en la isla de Cuba* (Madrid: Editorial Betania, 1991).

“imitative” character that confers it originality, because “it is such a deliberate and total act of appropriation of the reading and writing that had been denied him.”⁴² Without close reading any particular poem, Molloy claims that “the lyrical ‘I’ of Manzano’s poetry is a relatively comfortable rhetorical construct” in comparison to the prose of his autobiography, for which he had no previous model to appropriate. Echoing Molloy, Jerome Branche comments on the “relative autonomy and distancing afforded by the lyric voice” in Manzano’s poetical work.⁴³ In a different line of argumentation, Antonio Vera-León claims that Manzano’s poetry is an answer to his desire to “enter the written language, of being a writer,”⁴⁴ and Marilyn Miller points to the subversiveness of Manzano’s poetic creations because they led to an incessant verbalization in spite of his mistress’ attempts of silencing him.⁴⁵ Finally, Julio Ramos points to the importance of Manzano’s writing *prior* to the autobiography (that is, his poetry), which would lead to the poet’s access to different discursive spheres and, ultimately, to the projection of his own subjectivity as a subject of rights.⁴⁶

Although all these important analyses focus on the poet Manzano, they do not say much about the poems themselves. It is definitely true that the act of writing in Manzano’s autobiography is both a mark of distinction (from other enslaved peoples) and inclusion (in the world of letters). Still, when we take a closer look at Manzano’s poems, we can identify in them

⁴² Sylvia Molloy, “From Serf to Self: The Autobiography of Juan Francisco Manzano,” *MLN* 104, no. 2 (1989): 415.

⁴³ Branche, “‘Mulato entre negros’ (y blancos): Writing, Race, the Antislavery Question, and Juan Francisco Manzano’s ‘Autobiografía,’” 77. Branche’s main argument is that Manzano’s narrative is a constant attempt to distinguish himself from Black people (which he associates with brute force and rudeness) and associate with the White privilege through a self-identification as “mulato,” “chinito,” or “mulatico.”

⁴⁴ Vera León, “Juan Francisco Manzano: el estilo bárbaro de la nación,” 6.

⁴⁵ Marilyn Miller, “Rebeldía narrativa, resistencia poética y expresión ‘libre’ en Juan Francisco Manzano,” *Revista Iberoamericana* LXXI, no. 211 (Apr.-Jun. 2005): 417-436.

⁴⁶ Ramos, “La ley es otra,” 314.

strong intertextual and ritualistic aspects that instead of being simply “imitative,” allow Manzano to produce his own conceptions of bondage and emancipation while still enslaved. Manzano’s lyric poems reproduce, respond, and re-signify elements of the lyrical tradition, particularly one particular long-standing trope: that of love as bondage. By depicting the poetic voice as captive to their beloved, Manzano obliquely intervenes in contemporary debates about slavery and generates new ideas about freedom. The subject that emerges in these poems, as we will see, does not fit within the protonational projects advanced by his interlocutors such as Domingo del Monte insofar as it is not the autonomous Enlightened subject that, for instance, Manzano projects in his autobiography. I will argue, therefore, that what others see in Manzano’s poems as “imitative,” I see as potentially generative because “the menace of *mimicry* is its double vision, which in disclosing the ambition of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority,” as Homi Bhabha puts it.⁴⁷

This chapter approaches Manzano’s writings in two parts. The first section explores the prominence of affect in Manzano’s autobiographical manuscript insofar as it connects to his self-fashioning as a poet and, therefore, as a man of feeling. As his most examined text, the autobiography provides the best gateway in understanding Manzano’s stance vis-à-vis poetry as an author and as a racialized subject in Cuban colonial society. Then, addressing Manzano’s poems as a space of production rather than reproduction of pre-conceived ideas and models, I will closely analyze some of his poems in order to understand Manzano’s own articulations of freedom, servitude, and slavery. By reading Manzano’s autobiography along with his lyric poems, I will pay particular attention to the different circuits of interpellation and requests in

⁴⁷ Homi Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 155.

which they operate in order to examine the different subjects, or effects of subjectivity, that they produce.

Melancholy and Poetry

Susana Draper sees in Manzano's autobiography a duality between body and reason. Building on duBois, Butler, and Hegel, Draper posits the paradox of two "circuits of truth:" that of the body of the slave, and that of the reason of the master. In writing his autobiography, Manzano would occupy a liminal position between both circuits, at times emphasizing his own bodiliness in the descriptions of torture and physical punishments, and at others calling attention to his reason through writing and literacy (which would be denied to him as an enslaved subject). Ultimately, Draper argues that Manzano's autobiography creates a subjectivity that rejects this duality, since he is writing (and therefore being a subject of reason) about physical punishments and tortures he suffered as a slave (and therefore being an irrational body). That is, because of his corporeality as a slave, Manzano's writing cannot simply reproduce the values and discourses of the slaveholding class. Instead, Draper claims, he occupies a liminal position "that allows him to move from the category of enslaved black to the confirmation that he is a *mulatico fino* who is not far from an educated white."⁴⁸ Because he was a subject of reason, Manzano did not deserve the tortures and punishments that would turn him into nothing more than a body (and therefore reinforce his enslavement). To Manzano's audience, then, the unjust character of these punishments depends on this display of reason, expressed in the act of writing.

I would add, however, that although writing and literacy are indeed crucial to Manzano's self-fashioning as a subject deserving of freedom, it does not account for all his work. Prior to

⁴⁸ Susana Draper, "Voluntad de intelectual: Juan Francisco Manzano entre las redes de un humanismo sin derechos," *Chasqui*, Vol. 31, no. 1 (May, 2002): 11-12.

the figure of the man of reason, Manzano fashions himself as a man of feeling. It is feeling, which Manzano displays in his poetry as well as in his identification as poet, that marks his differentiation from other slaves, and it is feeling that leads him to eventually write and publish his own poetry. And it is the discourse of feeling—or, more particularly, the feeling of love—where Manzano builds his own conceptions of freedom and servitude. Such identification with the romantic figure of the poet, as we will see, foregrounds his understanding of poetry as a privileged form of subjective expression, through which the poet communicates his “superior” soul.⁴⁹

Long before he learned how to write, Manzano was already composing verses in his mind. In other words, before becoming a writer, Manzano was always already a poet. We learn in the autobiography that poetry happened to Manzano, just like any good nineteenth-century Romantic writer. His poetic sensibility was so evident from such an early age that even acquaintances of his mistress noted it. “It was when Dr. Beranés, discovering in me the first symptoms of poetry, gave me what they call ‘pie forzado’ [*Entonces fue cuando el señor doctor Beranés, descubriendo en mí los primeros síntomas de la poesía, me daba lo que llaman “pie forzado”*]. Poetry thus becomes an inevitable fate: “I was caught once with some verses in a piece of paper and Mr. Doctor Coronado was the first to predict that I would be a poet even if everyone opposed it” [*Pilláronme una vez algunos papelitos de décimas y el señor doctor Coronado fue el primero que pronosticó que yo sería poeta aunque se opusiera todo el mundo*].

⁴⁹ In a letter to Del Monte dated October 15, 1834, Manzano laments his misfortunes but says he is comforted when he considers that “God gave me the disgraces, and also a soul that makes me superior to others who carelessly laugh at me” [*Dios me ha dado las desgracias, y también una alma que me hace superior a algunos que sin el menor cuidado se ríen de mí*]. Manzano, “Cartas,” in *Autobiografía del esclavo poeta y otros escritos*, 128.

And indeed, everyone was against it. Unable to control the poetical sensibility of their slave, Manzano's masters resort to punishing him when he displays it in public. They also try to stop its development by foreclosing Manzano's access to writing:

When I was twelve years old, I had already composed many verses from memory; because my godparents didn't want me to learn to write; but I dictated them by heart, particularly to a young *morena* named Serafina, whose letters in verses maintained a love correspondence.

*Cuando yo tenía doce años, ya había compuesto muchas décimas de memoria<s>; causa por que mis padrinos no querían que aprendiese a escribir; pero yo las dictaba de memoria<s>, en particular a una joven morena llamada Serafina, cuyas cartas en décimas mantenían una correspondencia amorosa.*⁵⁰

Manzano's godparents—with whom he spent part of his childhood after the Marquesa Jústiz de Santa Ana died—did not want him to learn how to write not only because it would make Manzano a subject of reason, but because he might write down his verses. Writing here represents a full development of Manzano's sensibility, which had already started in his poetic compositions. In this passage, Manzano also shows that poetry depended on an interlocutor—in most cases, a “beloved,” like Serafina. Later in the narrative, when Manzano already learned how to write, he reflects on the originality of his early poetic production and insists again on the need for an object, or interlocutor: “Poetry wants an object to which to dedicate itself. Love usually inspires us. I was too naïve and hadn't loved yet; because of that, my compositions were

⁵⁰ Juan Francisco Manzano, “Autobiografía,” in Juan Francisco Manzano and Abdeslam Azougarh, *Juan Francisco Manzano: esclavo poeta en la isla de Cuba*, 69.

cold imitations” [*La poesía quiere un objeto a quien dedicarse. El amor regularmente nos inspira. Yo era demasiado inocente y todavía no amaba; de consiguiente, mis composiciones eran frías imitaciones*].⁵¹ For Manzano, then, to be an actual poet—that is, to produce poetry and not simply reproduce it from others—one needs an object, which could be also (but not necessarily) an interlocutor.

His status as an enslaved subject, however, forecloses Manzano’s access to an interlocutor or an entity to apostrophize in his poetic production. In another episode, Manzano recounts that his mistress forbade others in the house to talk to him because Manzano was reciting “so many verses that were neither divine nor amorous” [*tantas décimas que no eran ni divinas, ni amorosas*] to the house staff. In dire need of interlocutors to whom he could recite his poetic creations, he then turned to the house furniture: “I talked to the table, the painting, the wall, etc.” [*hablaba con la mesa, con el cuadro, con la pared, etc.*].⁵²

The interlocutor, to whom the poet writes verses and who is apostrophized, is part of what Jonathan Culler calls “triangulated address” in lyric poetry; that is, the “address to the reader by means of address to something or someone else.”⁵³ In the Western tradition, poets have been apostrophizing inanimate objects since Classical Antiquity, addressing verses to ships, musical instruments, natural elements, etc. In discussing the consequences and implications of the poetic apostrophe, Culler suggests that instead of merely functioning as an intensifier of feeling, the apostrophe to inanimate objects posits “a potentially responsive or at least attentive universe, to which one has a relation” in an “attempt, even, to evoke the possibility of a magical transformation.”⁵⁴ In this sense, the apostrophe is “a mark of poetic vocation,” a tool used to

⁵¹ Juan Francisco Manzano, “Autobiografía,” 99.

⁵² Juan Francisco Manzano, “Autobiografía,” 73.

⁵³ Culler, *Theories of the Lyric*, 186.

⁵⁴ Culler, *Theories of the Lyric*, 216.

constitute oneself as a poet through establishing a relation to poetic tradition.⁵⁵ Although this is on some level what Manzano is doing here—fashioning himself as a poet through the performance of apostrophe—his poetical address to house objects has another, more painful layer. Manzano, after all, addresses the table, the picture, and the wall because he has no options, no other interlocutors. His masters isolated him from other potential animate interlocutors in the house. When he apostrophes house objects, the lyric “triangulated speech” is not possible because there is no audience, at least not yet.

Manzano’s solution is then to use his own suffering as an enslaved subject as poetic object, albeit indirectly: “Misfortune and poetry were the only gifts I received in my crib” [*Desgracia y poesía únicamente/los dones fueron que encontré en mi cuna*], contends the poetic voice in “A Delia de mis versos” (1836). Riffing on this idea, Adriana Lewis Galanes claims that in Manzano’s life “both ‘gifts’ generate each other in a circular movement.”⁵⁶ Manzano’s enslavement caused the misfortunes which, in the poet’s own account, resulted in poetry.

Still, Manzano’s suffering does not appear raw in his poems. It is mediated by one particular affect—melancholy, one of Manzano’s most pronounced traits: “From the age of thirteen to fourteen years old, the joy and liveliness of my genius, the talk of my lips, called ‘golden beak,’ changed everything into a certain melancholy that became characteristic of me over time” [*Desde la edad de tres [trece] a catorce años, la alegría y viveza de mi genio, lo parlero de mis labios, llamados ‘pico de oro’, se trocó todo en cierta melancolía que se me hizo con el tiempo característica*].⁵⁷ This passage marks an important narrative shift in Manzano’s

⁵⁵ Culler, *Theories of the Lyric*, 216.

⁵⁶ This means not only that misery informed Manzano’s poetry, but also that writing poetry led to other misfortunes. The author is referring to Manzano’s complaints of being a *paria* and of being persecuted by Cuban colonial authorities. Adriana Lewis Galanes, *Poesías de J. F. Manzano, esclavo en la isla de Cuba* (Madrid: Editorial Betania, 1991), 34-35.

⁵⁷ Juan Francisco Manzano, “Autobiografía,” 71.

autobiography, when his second mistress, the Marquesa del Prado Ameno, starts to arbitrarily punish him for all kinds of small infractions or for what she saw as disobedience. Until then, Manzano's narrative was a series of nostalgic childhood memories with his "kind" and "benevolent first mistress" (Marquesa Justiz de Santa Ana, Prado Ameno's mother). When Santa Ana dies and he moves to Prado Ameno's house, however, "fortune began to unfold against me to the degree of greatest cruelty" [*empezó la fortuna a desplegarse contra mí hasta el grado de maior encarnizamiento*].⁵⁸ Instead of a deep, uncontrolled despondency that we saw in the previous chapters as nostalgia's main symptom, Manzano's melancholy is a kind of restrained suffering. He is not controlled by his passions nor does he abandon himself to despair; rather, Manzano displays a tamed melancholic state that allows him to develop his aesthetic sensibility and, therefore, compose poetry.

Music captivated me, but I cried without knowing why; and I enjoyed such consolation when I found occasion to cry that I always sought solitude to give long rein to my sorrows. I cried, but I didn't moan, nor was my heart tied, instead I was in a certain state of gloom, incurable to this day.

La música me embelesaba, pero sin saber por qué lloraba; y gustaba de tal consuelo cuando hallaba ocasión de llorar que siempre buscaba la soledad para dar larga rienda

⁵⁸ Manzano describes this change as a matter of fate, avoiding calling out his enslavers' direct role in it. The reason for this might be that when Manzano wrote his autobiography the Marquesa del Prado Ameno was still alive. Writing about his experience under slavery while living in the same city as the people who inflicted so much suffering on him was almost impossibly hard for Manzano. In a letter to Domingo del Monte while writing the autobiography, Manzano calls attention to his bravery in writing it at all: "Consideradme un mártir y hallaréis que los infinitos azotes, que ha[n] mutilado mis carnes aún no formadas, jamás envilecieron a vuestro afectísimo siervo, que, fiado en la prudencia que os caracteriza, se atreve a chistar una palabra sobre esta materia, y más cuando vive quien me ha dado tan largos ratos que gemir." Manzano, Letter to Domingo del Monte (June 25, 1835), in *Autobiografía del esclavo poeta y otros escritos*, 125.

*a mis pesares. Lloraba, pero no gemía, ni se me añudaba el corazón sino en cierto estado de abatimiento, incurable hasta el día.*⁵⁹

Manzano cried, but did not moan. His heart was not tied, but in a constant state of gloom that was refined by music. The verb he uses to describe the effect of music is “embelesar,” which the 1822 *Diccionario de autoridades* defines as “suspend, captivate the senses” [*suspender, arrebatat los sentidos*].⁶⁰ While we can only speculate as to the kind of music Manzano was referencing, it seems to have helped refine his aesthetic sense. Manzano’s aesthetic sense thus emerges in close association with his melancholy and, therefore, as a consequence of and a reaction to the physical and psychological cruelties inflicted by his mistress. If these hardships and slavery itself triggered Manzano’s melancholy, his relationship with the arts counterbalanced it, resulting in the self-fashioning of a sensitive man, a man who is not free but who deserves freedom. As evidence, Manzano provides his autobiography—and his poems.

Melancholy appears in close association with music and drawing, but most of all with poetry. When recounting the fishing trips he took with Prado Ameno (who was very fond of fishing), Manzano describes that his job was to attach the bait to the hook and then receive any fish she would get. While performing the work expected from him as a *paje*, however, Manzano would silently engage in poetry making, invisible to his mistress:

since melancholy was at the center of my soul and had taken over a part of my existence in my physical body, I took pleasure, under the *guásima* [tree], whose roots formed a kind of pedestal on which we fished, in composing some verses from memory, and they

⁵⁹ Juan Francisco Manzano, “Autobiografía,” 71.

⁶⁰ “Embelesar,” in *Diccionario de Autoridades*, vol. III (1832), 290.

were all always sad, which I did not write because I did not know how, which is why I always had a notebook of verses in my memory and improvised.

*como la melancolía estaba encentrada en mi alma y había tomado en mi físico una parte de mi existencia, yo me complacía, bajo la guásima, cuyas raíces formaban una especie de pedestal al que pescaba, en componer algunos versos de memoria, y todos eran siempre tristes, los cuales no escribía por ignorar este ramo, por esto siempre tenía un cuaderno de versos en la memoria y a cualquier cosa improvisaba.*⁶¹

Because melancholy was such a strong part of his soul and took over his body, Manzano would silently compose poems while helping his mistress fish. The resulting verses, of course, were always sad.⁶² The multitasking that Manzano displays here expresses the ambiguity that permeates the narrative as a whole, an ambiguity that was already present in the letter to Domingo del Monte that opens this chapter, and to which Susana Draper alludes. In this moment under the *guásima* tree, he is fulfilling his role as a slave in physically serving his mistress (he is a body) and mentally composing poetry, something he had been punished for doing in public (he is a man of feeling). The *logos* attributed to writing is not yet possible because there is no writing involved. Instead, Manzano demonstrates here his exceptional character through a performance of sensibility. Codified in poetry, melancholy becomes a sometimes invisible but potentially rebellious feeling.

⁶¹ Juan Francisco Manzano, "Autobiografía," 72-73.

⁶² In this sense, Manzano's melancholy is different from that of his contemporaries, who resorted to a "feliz melancolía" as an aesthetic tool. According to Vitier, this sort of joyful melancholy is a "tema herediano" that also appears in contemporary poets such as Francisco Iturrondo: "Aquí tiene su asiento/ la tranquila y feliz melancolía, la oculta soledad y la tristeza." See Cintio Vitier, *Lo cubano en la poesía*, 50.

In examining Manzano's autobiography, Gerard Aching argues that melancholy is a form of "unconscious resistance," that is, "a psychological resource that emerges in the experience of being subjugated and is activated before the subject ever arrives at the threshold of absolute submission."⁶³ Aching's argument arises from a question about acts of resistance and survival within slavery that do not fall under the umbrella of escape or marronage—or, as Aching explains it, "daily psychic work of finding alleviation from slavery's oppressive practices."⁶⁴ He is arguing against the label of "submissive slave" that previous commentators had attached to Manzano, which "does little to facilitate our comprehension of his predicament and ends up victimizing him."⁶⁵

The submissiveness that some see in Manzano's narrative stems from his pairing of scenes of cruel punishments with many moments in which the narrator expresses love and emotional attachment to his slavers—even the cruel Marquesa del Prado Ameno, the direct and indirect perpetrator in most of the abject scenes he describes. To Jackson, this "submissive" posture was Manzano's strategy to "play down the threatening image of the rebellious slave"⁶⁶ in order to get the sympathy and material help from del Monte's and his circle. Counterarguing this view, Sylvia Molloy claims that there was no threatening image that Manzano could play down because "the system had perversely beaten it out of him, both through physical abuse and, more importantly, through the attribution of privilege."⁶⁷ Branche, like Labrador Rodriguez, argues

⁶³ Gerard Aching, *Freedom from Liberation: Slavery, Sentiment, and Literature in Cuba*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 66.

⁶⁴ Aching, *Freedom from Liberation*, 69.

⁶⁵ Aching, *Freedom from Liberation*, 73.

⁶⁶ Richard L. Jackson, "Slavery, Racism and Autobiography in Two Early Black Writers: Juan Francisco Manzano and Martin Moria Delgado," in *Voices from Under. Black Narrative in Latin American and the Caribbean*, ed. William Luis (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984), 56.

⁶⁷ Sylvia Molloy, "From Serf to Self," 400. Molloy is echoing previous arguments made by Friol and Mullen. See Branche, "'Mulato entre negros' (y blancos): Writing, Race, the Antislavery Question, and Juan Francisco Manzano's 'Autobiografía,'" 80.

that this “pathetic subject” that emerges in Manzano’s autobiography and letters to del Monte is “a mixture of the ‘strategic’ and the ‘temperamental,’”⁶⁸ in the sense that it stems from Manzano’s fears of writing the autobiography while the Marquesa was still alive, and that under the dominant “meekness” of his autobiographical self lies a significant degree of rebellion.

Indeed, though Manzano’s meekness and emotional attachment to his slavers might come across as submissive and weird, the narrative includes plenty of events in which Manzano *does* fit in the abolitionist model of freedom.⁶⁹ For example, he recounts having escaped at least twice. The first time appears in the text almost as a trivial detail, between long dashes in a passage about his many sufferings the Marquesa del Prado Ameno inflicted on him: “Suffice it to say that since I had enough knowledge, until recently—after the end of the first constitution of 1812 that *I attempted a flight*—I do not find a single day that is not marked by some tearful event for me” [*Bástame decir que desde que tuve bastante conocimiento, hasta poco —después de acabada la primera constitución de 1812 que me arrojé a una fuga—, no hallo un solo día que no esté marcado con algún acaso lacrimoso para mí*].⁷⁰ Manzano not only tells us that he tried to run away when he was around fifteen years old, but that he might have been aware of the discussions about the abolition of slavery in the Spanish empire that happened in the courts of Cádiz in 1811, which the colonial government tried to suppress on the island.⁷¹ It may very well be that

⁶⁸ Branche, “‘Mulato entre negros’ (y blancos): Writing, Race, the Antislavery Question, and Juan Francisco Manzano’s ‘Autobiografía,’” 81.

⁶⁹ It does for most of Manzano’s readers, even in the nineteenth century. Madden excluded Manzano’s expressions of love towards his masters from his English translation.

⁷⁰ My italics.

⁷¹ As Larry Jensen recounts, Cuba’s Captain General Marquis of Someruelos prohibited the introduction and reprinting of the numbers 37 and 38 of the *Diario de sesiones de la Cortes*. The silencing did not work, since “rumors of the debate became rumors of legislation abolishing slavery.” Larry Jensen, *Children of Colonial Despotism: Press, Politics, and Culture in Cuba, 1790-1840* (Tampa: University Presses of Florida, 1988), 38. 1812 was also the year of the so-called “Aponte Conspiracy,” a series of slave uprisings on the island that led the colonial government to arrest, torture, and execute hundreds of enslaved and free blacks. Colonial authorities accused José Antonio Aponte, a free “colored” artisan, to be the leader mainly because of his “libro de pinturas,” which they saw as the conspiracy’s grand scheme.

Manzano mentions the Cádiz Constitution of 1812 as a mere temporal reference, but we cannot help but wonder if this attempted escape was related to the rumors circulating on the island at the time about the abolition of slavery. As it is situated in the narrative, however, this rebellious act functions as more evidence of Manzano's misfortunes and as a temporal marker from when his life took a turn for the worst: he was in so much suffering that he even tried to escape.

The second time Manzano escapes is when his manuscript ends. While he is waiting for the overseer's arrival to punish him for dropping a barrel full of water, another servant of the house tells him that he should not be living such a hard life: “‘*Hombre,*’ what, you don't have shame to be going through so much suffering? Any *bozal* is better treated than you. A fine mulatto, with as many skills as you at the moment will find someone to buy you.” [‘*Hombre, ¿qué, tú no tienes vergüenza para estar pasando tanto trabajo<s>? Cualquiera negro bozal está mejor tratado que tu. Un mulatico fino, con tantas habilidades como tú al momento hallará quien lo compre*’].⁷² In this much-commented passage, the servant convinces Manzano to run away to the Capitán General in Havana and denounce the cruel treatment inflicted by his mistress. As a result, said the servant, Manzano could “salir libre.” After much consideration, Manzano grabs a horse and leaves after midnight, arriving at what was supposed to be the second part of his autobiography: “what has happened to me, we will see in the second part of this story” [*lo que me ha sucedido, luego lo veremos en la segunda parte que sigue a esta historia*].⁷³ We

About the context of the “Aponte Conspiracy,” José Luciano Franco says that the numbers 37 and 38 of the *Diario de sesiones de la Corte* did circulate around Havana and were known by Aponte himself, through reports by the Catalan Pedro Huguet. Franco also adds that Aponte and his group circulated rumors that the Spanish king had liberated all slaves, interpreting the discussions in Cádiz as promulgated legislation. José Luciano Franco, “Las conspiraciones de 1810 y 1812,” in *Las conspiraciones de 1810-1812* (Caracas: Fundación Biblioteca Ayacucho, 2010), 10-11.

⁷² Manzano, “Autobiografía,” 100

⁷³ This second part of Manzano's autobiography is considered lost. José Luciano Franco mentions that it might have fallen into the hands of Manzano's previous owners.

now know that this escape in 1817 did not lead to freedom, but to a new master, don Tello de Mantilla, and to the publication of his poems in the collection *Poesías líricas* in 1821.⁷⁴

These two fugitive acts, however, do not erase the dominant tone in Manzano's autobiography, which is that of melancholy. In reading Manzano's account in light of Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia" (1918), Aching claims that Manzano's evidence "corroborate[s] some of Freud's findings" but that there is something "inherently weird" about Manzano's melancholy. On the one hand, Freud's clinical melancholia includes a tendency to self-reproach and a delight in public self-denigration, which would be a redirection to the self from the reproach of a loved object about which mourning was not possible. Manzano, on the other hand, does the exact opposite. He insists on performing for others his exceptional skills in different kinds of creative and useful activities, from painting to writing to sewing to taking care of the elderly. These skills, as Branche and others have claimed, would posit Manzano as a subject deserving of freedom, ready to be part of the growing population of free blacks in Havana. Why does Manzano not show any tendency to self-denigration? To Aching, Manzano's eagerness to publicly display his abilities would stem from "a melancholic confrontation with his enslavement."⁷⁵ That is, if slavery requires constant control, discipline, and demonstrations of paternalism, it then precludes the enslaved person from internalizing these same mechanisms and, therefore, from displaying the self-denigration that Freud identifies in clinical melancholia. Instead, Manzano associates melancholy with creative impulses which Aching ultimately sees as acts of resistance.

It is not surprising that Manzano's melancholy does not fit Freud's definition, since "Mourning and Melancholia" was written almost a century after Manzano's autobiography. As

⁷⁴ William Luis, "Cronología," in *Autobiografía del esclavo poeta y otros escritos*, 75.

⁷⁵ Aching, *Freedom from Liberation*, 99

other mental illnesses or conditions, melancholy is not a fixed, ahistorical entity but rather an ever-changing classification that “makes up people” and is made by people throughout time.⁷⁶ Since melancholia has been part of medical literature long before Freud, it therefore seems more relevant to read Manzano’s melancholy through the lenses of what *he* might have understood as such. Nevertheless, I bring up Aching’s reading of Manzano’s autobiography because it provides a generative insight on the relationship between melancholy and “creative impulses” as he calls it, or “aesthetic sensibility” as I call it. While I agree that because of this association Manzano’s melancholy can be understood as resistance, my main concern is to examine the ways in which this aesthetic sensibility informs Manzano’s conceptions of slavery and freedom. How does freedom appear in Manzano’s writings?

Enslaved Verses

We have thus far established that, according to Manzano’s autobiographical text and letters to Domingo del Monte, his poetical production stemmed directly from his life experience, or, more particularly, his life as an enslaved person. As he declares himself, “poetry in all events of my life supplied me with verses analogous to my situation, either prosperous or adverse” [*la poesía en todos los trámites de mi vida me sumistraba versos análogos a mi situación, ya próspera ya adversa.*]⁷⁷ But it was not only in his autobiography that Manzano explored his own and his possible readership’s feelings. Indeed, his poetry is saturated with gestures to sensibility with the aim of sensitizing his audience. There is no doubt that it worked, because it was precisely “the poor slave’s very heartfelt and melancholic [verses]” [*los muy sentidos y*

⁷⁶ I am borrowing here Ian Hacking’s definition of mental disorders as states. Ian Hacking, “Kinds of People: Moving Targets: British Academy Lecture,” in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, Vol. 151 (Oxford: British Academy, 2007).

⁷⁷ Manzano, “Autobiografía,” 89.

melancólicos [versos] del pobre esclavo] that charmed del Monte, according to del Monte himself in a later text.⁷⁸ Del Monte admired Manzano's poetry because of its "most profound native sense of humanity" [*más profundo sentimiento de humanidad nativa*]; because "the principles of my aesthetics and philosophy are more in line with the laments torn from the heart of the oppressed" [*los principios de mi estética y de mi filosofía, se avienen más con el lamento arrancado del corazón del oprimido*].⁷⁹

In his 48 known poems, Manzano addresses elements one would find in most nineteenth-century Romantic and Neoclassical poetry: God, music, death, life, loved ones, flowers, time. Embedded in Manzano's engagement with the period's trends and aspirations," however, is his lingering melancholy.⁸⁰ Indeed, even Manzano's most "innocent" early poems display a gloomy undertone. For instance, in "La Cucuyera," published in the *Diario de la Habana* in 1830, a young girl traps a firefly beetle (the *cucuyo*) with the device (the *cucuyera*) fabricated by her lover, thus making the fascinating insect, once "free as a butterfly" [*libre cual mariposa*], her prisoner: "happily in prison/ it shines delightfully" [*en la prisión contento/ brilla que es un regalo*].⁸¹

⁷⁸ In this text, del Monte is comparing Manzano to Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés, known as Plácido, who was a free poet of color and celebrated author. Del Monte acknowledges Plácido's "round and harmonious" verses [*versos rotundos y armoniosos*], which were free of the "grammatical incorrections and faults of prosody" [*incorrecciones gramaticales y las faltas de prosodia*] one would find in Manzano's poetry, but prefers the "slave's sad songs" [*los cantos tristes del esclavo*] to the "nug canors (simple though harmonious verses) of the free mulatto" [*nug canors (versos simples, aunque armoniosos) del mulato libre*]. Domingo del Monte and José Antonio Fernandes de Castro, *Escritos de Domingo del Monte* (Havana: Cultural, 1929), 150.

⁷⁹ Domingo del Monte and José Antonio Fernandes de Castro, *Escritos de Domingo del Monte*, 150.

⁸⁰ Luis, "Introducción," 61.

⁸¹ With "La Cucuyera," Manzano is part of the generation of poets who dedicated verses to the island's endemic nature. As Cintio Vitier states, the *cucuyo* (which Manzano spells *cucuyo*) "ha tenido fortuna poética." Vitier mentions poems by Valdés Machuca, Francisco Iturrondo, and, of course Manzano. It is no coincidence that Manzano knew Machuca and Iturrondo and their poetic productions very well. Allegedly, it was Iturrondo who introduced Manzano to Del Monte, and we know that Machuca was one of the orchestrators of Manzano's manumission. Vitier, *Lo cubano en la poesía*, 52.

The trapped firefly in “La Cucuyera” encapsulates some of the most recurring themes in Manzano’s *oeuvre*: freedom, captivity, suffering, and the impossibility of redemption. In “Un sueño,” a later poem dedicated to his brother, Manzano narrates a dream of flight in which he flies to Matanzas in order to rescue his younger brother, who is still enslaved at the El Molino plantation. The escape seems successful at first, until Manzano gets caught in a storm and loses grip of his sibling. He ultimately wakes up “seeking between my arms/ that which was taken by a dream” [*buscando entre mis brazos/ lo que llevó un sueño*].⁸² Wings, birds, and flight permeate Manzano’s poetry as a metaphor for freedom and escape from bondage, particularly in references to the myth of Icarus and Daedalus.⁸³

A poem Manzano read in Del Monte’s literary circle in 1836—the now famous “Treinta años”—is one of the most emblematic examples of his work. In this sonnet, the poetic voice looks back at their thirty years of sorrowful life: “Thirty years it has been since I’ve known this earth:/ Thirty years it has been that in a sorrowful state/ Sad misfortunes everywhere assail me” [*Treinta años ha que conocí la tierra:/ Treinta años ha que en gemidor estado/ Triste infortunio por doquier me asalta*].⁸⁴ His past is a place of “terror” and “suerte tan impía,” and the future does not seem to carry any sort of hope: “But nothing is for me the cruel war/ That in vain sighs I have endured/ If I calculate—oh God—that time that I have left” [*Mas nada es para mí la dura guerra/ Que en vano suspirar, he soportado/ Si la calculo ¡oh Dios!, con la que falta*].⁸⁵

As previously stated, Manzano’s reading of the poem was so effective in mobilizing the audience’s sympathy that it led del Monte’s circle to collect the required amount of pesos to

⁸² Juan Francisco Manzano, “Un sueño,” in Manzano and Luis, *Autobiografía del esclavo poeta y otros escritos*, 150.

⁸³ See Irene Gómez-Castellano, “Punto de fuga: ‘visión panorámica’ en ‘Un sueño’ de Juan Francisco Manzano,” *A contra corriente* 16, no. 1 (Fall 2018) 71-99.

⁸⁴ Juan Francisco Manzano, “Poesías,” in *Autobiografía del poeta esclavo y otros escritos*, 137-8.

⁸⁵ Manzano, “Poesías,” 138.

manumit the poet. In probing the reasons why this particular sonnet caused such impression among the Creole intellectuals, Aching suggests that it “contains ample allusions to adversities . . . that are sufficiently abstract in the sonnet to appeal to an audience beyond those who would have suffered actual bondage.”⁸⁶ Indeed, the poetic voice does not specify the kind of sufferings they had endured in their thirty years. I would argue, however, that it was the ambivalence of Manzano’s verses that allowed for such a powerful effect on the audience. On the one hand, Manzano’s reading created a close connection between the verses and his own subjectivity as an enslaved subject. On the other, the abstractness of the suffering he depicted also expresses the “universal” character of the lyric in Hegelian terms, to which his white, bourgeois audience could also relate.

This abstractness is precisely what Madden erased in his translation of “Treinta años,” fabricating an explicit connection to slavery in Manzano’s verses. Rather than a sonnet, the English translation is composed of four quartets, the last two of which end with a direct reference to Manzano’s enslaved condition—a feature that is absent in the original poem:

Treinta años ha que conocí la tierra:	I have known this sad life thirty years,
Treinta años ha que en gemidor estado	And to me, thirty years it has been
Triste infortunio por doquier me asalta.	Of suff’ring, of sorrow and tears,
	Ev’ry day of its <i>bondage</i> I’ve seen.
Mas nada es para mí la dura guerra	
Que en vano suspirar, he soportado	But 'tis nothing the past—or the pains,
Si la calculo ¡oh Dios!, con la que falta. ⁸⁷	Hitherto I have struggled to bear,
	When I think, oh, my God! on the <i>chains</i> ,

⁸⁶ Aching, *Freedom from Liberation*, 55-56.

⁸⁷ Juan Francisco Manzano, “Poesías,” 137-8.

That I know I'm yet destined to wear.⁸⁸

The relative openness of meaning in Manzano's original becomes much narrower with the added words "bondage" and "chains," immediately recognizable in any abolitionist poetry of the nineteenth century. Likewise, if in Spanish Manzano's poem does not name the "dura guerra" that his life had been, thus allowing the reader/listener to fill in the gaps, the English translation leaves no room for other interpretations. The case of "Treinta años" illustrates one of the most common approaches to Manzano's work that started with the poet's acquaintance with Domingo del Monte. This approach suggests that Manzano's poetry has the sole merit of having been written by a self-taught, (formerly) enslaved subject.⁸⁹ Even considering the particularities of translating poetry in comparison to prose, it is safe to say that Madden instrumentalizes Manzano's poem in his goal to fit the poet's work within the expectations, formulas, and tropes of British abolitionist literature.⁹⁰ In other words, Manzano's lyric verses become exclusively the expression of an individual—enslaved—subjectivity.

Yet, although "Treinta años" does not refer directly to slavery, all of those who were present at the Delmontian meeting in 1836 knew exactly Manzano's social status. They themselves read Manzano as a "poeta esclavo," and their proximity to the subject was more than

⁸⁸ Juan Francisco Manzano, "Thirty Years," in Juan Francisco Manzano, *The Life and Poems of a Cuban Slave*, ed. Edward Mullen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 106.

⁸⁹ Of course, some readings of Manzano avoid this reductionist take. José Lezama Lima includes Manzano's "Al reloj adelantado" in his anthology of Cuban poetry. See José Lezama Lima, *Antología de la poesía cubana* (Havana: Consejo Nacional de Cultura, 1965).

⁹⁰ See for instance Stephen Ahern, *Affect and Abolition in the Anglo-Atlantic, 1770-1830* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2013); and Brycchan Carey, *British Abolitionism and the Rhetoric of Sensibility: Writing, Sentiment, and Slavery, 1760-1807* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: MacMillan, 2005).

enough to fill the blanks left by the poem. As Aching argues, unlike British abolitionists, Cuban (and Brazilian, as a matter of fact) reformists “were certainly not vicarious but actual witnesses to the torments and distressed lives of their slaves.”⁹¹ Most of them were slave owners themselves.⁹² In this sense, while it may be true that direct references to the institution of slavery appear in no more than a handful of Manzano’s poems, the image of servitude is everywhere. It is, as we have seen above, in the image of the trapped firefly in “La Cucuyera;” or in the gardener who is enslaved to love in “El hortelano,” who claims: “When some blooming flower/ Dims the sun, I say:/ That is what love did to me/ In its tyrannical slavery” [*Cuando alguna flor lozana/ Amortigua el sol, yo digo:/ Tal hiciera amor conmigo/ En su esclavitud tirana*].⁹³

The reason why there are so few references to slavery, or why they appear as metaphors in Manzano’s published poems, might be simply because of the heavy colonial censorship that regulated the island’s press and incoming publications from the late eighteenth to the second half of the nineteenth centuries, when “*censorship* and *slavery* were the two faces of the same coin.”⁹⁴ Colonial authorities censored publications printed in Cuba, forbade the circulation of certain publications coming from other Caribbean islands and even from Spain itself, controlled the information published on Cuban periodicals, and even monitored correspondence between creole intellectuals such as del Monte and his circle. This scenario is evidence of a more epistemological dispute between, on the one hand, the “*ideología de las luces*” embodied by organizations such as the Sociedad Patriótica (in the late eighteenth century), the Sociedad de Amigos del País (early nineteenth century), and then the Academia Cubana de Literatura, and, on

⁹¹ Aching, *Freedom from Liberation*, 55.

⁹² Del Monte was married to Rosa Aldama, daughter of planter Miguel de Aldama, and owned a hundred slaves and a 900-acre estate.

⁹³ Manzano, “Poesías,” 135-6.

⁹⁴ Karim Ghorbal, “Peligros, controles y silencios atlánticos: censura y esclavitud en Cuba,” *Dirāsāt Hispānicas*, no. 2 (2015): 26. My translation.

the other, the ecclesiastical power of the Church and the sovereign power of the Spanish Crown. In the late eighteenth century, this dispute was enacted by the Sociedad Patriótica's periodical, *Papel periódico* (1791-1805), and the bishop of Havana, Felipe Joseph de Trespalacios y Verdeja. While the *Papel periódico* would place Cuba "in the degree of Enlightenment that we admire in Europe" [*en el grado de ilustración en que admiramos a la Europa*], according to one of its founders José Agustín de Caballero, the bishop of Havana made efforts to censor articles that went beyond his own idea of enlightenment.⁹⁵ According to Larry Jensen, Trespalacios y Verdeja censored articles "on the importance of philosophical study and the wisdom of the Greeks" as well articles on the importance of "liberty" in the abstract sense.⁹⁶ In 1794, clearly informed by the slave upheavals in Haiti as well as by the aftermaths of the French revolution, the bishop stated in correspondence with colonial authorities that less liberty meant "less corruption of our customs and fewer revolutions."⁹⁷

Until the 1830s, however, colonial censorship went almost hand in hand with the Cuban sugarocracy that occupied the seats of the Sociedad de Amigos del País and who owned most of the periodicals published in the island. Cuban elites were so afraid of slave rebellions and insurgency that they did not print much that was considered "radical" or "revolutionary." When Miguel Tacón was appointed the new general captain of the island in 1834, however, he sharpened the mechanisms of censorship that controlled all publications that entered or were printed on the island. Tacón was particularly worried about the influence of North American and British abolitionists movements in Cuba, in a moment when Britain was heightening its pressure

⁹⁵ José Agustín de Caballero, "Informe a la Sociedad Patriótica sobre el Papel Periódico desde su fundación," in *Obras* (Havana: Imagen Contemporanea, 1999), 248.

⁹⁶ Larry Jensen, *Children of Colonial Despotism: Press, Politics, and Culture in Cuba, 1790-1840* (Tampa: University Presses of Florida, 1988): 11.

⁹⁷ Jensen, *Children of Colonial Despotism*, 11.

against the slave trade all over the Atlantic world, and abolitionist materials translated into Spanish were finding their way to Cuba, sometimes through the British West Indies.⁹⁸ Two Royal Orders from 1839 and 1840 emphasized the need to forbid “la introducción y propagación de escritos ... susceptibles de despertar el orgullo y la impaciencia de la población de color, por temor a que los esclavos de Cuba entrasen en contacto con los negros de Jamaica y Haití.”⁹⁹ But the control and censorship over antislavery publications also aimed at writings produced within the island, including even royal decrees and laws from the Spanish Crown itself.

Censorship imposed by colonial authorities as well as a high degree of self-censorship were definitely two important reasons why the few of Manzano’s poems containing more or less direct references to slavery remained unpublished and virtually unknown. Although unpublished, these poems offer relevant insights into Manzano’s own conceptions of servitude and freedom. Particularly, what we find in his unpublished verses are a constant articulation between slavery and love. This is most salient in two of Manzano’s poems: “La visión del poeta. Compuesta en un Ingenio de fabricar azúcar” and “La esclava ausente.”

The Plantation as Hell

Written in the 1820s or 1830s, “La visión del poeta” counterposes the eerie, spectral landscape of the sugar mill, with a Neoclassical onirical experience in field full of flowers. It is Manzano’s longest poem, with 52 stanzas in *endecasílabos* in *octava real*; that is, eleven poetic syllables in an ABABABCC rhyme scheme.¹⁰⁰ It can be divided in three parts: the first eight

⁹⁸ Ghorbal, “Peligros, controles y silencios atlánticos,” 40-1.

⁹⁹ Ghorbal, “Peligros, controles y silencios atlánticos,” 6.

¹⁰⁰ Originally Italian, the *octava real* had been introduced in Spanish by Juan Boscán in the sixteenth century. It became popularized after Alonso de Ercilla’s epic “La araucana.” According to Antonio Quillis, the *octava real* was common in the Spanish baroque in long, narrative poems but was also disseminated in the neoclassical genre. See Antonio Quillis. *Métrica española* (Madrid: Ediciones Alcalá,

stanzas describe the poetic voice's emotional state at the moment of writing; stanzas 9-22 depict a Cuban sugar mill; and stanzas 23-52 narrate a neoclassic oniric experience.

In *Lo cubano en la poesía*, Cintio Vitier argues that Cuban poets in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century would transplant the “neoclassical idea of nature to our island, which is trying to become aware of itself” [*idea neoclásica de la naturaleza a nuestra isla, que está precisamente tratando de cobrar conciencia de sí*].¹⁰¹ The result, according to Vitier, is the production of a series of bucolic poems where there is a gradual approximation to the Cuban fauna and flora.¹⁰² In “La visión del poeta,” this gradual approximation to the Cuban environment does not happen in the form of endemic fruits and plants. Rather, the “Cubanness” in “La visión del poeta” is in the transplantation of neoclassical ideas into the framework of the sugar plantation.

“La visión del poeta” is in fact clearly informed by the Spanish neoclassical poet Juan Bautista Arriaza, particularly by his poem “El templo de Venus [canto lírico],” published in Arriaza’s 1803 *Poesías líricas*—the same title as the one Manzano chose for his own collection of poems two decades later. According to Manzano, Arriaza was his main poetic “guide” [*guía*], “whom I always imitated, figuring that by looking like him I was already a poet [*a quien imitando siempre me figuraba que con parecerme a él ya era poeta*].¹⁰³ The parallels between Manzano’s “La visión del poeta” and Arriaza’s “El templo de Venus” encompass form, narrative structure and imagery. Still, what interests me here are precisely the changes that happen when

1969), 102, 106-7. As a neoclassical poem, “La visión del poeta” thus follows the Spanish tradition of the *octava real*.

¹⁰¹ Vitier, *Lo cubano en la poesía*, 47.

¹⁰² Vitier mentions specifically Manuel Zequeira y Arango (1764-1846) and his ode to the pineapple. Although Vitier claims that the pineapple is a “vegetal indiano,” it is actually endemic to South America (and not the Caribbean). See Vitier, *Lo cubano en la poesía*, 46-49.

¹⁰³ Manzano, “Autobiografía,” 90.

Manzano transposes the formal elements and tropologies from a late-eighteenth century poem to the Cuban plantation.

The poem starts with the poetic voice comparing himself with a nightingale singing for a last time before death:

When at the top of a tall pine tree
The nightingale warns he is about to die
He prostrates himself to greet with a sad hymn
That last moment of his death;
And suffering from his wretched destiny
Celebrates the same fatal fate
And pretends to sing, but he cries
The terrible pain that devours him.

*Quando en la cima allá de un alto pino
Para morir el ruiseñor se advierte
Se postra a saludar con triste himno
Aquel postrer instante de su muerte;
Y doliente del mísero destino
Celebra el mismo tan funesta suerte
Y aparenta que canta, pero llora
El terrible dolor que le devora.¹⁰⁴*

¹⁰⁴ Manzano, "Poesías," 175.

Like the expiring nightingale, the poetic voice laments the sufferings he endures, describing them as “a thousand arrows” [*mil saetas*] that aim for his heart. The suffering peaks in the seventh and eight stanzas, when the poetic voice realizes that he cannot control his miserable fate as much as a captain cannot control their ship amidst the irate viciousness “the terrible raging sea” [*de la terrible mar embravecida*]. Hopeless, the poetic voice abandons itself to melancholy and despair—two of the most common themes in Manzano’s poems:

In this way, fatal melancholy
Haunts my afflicted hours
With my sad omens, which stubbornly
My miserable thoughts feed.
Deprived of rest and joy,
This desert, my affliction increases,
With no other choice in my violent sorrow,
Than surrender completely to my torment.

De este modo, fatal melancolía
Mis afligidas horas atormenta
Con mis presagios tristes, que a porfía
El pensamiento mísero fomenta.
Privado de reposo y alegría,
Este desierto, mi aflicción aumenta,
Sin otro arbitrio en mi pesar violento,

*Que rendirme del todo a mi tormento.*¹⁰⁵

In a Romantic move, nature in this poem mimics the poetic voice's inner world. In these first stanzas, "La visión del poeta" is remarkably similar to Arriaza's "El templo de Venus." The figure of the dying birds—Manzano chooses a nightingale, Arriaza had a swan [*cisne*]¹⁰⁶—express the near-death state of the poetic voices. Still, if Arriaza's suffering is abstract and existential, the situation is different in Manzano's poem. As the title suggests, the poem depicts a sugar mill, whose image becomes clearer in stanzas 9-22. The poem becomes gradually more eerie and morbid, entering the spaces that comprise a plantation in a movement that mimics a descent into hell. The poetic voice starts with the landscape: the open fields [*vasto campo*] have no flowers or greens; it is pale and "sin ventura." The whole scenario reminisces death, which is epitomized in the outline of the hill: "The rugged skeleton mount / With its austereness and unprecedented spectacle/ Seems to be moaning in an urn / With taciturn nature" [*El escabroso monte en esqueleto/ Su adustez y espectáculo inaudito/ Parece estar gimiendo en una urna/ Con la naturaleza taciturna*].¹⁰⁷ If in Arriaza's poem the eerie nature is produced by the poetic gaze, which converts natural pleasures into "sources of disgust" [*fuentes de disgusto*], in Manzano's poem the sterile and terrifying nature has a real referent. That is, the "monte en esqueleto" is a material product of Cuban modernity, whose plantation system had started to develop at the end of the eighteenth century, destroying forests to obtain the necessary wood to produce sugar. As stated by the sugar master of one of the largest plantations on the island in the nineteenth

¹⁰⁵ Manzano, "Poesías," 177.

¹⁰⁶ The verbs and imagery in these first stanzas are also very similar to Arriaza's poem, which says "Cual solitario Cisne,/que mirando/ Próximo de morir el trance fuerte,/ Con canto triste, armonioso y blando/ Se pone él mismo á celebrar su muerte..." Juan Bautista Arriaza, *Poesías líricas* (Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1822), 20.

¹⁰⁷ Manzano, "Poesías," 178

century, José Ignacio Echegoyen, “the need for firewood on a plantation is frightening. Where are there enough forests?” [*espanta la necesidad de leña de un ingenio. ¿Y dónde hay montes que basten?*].¹⁰⁸

In this sterile landscape, there is no life, only voices that moan and scream, “Echoes of confusion, deaf lamentations,/ Weeping voices, afflicted woes/ That reproduce gloomy tones” [*Ecos de confusión, sordos lamentos,/ Voces de llanto, ayes afligidos/ Que reproducen tétricos acentos*]. They are the voices of the enslaved, who represent “Of human misery the portents” [*De la humana miseria los portentos*].¹⁰⁹ The screaming voices of the enslaved open the way to the actual *molino*, the sugar mill, where the sugar cane is crushed. Inside the *molino*, the poetic voice encounters a monster as the vision becomes more and more hellish.

The monster is the *trapiche*, the machine that extracts the cane juice. This monster-*trapiche* creaks and grinds with its “octagonal turns” [*octogónicas vueltas*] and “a hundred bronze teeth” [*cientas muelas de bronce*] which devour everything that enters its mouth. The monster also drools, and its drool is the juices from the crushed sugar cane, which slowly flows down the monster’s feet “in a thick vein” [*en gruesa vena*] until it hardens and becomes “hard stone” [*piedra dura*].¹¹⁰ In the modernization of the Cuban plantations in the first half of the nineteenth century, the *trapiche* was one of the machines that suffered a “more radical transformation between 1800-1860,” with the adoption of metal instead of plain wood, and the construction of horizontal *trapiches* instead of vertical ones.¹¹¹ These new, modernized *trapiches* were fabricated by Britain and the United States were widespread in Cuba by the early nineteenth century, and by the 1820s most of the sugar mills in Cuba were industrialized or semi-

¹⁰⁸ Moreno Friginals, *El ingenio: Complejo económico social cubano del azúcar*, 188.

¹⁰⁹ Manzano, “Poesías,” 178.

¹¹⁰ Manzano, “Poesías,” 178-9.

¹¹¹ Moreno Friginals, *El ingenio: Complejo económico social cubano del azúcar*, 173.

industrialized. Knowing that this poem is from the 1820s or 1830s, it is likely then that the monster trapiche described here is one of the modernized ones, especially because it is made of metal (“muelas de bronce”).¹¹² Hell in “La visión del poeta” is industrialized, modern, made with international capital.

Following the process of producing sugar, the poetic voice then moves to the *casa de caldera*. It is where the raw cane juice (called guarapo) was deposited, clarified and concentrated by heat in huge caldrons (calderas). We come even closer to hell, because here there is fire.

When the bright hours retreat
And the darkness of the night ascends,
Ten burning vaults look at each other
Whose long-distance ardors offend
The dry *cuábas* that are thrown into its center
In its entrails they ignite with fury
The oppressed fire whips in the prison,
It sparks, bursts, and red flame sprouts.

*Quando las claras horas se retiran
Y las tinieblas de la noche ascienden,
Diez bóvedas ardiendo aquí se miran
Cuyos ardores a gran trecho ofenden
Las secas cuábas que a su centro tiran*

¹¹² It is likely that this trapiche was animal-powered and not steam-powered, which was an even more modern invention, becoming more widespread in Cuba around the 1860s. See Moreno Friginals, *El ingenio: Complejo económico social cubano del azúcar*, 177.

En sus entrañas con furor se encienden

El fuego opreso la prisión azota,

*Chispea, estalla y roja llama brota.*¹¹³

The *cuába* is a common type of tree in the island, which adds an “autoctonomous” element to the poem and situates it even more in Cuba. The fire becomes even more intense in the following stanza, as the poem gets closer not only to hell but also to Neoclassical references. The *calderas* are “the hearths of Etna/ That burn Teseo’s hard soul” [*del Etna los fogones/ Que abrasan de Teseo el alma dura*].¹¹⁴ The landscape starts blending in the hellish soundscape: there are no “campestres sonos;” nor the singing of “cantoras aves.”

Who are the ones putting wood into the fire, sugar cane in the trapiche, listening to those sounds? Curiously, there are no agents in these stanzas. The trapiche is a monster that devours “cuanto en su poce pone el que la llena,” an undertermined subject throws the *cuábas* into the fire (“Las secas *cuábas* que a su centro tiran”); and the passive voice does not specify who inhabits that space (“No se sienten aquí campestres sonos”). Unable to mention slavery by its name, Manzano resorts to a detailed description of hell to describe life on a sugar plantation. Any nineteenth-century reader would know (as do we), however, that the souls suffering in that hell were enslaved.

In the fifteenth stanza there appears another element: the overseer. The poetic voice associates the *mayoral* with his scream (a screamed order, one would think), thus expanding the

¹¹³ Manzano, “Poesías,” 179.

¹¹⁴ Manzano, “Poesías,” 179. This is a reference to Greek mythology: Theseus and Pirithous travelled to the underworld in order to abduct Persephone Hades’s wife. As they sat on a rock to rest, they became one with the rock (“el alma dura” to which Manzano refers here), being surrounded by the Erynies, who were carrying torches.

hellish soundscape of the ingenio: “An overseer with ample right/ With a throat of an infernal calf/ Launches a cry from his horrible chest/ Dismaying the mounts, shaking the hill” [*Un mayor vieras de ámplito derecho/ Cuya garganta de infernal becerro,/ Si lanza un grito de su horrendo pecho/ Consterna el monte, se estremece el cerro*].¹¹⁵ The overseer comes with his dog, called “*Gran Nerón*,” and his mark is his disavowal for the natural law: “*Está con pecho de mortal dureza/ De la ley natural el fuero hollando*.”¹¹⁶ In a brief yet rich analysis of this poem, Gómez-Castellano calls for the importance of reading Manzano’s Neoclassical motifs and style in a context when these elements had a heightened rhetorical function for chattel slavery. Pro-slavery ideologues would resort to ancient Greece and Rome to justify nineteenth-century chattel slavery, such as the reformist Antonio Saco (Del Monte’s close friend).¹¹⁷ In the hellish *ingenio*, “el tópico horaciano del *beatus ille* se contrapone literalmente a la realidad de la plantación azucarera,” and the satirical overseer (in the sense that he resembles Satyr) inverts “el tópico cristiano del pastor que cuida a su grey.”¹¹⁸

The image of the overseer and his infernal scream bring the poetic voice to see himself in actual hell, far away from God and his creation:

It appears that I am deep inside,
 Where Satan is in his eternal exile,
 Whose caverns in that world
 Are infamous enclosures of the horrendous hell.
 This whole filthy place is like

¹¹⁵ Manzano, “Poesías,” 179.

¹¹⁶ Manzano, “Poesías,” 180. Nero, the fifth Roman emperor, was known for his tyranny.

¹¹⁷ Gómez-Castellano cites Saco’s *Historia de la esclavitud* to justify this argument, in which Saco claims that slavery in the Greek and Roman societies did not foreclose their importance as models of freedom. Gómez-Castellano, “Punto de fuga,” 84-5.

¹¹⁸ Gómez-Castellano, “Punto de fuga,” 85.

The dim caves of the underworld.

*Tal me figuro estar en lo profundo,
Do está Satán en su destierro eterno,
Cuyas cavernas son en aquel mundo
Recinto infausto del horrendo infierno.
Igual en todo este lugar inmundo
A las soturnas cuevas del averno.*¹¹⁹

In hell, suddenly something odd happens. The landscape of the poem radically changes as the poetic voice falls asleep after a long meditation and suddenly finds himself in a landscape that is the complete opposite of the hellish scenario of the *ingenio*. Instead of a dry, dead field, there is a “prado deleitoso y halagüeño” where flowers and green grass abound. Instead of dead silence and emptiness, the poetic voice sees all kinds of animals and hears birds singing their “deleitosa melodía.” If the section on the sugar mill codifies neoclassical trope in the landscape of the plantation, here we are completely removed from nineteenth-century Cuba and find ourselves in an anacreontic garden. Here, Manzano goes back to Arriaza.¹²⁰ However, while Arriaza’s poetic voice does not stay there for more than a brief moment before he enters Venus’s temple, Manzano’s poem stays in the exterior. After the claustrophobic experience in the hellish sugar mill, the green and blooming fields represent not only an aesthetic change, but also a phenomenological shift. We could not be further removed from the plantation.

¹¹⁹ Manzano, “Poesías,” 180.

¹²⁰ In both poems, the poetic voices find themselves suddenly transported to a “prado deleitoso y halagüeño” in Manzano’s poem, or to a “florido campo de Cíteres” in Arriaza’s.

In such a perfect scenario, the human hand becomes useless both in its attempts at artistic mimesis and reproductive labor. Painting, for instance, cannot reach nature's perfection: "The brush dares, and before its copy/ Painting lacks art itself,/ Since the perfect painting would be/ If nature copied itself" [*Atrévase el pincel, y ante su copia/ Fáltale el arte mismo a la pintura,/ Pues el cuadro perfecto sí quedara/ Si ella misma, a sí misma se copiara*].¹²¹ If nature can copy itself in the most perfect way, there is no need for the human hand to imperfectly reproduce its creations. The same happens with physical labor, represented through the index of sweat: "De sus bellezas vierte allí natura/ La copia en que atesora sus primores,/ Sin esperar con régimen clemente/ El salado sudor de humana frente."¹²² We can understand labor in this stanza as agricultural labor, since it is another kind of mimetic activity whose goal is to "copy" (that is, reproduce) nature. But nature is so perfect that it does not require external copies. It makes sense: not working is indeed the perfect scenario for a subject whose legal status forces them to sweat in the hell of the *ingenio*.

The poetic voice stands in awe, contemplating this beautiful scenario. He then hears music: it was a celebration of Venus with all the neoclassical instruments: fluit, lyre, zither. He is then approached by a "beautiful deity" [*linda deidad*] who talks to him, acknowledging the sufferings he experienced in the plantation and reaffirming that he now stood in an opposite scenario:

From your miserable wild fields
You came to step on this ground,
Where peace reigns, and not the plague
Of the evils that cause your sleeplessness

¹²¹ Manzano, "Poesías," 182.

¹²² Manzano, "Poesías," 183.

I am Truth herself, my asylum is here
And for giving you some consolation of love,
I want you to go where you, lover, can see
To the object with whom you so want to be.

*Desde tu campo mísero y agreste
Viniste a pisar en este suelo,
Donde reina la paz, y no la peste
De los males que causan tu desvelo
Soy la misma Verdad, mi asilo es éste
Y por darte de amor algún consuelo,
Quiero que vayas donde amante veas
Al objeto que tanto ver deseas.*¹²³

She then takes him to see the object he so desires—love. It is Venus herself, “the mother of placid loves” [*la madre de los plácidos amores*]. He observes from afar, hidden by a “álamo coposo” and afraid to get closer. The heart, the main agent behind all these oniric happenstances, is filled with love, and “burned in ardent desires” [*en ardientes deseos se abrasaba*].¹²⁴ William Luis reads this section of the poem as profane love saving Manzano.¹²⁵ I would agree that it is profane love, but I am not sure that it offers any salvation.

¹²³ Manzano, “Poesías,” 185.

¹²⁴ Manzano, “Poesías,” 188.

¹²⁵ Luis, “Introducción,” 67.

Observing a sort of ritual in which different individuals approach Venus with their amorous misfortunes, the poetic voice understands that there is no justice in love: one man offers Venus a glass of tears as proof of his suffering; a woman revokes her promise to her beloved, “showing that in such a cruel decision/ All love changes” [*mostrando en tan cruel resolución/ Que todo amor contiene variación*]. A jealous man cries on the floor before Venus, who leaves him “condemned/ to the sentence of loving without being loved” [*condenado/ a la pena de amar sin ser amado*].¹²⁶

Suddenly, the poetic voice sees among these unhappy souls someone he knows: his Lesbia.¹²⁷ As the others, she stands before Venus and tells her about the cause of her misfortune:

A tremendous decision causes my suffering!
From a father the influence and power
That commands me to foresake without reason
The one I thought to call *dueño mío*.
Nothing softens the paternal heart:
My will is subject to whim;
Nor the spring of tears that I shed
Leaves me an uncertain ray of hope.

*Causa mi mal ¡tremenda decisión!,
De un padre la influencia y poderío
Que aborrecer me ordena sin razón*

¹²⁶ Manzano, “Poesías,” 189.

¹²⁷ According to William Luis (citing Roberto Friol), the Lesbia that often appears in Manzano’s poems is Marcelina Campos, the poet’s first wife. Luis, “Introducción,” 66.

Al que pensé llamar el dueño mío.
Nada ablanda el paterno corazón:
Sujeto está al capricho mi albedrío;
Ni el manantial de lágrimas que vierto
*Me dejan de esperanza un rayo incerto.*¹²⁸

Lesbia suffers because she cannot be with her lover—her *dueño mío*, her master. A masculine figure of authority separates them, ordering her to refuse her beloved. This figure is “a father” [*un padre*] who has “influence and power” [*influencia y poderío*]. But whose father? Lesbia does not say “mi padre,” but “un padre.” At this point Manzano’s autobiographic narrative may shed some light on the matter.

One of the most recurring features in Manzano’s autobiography is the reference to his masters and mistresses as family members. His first benevolent mistress is “mamá mía,” and don Nicolás, with whom he lives for a period of his life, loved him “not as a slave, but as a son, notwithstanding his young age” [*no como esclavo, sino como hijo, a pesar de su corta edad*].¹²⁹ In explaining these love demonstrations in Manzano’s narrative, Aching suggests that paternalism, “as a common practice and false ideology, rationalized relations between masters and slaves so that these relations might take on the appearance of being necessary and natural.”¹³⁰ As “false ideology” in the Marxist sense, therefore, it is possible that the figure of the father here is replacing the figure of the master. In forbidding the love between the poetic voice and Lesbia, this “father” brings the oneiric idyll to the hellish life, blurring the differences

¹²⁸ Manzano, “Poesías,” 190.

¹²⁹ Manzano, “Autobiografía,” 89.

¹³⁰ Aching, *Freedom from Liberation*, 73.

between life and dream. The cruelty of Delia's plight brings the poetic voice to the melancholic feeling he described in the first stanzas of the poem, blurring the distinctions between life and dream:

"Oh cruelty" I replied, and immediately

The elusive fugitive shadow flew,

Leaving a raw wound in my chest

.....

With hope almost lost,

How is it possible that I live in peace?

For when painting my cruel melancholy,

What a dream, it still seems to me.

"Oh crueldad" repuse, y enseguida

Voló la ilusa sombra fugitiva,

En mi pecho dejando cruda herida

.....

Con la esperanza casi ya perdida,

¿Cómo es posible que tranquilo viva?

Pues al pintar mi cruel melancolía,

Qué sueño, me parece todavía.¹³¹

¹³¹ Manzano, "Poesías," 190.

In order to take this line of reading further, let us focus on one apparently insignificant detail in these last stanzas: the way that Lesbia refers to her lover: “*dueño mío*,” in italics also in the original. Within slave societies, *dueño* usually refers to the slave owner. What we have here, therefore, is a double displacement through figurative language. The father figure replaces the master figure, and the *dueño* figure replaces the beloved.

In order to distangle this structure of metaphoric language that is built around the *dueño mío* in “La visión del poeta,” let us examine another of Manzano’s poems where we can find the same expression in a similar context.

Courtly Love and Matters of Property

Unpublished during Manzano’s life and dated 1823, “La esclava ausente” is a complaint of 114 verses of an enslaved woman to her slaver. It was one of the thirteen poems that del Monte gave to Madden before he left for England, but which Madden chose not to translate or publish. In fact, “La esclava ausente” remained unknown until Adriana Lewis Galanes discovered it at the Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid in the 1980s (Ms. 20.271).¹⁰ Although Galanes initially conjectured the possibility that the poem was penned by a woman who was in love with Manzano, or that it had been accidentally mixed with Manzano’s poems,¹³² Abdeslam Azougarh later confirmed through a letter from Del Monte to Madden mentioning the poem, that the author is in fact Manzano adopting a female poetic voice.¹³³

The reason for the woman’s laments is familiar to us: the separation from her (also enslaved) lover. It is one of Manzano’s most tenaciously antislavery productions, using legal, philosophical, religious, and sentimental language to address its main point—slavery is an evil

¹³² Lewis-Galanes, *Poesías de J. F. Manzano, esclavo en la isla de Cuba*, 103.

¹³³ Azougarh, “Destino y obra de Juan Francisco Manzano,” 37.

that breaks even the most virtuous and holiest of bonds, that of Romantic love, inspired by the medieval tradition of courtly love. The poetic voice affirms her own humanness through her ability to feel, and the owner's inhumanity through his insensibility and cruelty in keeping her in such a condition, that is, enslaved *and* far from her lover: "Harsh, inhumane master, horrible man!/ Why do you condemn me to such fate?" [*¡Dueño duro inhumano, hombre terrible! ¿Por qué a tan triste suerte me condenas?*].¹³⁴ In denouncing the evilness of slavery, we will see, the focus is not physical ailments inflicted upon the enslaved body, but rather the emotional consequences and sufferings of the enslaved mind—and heart. As it happens in Manzano's autobiography, the poem's arena is the subjective, internal struggle rather than a body in chains. It begins with an assertion of the bodily and symbolic place of feeling, which sets the tone for the following verses.

Oh sweet affection of the purest love!
How fruitless goes your slow flame
From the desires in my inflamed chest,
That shift around the heart
To the heat of your fire!...

*¡Oh dulce afecto del amor más puro!
¡Cuán infructuosa va tu llama lenta
De mi pecho inflamado los deseos,
Que en derredor del corazón se alteran
Al ardor de tu fuego!...*¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Manzano, "Poesías," 171.

¹³⁵ Manzano, "Poesías," 170.

Pecho y corazón; heart and chest: this is where the poem's action takes place. All the more so because the poetic voice is an enslaved woman: "But I suffer, that I am a woman after all/ And as a human, it is fair that I feel resentment" [*Mas padezco, que soy mujer al cabo/ Y como humana, es justo que me resienta*].¹³⁶ She resents her slaver not only because she is human—and thus has feelings—but mainly because she is a woman. Just as in his autobiography Manzano places the idea of escape in the mouth of another person—"un criado libre de la casa"—here too the critique of slavery comes through the mouth of an enslaved woman and the perspective of separation.¹³⁷

In attempting to explain Manzano's appropriation of a female poetic voice, William Luis conjectures that the author "maybe supposed that women were more sensitive, able to describe with more precision than men the intense exaltations of love."¹³⁸ Other scholars have ventured a similar hypothesis in order to explain the fact that most Cuban and Brazilian antislavery fiction chose to ventriloquize enslaved women, whom authors such as Antonio Zambrana, Félix Tanco y Bosmeniel, Bernardo Guimarães, Aluísio de Azevedo, among others, used to express the evils of slavery on their bodies and hearts. Ana Hontanilla, for instance, claims that "to feminize colonization is to associate imperial power with sentimental feelings" in reference to Luis Paret y Alcázar's engraving "La alegoría de la colonización" (1798), which depicts three female figures.¹³⁹ Along the same line, Matthew Pettway has argued about "La esclava ausente" that "the slave owner intended to rape the captive black woman," and that the choice of a female

¹³⁶ Manzano, "Poesías," 174.

¹³⁷ Manzano, "Autobiografía," 114.

¹³⁸ Luis, "Introducción," 64.

¹³⁹ Ana Hontanilla, "Sentiment and the Law: Inventing the Category of the Wretched Slave in the 'Real Audiencia' of Santo Domingo, 1783–1812," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 48, no. 2 (Winter 2015): 181.

poetic voice was a way for Manzano to “give voice to the pain, shame, and powerlessness that he experienced when he was raped on the Matanzas plantation.”¹⁴⁰ Pettway is referring to a veiled and much commented episode in Manzano’s autobiography, when he absent-mindedly crushes a geranium leaf from his mistress’s garden and gets caught. As a punishment for his “misdemeanor,” he is taken to the stocks located in a former infirmary, where the overseer traps his feet and leaves him in the cold all night. In the morning, the overseer and the administrator come back and take out a plank, to which they tie Manzano’s hands, gagging him at the same time. Manzano does not describe what follows, saying instead “Oh God! Let’s draw a veil over this sad scene. Oh! My blood spilled and I lost consciousness” [*¡Oh Dios! Corramos un velo sobre esta escena tan triste. ¡Ay! Mi sangre se derramó y perdí el sentido*].¹⁴¹ Although Manzano never refers explicitly to sexual violence, Robert Richmond Ellis has read this episode as sexual violence, an interpretation that Pettway also shares.

Although it is clear that this passage veils a moment of extreme violence that can be of sexual nature, I do not see evidence of it in “La esclava ausente.” My reading of Manzano’s unpublished poem draws from the poem’s surface, its terminology and explicit meaning. I agree with the broader argument put forward by Luis and Hontanilla that the choice of representing slavery and/or colonialism with a feminine image or voice is a direct association with sentiment, but I will demonstrate that this sentiment in “La esclava ausente” is built on the articulation between legal language and the tradition of courtly love.

Indeed, although the narrator describes herself as “this fragile woman, whose only sin/ Is to love tenderly” [*esta débil mujer, que sólo peca/ En amar tiernamente*], and who is part of “the delicate feminine sex” [*el femenino sexo delicado*], her claims are far from “fragile” and

¹⁴⁰ Pettway, *Cuban Literature in the Age of Black Insurrection*, 13, 77.

¹⁴¹ Manzano, “Autobiografía,” 94.

“delicate.”¹⁴² She resorts to the Law to argue that her owner has no right to separate her from her lover. The Law, however, has a double status in the poem. On the one hand, human law bonds her to her slaver since, as it is largely known, slavery in territories of Iberian colonization was a juridical category, a legally binding relationship: “A man with his law; with a bitter hand/ that gave me such bitterness to drink/ With a hard soul and a severe condition” [*Un hombre con su ley; a mano acerba/ que a beberme dio tal amargura/ Con alma dura y condición severa*].¹⁴³ The separation from the poetic voice’s lover, then, becomes a juridical matter when a “barbarous precept” (legal slavery) ignores the lovers’ oaths of eternal love:

What could a firm, eternal oath do?

What about the constancy and the faith; what about the conviction

If in power the barbarous precept

Tenaciously mocks all your promises?

.....

Free of laws (which are so cruel to me!)

The little birds fly through the air

Singing their loves tenaciously

From the valley to the meadow; and in the green forest

Enjoy flattery from their tender husbands;

And in their bond their power rises...

And I, freer than the birds, have

oh! Less freedom than all of them!

¹⁴² Manzano, “Poesías,” 172.

¹⁴³ Manzano, “Poesías,” 173.

*¿Qué pudo un juramento firme, eterno?
Qué la constancia y fe; qué la firmeza
Si de un poder el bárbaro precepto
Tenaz hoy burla todas tus promesas?
.....
Suelos de leyes (¡para mí tan duras!)
Los pajaritos por el aire vuelan
Cantando sus amores a porfía
Del valle al prado; y en la verde selva
Del tierno esposo los halagos gozan;
Y en su alianza su poder se aumenta...
Y yo, más libre que las aves, tengo
¡Ah! Menos libertad que todas ellas!¹⁴⁴*

A long-standing symbol of freedom in antislavery narratives, the bird here evokes the ability to be with loved ones and to fly alongside one's "tender husband." Free from the laws of slavery, the couple of birds can sing and nourish their love. This possibility of flight, however, is denied to the poetic voice in a seemingly contradictory claim: although freer than birds, she has less freedom than they do. Why is the narrator freer than birds? I contend that here the poem conforms to Catholic doctrine, according to which the Christian man is free because he has been liberated from his sins by the sufferings of Christ. This is postulated by the Dominican friar Luis de Granada (1504-1588), whose sermons Manzano claims to have memorized since an early

¹⁴⁴ Manzano, "Poesías," 171.

age.¹⁴⁵ In his *Compendio y explicación de la doctrina cristiana* (1559), for instance, Granada discusses “Christian freedom” [*la libertad cristiana*], which “freed us from the tyranny of our passions, from the chains of the appetites, from the service of sin, from the heavy yoke of the old law [*nos libró de la tiranía de nuestras pasiones, de las cadenas de los apetitos, del servicio del pecado, del pesado yugo de la vieja ley*].¹⁴⁶ In his later *Memorial de la vida cristiana* (1565), Granada explains that “freedom and peace of spirit” [*la libertad y el sosiego del espíritu*] are more easily achievable in a life reigned “by virtue and reason, than the one anchored in desire and passion” [*por virtud y por razón, que en la que se rige por antojo y por pasión*] because “man is a rational, and not a bestial creature” [*el hombre es criatura racional y no bestial*].¹⁴⁷ Free in the spiritual sense because she is human and Christian, the poetic voice is enslaved and therefore has “less freedom than all of them [birds].” She then pleads to her enslaver:

Inhuman cruel owner, terrible man!
 Why do you condemn me to such a sad fate?
 Is this how much are worth the vain lamentations
 Of this weak woman, whose only sin
 Is to love tenderly? And if true love
 Is a crime how could it
 Join inspiring virtue and faith?

¹⁴⁵ Manzano writes, “I was already ten years old when, instructed about religion as much as a woman could—I memorized all catechism by heart such as almost all the sermons by Fray Luis de Granada, relations, praises, and *entremeses*—I already sewed regularly and knew the placement of the pieces” [*Tenía ya diez años cuando, instruido en cuanto podía instruirme una mujer en religión—el catecismo lo daba todo de memoria como casi todos los sermones de Fray L[uis] de G[ranada], relaciones, loas y entremeses—ya cosía regular y conocía la colocación de las piezas*]. Manzano, “Autobiografía,” 67.

¹⁴⁶ Luis de Granada, “Compendio y explicación de la doctrina cristiana,” in *Obras del v.p.m. Fray Luis de Granada, Vol. 3* (Madrid: Imprenta y Estereotipía de M. Rivadeneyra, 1852), 114.

¹⁴⁷ Luis de Granada, “Memorial de la vida cristiana,” in *Obras del venerable P. maestro Fr. Luis de Granada de la Orden de Santo Domingo, Vol. III, Part 1* (Madrid: Don Antonio de Sancha, 1782), 46.

¡Dueño duro inhumano, hombre terrible!

¿Por qué a tan triste suerte me condenas?

¿Tanto te valen los lamentos vanos

De esta débil mujer, que sólo peca

En amar tiernamente? —Y si es delito

Un verdadero amor ¿cómo pudiera

*Unirse a la virtud la fe que inspira?*¹⁴⁸

Embodying the institution of slavery, the master causes the separation between the poetic voice and her beloved, punishing her for a crime she did not commit. Her only crime—or sin—is to love. Her love, however, is in fact ennobling and virtuous (“unirse a la virtud la fe que inspira”), an inheritance from the medieval tradition of courtly love which, as we will see, informs the poem as a whole. If, on the one hand, human law is unjust and inhumane because it allows for her separation from her lover, natural law—created by God—gives her the right to love freely:

Yes, I love: love was never a crime

God Himself, taking delight

In the works that His wisdom created.

He gave nature to everything, everything

The right to love: well, an inviolable

Principle confirms this problem,

From the Lion to the innocent Turtledove:

¹⁴⁸ Manzano, “Poesías,” 171-2.

If the silver Moon did not love the sun
Light would never shed on earth.

*Si, yo amo: amar nunca fue crimen
El mismo Dios, amando se deleita
Las obras que creó su sabio influjo.
A todo, todo dio naturaleza
El derecho de amar: pues un principio
Inviolable confirma este problema,
Del León a la Tórtola inocente:
Si la plateada Luna al sol no amara
Jamás luz derramara por la tierra.*¹⁴⁹

The enslaved woman in Manzano's poem affirms her natural right to love as an amendment to an unjust, cruel civil law—slavery. In poetical language, this opposition gains strength because of its affective mobilization through sympathy. As Rachel Price argues in a brief analysis of this poem, "La esclava ausente" has as potential audience a reader who could "overcome their emotional distance from the fictive slave in order to work to abolish the extra-textual 'unnatural' institution of slavery that separated families and lovers in the first place."¹⁵⁰ The poetic voice insists on accusing her slaver of being insensitive to her pleas, thus sensitizing the readers who picture her crying: "No: más te place la crecida vena/ Del llanto que derramo por los ojos/ Sin

¹⁴⁹ Manzano, "Poesías," 172.

¹⁵⁰ Price, "Enemigo suelo," 538.

poder ablandar tu vil dureza.”¹⁵¹ The readers will not want to be like the cruel, insensitive master. They will choose to side with the sympathetic poetic voice, who suffers the familiar pain of being in love, a divine right. They will choose to side with divine law, the same that grants animals the right to love, and distance themselves from the human law—the negative power that breaks the sacred bonds of love. This potential reader would thus absolve the poetic voice of any “delito” or “crimen,” since love is not a crime. Manzano points here to the apparent contradiction in the simultaneous maintenance of the institution of slavery and the discourse of a natural right to freedom. The Creole reformists in del Monte’s literary circle, after all, were deeply interested in Enlightenment and liberal epistemologies.¹⁵² Still, the kind of freedom that the poetic voice in “La esclava ausente” imagines does not stay within the limits of the Enlightenment.

Arguing for the primacy of natural, divine law over an unjust human law that allows for the separation from her lover, the poetic voice moves to another legal matter: property. In spite of being her master, she contends, her enslaver does not actually *own* her:

This hand, this chest, this my everything
Belongs to my beloved: my mouth confesses it.
Let me join him, as per the demands of
Religion, love, nature.
If fate has made you *my Lord*,
Are my powers perchance yours?
If in your power, today you have my will,
My life and soul, are they yours?...

¹⁵¹ Manzano, “Poesías,” 173.

¹⁵² Aching, *Freedom from Liberation*, 46.

Esta mano, este pecho, este mi todo
Es de mi bien: mi boca lo confiesa.
Déjame unir a él, que así lo exigen
Religión, amor, naturaleza.
Si la suerte te ha hecho Señor mío,
¿Son por ventura tuyas mis potencias?
Si en tu poder, hoy tienes mi albedrío,
*Esta mi vida y alma ¿a caso es vuestra? ...*¹⁵³

In addressing her enslaver as “tú,” the poetic voice rejects the language of deference and respect with which a slave is expected to address their master. She refuses to act as a slave because ultimately she does not belong to him. In her brief yet careful examination of the poem, Price has pointed to the separation from the lover as the cause of the bodily fragmentation described in this stanza, arguing that “es de mi bien” means that the poetic voice “is part of something larger.”¹⁵⁴ However, translating “es de” as “out of” or “from,” this analysis overlooks the more straightforward sense of possession syntactically explicit in these lines: “esta mano,” “este pecho” and her whole self are her lover’s; they belong to him.

There is an unexpected logic at play here. The poetic voice preemptively denies her master’s power and endows her selfhood to her absent lover. The reason why she cannot belong to her slaver is not that she is a self-possessive subject, but because she belongs to someone else. In keeping up with the juridical language, the poem suggests that this property transfer happens through an illocutionary speech act—a confession—enacted by the narrator’s mouth: “mi boca lo

¹⁵³ Manzano, “Poesías,” 172-3.

¹⁵⁴ Price, “Enemigo suelo,” 538.

confiesa.” It is the body who speaks, and the speaking body resists the master’s power in order to subject itself to the beloved. Once more resorting to a higher power, however, the narrator claims that her reunion with her lover must happen because “religión, amor, naturaleza” demand it—a much stronger argument to make to a white audience than the desire of an enslaved Black woman. While decisively denying her master’s power, she does not assert hers, ending this stanza with a series of rhetorical questions: does her enslaver own her “potencias?” Are her life and soul also his? The reader answers: no; her strengths, her life, and her soul are not her master’s. But whose are they? The final lines towards the end of the poem confirm our first hypothesis:

It will soon be one year since I have been deprived
Of all the joy, here severity locks me up
Separated from the world, without at least
“Goodbye, my sweet owner,” I could say
To that only motivation that revives
All my flattering hopes.

*Un año va a cumplir, de que privada
De todo el gusto, aquí el rigor me encierra
Separada del mundo, sin que al menos
“Adiós, mi dulce dueño”, le dijera
A aquel único móvil que reanima
Todas mis esperanzas lisonjeras.¹⁵⁵*

¹⁵⁵ Manzano, “Poesías,” 174.

Here lies the connection between “La esclava ausente” and “La visión del poeta”: the trope of amorous bondage in the context of nineteenth-century racial slavery. A common trope in medieval and early modern courtly love poetry, the reference to the beloved as “dulce dueño” implies a complete abandonment to the beloved as proof of true love, be it in the form of servitude, captivity, prison, death, or even juridical language.¹⁵⁶ To sixteenth-century poets, the lover in courtly poetry desires the “blissful prison” [*prisión gozosa*] or “prison consented/ by the heart” [*prisión qu’es consentida/por parte del corazón*]; or, as the Spanish poet Quirós describes it, “I was born free and now I am captive/ my freedom consents to it/ because it knows what it feels” [*Nací libre y soy cautivo/ mi libertad lo consiente/ porque sabe lo que siente*].¹⁵⁷

However, if in the medieval tradition these themes refer to feudal relationships of lordship and vassalage, abstracting the feudal relationships of production, they acquire a different meaning in Manzano’s poem, not only because of its distinct historical contingencies but also because of the narrator’s legal status. In fact, we can think of “La esclava ausente” as an heir to courtly love poetry since it uses the same images that had populated the Iberian lyric: the total renunciation of the self to the beloved; and the separation that proves true love. In fact, as Bosch explains, in the medieval courtly love tradition there is a “frontal collision between the cult that courtly love creates to the woman and the content of social norms,” which places women in a subjugated position.¹⁵⁸ In “La esclava ausente,” however, the subjugated position of the female narrator is the poem’s very arena, it is that which informs the complaint as a whole. Her enslaver

¹⁵⁶ Estela Pérez Bosch, *Los valencianos del Cancionero General: estudio de sus poesías* (Valencia: Publicacions de la Universitat de València, 2008), 125-9.

¹⁵⁷ Cited in Bosch, *Los valencianos del Cancionero General*, 127-8.

¹⁵⁸ Bosch, *Los valencianos del Cancionero General*, 149.

is at the same time the obstacle and the trigger of two main tropes of courtly love. Her beloved is her “sweet master,” while the enslaver dominates her under illegitimate law.

In other words, the female voice in Manzano’s poem solicits sympathy from her potential anti-slavery readership not only because she is inspired by Enlightened epistemologies, but because God gives her the right to renounce that freedom to her beloved. She does not aim to be a free, self-possessive subject such as that circulating in antislavery genres of the period, but to be her beloved’s property. In denying the slaver’s ownership through a voluntary renunciation of herself to her “sweet master,” then, the poetic voice affirms the depth of her love while reaching another level of dispossession. She has no interlocutor for her demands. Her slaver ignores her, and she is alone. Finally, in the last stanzas, she resorts to God.

But who am I talking to? Who do I give my complaints to?

If the distance drowns my complaints.

...

But seeing that one day follows another

And that none of my desires is fulfilled,

To the sky I show my sensitive cry;

And with both knees on the ground

There I direct my hope:

I would fly, if I could as well

To seek in happier regions,

Life, less full of misery;

But “long live,” orders the sky... and I live

Until the chalice is drained, given to me by

*Love and slavery, when they come together,
Condemning me to suffer their torments.*

*Pero ¿a quién hablo? ¿a quién mis quejas doy?
Si la distancia ahoga mis querellas.*

...

*Pero viendo que a un día, otro sucede
Y que ninguno mis deseos llena,
Al cielo nuestro mi sensible llanto;
Y con ambas rodillas en la tierra
Allá dirijo la esperanza mía:
volara, si también pudiera
A buscar en regiones más felices,
Vida, de miseria menos llena;
Mas “que viva” ordena el cielo...y vivo
Hasta apurar el cáliz, que presentan
Amor y esclavitud, cuando se unen
Y a sufrir sus tormentos me condenan.¹⁵⁹*

This final stanza reiterates the isolation and abandonment of the poetic voice. In claiming that in her despair she would rather fly to “happier regions” than live her miserable life on Earth, she

¹⁵⁹ Manzano, “Poesías,” 174.

mobilizes yet another trope inherited from traditional love poetry, which conceives of death as a “vía de escape para el calvario amoroso.”¹⁶⁰ At the same time the image of the flight to happier regions is part of the “flying African” trope, which usually symbolizes the escape from slavery and has also been associated with the suicide of the enslaved as a path toward self-liberation.

However, the sky denies the poetic voice any possibility of escape through flight or death, sentencing her to live until she finishes her chalice of suffering. The poetic voice has no choice but to live her double bondage: love and slavery. It is in the metaphor of the amorous bondage, which we saw in “La visión del poeta” and in “La esclava ausente,” where I argue lies Manzano’s important contribution. Amorous bondage and legal slavery displace one another in the image of the separation from the beloved. “La esclava ausente” cannot be a courtly love poem because of the enslaved status of the poetic voice and her position vis-a-vis her interlocutor (her slaver). At the same time, this position and legal status are precisely what triggers the separation that ultimately creates the poem’s sentimental mood, appealing to the readers’ sympathy.

While Azougarh claims that the “querela de amor de una muchacha” is a “disfraz” that obscures the more serious criticism of the institution of slavery, I would argue that love in “La esclava ausente” is not a mere disguise but rather a strategic thematic choice that has a twofold implication. First, the “querela de amor” appeals to a white readership familiar with the tropes of Romantic and courtly love, as Price has previously argued. Second, it fosters a particular antislavery stance that does not emerge under the modern, Enlightened epistemic apparatus of the self-possessive, rational subject to whom freedom is a natural right. Rather, the antislavery stance in “La esclava ausente” is anchored in much earlier, non-modern traditions that postulate

¹⁶⁰ Bosch, *Los valencianos del Cancionero General*, 179.

the divine right to love. The conception of freedom that “La esclava ausente” posits is opposed to slavery insofar as slavery is an obstacle to the right to love. Her “freedom,” however, entails renouncing herself to the beloved rather than the affirmation of individual autonomy. In other words, there is no space for the modern, autonomous subject in the anacreontic garden in “La visión del poeta” or in the amorous suffering in “La esclava ausente.”

This line of interpellation might add another piece of the puzzle that scholars have been trying to solve about Manzano’s choice of a female poetic voice. As a gendered and heteronormative claim, the right of a woman to love her man represents much less of a challenge to the nineteenth-century Cuban *status quo* than a universal claim for freedom as posited, for instance, in the Declaration of the Rights of Man (1789) or, even more radically, in Haiti’s Declaration of Independence (1804). Merely two decades earlier, a successful slave revolt had resulted in the institution of the world’s first Black republic precisely on the basis of a literal, universal understanding of freedom. Manzano was well aware of the repercussions of such a claim on the island of Cuba in the 1820s, when accounts of the “horrors” of the insurgence on the neighbor island were circulating among Cuban and Spanish authorities at the same time as Cuba became “the world’s largest producer of sugar and one of the greatest consumers of enslaved Africans in the nineteenth century world.”¹⁶¹ That is, at the same time as Manzano wrote “La esclava ausente,” the Spanish island was consolidating itself as the opposite image of Saint-Domingue. Beyond the colonial institutions that already censored the publications and texts that circulated on the island, as we have seen, no white creole wanted to be reminded of the possible consequences of universal freedom.

¹⁶¹ Ada Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 10.

In “La visión del poeta” and “La esclava ausente,” therefore, Manzano rejects the narrative of modernity that David Scott understands as imperative to colonial subjects: “modernity was not a choice New World slaves could exercise but was itself one of the fundamental *conditions* of choice.”¹⁶² According to Scott, power structures shaped the cognitive and institutional conditions in which the enslaved subject in the New World acts and constitutes themselves. Domingo del Monte and the Creole intellectual elite more generally operate within these power structures. Following this line of thought, Manzano is a “conscript” of modernity, that is, someone to whom Enlightenment, reason, and poetic sensibility are not a choice but an imposition.

At the same time, if Manzano’s self fashioning as a modern, civilized subject deserving of freedom is not an election, the ways in which Manzano participates in this modernity (lyric poetry) is. In his poems, therefore, Manzano proposes a poetic *counter*-modernity, which he then uses as one of his tickets to freedom as it is claimed in his autobiography—a ticket to modernity itself. This ticket to modernity, however, destabilizes the modernity narrative that Scott sees as imperative to colonial subjects. Modernity in this sense is a semantic field that includes terms such as Enlightenment, autonomy, progress, rationality, civilization, and which guides discourses and actions in a given society. In this sense, Manzano proposes a double renunciation of modernity—the capitalist modernity of the sugar plantation; and the Enlightened modernity of the self-possessive, autonomous subject.

Haitian historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot writes that the metaphor of slavery in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was an “easy metaphor, accessible to a large public who

¹⁶² David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 19.

knew that the word stood for a number of evils except perhaps the evil itself.”¹⁶³ But this is not what happens in Manzano’s poems, as I have just demonstrated. To Manzano, the metaphor represents its actual referent (slavery) as well as its figuration (love). In reinscribing the metaphor of amorous bondage within his position as an enslaved subject, Manzano and his poetic voices “literalize” the metaphor. In this literalization, the metaphor is destroyed. As a result, the fate of the enslaved subject is the same as that of the romantic lover: tragic, with no possible redemption, and incapable of materializing his wishes—be it reuniting with the beloved or achieving freedom.

Such literalization of the metaphor of bondage, however, goes beyond Manzano both in geographic and temporal levels. In the following chapter, I will examine the poetic work of a Brazilian poet who, in the second half of the nineteenth century, also reappropriated earlier lyric traditions in order to fashion a critique of slavery.

¹⁶³ Michel-Rolph, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), chap. 3, Kindle.

Chapter 4

Luiz Gama and the Insurgent Politics of Intimacy

There is a famous passage in Guillaume-Thomas Raynal's 1774 *Histoire des deux Indes* that says, "Where is this great man to be found, whom nature, perhaps, owes to the honor of the human species? Where is this new Spartacus, who will not find a Crassus?"¹⁶⁴ The call for an enslaved leader who would lead captives to freedom came to epitomize an Enlightened anti-slavery critique through its reference to an episode from Classic history: in 73 BCE, Spartacus led a group of enslaved gladiators like himself to escape bondage and to fight against Roman militias controlled by Crassus. Later on, Raynal's text became an already fulfilled prophecy, since two decades after its publication the slave revolts in Saint-Domingue generated the first historical character to be associated to Raynal's "new Spartacus:" Toussaint Louverture.

According to a much quoted but unverified story, it was General Étienne Maynaud de Bizefranc de Laveaux, then governor of Saint-Domingue, who on April 1, 1796, first called Louverture "black Spartacus, the man of Raynal's prophecy." Louverture embodied one of the first iterations of the "black avenger" trope, "a line of racial representation that constantly rewrites and rediscovers canonical texts," as Gregory Pierrot puts it,¹⁶⁵ and which spread across colonies, oceans, and empires.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ "Où est-il ce grand homme, que la nature doit peut-être à l'honneur de l'espèce humaine? Où est-il, ce Spartacus nouveau, qui ne trouvera point de Crassus?" in Guillaume-Thomas Raynal, *Histoire philosophique et politique. Des établissements du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes*, Vol. 4 (1774), 227.

¹⁶⁵ Gregory Pierrot, *The Black Avenger in Atlantic Culture* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2019), 61.

¹⁶⁶ Pierrot, *The Black Avenger in Atlantic Culture*, 65. According to Pierrot, there is no copy of this April 1 speech in which Laveaux would have called Louverture the "black Spartacus." Other less direct but still obvious references to Louverture as Raynal's prophecy has appeared in Henry Perroud's letter to the French consul in the United States on March 30, 1796,

Almost a full century later, slavery had been abolished all over the Americas except for Brazil and Cuba. Abolitionist movements were gaining traction in the Spanish colony as well as in the Brazilian empire, informed not only by French, British, and US-American anti-slavery thought but also by the experiences and demands of people of African descent. In Brazil, Spartacus was one of the many tropes that both abolitionist and pro-slavery ideologues mobilized in order to achieve opposite goals—to demand immediate abolition or mobilize white people’s fears of slave insurrections. On one hand, monarchists and moderate republicans asked for restraint and warned about the “constant threat of an African Spartacus who, with a torch of fire and an assassin’s dagger, might violate freedom as a fierce retaliation for his captivity” [*ameaça constante do aparecimento de algum Spartacus Africano que, com o facho do incendio e o punhal do assassino, viole a liberdade, como represalia feroz do seu captiveiro*].¹⁶⁷ On the other hand, radical republicans such as the ones who wrote for the newspaper *Radical Paulistano* foresaw Raynal’s prophecy as a narrative of collective liberation: “people’s facial angle dilates; brains become enlightened; serfs become ennobled; all Spartacus become free” [*o ângulo facial do povo dilata-se; os cérebros iluminam-se; os servos nobilitam-se; os Spartacus emancipam-se*].¹⁶⁸

In Brazil, the trope of a Black Spartacus also came to be associated to a specific historical character: the poet, lawyer, and journalist Luiz Gonzaga Pinto da Gama (1830-1882), cofounder of the aforementioned periodical *Radical Paulistano*. Born in Bahia to a freed African woman and a man of Portuguese descent, Gama had been sold as a slave by his own father at the age of

¹⁶⁷ *Diario do Rio de Janeiro*, May 26, 1860.

¹⁶⁸ *Radical Paulistano*, July 3, 1869. Spartacus was also the pen name of other articles that circulated in the Brazilian press asking for immediate abolition of slavery, particularly in the 1770s and 1880s, many of which are Gama’s. Bruno Rodrigues de Lima, “Introdução,” in Luiz Gama, *Obras completas: Liberdade* (São Paulo, Hedra, 2021), 29-36.

ten. Sent to São Paulo, he served two masters and learned how to read and write, thus finding “undeniable proof” of his freedom and illegal enslavement. Gama managed to free himself in a still unknown process, to then become an amanuensis (or copist) for the São Paulo police.¹⁶⁹ Without ever attending Law school, he soon started working as an attorney defending illegally enslaved men and women. In that capacity, he managed to free hundreds of them until his death in 1882. During this time, he published profusely in the São Paulo press, especially articles about the judicial cases he was working on and advocating for abolition. All this activity led to his celebration as “the pioneer of abolition in Brazil” and amplified his association with Spartacus.¹⁷⁰

It was Gama himself who first mentioned Spartacus in some of his newspaper articles published in the last decade of his life, when Gama’s writing became more “radicalized and racialized.”¹⁷¹ In one of them, published in the *Gazeta da Tarde* on December 16, 1880, he defends the four enslaved men who had killed their master’s son in the town of Itu, dubbing the event “the sublime martyrology of the four Spartacuses who killed the miserable son of the planter Valeriano José do Vale” [*o martirológio sublime dos quatro Espártacos que mataram o infeliz filho do fazendeiro Valeriano José do Vale*].¹⁷² The other article was published only two days later in the newspaper *Gazeta do Povo*. It ridicules moderate calls for a gradual abolition of slavery on the part of members of the Partido Republicano Paulista, whom Gama considered lazy and “anti-revolutionary.” Gama contrasted their laziness and inactivity with a revolutionary

¹⁶⁹ All this information is available in Gama’s autobiographical letter to his friend Lúcio de Mendonça.

¹⁷⁰ Sud Mennucci, *O precursor do abolicionismo no Brasil: Luiz Gama* (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1938).

¹⁷¹ Bruno Rodrigues de Lima, “Introdução,” in Luiz Gama, *Obras Completas: Liberdade (1880-1882)* (São Paulo: Hedra, 2021), 19.

¹⁷² Luiz Gama, “Carta a Ferreira de Menezes,” *Gazeta da Tarde*, December 16, 1880, in *Lições de Resistência: Artigos de Luiz Gama na Imprensa de São Paulo e do Rio de Janeiro*, ed. Lígia Fonseca Ferreira (São Paulo: SESC, 2020), Kindle.

impetus. “To the positivism of the soft slavery I counterpose that of the freedom revolutions; I want to be mad like John Brown, Spartacus, Lincoln, Jesus; I hate, however, the Pharisaic calmness of [Pontius] Pilates” [*Ao positivismo da macia escravidão eu antepenho o das revoluções da liberdade; quero ser louco como John Brown, e como Espártaco, como Lincoln, como Jesus; detesto, porém, a calma farisaica de Pilatos*].¹⁷³ This was a moment of Gama’s radicalization in the public sphere. His deployment of Spartacus is only one of the many tropes he activates in his writing, which over the years becomes more and more urgent and less diplomatic.

This was not a common stance within the abolitionist movement, even among its most famous public figures. The white statesman Joaquim Nabuco, for instance, advocated for a gradual, legislative process of abolition. For Nabuco, putting abolition in the hands of the enslaved would be an “inept and criminal cowardice” [*covardia, inepta e criminosa*] as well as a “political suicide” [*suicídio político*] because it would mean “the sign of death for Willberforce’s, Lamartine’s and Garrison’s abolitionism, which is ours, and the birth of Catiline’s, Spartacus’s, or John Brown’s abolitionism” [*o sinal de morte do abolicionismo de Wilberforce, Lamartine, e Garrison, que é o nosso, e do começo do abolicionismo de Catilina ou de Espártaco, ou de John Brown*].¹⁷⁴ Nabuco clearly preferred the first strand to the second, which would lead to a “barbarian and savage vindication of a population kept until today at the level of animals, and whose passions, breaking the brake of fear, would know no limits in the way of satisfying themselves” [*vindita bárbara e selvagem de uma população mantida até hoje ao nível dos*

¹⁷³ “A emancipação ao pé da letra,” *Gazeta do Povo*, December 18, 1880, in Fonseca, *Lições de Resistência*, Kindle.

¹⁷⁴ Joaquim Nabuco, *O abolicionismo* (Brasília: Senado Federal, 2003), 44.

animais e cujas paixões, que brado o freio do medo, não conheceriam limites no modo de satisfazer-se].¹⁷⁵

A few months after Gama evoked Spartacus in his essay for the *Gazeta do povo*, the newspaper printed another article signed by Spartacus “himself.” Spartacus directly addressed the chief of police, accusing him of violence against a free African called Joaquim Antonio, who was entertaining friends in his own house while in possession of a written authorization by the police to do so. A police patrol knocked on his door and asked him to stop. As he refused to do so, the police broke into Joaquim’s house, looted it, arrested one of the guests who complained about them, and proceeded to break into two neighboring houses, also owned by free Africans. The article’s title is powerful and scarily contemporary: “In this country, black people are not allowed to have fun” [*Neste país não é permitido ao negro se divertir*].¹⁷⁶ Around the same time, other articles signed by Spartacus (and John Brown) appeared in the São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro presses, all of which employ similar rhetorical strategies and legal vocabulary, and echo Gama’s own legal argumentation in court cases. There is little doubt that those Spartacuses and John Browns are Gama’s pseudonyms. They mark the racialized abolitionism that Gama advanced in the final decade of his life (and in the years right before slavery was actually abolished). According to Bruno Rodrigues de Lima, Gama “found in the creative use of pseudonyms a way of denouncing the cruelty against the enslaved and to show the racialization of this same violence in the public sphere.”¹⁷⁷

Gama’s wish to be associated with classical figures was carried out shortly after the publication of that article, when his colleagues and admirers reinforced the comparison between

¹⁷⁵ Joaquim Nabuco, *O abolicionismo*, 44.

¹⁷⁶ Luiz Gama, “Neste país não é permitido ao negro se divertir,” in Luiz Gama, *Obras Completas: Liberdade (1880-1882)* (São Paulo: Hedra, 2021), 107-8.

¹⁷⁷ Rodrigues de Lima, “Introdução,” 36.

him and Spartacus. On December 15, 1880, for example, Lúcio de Mendonça published a biographical article about Gama in the *Gazeta da Tarde* and in the *Almanach Litetrario de São Paulo para o anno de 1881* stating that Gama “deserves a place in human gratitude, between Spartacus and John Brown” [*merece um lugar na gratidão humana, entre Spartacus e John Brown*].¹⁷⁸ Later on, in 1904, the literary critic Silvio Romero would claim that “slavery has given us Luiz Gama, who has much of Terence, Epictetus, and Spartacus in him” [*a escravidão entre nós produziu Luiz Gama, que teve muito de Terêncio, de Epícteto e de Espártaco*].¹⁷⁹

Mendonça’s article was based on Gama’s only autobiographical text: a letter to Mendonça himself, dated July 25, 1880, when Gama was fifty years old, and Mendonça was merely twenty-six. As one of the few pieces of autobiographical writings authored by a formerly enslaved subject in Brazil, the letter gained an almost immediate historical relevance when it was published for the first time in 1831 in the newspaper *Estado de S. Paulo*. Before then, Gama’s biography was known mainly through Mendonça’s article. The unprecedented character of the letter had to do not only with its historical relevance but also with the fact that it was one of the few (if not the only) instance in which Gama describes his childhood, his years lived under slavery, and his formation as an abolitionist, public intellectual, and autonomous individual.

From the publication of Mendonça’s text onwards, the analogies between Gama and classical figures multiplied. Gama was Spartacus, Terence, Epictetus—all Greek or Roman slaves who became leaders, playwrights, politicians, philosophers. Even though he lived and acted next to (and for) thousands of enslaved peoples of African descent, Gama is cast as hero through a classical imagery of whiteness. There is no clear gesture towards Haiti, Toussaint

¹⁷⁸ Lúcio de Mendonça, “Luiz Gama por Lúcio de Mendonça,” in Luiz Gama, *Obras Completas*, 84.

¹⁷⁹ Silvio Romero, *História da literatura brasileira* vol. 4, 3rd edition (Rio de Janeiro: J. Olympio, 1943), 118.

Louverture, or any other enslaved person in the Atlantic world. The modern references that come up are either John Brown or Abraham Lincoln—other white men—and even those do not last long. Shortly after his untimely death in 1882, Gama’s friends, colleagues, and admirers populated the press with homages to the “this country’s first abolitionist, the most sincere, convinced, uncompromising” [*o primeiro dos abolicionistas do país, o mais sincero, o mais convencido, o mais intransigente*], as the *Gazeta do Povo* described him. Attended by thousands, Gama’s funeral was described as a spectacle that celebrated Gama’s apotheosis, strengthening his image as national hero.¹⁸⁰

The insistence on the analogy between Gama and classical figures is partly due to the popular republican imagination that was starting to permeate political discourses at the time, inspired by the French and American revolutions, as well as by positivist thought.¹⁸¹ Being an active member of both the Republican Party of São Paulo (Partido Republicano Paulista) and the most progressive freemasonry house in the country (Casa América), Gama read and contributed to those sources. As José Murilo de Carvalho states, Classicism in the turn of the century was “a vision of the world and a set of social and political values based on the simplicity, nobility, and civic spirit of the old republics, encompassing Spartan austerity and the sacrificial dedication of Roman heroes.”¹⁸² While it is no surprise, then, that Gama’s heroic image was built through classical references, it is important to examine the specific features that such associations highlight at the expense of others. There is no doubt that Gama was Spartacus or Epictetus because of his activity as an attorney for illegally enslaved individuals, as well as for his

¹⁸⁰ “A morte de Luiz Gama,” in *Com a palavra, Luiz Gama*, ed. Lígia Fonseca Ferreira (São Paulo: Imprensa Oficial do Estado de São Paulo, 2011), 218.

¹⁸¹ Independent since 1822, Brazil was an empire until 1889, when a military revolution instated the First Republic.

¹⁸² José Murilo de Carvalho, *The Formation of the Souls: Imagery of the Republic in Brazil*, trans. Clifford E. Landers (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), 4.

exceptionally sharp and fearless articles in the São Paulo press attacking judges, planters, and anyone he thought helped maintain—or did not do enough to demolish—the institution of slavery. As a lawyer, Gama freed around 500 people from illegal enslavement.¹⁸³ As a journalist, he deployed political and legal theories to mobilize the concepts of resistance and insurrection, thus “developing a fighting tactic which encompassed the law but did not engage with the maintenance of the legal order of his time,” as Júlio Vellozo and Silvio Almeida argue.¹⁸⁴

It was not only within the Law and the press that Gama developed an original approach to earlier epistemological traditions. It was also in poetry. In 1859, before starting his legal career, he published the *Primeiras trovas burlescas de Getulino* [Getulino’s First Burlesque Ballads], the first collection of poems published by a Black person in São Paulo. In 1861, Gama went to Rio de Janeiro in order to print an expanded edition of the book through a more prominent press. This new edition included nineteen new poems and excluded three from the previous version. He did not change the title and kept the collection’s presentation as mainly satirical (“Trovas burlescas”).

It makes sense then that most of the (few) critics and scholars who have delved into Gama’s poetic work chose to focus on the verses mocking the Brazilian elites, politicians, intellectuals, and the hypocrisy of a white-washed empire.¹⁸⁵ Satire also attracted readers and

¹⁸³ Recently, historian Bruno Rodrigues de Lima uncovered a judicial process in the Brazilian National Archive in which Gama managed to free 217 enslaved individuals who were supposed to be manumitted after the death of their master, Manoel Joaquim Ferreira Netto, one of the richest men in the Empire. This is the largest collective action for the liberation of enslaved peoples known in the Americas. Leandro Machado, “Luiz Gama: A desconhecida ação judicial com que advogado negro libertou 217 escravizados no século 19,” *BBC Brasil* (May 8, 2021), <https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/brasil-57014874>.

¹⁸⁴ Júlio Cesar Vellozo and Silvio Luiz Almeida, “‘Saberei ensinar aos desgraçados a vereda do desespero’ – Entre o crime de insurreição e o direito à resistência: o abolicionismo radical de Luiz Gama,” *Revista Direito, Estado e Sociedade* 0, no. 57 (October 18, 2020): 168.

¹⁸⁵ For instance, Sylvio Romero stated in 1888 that Luiz Gama was “one of the funniest and most satirical poets in our letters,” although he also commented on Gama’s “more serious” poems. Sylvio Romero, *Historia da litteratura brasileira* vol. 2 (Rio de Janeiro: H. Garnier, 1903), 448. Manuel Bandeira considered one of Gama’s poems (“A bodarrada”) the best satire of Brazilian poetry. Manuel Bandeira,

reviewers at the time of the publication of both editions. A note in the “Noticiário” section of the *Diário do Rio de Janeiro* that came out on August 6, 1861, states that “it is so rare for there to emerge among us a collection of poems that moves away from the sentimental genre that it is always a pleasant surprise when we are graced with a publication in the burlesque and satirical genre” [*É tão raro aparecer entre nós algum livro de poesia que se afaste do gênero sentimental, que é sempre uma agradável surpresa quando nos mimoseam com um do gênero burlesco e satyrico*].¹⁸⁶

Yet, in spite of its title, the *Primeiras trovas burlescas* also engages with the “sentimental” genre. Among Gama’s forty-something known poems, nine of them are lyrical. Although these have received much less attention from critics and readers in general, they were not completely neglected either. For instance, in a review published in the *Diário do Rio de Janeiro* on August 11, 1861, the author “N.” praises the popular language and satirical verses in Gama’s poems, but also states that Gama’s verses “pulsate with sentimental lyric,” mentioning three poems of this kind: “Laura,” “A borboleta,” and “No cemitério de S. Benedicto.”¹⁸⁷ Likewise, Sylvio Romero comments on Gama’s “serious” poems, which “reveal the philanthropic sentiments ... on slavery” and that “also within the black, enslaved family pulsed pure hearts, full of magnanimous and elevated affects.”¹⁸⁸ Romero’s reading of Gama’s lyric

Antologia dos poetas brasileiros da fase romantica (Rio de Janeiro: Serviço Gráfico do Ministério da Educação e Saúde, 1940). For a more thorough account of the history of literary criticism on Luiz Gama, see Ligia Ferreira, “Fortuna crítica,” in Luiz Gama, *Primeiras trovas burlescas*, org. Ligia Ferreira (São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2000). See also Sílvio Roberto dos Santos Oliveira, *Gamacopéia: ficções sobre o poeta Luiz Gama* PhD dissertation in Literary Theory and History, Universidade Estadual de Campinas, 2004. More recently, Eduardo Antonio Estevam Santos has argued that Gama’s satirical poems “contributed to reconfigure the cartography of racial belonging in the historical moment when literary thought sought its own roots in idealizations of national images and symbols.” Eduardo Antonio Estevam Santos, “Luiz Gama e a sátira racial como poesia da transgressão: poéticas diaspóricas como contranarrativa à ideia de raça,” *Almanack*, no. 11 (Dec. 2015): 746.

¹⁸⁶ “Noticiário,” *Diário do Rio de Janeiro* (Aug. 6, 1861): 1.

¹⁸⁷ “Primeiras trovas burlescas de Getulino,” *Diário do Rio de Janeiro* (Aug. 11, 1861): 2.

¹⁸⁸ Sylvio Romero, *História da literatura brasileira*, 119.

poems denotes a common perspective in the immediate pre- and post-abolition years in Brazil, which I have been tackling from different angles throughout this dissertation: the idea that enslaved people somehow had to prove their ability to feel.

The first scholarly focus on Gama's lyric poems was Arlindo Veiga dos Santos's *A lírica de Luiz Gama* (1945). As Sílvio Roberto dos Santos Oliveira states, "the title itself was already an innovation" because in the literary sphere Gama was known for his satires, not his lyrical poetry. Reading Gama in the romantic/Hegelian key, Veiga dos Santos argued that Gama possessed the "meditative character" [*caráter meditativo*] that was the "essential power of the lyric bards" [*condão essencial dos bardos líricos*] and in which "the subjective note predominates" [*predomina a nota subjetiva*].¹⁸⁹ Gama's soul, according to Veiga dos Santos, manifests in the form of the lyric because he is an "heir of two bloods"—Portuguese blood, whose lyricism comes from the Middle Ages, and African blood, which has revealed a "very rich psychology of inner life, of meditation, of banzo."¹⁹⁰ By connecting Gama's lyric poetry to race and to Luso-African banzo, Veiga dos Santos created an association between Afro-Brazilian poetry and slavery. More recently, Sílvio Roberto dos Santos Oliveira also called attention to Gama's lyric poems, arguing that Gama is an "appropriator" in his poetic practice "by laughing at customs, affirming his own identity, crossing references, honoring the classics, desacralizing them, quoting everyday speech, desecrating history, participating in romantic lyricism, and expressing feelings through traditional forms."¹⁹¹ While I do not disagree with Oliveira, I believe that a closer look at Gama's lyric poems and their hypertexts might open new avenues of inquiry about his still underexamined poetic work.

¹⁸⁹ Arlindo Veiga dos Santos, *A lírica de Luiz Gama* (São Paulo: Estabelecimento Gráfico Atlântico, 1944), 15.

¹⁹⁰ Veiga dos Santos, *A lírica de Luiz Gama*, 17.

¹⁹¹ Sílvio Roberto dos Santos Oliveira, "Luiz Gama, o poeta invisível," *Síntese* 10 (2005): 439.

This chapter examines Luiz Gama's literary relationship with *pathos* in two distinct but complementary approaches. First, through a close-reading of Gama's autobiographical letter to Lúcio de Mendonça, I will argue that Gama's self-fashioning is a political articulation of intimacy, binding together the public and the private spheres and paving the way for his portrayal as a hero. Second, through a careful analysis of Gama's lyric poems and intertextuality, this chapter situates Gama within an Iberian poetic tradition centered on the figure of the woman of color. As his ticket to the nineteenth-century culture of feeling, Gama's lyrical poems and autobiographical letter appropriate and re-signify tropes born out of Classicism or from the earliest instances of the Iberian colonial project at a moment when the institution of slavery in Brazil was being increasingly disputed. If slavery in the Americas has always begged comparison with other slaveholding societies—Roman, Greek, North American, African—Gama's writings concentrate a literary coexistence of these other forms of slavery. This chapter addresses the affective registers that this hypertextuality produces within Gama's writings.

Political Intimacy

Dated July 26, 1880, Gama's letter to Lúcio de Mendonça was an answer to Mendonça's own request, as the first sentences demonstrate:

My dear Lúcio,

I have received your note dated the 28th of last month.

I cannot deny your request because I would rather be called ridiculous for recounting puerile truths about myself, than vain and fatuous for shamefully concealing them: there you have the notes that you requested and which I have always carried in my memory.¹⁹²

¹⁹² This opening clears up the later misunderstanding between Gama's first biographer, Sud Menucci, and Lúcio de Mendonça's son. Menucci would claim that Lúcio de Mendonça had violated Gama's trust by

Meu caro Lúcio,

Recebi teu cartão com a data do 28 do pretérito.

Não me posso negar ao teu pedido, porque antes quero ser acoimado de ridículo, em razão de referir verdades pueris que me dizem respeito, do que vaidoso e fátuo, pelas ocultar, de envergonhado: aí tens os apontamentos que me pedes e que sempre eu os trouxe de memória.¹⁹³

As an epistle, Gama's text had one individual recipient and thus seems imbued with a certain degree of intimacy, also evident in the author's informal treatment of Mendonça. Still, as we will see, this intimacy effect is precisely that—an effect, carefully crafted by Gama on the rhetorical and narratological levels. In Mendonça's biographical article based on Gama's letter, this intimate aspect becomes yet another ennobling, humbling aspect of Gama's personality that Mendonça uses in order to build a heroic image of Brazil's fiercest abolitionist—a Black man who had been himself illegally enslaved, and who helps other enslaved people achieve freedom. Simply put, Mendonça uses Gama's letter to build Gama's image as Spartacus. While I will not focus on Mendonça's article here, it is nevertheless important to point to this use of Gama's letter in the public sphere.¹⁹⁴

using the letter as a base to his biographical article. Mendonça's son replied that both interlocutors had a common understanding of the letter's goals, a hypothesis corroborated by the missive's first lines as well as by the fact that Gama published a poem in the same edition of the *Almanach Literario* where Mendonça published his article.

¹⁹³ Luiz Gama, "Minha vida: carta a Lúcio de Mendonça," in Luiz Gama, *Obras Completas: Liberdade (1880-1882)*, 60.

¹⁹⁴ For a carefully compared reading of Gama's autobiographical letter and Mendonça's biographical essay on Gama (based on the letter), see Ligia Fonseca Ferreira, "Luiz Gama por Luiz Gama: carta a Lúcio de Mendonça," *Teresa: revista de Literatura Brasileira*, vol. 8, no. 19 (2008): 300-321.

If Gama knew that Mendonça was going to write a biographical article about him, it makes sense that Gama provided a significant amount of factual details about certain episodes of his life, while dramatically obscuring others. For instance, when describing his birth, Gama provides the street name (Bângala street), the location of the house (internal angle, on the corner, on the right side of who comes from the adro da Palma, at Freguezia de Sant'Ana), the precise time and date (7am, June 21, 1830), as well as the details of his baptism. This level of detail creates an "effect of the real", as Fonseca has observed.¹⁹⁵ Read along the opening "I was born," the letter's first paragraph is thus an assertion of Gama's credibility as a storyteller: he remembers, provides details, and therefore is credible.¹⁹⁶ This credibility, however, has been put into question by multiple historians who have tried (and failed) to find evidence of Gama's birth and baptism in Salvador, Bahia. The lack of empirical sources for a moment about which the narrative provides so many details has led some to question the veracity of the letter as a whole.

Also abounding with details and precise descriptions are the sections about Gama's mother, a freed African woman named Luisa Mahin from whom Gama was separated while still a young child, and for whom he searched for years after becoming an adult.

I am the natural son of a black, free African woman from the Mina Coast (Nago nation), a pagan who has always refused the Christian baptism.

¹⁹⁵ Fonseca Ferreira, "Luiz Gama por Luiz Gama," 306.

¹⁹⁶ While the line "I was born" is a staple of slave narratives in the Anglophone world, its main characteristic is the lack of genealogical information, some of which Gama provides here. On the line "I was born" and the construction of credibility and authenticity in British and US-American slave narratives, see James Olney, "I Was Born": Slave Narratives, Their Status as Autobiography and as Literature," *Callaloo*, vol. 20 (1984): 46-73; Robert S. Levine, "The Slave Narrative and the Revolutionary Tradition of American Autobiography," in *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative*, ed. Audrey A. Fisch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 99-114.

My mother was short, slim, beautiful, her color was of a dull black with no shine, her teeth were white as snow, she was very proud, and had a difficult, restless, and vindictive temper.

She worked in sales—was a street food vendor, very hard-working, and, more than once in Bahia, was arrested for allegedly being involved in slave insurrection plans, which never succeeded.

Sou filho natural de uma negra, africana livre, da Costa Mina (Nagô de Nação), de nome Luiza Mahin, pagã, que sempre recusou o batismo e a doutrina cristã.

Minha mãe era baixa de estatura, magra, bonita, a cor era de um preto retinto e sem lustro, tinha os dentes alvíssimos como a neve, era muito ativa, geniosa, insofrida e vingativa.

Dava-se ao comércio — era quitandeira, muito laboriosa, e amis de uma vez, na Bahia, foi presa como suspeita de envolver-se em planos de insurreições de escravos, que não tiveram efeito.¹⁹⁷

Insubordinate, revolutionary, brave, and hard-working, Luisa Mahin appears as a boilerplate for Gama himself. Gama tells Mendonça that his mother went to Rio de Janeiro in 1837, probably running away from the police, and that they lost touch after that. In his biographical article about Gama, Mendonça obviously sees this unsaid comparison between mother and son and, after paraphrasing almost verbatim Gama's description, emphasizes the similarities between the rebellious, formerly enslaved mother, and the insurgent, formerly enslaved, now abolitionist son.

¹⁹⁷ Luiz Gama, "Minha vida: carta a Lúcio de Mendonça," 61.

“One can see that the profound feeling of insurrection and freedom in Luiz Gama is hereditary” [*Vê-se que é hereditário em Luiz Gama o profundo sentimento de insurreição e liberdade*], Mendonça claims, before activating the trope of the savage African.¹⁹⁸ “Bless you, noble African womb, who gave the world a predestined son to whom you transmitted with your savage blood the untamed energy that would free hundreds of captives!” [*Abençoado sejas, nobre ventre africano, que deste ao mundo um filho predestinado, em quem transfundiste, com o teu sangue selvagem, a energia indômita que havia de libertar centenas de cativos!*].¹⁹⁹ Blood is here the biological metaphor that explains, in Mendonça’s narrative, Gama’s heroic actions through his Blackness. Gama’s letter is the origin of the myth of Luisa Mahin, who has become the object of many narratives and speculations.²⁰⁰ He tells Mendonça that he tried to find his mother many times in Rio de Janeiro, but never succeeded.

Gama’s father, on the other hand, receives a much less caring and distinguished treatment. Even though he seems to have spent more time with Gama after Luisa Mahin went to Rio de Janeiro, he plays no part in his son’s character formation. He “was a nobleman; and belonged to one of the most prominent families in Bahia, of Portuguese origin” [*era fidalgo; e pertencia a uma das principais famílias da Bahia, de origem portuguesa*].²⁰¹ In spite of the Portuguese descent, Gama states that “I refuse to call him white” [*não ousou afirmar que fosse branco*], another instance of his well-known claim that all Brazilians are, in one way or another, mixed-race.²⁰² A wealthy man, Gama’s father was also a *bon vivant*: he loved horses,

¹⁹⁸ Lúcio de Mendonça, “Luiz Gama por Lúcio de Mendonça,” in Luiz Gama, *Obras: Liberdade* (São Paulo: Hedra, 2021), 75.

¹⁹⁹ Lúcio de Mendonça, “Luiz Gama por Lúcio de Mendonça,” 75.

²⁰⁰ Luisa Mahin is Kehinde, the protagonist of *Um defeito de cor*, the award-winning novel by Ana Maria Gonçalves, and has been honored as a Black female leader by the samba school Mangueira in its also award-winning parade in 2020. Ana Maria Gonçalves, *Um defeito de cor* (Rio de Janeiro: Record, 2006).

²⁰¹ Luiz Gama, “Minha vida: carta a Lúcio de Mendonça,” 62.

²⁰² Luiz Gama, “Minha vida: carta a Lúcio de Mendonça,” 62.

fishing, hunting, and playing cards. After losing all his money in gambling, he decided to sell his son “as his slave” [*como seu escravo*] in 1840.²⁰³ Gama was only ten years old.

Let us open a brief parenthesis here to comment on the illegal character of this enslavement. Although after the 1822 declaration of independence Brazil had inherited the Portuguese Philippine Ordinations from the seventeenth century which regulated slavery based on the medieval *Siete Partidas* (thus allowing for the enslavement of one’s offspring), the 1830 Criminal Code stipulated that it was a crime to “to reduce to slavery a free person who has possession of their freedom” [*reduzir á escravidão a pessoa livre, que se achar em posse da sua liberdade*].²⁰⁴ The 1824 Constitution also guaranteed the inviolability of the civil and political rights of Brazilian citizens, “which are based on freedom, individual safety, and property” [*que tem por base a liberdade, a segurança individual, e a propriedade*].²⁰⁵ Adding to this legal scenario the law of November 7, 1831, which prohibited the slave trade to Brazil, it becomes clear that most enslaved people in Brazil from 1831 to 1888 were illegally enslaved, since all

²⁰³ Luiz Gama, “Minha vida: carta a Lúcio de Mendonça,” 63.

²⁰⁴ “Código Penal do Império do Brasil” (Dec. 16, 1830), http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/lim/lim-16-12-1830.htm. The first article of the 20 October, 1823 Law stated that all the “Ordenações, Leis, Regimentos, Alvarás, Decretos, e Resoluções promulgadas pelos Reis de Portugal, e pelas quaes o Brazil se governava até o dia 25 de Abril de 1821, em que Sua Magestade Fidelissima, actual Rei de Portugal, e Algarves, se ausentou desta Côrte; e todas as que foram promulgadas daquella data em diante pelo Senhor D. Pedro de Alcantara, como Regente do Brazil, em quanto Reino, e como Imperador Constitucional delle, desde que se erigiu em Imperio, ficam em inteiro vigor na pare, em que não tiverem sido revogadas, para por ellas se regularem os negocios do interior deste Imperio, emquanto se não organizar um novo Codigo, ou não forem especialmente alteradas.” See http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/lim/LIM....-20-10-1823.htm. This meant that, in the absence of a civil code, Brazil was to be governed by the Book IV of the Philippine Ordinances. André Barreto Campello, *Manual Jurídico da Escravidão: Império do Brasil* (Jundiá: Paco Editorial, 2018), loc. 631.

²⁰⁵ Art. 179, “Constituição política do Império do Brasil” (March 25, 1824), http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/constituicao/constituicao24.htm. The 1824 Constitution, based on liberal principles, did not explicitly tackle the matter of slavery. Rather, it referenced two kinds of Brazilian citizens: the natives (*ingênuos*) and the freed (*libertos*), thus inserting slavery at the basis of Brazilian society.

Africans who arrived in Brazil after that, as well as their descendants, were supposed to be free by law.²⁰⁶ Gama was one of them.

In order not to ruin his progenitor's reputation, however, Gama chooses not to name his father: "I must spare his miserable memory from a painful injury, and I do so by concealing his name" [*Devo poupar à sua infeliz memória uma injúria dolorosa, e o faço ocultando o seu nome*].²⁰⁷ In Mendonça's article, this omission becomes yet another of Gama's ennobling traits: "I don't know if this miserable man still lives; I don't even know his name, which Luiz generously conceals to his most intimate friends..." [*Não sei se o desgraçado ainda vive, nem lhe conheço o nome, que Luiz oculta generoso aos amigos mais íntimos...*].²⁰⁸ By silencing his father's name and centering his narrative around his mother, Gama chooses to create and take part in a Afrodiasporic matrilineal genealogy at the expense of an aristocratic, white-approximating European lineage. The timing of the two events—losing track of his mother and being illegally sold into slavery by his father—produces the break of kinship that scholars since Orlando Patterson have considered to be one of the main features of transatlantic slavery and one of the main causes of what he named "social death."²⁰⁹ In the letter, Gama retells his failed attempts at finding his mother. He looked for Luisa Mahin three times in Rio de Janeiro, and

²⁰⁶ The law's first article stated that "All slaves who enter Brazil's ports or territories from abroad become free" [*Todos os escravos, que entrarem no território ou portos do Brasil, vindos de fora, ficam livres*]. Lei de 7 de novembro de 1831: Declara livres todos os escravos vindos de fora do Imperio, e impõe penas aos importadores dos mesmos escravos. Available at http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/lim/LIM-7-11-1831.htm. Between 1831 and 1851, more than 750 thousand enslaved Africans illegally entered Brazil. Brazil ultimately stopped all slave trade with the Eusébio de Queirós law in 1851.

²⁰⁷ Luiz Gama, "Minha vida: carta a Lúcio de Mendonça," 62.

²⁰⁸ Medonça, "Luiz Gama por Lúcio de Mendonça," 76.

²⁰⁹ Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982).

later found out that she had been imprisoned in a *casa de dar fortuna* in 1838, and that she had disappeared since.²¹⁰

After narrating his illegal enslavement and simultaneous loss of kinship, Gama starts the most intimate and sentimental part of his letter, which becomes in Mendonça's article another aspect of his magnificence: the years he lived in slavery. Gama was sent to Rio de Janeiro aboard the *Saraiva* ship, becoming part of the growing domestic slave trade from the Northeast provinces to the Southeast.²¹¹ There, he staid with a wax-chandler named Vieira, whose wife and daughters were "very kind, sweet, and compassionate." In retelling his departure from Vieira's house, Gama narrates the most sentimental moment in his letter, deploying the most traditional elements in abolitionist narratives.

Whenever I remember this good lady and her daughters, tears come to my eyes, because I miss the love and care with which they showered me for a few days.

²¹⁰ *Casas de dar fortuna* (houses of good fortune) were places where Africans or people of African descent (and also whites) would practice religious observances of African origins. Throughout the nineteenth century, police raided these houses in order to arrest all participants, following the 1830s law criminalizing "witchcraft." For a literary account of a *casa de dar fortuna* and a police raid, see Manuel Antônio de Almeida *Memórias de um sargento de milícias* [Memoirs of a Police Sargent], 1852. Although it may have happened, Gama does not say that his mother was killed by state authorities but that she was probably deported: "My informants thought that these 'rebels' were sent out of the country by the government who, at that time, treated free Africans very severely, since they were thought to be agitators" [*Era da opinião dos meus informantes que esses 'amotinados' fossem mandados por fora pelo governo, que, nesse tempo, tratava rigorosamente os africanos livres, tidos como provocadores.*] Indeed, it was a fairly common practice in the nineteenth-century Brazil to deport freed Africans to Africa, especially after the 1835 Malês rebellion. Police were always suspicious of free Africans, thought to plan rebellions, lure slaves to run away, and to commit crimes. Sidney Chalhoub, "The Precariousness of Freedom in a Slave Society (Brazil in the Nineteenth Century)," *International Review of Social History* 56, no. 3 (2011): 405–39.

²¹¹ Although there is a record of the *Saraiva* ship bringing slaves from Bahia to Rio de Janeiro, there is no information on their names. According to Herbert Klein, there are only detailed records on the enslaved peoples imported to Rio starting in 1852, when a supplemental decree required that the police "inspect all slaves imported into the city by ship." The goal was to determine that the enslaved had entered the empire legally. Herbert S. Klein, "The Internal Slave Trade in Nineteenth-Century Brazil: A Study of Slave Importations into Rio de Janeiro in 1852," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 51, no. 4 (November 1, 1971): 570.

I left that house weeping copiously, as did they, sad to see me go.

Oh! There were painful events in my life which are worth more than all the rueful legends in the miserable life of martyrs.

Sempre que me lembro desta boa senhora e de suas filhas, vêm-me as lágrimas aos olhos, porque tenho saudades do amor e dos cuidados com que me afagaram por alguns dias.

Dali saí derramando copioso pranto, e também todas elas, sentidas de me verem partir.

Oh! Eu tenho lances doridos em minha vida, que valem mais do que as lendas sentidas da vida amargurada dos mártires.²¹²

This passage bears a remarkable resemblance with Manzano's autobiography. In a moment more abundant with affect than factual details, Gama conflates sentimentality with femininity. Like Manzano, he recounts having nurtured an affection for women who, in different ways, were connected to his enslavement. The "perverse mothering" that Aching sees in Manzano's autobiography appears here not as a product of *partum sequitur ventrem* (since Gama's mother was free) but of what Sidney Chalhoub calls the "structural precariousness of freedom" in nineteenth-century Brazil.²¹³ In spite of its higher rates of manumissions in comparison to Cuba and the United States, most of the enslaved population in the decades following the aforementioned law of 1831 were illegally enslaved. For people of color in nineteenth century Brazil, "freedom was a risky experience ... because they had their lives ruled by slavery, by

²¹² Luiz Gama, "Minha vida: carta a Lúcio de Mendonça," 63.

²¹³ Gerard Aching, *Freedom from Liberation: Slavery, Sentiment, and Literature in Cuba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 82. Sidney Chalhoub, "The Precariousness of Freedom in a Slave Society (Brazil in the Nineteenth Century)," 406.

always dealing with the risk of being enslaved, or of falling back into slavery.”²¹⁴ In other words, Gama’s father could only sell his ten-year-old son as a slave because the boy was Black. Conflated with the estrangement from his mother, Gama’s precarious freedom led into an illegal enslavement that shattered his remaining familial relations and led to an affective relationship with his slavers.²¹⁵

When living with his second alleged master, Antônio Pereira Cardoso, in São Paulo, Gama learns a wide array of activities—he works as cupbearer, shoemaker, washer, and tailor. There, he meets a house guest, a young man from a prominent family named Antônio Rodrigues do Prado Júnior who had gone to São Paulo in order to study Law. In another stark resemblance to Manzano’s narrative, Gama also cultivates an “intimate friendship, just like brothers” with Prado Júnior, who teaches him the “first letters” [*primeiras letras*]; that is, how to read and write. This is a pivotal moment, because—just like Manzano—Gama’s literacy leads to freedom, albeit enigmatically: “In 1848, having learned how to read and count, and having cunningly and secretly obtained unquestionable proof of my freedom, I left, escaping the Ensign Antônio Pereira Cardoso’s house, who in fact held me in great esteem, and joined the Army” [*Em 1848, sabendo eu ler e contar alguma coisa, e tendo obtido artilosa e secretamente provas inconcussas de minha liberdade, retirei-me, fugindo, da casa do alferes Antônio Pereira Cardoso, que aliás votava-me a maior estima, e fui assentar praça*].²¹⁶ Gama does not add anything to how or when he managed to “obtain” the “unquestionable proof” of his freedom.

²¹⁴ Sidney Chalhoub, *A força da escravidão: ilegalidade e costume no Brasil oitocentista* (São Paulo, SP: Companhia das Letras, 2012), 29.

²¹⁵ Chalhoub discusses numerous cases of “people who were arrested under suspicion of being enslaved, individuals who would declare they were free but ended up being put for auction, examples of illegal enslavement, reenslavement, free subjects claiming to be enslaved in order to evade recruiting, conditional, fragile and oftentimes revoked manumissions.” Chalhoub, *A força da escravidão*, 45-6.

²¹⁶ Gama, “Minha vida: Carta a Lúcio de Mendonça,” 65.

This mysterious manumission is both legal and fugitive because, although it is motivated by legal proof, it entails an actual escape (*fugindo*). Gama decided to join the army because, as Angela Alonso claims, it was the “socially safe path for a former slave”—yet another display of the precarious freedom experienced by Black subjects in nineteenth-century Brazil.²¹⁷

After leaving Cardoso’s house, Gama becomes a soldier and gets fired for insubordination. He is arrested, then becomes an amanuensis, police secretary, and gets fired again in 1868 for insurgency—that is, for being a member of the Liberal party and for working as an attorney for illegally enslaved people such as Jacinto, an African man who claimed he had been brought to Brazil after the 1831 law forbidding the slave trade. After being fired, Gama devotes all his work to the republican cause and to cases like Jacinto’s, “because I hate captivity and all masters, especially Kings” [*porque detesto o cativo e todos os senhores, principalmente os Reis*].²¹⁸

As I noted in the introduction to Part II, critics have claimed that Gama used literacy and the act of writing as evidence of his civility and autonomy. If Gama’s intelligence and capacity for *logos* is more than “proven” when he writes this letter to Lúcio de Mendonça in 1880—he is a self-taught lawyer, recognized radical republican, well-known abolitionist writer—what is left, then, for the public to find out? The answer is precisely what the letter reveals: the story of his life and its affective registers, which fit perfectly in Gama’s well-known abolitionist practice. His suffering as an enslaved child and his becoming a lawyer specialized in freeing illegally enslaved Africans are the two ends of a thread that meet in a circle. Gama’s autobiographical letter, as well as its later dissemination with Mendonça’s article, creates this circle. In this sense, Gama’s

²¹⁷ Angela Alonso, *Flores, votos e balas: o movimento abolicionista brasileiro (1868-1888)* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2015), 182.

²¹⁸ Gama, “Minha vida: Carta a Lúcio de Mendonça,” 68.

autobiographical writing adds the intimate *pathos* element to a public figure already known for his *logos*.

Gama builds such *pathos* around the image of his mother. Towards the end of the letter, after recounting the times when he tried to find Luisa Mahin in Rio de Janeiro, Gama tells Mendonça about the month he spent in prison in 1854, when he was accused of insubordination towards a higher-ranking officer. While in jail, he “spent the days reading and, at night, suffered with insomnia; and continuously, had before my eyes the image of my dear mother” [*passava os dias lendo e às noites, sofria de insônias; e, de continuo, tinha diante dos olhos a imagem de minha querida mãe*].²¹⁹ In one of these visions, Gama sees his mother getting arrested while calling his name. Gama wakes up, frightened, and runs towards the prison hallway, sticking his head out of the cell bars. Later, he shares the story with his cell mates, who had similar experiences. Gama then “fell into nostalgia, cried, and slept [*caí em nostalgia, chorei e dormi*].²²⁰

Like this experience in a jail cell, much of Gama’s lyric poetry is an attempt to reconstruct a lost nuclear family around an emphasis on Black women. The privileged position Luisa Mahin occupies in Gama’s autobiographical narrative and affective imaginary is such that he encloses a poem titled “Minha mãe” with his letter to Lúcio de Mendonça.²²¹ Poetry, then, becomes the means through which Gama rebuilds his lost kinship.

Fantasizing Slavery

²¹⁹ Gama, “Minha vida: Carta a Lúcio de Mendonça,” 66.

²²⁰ Gama, “Minha vida: Carta a Lúcio de Mendonça,” 66.

²²¹ The poem had been published in the 1861 edition of the *Primeiras trovas burlescas de Getulino*. We will closely examine this poem later on.

When Gama published the first edition of *Primeiras trovas burlescas* in a small São Paulo press in 1859, another Afro-Brazilian writer in the state of Maranhão had just published their first novel: Maria Firmina dos Reis, author of *Úrsula*, one of the first abolitionist novels in Brazil, and the first published by an Afro-Brazilian woman.²²² Most presses at the time were located in the capital, Rio de Janeiro. As Ligia Fonseca Ferreira explains, São Paulo’s publishing life started at the same time as the Law schools opened, in 1827.²²³

Gama included 22 poems in the first edition of *Primeiras trovas burlescas de Getulino* (1859). Framed by the verses of another author—José Bonifácio, o Moço, Gama’s close friend and supporter at the time—the collection is hypertextual in its structure. Bonifácio’s “Saudades do escravo” opens the book, while “Tropeiro” and “Calabar” close it. While the poems themselves do not credit Gama’s friend, a note added after or before each of Bonifácio’s verses clarifies the authorship. Right after “Saudades do escravo,” for example, Gama’s note states that:

This fine production has been given to us by its illustrious author, the Exm. Snr. Dr. José Bonifacio de Andrada e Silva, [and] we publish it in the beginning of our obscure volume as an *abracadabra*, amidst the tempestuous seas of censorship [and] the terrible roundabouts of the sordid selfishness of the monopolists.²²⁴

²²² In 1859, Harriet E. Wilson published *Our Nig: Sketches from a Life of a Free Black*, also the first novel published by an Afro-American woman in the United States.

²²³ Ligia Fonseca Ferreira, “Luiz Gama autor, leitor, editor: revisitando as Primeiras Trovas Burlescas de 1859 e 1861,” *Estudos Avançados* 33, no. 96 (August 21, 2019): 120. The first literary work published in São Paulo was *Rosas e Goivos* (1849), penned by José Bonifácio, o Moço—Luiz Gama’s close friend—followed by Bernardo Guimarães’s *Cantos da Solidão* (1852). With such a limited literary history, it is no surprise that both Bonifácio and Guimarães appear in Gama’s *Primeira trovas*, in the form either of epigraphs or in full poems.

²²⁴ Luiz Gama, *Primeiras trovas burlescas de Getulino* (São Paulo: Typographia Dous de Dezembro, 1859), 12. Emphasis in the original.

Esta bella producção foi-nos dada pelo seu illustre autor o Exm. Snr. Dr. José Bonifacio de Andrada e Silva, publicamol-a na frente do nosso obscuro volume para nos servir de Abracadabra, nos mares tempestuosos das censuras, e nas horridas ambages do sordido egoismo dos monopolistas.

Bonifácio's poem thus plays a "cabalistic" function in Gama's first work, positioned at the opening and at the closing of the collection in order to keep his censors, critics, and pro-slavery foes at bay.²²⁵ The second, extended edition of *Primeiras trovas burlescas*, published in 1869 in the capital of the Brazilian empire (Rio de Janeiro), did not reproduce this note but included 19 new poems by Gama, corrected versions of the ones published in the 1859 edition, and added not only three but 22 poems by Bonifácio. Grouped this time at the end of the book, Bonifácio's poems serve again to legitimize the work of a lesser-known poet in the Brazilian court. Some of the newspaper ads for the book also point in this direction, such as the one published by the bookstore F.L. Pinto & Cia in the *Jornal do Commercio* issue of July 25, 1863. The short note presents Gama's book as a "second edition, augmented with the beautiful poems by the Exm. Sr. Conselheiro José Bonifácio de A. e Silva."²²⁶ Using Bonifácio's name to leverage Gama's work, the ad fails to mention the common theme of both authors: slavery.²²⁷

²²⁵ Ligia Fonseca Ferreira, "Luiz Gama autor, leitor, editor," 114.

²²⁶ *Jornal do Commercio* (July 25, 1863): 3.

²²⁷ This creates a dissonance on the newspaper page: in the column next to the note about the *Primeiras trovas*, the reader would find several ads for the purchase, sale, and rental of enslaved individuals in Rio de Janeiro who could perform all kinds of domestic work: wet nurses, cooks, maids, cup-bearers, laundresses, ironers. One of them is a "perfect ironer and seamstress *crioula*; at the Quitanda Street, no. 59, second floor" [*crioula perfeita engomadeira e costureira; na rua da Quitanda, n. 59, sobrado*]. Another is a ten-year old girl, who is advertised for her beauty rather than for her labor—"Little black girl for sale, 10 years old, beautiful piece for 1:050\$ at the Fogo Street, n. 10" [*Vende-se uma negrinha de 10 anos, bonita peça por 1:050\$ na rua do Fogo n. 10*]. *Jornal do Commercio* (July 25, 1863): 3.

Bonifácio's poem that opens the 1859 edition (which is also included in the 1861 version) addresses the issue of slavery through the lens of a non-pathologized form of nostalgia, *saudades*. The poem describes an enslaved man who longs for their previous life of freedom in the *palmares*: "Slave—no, I have not died/ In the shackles of slavery;/ In the woods I have lived,/ My heart is free!" [*Escravo—não, não morri/ Nos ferros da escravidão;/ Lá nos palmares vivi,/ Tenho livre o coração!*].²²⁸ Adopting a typical Christian stance that separates the tortured body from a free soul, Bonifácio's poem affirms the slave's humanity through the word of God.²²⁹ Although the body is tortured in slavery, the spirit wanders freely in its native "land of the sun" [*terra do sol*]. Soul and heart are one and the same, as the beating heart—the mark of a living body—lives for the nostalgia of freedom.²³⁰ More importantly for us, Bonifácio's poem also introduces a very dear subject for Gama—the figure of the mother and the enslaved family. In the free land where the poetic voice used to live, "there I have land and flowers.../ My mother.... My loves..../ Clouds and skies.... My home!" [*Lá tenho terras e flores.... Minha mãe.... Os meus amores..../ Nuvens e céus.... Os meus lares!*].²³¹

The trope of the enslaved woman—particularly the mother—pervades nineteenth-century Brazilian literature from all angles. Bonifácio's "Saudades do escravo," therefore, is just one of many examples. As Pablo Simpson states, the enslaved woman in nineteenth-century abolitionist poetry becomes a topos "through an interplay of references with its intertextual dimension—

²²⁸ José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva, "Saudades do escravo," in Luiz Gama, *Primeiras trovas burlescas de Getulino* (São Paulo: Typographia Dous de Dezembro, 1859), 9.

²²⁹ See Part I.

²³⁰ "From this miserable body/ My detached spirit/ Has not left—it stayed there!" [*D'este corpo desgraçado/ Meu espírito soltado/ Não partiu—ficou-me lá!*]. Andrada e Silva, "Saudades do escravo," 11.

²³¹ Bonifácio, "Saudades do escravo," 11. The association of land ownership and freedom deserves attention. In 1850, the Land Law regulated private property in Brazil, creating unsurmountable obstacles for former slaves and poor people in general because all land had to be bought from the Crown.

explicit homage, submission to a model, voluntary inspiration.”²³² As such, it is an instance of what Lauren Berlant calls “sentimental politics” or “politico-sentimental,” that is, a top-down fantasy of identification and compassion (on the part of privileged subjects) through suffering (on the part of marginalized subjects). Sentimental politics, Berlant claims, operated in a paradox. On the one hand, it expanded the terms of the human in the eyes of privileged classes, who began to see subordinate populations as “candidates for inclusion in the body politic.”²³³ On the other, it mobilized clichés and tropes that reinforced the marginalization of the enslaved (in this case), “making obligations to action mainly ameliorative, a matter not of changing the fundamental terms that organize power, but of following the elevated claims of vigilant sensitivity, virtue, and conscience.”²³⁴

Such “top-down fantasy of identification” is most evident in Francisco Leite Bittencourt Sampaio’s “A captiva,” published in the collection of poems *Flores sylvestres* (1860) merely a year before Gama’s second edition of the *Primeiras trovas burlescas*.²³⁵ Like Bonifácio’s, Bittencourt Sampaio’s poetic voice speaks in the first person, but as an interlocutor to an enslaved woman: a planter’s son reminiscing about his childhood. Luiza, the “captive,” is an African woman who is now enslaved on a Brazilian plantation. She “cried with grief,/ Because the lands of the Congo she left [*chorou de pezares,/ Porque as terras do Congo deixou*].”²³⁶ Luiza

²³² Pablo Simpson, “A escrava na poesia romântica brasileira,” in *Marginalidades femininas: a mulher na literatura e na cultura brasileira e portuguesa*, ed. Luciene Marie Pavanelo, Maria Cristina Pais Simon, Osmar Pereira Oliva, and Paulo Motta Oliveira (Montes Claros: Unimontes, 2017), p. 303-314.

²³³ Lauren Berlant, *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 35.

²³⁴ Lauren Berlant, *The Female Complaint*, 22, 35-36.

²³⁵ As we are about to see, one of Gama’s poem bears the same title as this one by Bittencourt Sampaio.

²³⁶ Francisco Leite Bittencourt Sampaio, *Flores sylvestres* (Rio de Janeiro: B. L. Garnier, 1860), 131. The trope of the nostalgic African who misses their land and kin, which we saw in Part I, had become poetic currency with Gonçalves Dias’s poem “A escrava,” published in his 1846 book *Primeiros cantos*: “Oh! sweet country of Congo,/ Sweet lands beyond the sea/ Oh! beautiful sunny days!/ Oh! moonlit nights!/ White sand deserts/ That stretch for vast, immense lengths,/ Where free runs the mind,/ Free beats the heart!” [*Oh! doce país de Congo,/ Doces terras d’além-mar/ Oh! dias de sol formoso!/ Oh! noites d’almo*]

misses her family and cries about her lost freedom: “Her weeping told me: ‘Once/ I was free living among my kin’” [*O seu pranto dizia-me: “outr’ora/ Fôra livre vivendo entre os meus!”*].²³⁷ Such longing, or *saudade*, is precisely the feeling that the poetic voice uses to identify with the captive.

And the captive liked me,
Because I liked her too;
It was when my mother was alive,
How much longing can my chest bear!
My mother used to tell me that once
Luiza had been free among her own.

*E gostava de mim a captiva,
Porque eu d’ella gostava tambem;
Inda então minha mãe era viva,
Que saudades que o peito não tem!
Minha mãe me dizia que outr’ora
Fôra livre Luiza entre os seus.*²³⁸

The sufferings of the poetic voice and that of the captive become enmeshed as both long for their loved ones. This is the “affective recognition” that Berlant discusses, which does not

luar!/ Desertos de branca areia/ De vasta, imensa extensão,/ Onde livre corre a mente,/ Livre bate o coração!]. Already here we see that the freedom Gonçalves Dias depicts in Africa is a freedom to feel. Antônio Gonçalves Dias, *Primeiros cantos* (Rio de Janeiro: Eduardo e Henrique Laemmert, 1846), 146.

²³⁷ Bittencourt Sampaio, *Flores sylvestres*, 132.

²³⁸ Bittencourt Sampaio, *Flores sylvestres*, 132.

create any sort of call to action or expose the “structure of violence” that organizes Bittencourt Sampaio’s verses. Rather, it displays longing (*saudade*) as a universal feeling that is supposed to create a connection between slavers and the enslaved through pedagogical message, forcing a subjective recognition between the poetic voice, Luiza, and the reader: “Whoever says that the captive does not love/ Is lying to God who created the universe” [*Quem disser que o captivo não ama/ Mente a Deus que o universo creou*].²³⁹ Luiza suffers all the effects of her enslavement subjectively. There is no mention of her body. However, instead of producing redemption and the promise of freedom for the enslaved, Bittencourt Sampaio’s verses (accidentally?) confirm the complete material failure of his sentimental politics. In the last stanza, Luiza becomes mad with longing: “Until one day Luiza, very quietly/ Started to run across the fields;/ People said she was damned,/ Everyone avoided seeing her./ .../ Today it is a pity! The sad woman does not even cry,/ Crazy, she is always singing, oh God!...” [*Eis que um dia Luiza calada/ Começou pelo campo a correr;/ Se dizia que estava damnada,/ Todo mudo fugia de a vê./.../ Hoje é pena! que a triste nem chora,/ Doida vive cantando, meu Deus!...*].²⁴⁰

In Brazil, as in Berlant’s United States and all over the Atlantic world, the image of the fragmented enslaved family, with a particular focus on the separation between mothers and children, was one of the most common rhetorical devices in abolitionist discourses, as Bonifácio’s poem demonstrates.²⁴¹ Examining the “feminized abolitionist rhetoric” that instrumentalized the image of the separation of mothers and children, Camillia Cowling argues that such rhetoric “echoed, and also helped propel, enslaved women’s own legal demands, even

²³⁹ Bittencourt Sampaio, *Flores sylvestres*, 133.

²⁴⁰ Bittencourt Sampaio, *Flores sylvestres*, 134. The mad enslaved woman seems to be yet another trope in nineteenth-century Brazilian literature, appearing in poems by Castro Alves (“Lúcia”), Fagundes Varela (“A escrava”), and in novels such as Aluísio de Azevedo’s *O mulato* (1881).

²⁴¹ Let us not forget that the enslaved mother was also at the core of Luiz Antonio de Oliveira Mendes’s discourse on *banzo*, as well as of Macedo’s *Considerações sobre a nostalgia*. See Part I, Chapter 2.

though these women would not necessarily have shared the definitions and concepts of motherhood that were assumed by elite commentators.”²⁴²

Gama’s version of sentimental politics is not its complete disavowal, but rather a reinscription of the sentimental image in connection with earlier Iberian poetic traditions and, of course, with his distinctive critique of Brazilian white supremacy. The Black woman and particularly the Black mother in Gama’s poetry are more than abolitionist tropes of sentimental politics; they are a poetic enactment of Gama’s political practices.

But before delving into Gama’s reimagining of the abolitionist trope of the Black mother, let us take a look at his approach to female whiteness. Among Gama’s eight lyric poems, two of them praise the beauty of white women—with the same (dis)closure in the end. “Laura,” for instance, is an exaltation of a woman with a “white bust” [*niveo collo*] and “golden locks” [*aureos novellos*].²⁴³ Her whiteness and beauty produce an unreachable figure who, in the end, is revealed to be an actual statue: “It was a statue—an example of beauty,/ And as such her chest was made of marble!” [*Era uma estátua – exemplo de beleza,/ E como ela de mármore tinha o peito!*].²⁴⁴ “Junto à estátua” narrates a similar scenario, even though the “revelation” is already in the title. The poetic voice is in São Paulo’s botanical garden when he falls asleep and dreams about a

Beautiful virgin with a snowy bust,

²⁴² Camillia Cowling, *Conceiving Freedom: Women of Color, Gender, and the Abolition of Slavery in Havana and Rio de Janeiro* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 99. See also Roger A. Kittleston, “Women and Notions of Womanhood in Brazilian Abolitionism,” in Pamela Scully and Diane Patton (orgs.), *Gender and Slave Emancipation in the Atlantic World* (New York: Duke University Press, 2005), 99-120.

²⁴³ Luiz Gama, *Primeiras trovas burlescas de Getulino*, 2nd edition (Rio de Janeiro: Typ. De Pinheiro & C., 1861), 152.

²⁴⁴ Gama, *Primeiras trovas burlescas de Getulino*, 2nd edition, 155.

Green-blue eyes, blond hair;
Blood-red lips, elegant posture,
A face as tender as that of beautiful Erycina,
Curving the fine alabaster breast,
Tenderly prints on my black lips
A luscious kiss of ardent voluptuousness!–
Defeated by pleasure, swimming in ecstasy,
Already in fear moving hesitatingly,
I fly with her to ethereal regions
On the tenuous wings of endless tenderness.

*Formosa virgem de nevado colo,
De garços olhos, de cabelos louros;
Sanguíneos lábios, elegante porte,
Mimoso rosto de Ericina bela,
Curvando o seio de alabastro fino,
Mimosa imprime nos meus lábios negros
Gostoso beijo de volúpia ardente!–
Vencido de prazer, nadando em gozos,
Já temeroso pé movendo incerto,
Voo com ela às regiões etéreas
Nas tênues asas de ternura infinda.²⁴⁵*

²⁴⁵ Luiz Gama, *Primeiras trovas burlescas de Getulino*, 2nd edition, 18.

The dream ends when the poetic voice wakes up “at the break of dawn” [*no romper da Aurora*] and finds that he is embracing not a woman, but a “a cold statue, made of coarse marble!...” [*gelada estátua de grosseiro mármore! ...*].²⁴⁶ As in “Laura,” the poetic voice realizes in the final verses that the white beauty he coveted is unreachable, cold, distant. The eroticism that such perfect, Petrarchan beauty of the white marble statue provokes in the poetic voice—a Black man at least in “Junto à estátua”—is mere fantasy. Of course, as the title “Laura” suggests, Gama is referencing Petrarch’s Laura, the origin of the ubiquitous “capei d’oro a l’aura sparsi.”²⁴⁷ These poems do not legitimize whiteness as the unreachable ideal. Rather, what Gama does here is precisely critique the desire for whiteness as such, much like he does in his satirical poems and, as stated above, in his letter to Lúcio de Mendonça.²⁴⁸

In his lyric poems, however, the critique of whiteness happens through an association with certain romance poetic traditions in a thematic and rhetorical level but also through hypertext. In “Junto à estátua,” Gama chooses as epigraph a 1598 sonnet by Luis de Camões: “The ardent Aurora had shaken free/ her slender tresses of gold,/ and the flowers of the enameled fields/ were sprinkled with crystal dew” [*Já a saudosa Aurora destoucava/ Os seus cabelos de ouro delicados,/ E as boninas nos campos esmaltados/ De cristalino orvalho borrifava*].²⁴⁹ It is well known that in his sonnets Camões was very much in debt to the Italian Renaissance, and

²⁴⁶ Luiz Gama, *Primeiras trovas burlescas de Getulino*, 2nd edition, 19.

²⁴⁷ Francesco Petrarca, “Sonnet XC,” in *Il Canzoniere*, <https://petrarch.petersadlon.com/canzoniere.html?poem=90>.

²⁴⁸ See “Quem sou eu,” also known as “A bodarrada,” in which Gama ridicules white-washing by invoking “bode” (literally, billy goat), a pejorative term for dark-skinned mixed-race people: “Bodes há de toda casta,/ Pois que a espécie é muito vasta.../ Há cinzentos, há rajados,/ Baios, pampas e malhados,/ Bodes negros, *bodes brancos*,/ E, sejamos todos francos,/ Uns plebeus, e outros nobers,/ Bodes ricos, bodes pobres,/ Bodes sábios, importantes,/ E também alguns tratantes...” Gama, *Primeiras trovas burlescas de Getulino*, 2nd edition, 141-2.

²⁴⁹ Luiz Gama, *Primeiras trovas burlescas de Getulino*, 2nd edition, 16.

that “the greatest of these debts to Renaissance poets is transparently to Petrarch,” as Landeg White claims.²⁵⁰ The epigraph in “Junto à estátua” is a clear homage, or reproduction, of the Petrarchan sonnet, in form and content: the praise to the blonde woman.

Yet Camões was not a mere replicator of the Italian Renaissance. As White and others scholars demonstrate, the author of the *Lusiadas* was also an admirer of Portuguese folk song, which he quoted frequently in epigraphs to his poems.²⁵¹ In citing Camões in his own epigraphs, Gama thus also inserted himself within these two traditions, albeit with a twist. The Iberian literary canon in Gama’s poetry serves a similar purpose as it does for Manzano: it provides the tropes and identifiable tools through which Gama becomes part of and is admired by the white, elite-dominated literary circles in the Brazilian empire.²⁵² But it also allows him to rewrite this very canon through the deployment of seventeenth-century Iberian tropes and genres in nineteenth-century Brazil. The coexistence of different colonial temporalities in Gama’s lyric poetry, as we are about to see, distinguishes him from his peers because of the deliberate reinscription of these same images and references within his own practice, mixing—as did Camões—canonical and popular lyric traditions.

Luiz Gama Rewrites Luís de Camões

Camões appears in the epigraphs of two other lyric poems in Gama’s poetic *oeuvre*: “A captiva” and “Meus amores.” The former was included in the 1861 edition of *Primeiras trovas*, and the latter was published in the newspaper *Diabo Coxo* on September 3, 1865. In both poems, the poetic voices declare their love for women of color, offering lengthy descriptions of their

²⁵⁰ Luís de Camões, and Landeg White, *The Collected Lyric Poems of Luís de Camões* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 8.

²⁵¹ Camões and White, *The Collected Lyric Poems of Luís de Camões*, 9-10.

²⁵² See Chapter 3.

physical beauty. “A captiva” echoes Manzano’s “La esclava ausente:” the poetic voice cannot act on their feelings for the beloved because one of them is enslaved. However, while in Manzano’s poem the enslaved subject is the female poetic voice herself, in “A captiva” it is the beloved who is enslaved. The actual master-slave relationship does not come into play as it does in “La esclava ausente,” since the poetic voice is a supposedly free man, initially unaware of his beloved’s legal status.

Camões emerges in these poems through the citation of two different stanzas of one single poem: “Endechas a Bárbara escrava,” published in first collection of Camões’s poems in 1595 (edited by Fernão Rodrigues Lobo Soropita) and dedicated to “a slave called Bárbara with whom he was much enamored in India” [*uma captiva, por nome Bárbara, com quem o poeta andava de amores na Índia*].²⁵³ A long-lasting object of scrutiny and interrogation among Camonian scholars, the poem has “raised delicate interpretative questions since very early on” because of its heterodox subject: the enslaved Bárbara (modernized as Bárbara), whose “blackness of love” [*pretidão de amor*] made snow envious.²⁵⁴ Written in *redondilha menor* (five poetic syllables), a typical length for Lusophone folk song, Camões’s poem is a first-person ode to an enslaved woman he supposedly met somewhere in Southeast Asia (India), where he served as a soldier between 1553 and 1567. Martins Gomes claims that Camões wrote the poem during his stay on the Island of Mozambique, where he lived from 1567 and 1569 on his way back from his time in Goa, Macau, Malaca, Malasia, Mekong “and other regions of the Persian Gulf.”²⁵⁵

²⁵³ Luís de Camões, *Rimas de Luís de Camões*, ed. Gonçalo Coutinho (Lisboa: Pedro Crasbeeck, 1598), 185.

²⁵⁴ Rita Marnoto, “A figura feminina petrarquista em Camões, entre imitação e transformação,” in *Lírica camoniana: estudos diversos* (Lisboa: Constância, 1996), 50.

²⁵⁵ António Martins Gomes, “A Bárbara e o Jau: a escravatura em Camões,” In M. R. P. C. Pimentel, & M. D. R. Monteiro (eds.), *Senhores e Escravos nas Sociedades Ibero-Atlânticas* (Lisbon: CHAM & Edições Húmus, 2019), 65.

Some scholars consider it one of the “first poems by a modern European poet about love for a non-European woman.”²⁵⁶ The adjective “modern” here is important, since the theme of infatuation for an “exotic” captive woman was not uncharted territory in Iberian literature.²⁵⁷ Camões starts the poem with an inversion of the master-slave relationship by activating a common trope in Iberian courtly love poetry which we have tackled when examining Manzano’s “La esclava ausente:” love as bondage.

That slave I own
who holds me captive,
living for her alone
who scorns I should live,
no hybrid rose
drenched in dew
had ever to these eyes
half such beauty.²⁵⁸

Aquella captiva

Que me tem captivo,

²⁵⁶ Camões and White, *The Collected Lyric Poems of Luís de Camões*, 2.

²⁵⁷ Martins Gomes reminds us of a poem in the *Cancioneiro Geral* (Garcia de Resente, 1516), where we find a *vilancete* by D. João de Meneses in which the poetic voice confesses being in love with his captive, in a very similar play of “semantic dichotomies” as that of Camões: “Catyvo sam da catyva,/ servo d’uma servidor,/ senhora de seu senhor.” The scholar also calls our attention to the play *Farsa do Juiz da Beira* (1525), in which a squire falls in love with an enslaved moorish woman: “Ella captiva, eu captivo: / ora que má morte moura.” António Martins Gomes, “A Bárbara e o Jau: a escravatura em Camões,” In M. R. P. C. Pimentel, & M. D. R. Monteiro (eds.), *Senhores e Escravos nas Sociedades Ibero-Atlânticas* (Lisbon: CHAM & Edições Húmus, 2019), 66-67.

²⁵⁸ Luís de Camões, *The Collected Lyric Poems of Luís de Camões*, trans. Landeg White (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 253.

Porque n'ella vivo

Já não quer que viva.

Eu nunca vi rosa

Em suaves mólhos,

Que para meus olhos

Fosse mais formosa.²⁵⁹

Following the Petrarchan model, a humble poetic voice exalts the beloved's beauty in comparison to natural elements, such as flowers and stars. As Rita Marnoto claims, the exalted woman in Petrarchan poetry is not the purely spiritual being of the Italian *dolce stil novo*, in which the female angelic status is a vector for the divine. Rather, she is soul and flesh, simultaneously "angelical essence and intense, striking presence."²⁶⁰ Nevertheless, the captive in Camões's song does not bear much resemblance to Petrarch's (or Gama's) Laura, whom both poets had praised in other poems. Rather than having blond hair, fair skin, and rosy cheeks, Bárbara has "eyes dark and at rest" [*olhos sossegados, pretos e cansados*], as well as black hair:

Here dwells the sweetness

by which I live,

she being mistress

of whom she is captive.

Her hair is raven,

and the fashion responds,

²⁵⁹ Luís de Camões, *Obras completas de Luís de Camões*, Vol. II, ed. Innocencio Francisco da Silva (Lisboa: Parceria A. M. Pereira, 1912), 174.

²⁶⁰ Rita Marnoto, "Camões, Laura e a Bárbara escrava," *Máthesis* (1997): 87.

forgetting its given
preference for blonde.²⁶¹

Huma graça viva
Que n'elles lhes móra
Pera ser senhora
De quem he captiva.
Pretos os cabelos,
Onde o povo vão
Perde opinião
*Que os louros são bellos.*²⁶²

The metaphorical subversion of the master-slave relationship through amorous bondage undergirds the further debasement of the Petrarchan canon. Bárbara's black hair puts the common folk's (*povo vão*) preference for blondes in question. Of course, as scholars such as Larissa Brewer-García have argued, dark-skinned women had been an important figure in Iberian religious imagery since the fourteenth-century, with cults to dark-skinned virgins and folk song praising dark-skinned women.²⁶³ Until the mid-sixteenth century, dark-skinned women in Iberian profane folk song (*morena* or *negra*) were associated to sin, shamefulness, ugliness, and field work—things to be avoided.²⁶⁴ As Alín argues, however, in the second half of the

²⁶¹ Camões, *The Collected Lyric Poems of Luís de Camões*, 254.

²⁶² Camões, *Obras completas de Luís de Camões*, 174.

²⁶³ Larissa Brewer-García, *Beyond Babel: Translations of Blackness in Colonial Peru and New Granada* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 189.

²⁶⁴ Bruce W. Wardropper, "The Color Problem in Spanish Traditional Poetry," *Modern Language Notes* 75, no. 5 (1960): 415–21.

sixteenth century there was an emergence of folk song praising dark-skinned women, at times with a caveat (“aunque soy morenita y prieta/ a mí qué sé me dá,/ que amor tengo/ que me servirá”) but progressively more positive. The dark-skinned woman “becomes an object of true love and the object of deep passions.”²⁶⁵ At the same time, the *morena* was divinized in religious poetry praising the black Madonna (“*nigra sum sed formosa*, “I am dark-skinned but comely”).²⁶⁶ Nevertheless, even when dark skin appears as a positive trait in women in Iberian folk song, it is still associated with sexuality and lust.²⁶⁷ Camões is in dialogue with this popular tradition, evoking it as a direct counterpoint to Petrarch’s Laura, with her fair skin and golden hair. But he does not stop there. In the fourth stanza, the poet escalates this debasement as it shifts from the description of Bárbara’s black hair to a non-descriptive reference to her blackness.

Blackness of Love

at so sweet a figure,

the blanketing snow

vows to change color.

Gladly obedient

and naturally clever;

She may be foreign,

²⁶⁵ José María Alín, *El cancionero español de tipo tradicional* (Madrid: Taurus, 1968), 257.

²⁶⁶ On the black Madonna in the Song of Songs, see Larissa Brewer-García, *Beyond Babel*, 188-190; and Bruce W. Wardropper, “The Impact of Folk Song on Sacred and Profane Love Poetry in Post-Tridentine Spain,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 17, no. 4 (1986): 483–98.

²⁶⁷ While Alín sees in the *nigra um sed formosa* the origin for the praise of the dark-skinned woman, Margit Frenk claims that compliments to the *morena* were not a direct reference to skin color, but to a sexually experienced woman. Margit Frenk, *Poesía Popular Hispánica: 44 Estudios* (México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2006), 366, 371.

but barbarous, never!²⁶⁸

Pretidão de Amor,

Tão doce a figura,

Que a neve lhe jura

Que trocára a cor.

Leda mansidão,

Que o siso acompanha;

Bem parece estranha,

*Mas bárbara não.*²⁶⁹

The poetic voice does not directly describe the beloved's skin color. Rather, he uses a noun (*pretidão*, Blackness) which he associates with feeling (*amor*, *love*) and body ("Tão doce a figura"). This line has gained much attention since the poem was published in the early sixteenth century, not only because of its possible meanings, which in sixteenth-century Iberian poetry were unorthodox, but because of the wording itself.²⁷⁰ Vincent Barletta observes that this construction "frames this blackness as an abstract essence rather than an adjectival accident."²⁷¹

There are not many instances of "pretidão" in sixteenth-century Portuguese texts, which leads

²⁶⁸ Camões, *Obras completas de Luís de Camões*, 174, my translation. Note that I am not using Landeg White's translation for this part because White translated "pretidão de amor" as "Love being Negro," which erases the noun "pretidão."

²⁶⁹ Camões, *Obras completas de Luís de Camões*, 174.

²⁷⁰ Rita Marnoto provides a comprehensive review of the literature on this poem published since the seventeenth century. Rita Marnoto, "'Bárbara escrava': Canon, beauty and color: An embarrassing contradiction," in *Post-Imperial Camões*, ed. João Ricardo Figueiredo (Dartmouth: Tagus Press, 2002), 59-61.

²⁷¹ Vincent Barletta, *Rhythm: Form and Dispossession* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2020), 77.

Barletta to examine Camões's shift from the standard adjective "preto" to the abstract noun, arguing that the term works in two directions. On the one hand, pretidão "represents an early and somewhat tentative move in the development of modern Western notions of race: it speaks of blackness as *ousía*, an innate form of being."²⁷² On the other, it "points most directly and conventionally to the figurative darkness of amorous bondage."²⁷³ Indeed, as I have demonstrated in my analysis of Manzano's "La esclava ausente," the courtly love tradition has often made use of the trope of captivity. As Camões activates this trope, his amorous bondage takes place within a colonial order predicated on the legal institution of slavery that emerged precisely around the time Camões wrote "Aquella captiva." In the new paradigms of humanness that emerged during Portugal's colonial expansion to Africa, Asia, and then the Americas, bodily difference becomes the marker of otherness. As the poetic voice's slave and amorous master, Bárbara simultaneously bears the traditional Petrarchan tropes of tranquility and wisdom ("mansidão" and "siso") as well as the mark of visual/physical difference ("pretidão de Amor", "pretos os cabelos"). This conflation of tradition and otherness leads to a beloved who seems strange or foreign ("parece estranha") but who is not barbaric ("Mas bárbara não"). Marnoto posits the existence of two Camões: the Renaissance poet and the Mannerist, "Aquella captiva" being penned by the latter. Martins Gomes agrees, further arguing that this poem "highlights the Apollonian component of the Portuguese Renaissance" because it moves away from the "deferential imitation of the Petrarchan imaginary, giving preference to the differential imitation of the new Mannerist code."²⁷⁴

²⁷² Vincent Barletta, *Rhythm*, 78.

²⁷³ Vincent Barletta, *Rhythm*, 78.

²⁷⁴ António Martins Gomes, "A Bárbara e o Jau: a escravatura em Camões," 69.

Yet, Camões's choice for the noun "pretidão" (blackness) instead of a more direct adjective portrait of Bárbara led to never-ending discussions among scholars of his work. In his comments on Camões's odes in *Rimas várias* published in 1688, Manuel de Faria e Sousa claims that Bárbara was an actual enslaved woman owned by Camões when he was in Goa.²⁷⁵ The poem, says Faria e Souza, was Camões's response to those who censored him for falling in love with an enslaved Black woman, which happened because Camões was "de carne" [*made of flesh*].²⁷⁶ The author also states in a different moment of the text that "la mujer negra puede ser tan hermosa como la blanca."²⁷⁷ Others have followed this historiographical pursuit, even though there is no historical evidence to confirm Bárbara's existence or fictionality since a large part of Camões's life remains unknown.

Faria e Sousa's take influenced other authors well into the nineteenth century, including some works that Gama might have read. As advocates of the racist theories that peaked at the time, however, many of these authors did not share Faria e Souza's willingness to relativize the white ideal of beauty, choosing instead to descant on their racist pre-conceptions. For instance, in an 1851 publication of "Aquella captiva," José Maria da Costa e Silva states his disbelief at Camões's feelings for a Black woman, crediting the poem to creative genius.²⁷⁸ This line of argument is further explored by Visconde de Juromenha, who in 1860 calls Camões's love for "a escrava Luíza Bárbara" an "aberration" and a "fragility," which he then justifies—contradicting

²⁷⁵ Rita Marnoto, "Bárbara escrava: Canon, Beauty, and Color: An Embarrassing Contradiction," *Portuguese Literary & Cultural Studies* 9 (2003): 51.

²⁷⁶ Luís de Camões and Manuel de Faria e Souza, *Rimas varias de Luis de Camoens, principe de los poetas heroycos, y lyricos de España ; ofrecidas al muy ilustre Señor Garcia de Melo, Montero Mor del Reyno, Presidente del Dezembargo del Paço, &c. ; commentadas por Manuel de Faria, y Sousa, Cavallero de la Orden de Christo* vol. III (Lisboa: Imprenta Craesbeeckiana, 1688), 179.

²⁷⁷ Faria e Souza, *Rimas varias de Luis de Camoens*, 184.

²⁷⁸ José Maria da Costa e Silva, *Ensaio biographico-critico sobre os melhores poetas portugueses*, vol. 3-4 (Lisboa: Imprensa Silviana, 1851), 211.

himself—by denying Bárbara’s blackness. Bárbara might have been, he says, “d’estas pardas asiaticas, que apresentam as vezes formas esbeltas e feições regulares” [*one of these dark-skinned Asians, who at times appear in slender form and regular features*] since Camões’s description of her hair, “apesar de poderosa, não teria mais força do que o pente em uma rebelde carapinha.”²⁷⁹ Nevertheless, Juromenha adds, the fact that Chateaubriand translated these redondilhas to French reaffirms “the power of the genius” [*o poder do gênio*].²⁸⁰

It is amidst these racist critiques of “Aquella captiva” and in dialogue with Camões himself that Gama engages with the verses to Bárbara in the epigraphs of two of his poems. While it is not clear if Gama read Costa e Silva’s or Juromenha’s ridiculous attempts to “excuse” Camões of the “aberration” of loving a Black woman, he was more than familiar with the racist opinions they circulated. Although European theories of scientific racism received in Brazil an “enthusiastic welcome,” as Lilia Schwarcz states, they arrived later in the nineteenth century, peaking between the 1870s and the 1920s.²⁸¹ The racial debate, however, had started long before, and Gama’s whole poetic, journalistic, and juridical activity is precisely a counterargument to anti-black racism in the Brazilian society. His own experience of rejection in the São Paulo Law School, for instance, was based on race.²⁸²

²⁷⁹ Luís de Camões and Visconde de Juromenha, *Obras de Luiz de Camões: Vida de Luiz de Camões. Elogios dedicados a L. de Camões, por alguns escriptores. Traducções dos Lusíadas e outras obras de Camões e relação dos auctores estrangeiros que escreveram sobre o poeta. Escriptores portuguezes* vol. I (Lisboa: Imprensa nacional, 1860), 158.

²⁸⁰ Visconde de Juromenha, *Obras de Luiz de Camões*, 158. This tendency definitely peaks in Xavier da Cunha’s 1891 luxurious volume, *Pretidão de amor*. In almost 900 pages, Cunha delves into “Aquella captiva,” offering possible interpretations of Bárbara, her race, origins, and her physical description, besides hundreds of translations of the poem in more than 30 languages. Xavier da Cunha, *Pretidão de amor: endechas de Camões a Barbara escrava, seguidas da respectiva tradução em varias linguas e antecedidas de um preambulo* (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1893).

²⁸¹ Lilia Schwarcz, *O espetáculo das raças: cientistas, instituições e questão racial no Brasil, 1870-1930* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1993), 19.

²⁸² Jair Cardoso dos Santos, *Entre as leis e as letras: escriturários negros de Luiz Gama* (Salvador: Quarteto Editora, 2017), 49.

What kind of work does an epigraph do? Asking this question in light of Gama's poems complicates the general understanding of the term. It is safe to say that the most common meaning attributed to literary epigraphs is the one that the Oxford English Dictionary offers: an epigraph is a "short quotation or pithy sentence placed at the commencement of a work, a chapter, etc. to indicate the leading idea or sentiment; a motto."²⁸³ That is, the epigraph sets the tone, establishes the theme, or suggests a shared idea or ideological affinity between the main text and that of the epigraph. What this common definition fails to address, however, is the dialogical character of the epigraph. An epigraph is the start of a conversation between two people, the epigraphed and the epigrapher, to use Gerard Genette's terms.²⁸⁴ This intertextual relation becomes even stronger when the subject is lyric poetry, a genre which, as we have seen in the introduction to this Part, is always referential or intertextual. As Jonathan Culler states about the lyric, "lyric forms are not confined to one historical period but remain available as possibilities in different eras."²⁸⁵ It is this ability of the lyric to time-travel that allows for more complex relations between the epigraphed and the epigrapher. Ligia Fonseca Ferreira has argued that references to Camões and other European authors in Gama's poetic work help create a sense of "conviviality with the reader insofar as Luiz Gama demonstrated having the same 'literary culture' as his peers."²⁸⁶ While it is true that the presence of Camões in an epigraph creates a sense of belonging in the São Paulo intellectual circle, Gama's choice of hypertext was not merely performative. It was also a movement of rewriting that places him in the same tradition as Iberian folk song and Camões.

²⁸³ "Epigraph, n." *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, March 2022 (Oxford University Press).

²⁸⁴ Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 144-156.

²⁸⁵ Culler, *Theories of the Lyric*, 4.

²⁸⁶ Ligia Fonseca Ferreira, "Introdução," in Luiz Gama, *Primeiras trovas burlescas de Getulino*, org. Ligia Fonseca Ferreira (São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2000), lviii.

But what exactly is Gama rewriting? In “A captiva,” the soon-to-be lawyer invokes Camões’s “Aquella captiva” for its articulation of the amorous bondage metaphor. Gama chose the following verses as epigraph:²⁸⁷

Here dwells the sweetness
by which I live,
she being mistress
of whom she is captive.

Uma graça viva

Nos olhos lhe mora

Para ser senhora

*De quem é cativa.*²⁸⁸

Gama establishes his intertextual relationship with Camões through reproducing the inversion of the master-slave relationship in the tradition of courtly love. Yet, we do not see the inversion of the Petrarchan canon of whiteness and beauty which we examined earlier. A reader unfamiliar with Camões’s “Aquella captiva” would not know that this epigraph refers to a dark-skinned woman. Yet, Gama does not let the reader wonder: in the first stanza, the poetic voice already comments on the beauty of his beloved, who is not the color of snow, but has a “dark countenance”:

How beautiful was she, my God!

²⁸⁷ Although he did not have a diploma, Gama was granted the right to practice Law in 1869. See Jair Cardoso dos Santos, *Entre as leis e as letras*, 49.

²⁸⁸ Gama, *Primeiras trovas burlescas de Getulino*, 2nd ed., 163.

Her color did not resemble snow
But in the dark countenance
There were rays of love.

Como era linda, meu Deus!
Não tinha da neve a cor,
Mas no moreno semblante
*Brilhavam raios de amor.*²⁸⁹

For the first ten stanzas, the poem follows the traditional formulas of nineteenth-century Romantic poetry in its operation of the courtly love tradition—as well as Camões’s subversion of whiteness as the ideal of female beauty. In *redondilha maior* (seven poetic syllables, not the five that Camões used in “Aquella captiva”), the poetic voice describes the physical traits of the beloved: her lips are “ruby-red crimson” [*carmim rubro*], her breasts are “golden pomes” [*pomos de ouro*] and her eyes are “two shining stars” [*dois astros brilhantes*], but her face is of a “coral-red brunette” [*trigueira coralina*], and her hair is made of “coarse black locks” [*madeixas crespas negras*]. Finally, on the eighth stanza, the poetic voice attempts a physical approximation to the beloved, but she does not consent. This is when the social status that was associated to her racial otherness comes up in a failed amorous interaction:

I wanted to kiss her divine hands,
But she pushed me away—she does not consent,
At her feet I bowed,

²⁸⁹ Gama, *Primeiras trovas burlescas de Getulino*, 2nd ed., 163.

— So much can such a burning love!

Do not get away, I beg,

You are my heart's queen;

Do not get away, in this chest

You have a throne, *mulatinha!*...

Quis beijar-lhe as mãos divinas,

Afastou-m'as – não consente;

A seus pés de rojo pus-me,

– Tanto pode o amor ardente!

Não te afastes lhe suplico,

És do meu peito rainha;

Não te afastes, n'este peito

*Tens um trono, mulatinha!...*²⁹⁰

The beloved is not Camões's "pretidão de amor" nor the popular sixteenth-century *morena*, but rather the *mulata*, a signifier of hybridity and hyper-sexualization since colonial times.²⁹¹ The

²⁹⁰ Gama, *Primeiras trovas burlescas de Getulino*, 2nd ed., 165.

²⁹¹ In *Casa-grande & senzala*, Gilberto Freyre quotes the famous adage "white woman to marry, mulatto woman to f—, black woman to work" [*Branca para casar, mulata para f..., negra para trabalhar*]. Gilberto Freyre, *Casa-grande & senzala: formação da família brasileira sob o regime da economia patriarcal* (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio Editora, 1987), 10. As Bluteau's 1712 dictionary states, the word "mulato" or "mulata" comes from "Mú, or mulo, an animal that is a product of two others of different species." Rafael Bluteau, *Vocabulário Portuguez e latino*, Volume 5 (Coimbra: Collegio das Artes da Companhia de Jesu, 1712), 628.

mulatinha in “A captiva,” however, does not fit in the stereotypical *mulata*—the poetic voice does not suggest anything more than kissing her hands, and the beloved verbally responds to his interpellation. This is precisely where Gama’s poem departs from his sixteenth-century inspirations. Camões’s “Aquella captiva” is all about the poetic voice’s feeling—particularly, the euphoric feeling that is caused by the contemplation of the beloved. The beloved exists solely in verbal description as a muse, as a cause for inspiration for the poetic voice: “E, pois nela vivo,/ É força que viva.” The inversion of the master-slave relationship remains on the Neoplatonic level, since the “differential imitation” that Martins Gomes sees in Camões’s poem does not reach the actual colonial relationship there described. In Gama’s poem, on the other hand, the captive speaks. “A captiva” turns the Neoplatonic beloved into an interlocutor, albeit an unwilling one. She “does not consent” to the poetic voice’s approach, who in turn reacts by affirming the figurative inversion of her enslaved status that anchors the poem in the tradition of courtly love.

This figurative inversion, however, fails to affect the social hierarchy that operates in the poem. Although the beloved is “queen” of the poetic voice’s heart, she remains enslaved, which points to the alienating property of the language of amorous bondage in a context of actual captivity. Gama—having been enslaved himself as a child—escapes Camões’s Neoplatonism, fashioning a more skeptical vision of the possibilities of affect and amorous bonds within a

The seventeenth-century satirical poet Gregório de Matos often refers to *mulatas* in urban spaces as prostitutes, although he also pays them homage—always with sexual innuendo (“Córdula, minha vida/ Mulatinha da minha alma/ Lêda como as aleuias/ E garrida como a Páscoa”). See Fernando da Rocha Peres, “Negros e mulatos em Gregório de Matos,” *Afro-Ásia* 4, no. 5 (1967), 62. Along the same lines, other poets contemporary to Gama depicted the *mulata* as a hypersexual being who seduced all men she encountered. See, for instance, Alexandre José de Melo Morais Filho’s poem “A mulata:” “Under the embroidered blouse,/ Thin, so white, and laced/ The dark breast trembles:/ It is like the fragrant *jambo*/ That hangs from the leafy branch / Covered by dew!” [*Sob a camisa bordada,/ Fina, tão alva, arrendada,/ Treme-me o seio moreno:/ É como jambo cheiroso/ Que pende ao galho frondoso/ Coberto pelo sereno!*] Alexandre José de Melo Morais Filho, *Mythos e poemas: Nacionalismo* (Rio de Janeiro: Typographia de J. Leuzinger & Filhos, 1884), 85.

slaveholding society. The enslaved woman cries to then explain why she “does not consent” to the poetic voice’s approach:

I saw her eyelids tremble
As does the jaunty flower,
Shedding the snowy drops
Of the morning dew.

As in the withered branch,
Chaste and sensitive,
Sighing she murmured:
Oh, sir, I am a captive!...

She turned her back on me, left,
Like the shadow of a cloud flees
The afternoon as the sun sets,
And the sunlight falls.

*Vi-lhe as pálpebras tremerem,
Como treme a flor louçã,
Embalando as nêveas gotas
Dos orvalhos da manhã*

Qual na rama enlanguescida,

Pudibunda, sensitiva,

Suspirando ela murmura:

Ai, senhor, eu sou cativa!...

Deu-me as costas, foi-se embora,

Qual da tarde ao arrebol,

Foge a sombra de uma nuvem,

*Ao cair a luz do sol.*²⁹²

As in Manzano's "La esclava ausente," it is the woman's enslaved status which precludes the consummation of the poetic voice's love. This time, however, we are reading this story through the eyes of the man, who (we assume) is free. The poetic voice's exaltation of the beloved as a queen serves only to highlight the metaphorical character of her royalty, thus emphasizing her actual enslavement, which appears as the very concrete obstacle to their love.

At this point, the hypertextuality with Camões merits a closer look. Vincent Barletta has read "Aquella captiva" as a "dense representation of the Portuguese empire's racialized economy of sex"—that is, a racial exceptionalism in the sense of what Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre has named "lusotropicalism."²⁹³ The "easy and relaxed flexibility" that characterize the Portuguese, says Freyre, led to a high degree of "miscibility" between the Portuguese and the Afro-descendants.²⁹⁴ To be sure, Camões wrote "Aquella captiva" centuries before this theory started circulating in the Luso-Brazilian imaginary. Yet, Barletta reminds us that during the peak

²⁹² Gama, *Primeiras trovas burlescas de Getulino*, 2nd ed., 165.

²⁹³ Vincent Barletta, *Rythm*, 74.

²⁹⁴ Freyre, *The Masters and the Slaves*, 7.

of lusotropicalism—António Salazar’s fascist dictatorship (1932-1968)—Camões’s “A quella captiva” was used as propaganda for Portugal’s supposed love for its African colonial subjects.²⁹⁵ If one can find in Camões’s “A quella captiva” a foundational fiction for the enduring myth of lusotropicalism, then we can read in Gama’s “A captiva” an early counterargument to this myth. Gama demonstrates that slavery was an immovable obstacle to the realization of courtly love, as we have already seen in Manzano’s “La esclava ausente,” even if the poetic voice is non-white. The trope of amorous bondage in Gama’s poem becomes reified in the literal enslavement of the beloved.²⁹⁶ By making Camões’s Bárbara speak, refusing the poetic voice’s advancements and thus foreclosing any possibility of erotic or romantic relationship because of her enslavement, Gama makes explicit the concrete effects of bondage that in Camões’s poem only appear as an alienating metaphor, concealing the violence of the colonial project.

Mother and Son

²⁹⁵ Vincent Barletta, *Rythm*, 74.

²⁹⁶ Yet, even after publishing “A captiva” in 1861, Gama does not abandon Camões. In his lesser-known “Meus amores,” published in 1865 on the periodical *Diabo Coxo* under the pseudonym of “Getulino,” Gama goes back to Bárbara. This time, the epigraph does not mention her enslaved status, but emphasizes her racial otherness. Gama chooses the most emblematic verses of Camões’s verses: “Pretidão de amor,/ Tão leda a figura/ Que a neve lhe jura/ Que mudara de cor.” This epigraph sets the tone of Gama’s own poem, which does not explicitly refer to slavery or amorous bondage, but intensifies Camões exaltation of black female beauty. If some of Camões earlier readers questioned the poem’s allusion to a woman of color, for Gama this was a no-brainer. The poem starts with a confirmation of the beloved’s skin color: “Meus amores são lindos, cor da noite/ Recamada de estrelas rutilantes; /Tão formosa crioula, ou Tétis negra,/ Tem por olhos dois astros cintilantes.” Gama repeats some of the images he had already used in “A captiva.” The beloved’s eyes as “Astros brilhantes” become “astros cintilantes;” the “colo acetinado” becomes “colo de veludo.” “Meus amores,” however, displays a much higher level of eroticism, a feature that is more tamed in “A captiva.” The subversion of the traditional Petrarchan white beauty goes beyond the descriptions of the female body. The poetic voice describes his own physical reactions to the contemplation of the beloved, stating that “It is something to feel, not to tell” [*É coisa de sentir, não de contar*]. Luiz Gama, *Com a palavra, Luiz Gama: poemas, artigos, cartas, máximas*, ed. Ligia Fonseca Ferreira (São Paulo: Imprensa Oficial do Estado de São Paulo, 2011), 82-82.

Women of color in Gama's lyric poetry do not appear exclusively as subjects of romantic love or objects of erotic desire. As stated in the first part of this chapter, one of the most important themes of Gama's lyric poetry is the Black mother. She is the subject of the aforementioned "Minha mãe," which Gama sent along his autobiographical letter to Lúcio de Mendonça; "No cemitério de S. Benedicto;" and in "O colleirinho." Except for the latter, the other two only appear in the 1861 edition of the *Primeiras trovas burlescas*. The three poems address the longing for a lost ancestor—for the matriarch—or for lost kinship in broader terms. "Minha mãe" consists of eight stanzas in *redondilha maior* (seven poetic syllables in Portuguese) describing Gama's mother.²⁹⁷ It has the same metric as the poem cited in the epigraph, "A órfã na costura," by Junqueira Freire, a Benedictine monk and Romantic poet from Salvador (just like Gama). The *redondilha maior* is a common metric in Lusophone folk song since the sixteenth century.

However, if the mother in Freire's poem had hair "so blond/ like a golden ribbon" [*tão louro/ que nem uma fita de ouro*], Gama's mother "was the most beautiful black woman,/ Queen of the sunstruck Libya/ and in Brazil, a poor slave!" [*era a mais linda pretinha,/ Da adusta Líbia rainha,/ E no Brasil pobre escrava!*].²⁹⁸ Like in "A captiva," here the Petrarchan literary canon of the angelical woman with "Crin d'oro crespo," which has been overly reproduced between the Renaissance and the Romantic period and which Freire evidently reproduces himself, becomes in Gama's poem a Black woman, a "linda pretinha."²⁹⁹ Petrarchan coral lips are here "roixo lírio," and the eyes are not rays of sun but "estrelas cadentes." Other critics have pointed to the

²⁹⁷ Given Gama's reference to the poem in his letter to Lúcio de Mendonça, we can plausibly state that Gama identifies with the poetic voice in this poem, thus connecting signifier and referent. That is, "Minha mãe" is about the poet's mother.

²⁹⁸ Gama, *Primeiras trovas burlescas de Getulino*, 2nd ed., 183.

²⁹⁹ Rita Marnoto, "A figura feminina petrarquista em Camões, entre imitação e transformação," 49.

subversion of the ideal whiteness of female beauty in Gama's poetic work, arguing that the legitimation of Black female beauty, as well as the author's explicit self-fashioning as a Black man, makes him a "the first black author of Brazilian literature," anticipating Cruz e Souza and Lima Barreto.³⁰⁰

Blackness in Gama, according to Bernd and Ferreira, is not a phenotypical trait but a type of consciousness of an author who understands himself as a Black man.³⁰¹ In his lyric poetry, however, Gama is not only a Black man but the son of a Black mother. This centrality of the Black mother leads the poetic voice in "Minha mãe" to go beyond visual perception in his reminiscence of childhood. While the mother in Freire's poem emerges as a visual memory centered on her long hair—"Her gleaming locks/ Were so long/ That they kissed her feet" [*Suas madeixas luzidas/ Lhe caíam tão cumpridas,/ Que vinham-lhe os pés beijar*]³⁰¹—Gama's mother, on the other hand, mobilizes a more tactile, sensual memory:

Oh, how do I miss
Her loving affection,
...
Her plump ebony arms,
Pressed love like a fruit,
And to our mouth she would add
A kiss, which was life.

Oh, que saudades que eu tenho

³⁰⁰ See Sílvia Roberto dos Santos Oliveira, *Gamacopéia: ficções sobre o poeta Luiz Gama* (PhD diss., Universidade Estadual de Campinas, 2004); and Ligia Fonseca Ferreira, "Introdução", xv;

³⁰¹ Zilá Bernd, *Introdução à literatura negra* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1988).

Dos seus mimosos carinhos,
...
Nos roliços braços de ébano,
De amor o fruto apertava,
E à nossa boca juntava
*Um beijo seu, que era vida.*³⁰²

The poetic voice's visual memory is his mother's black skin, which activates tactile remembrance: her arms holding her children, her loving kisses. These motherly kisses, however, pave the way to the pathos of slavery, since her smile was a pretense of freedom:

When pleasure half-opened
Her lily-red lips,
She veiled the martyrdom
In the darkness of solitude.
The snow-white teeth
Were a myth of freedom,
On her face the pain of the afflicted,
Black is the color of slavery.

Quando o prazer entreabria
Seus lábios de roixo lírio,
Ela fingia o martírio

³⁰² Gama, *Primeiras trovas burlescas de Getulino*, 2nd ed., 183-4

Nas trevas da solidão.
Os alvos dentes nevados
Da liberdade eram mito,
No rosto a dor do aflito,
*Negra a cor da escravidão.*³⁰³

After emerging as a reference to a royal African past (“Da adusta Líbia rainha”), blackness quickly becomes the mark of slavery in Brazil. In this movement from Africa to the Americas, which we have already seen in Bonifácio’s “Saudades do escravo,” the tender memories of the mother embracing and kissing her children intertwines with the acknowledgement that her smile was a facade, an attempt to hide her pain of being enslaved, a pain she suffered in solitude—
“Sadly wailing alone,/ At the sound of the graceful breeze [*Gemendo triste sozinha,/ Ao som da aragem faceira*].³⁰⁴

As I have briefly mentioned, the enslaved mother is a ubiquitous trope in nineteenth-century Brazilian literature. However, while in Gama there is an affirmation of the matrilineal lineage, in many other works the relationship between mother and son is either falsified or tragically interrupted. In José de Alencar’s play *A mãe* (1859), for instance, Joana, an enslaved Black woman, raises her mixed-race son Jorge as if he were her master, thus concealing their parental relationship and therefore evading the legal principle of the *partus sequitur ventrem*.³⁰⁵

³⁰³ Gama, *Primeiras trovas burlescas de Getulino*, 2nd ed., 184.

³⁰⁴ Gama, *Primeiras trovas burlescas de Getulino*, 2nd ed., 185.

³⁰⁵ Inherited from the *Siete partidas*, the *partus sequitur ventrem* stipulated that children should inherit the legal status of their mothers: if they were enslaved, their children should be enslaved. See Lei 1, Título XXI, Partida IV). For a history of the *partus*, see Paulo Henrique Rodrigues Pereira, “Partus Sequitur Ventrem: Uma história da construção, consolidação e crise do domínio sobre o ventre escravizado nas Américas,” dissertation defended at the Universidade de São Paulo (2022).

In the end, Joana is confronted with telling the truth to her son and decides to poison herself. Even while dying in Jorge's arms, Joana denies being his mother: "It is not true, no!... Have you ever seen such a thing?... Me being the mother of a boy like *nhonhô*!... I am a slave!... Don't you see, *nhonhô*, that he's wrong?" [*Não é verdade, não!... Pois já se viu isso?... Eu ser mãe de um moço como nhonhô!... Eu uma escrava!... Não vê, nhonhô, que ele se engana?*].³⁰⁶ Alencar's play mobilizes an idealized image of the mother as angel who sacrifices herself for her offspring, an image that would cross racial and social barriers—"Queen or slave, a mother is always a mother" [*Rainha ou escrava, a mãe é sempre mãe*], says Alencar in the prologue.³⁰⁷ However, for an enslaved mother, such sacrifice meant the complete erasure of any familial ties and the masking of the mother-son relationship as a relation of servitude. Although *A mãe* has been traditionally read as a critique of the impact of slavery on families, it also provides a weird case of self-enslavement where the mother, in fulfilling her virtuous role as selfless martyr, enslaves herself to her son.³⁰⁸

Gama's lyric approach to the enslaved mother, as I have shown, does not resort to the falsification of kinship ties or to infanticide as the mother's final resort.³⁰⁹ The poetic voice instead seeks the affirmation of kinship and reminisces about the physical presence of the

³⁰⁶ José de Alencar, *Mãe: Drama em 4 actos* (Rio de Janeiro: Typographia de F. de Paula Brito, 1862), 141.

³⁰⁷ José de Alencar, *Mãe*, 5.

³⁰⁸ In a pernicious move, twelve years after publishing *A mãe* Alencar was a member of the Brazilian parliament and aggressively argued against the law of the free womb. To Alencar, the law that would abolish the principle of the *partus sequitur ventrem* was "wicked and barbarous" [*iníqua e bárbara*] because "it concedes freedom to the offspring while denying it to the current generation" [*porque concede a liberdade á prole e a nega á geração actual*] and because it "condemns the innocent offspring to abandonment, which means misery and death" [*condemna a prôle innocente ao abandono, o que singifica á miséria e á morte*]. José de Alencar, *Discursos proferidos na sessão de 1871 na Câmara dos Deputados* (Rio de Janeiro: Typographia Perseverança, 1871), 98.

³⁰⁹ A less twisted but still grim depiction of the enslaved mother and son relationship is Antônio Frederico de Castro Alves's "A mãe do cativo" (1868), in which the poetic voice suggests that the enslaved mother should kill her infant as a way to avoid the misery of slavery. See Castro Alves, *Os escravos* (Lisboa: Tavares Cardoso & Irmão, 1884).

mother. Such nostalgic memory appears again in “No cemitério de S. Benedicto,” the only of the three poems about the enslaved family that had already appeared in the 1859 edition of the *Primeiras trovas burlescas*—right before some of Bonifácio’s antislavery poems. Not by accident, it is one of the most explicit critiques of slavery within Gama’s poetic production, echoing the mood that Bonifácio had inaugurated with “Saudades do escravo.” The poem opens with an epigraph by Bernardo Guimarães, one of Brazil’s first anti-slavery poets, taken from his book *Cantos da solidão* (1852):

Also the slave’s humble grave
Merits a longing sigh:
Oh may at least one tear of gratitude
Fall on top of it.

Também do escravo a humilde sepultura
Um gemido merece de saudade:
Ah caia sobre ela uma só lágrima
*De gratidão ao menos.*³¹⁰

The epigraph sets the tone of longing and death that permeates the poem, which narrates a stroll in a cemetery and the contemplation of an enslaved person’s grave. Like Bonifácio’s “Saudades do escravo” and Antonio Vieira’s sermons, death appears here as the emancipation of bodily slavery through the liberation of the soul.³¹¹

In a dismal, dark, and cold room,

³¹⁰ Gama, *Primeiras trovas burlescas de Getulino*, 2nd ed., 187.

³¹¹ About Antonio Vieira, see the Introduction and Part I, Chapter 2.

Where silence reigns over the dead,
Between four discolored walls,
Which capricious luxury doesn't adorn,
Lies under the earth the human body,
That succumbed as a slave, to be born free!
Loosened from the horrible chains,
That only sacrilegious tyrants forge,
There he sleeps the eternal rest.

*Em lúgubre recinto escuro e frio,
Onde reina o silêncio aos mortos dado,
Entre quatro paredes descoradas,
Que o caprichoso luxo não adorna,
Jaz da terra coberto humano corpo,
Que escravo sucumbiu, livre nascendo!
Das hórridas cadeias desprendido,
Que só forjam sacrílegos tiranos,
Dorme o sono feliz da eternidade.³¹²*

It is not clear if the cemetery where the poetic voice wanders existed under that name (S. Benedito) in the city of São Paulo.³¹³ The contemplation of the unadorned tomb leads to a

³¹² Gama, *Primeiras trovas burlescas de Getulino*, 2nd ed., 188.

³¹³ According to Jair Cardoso dos Santos, it did not. Jair Ferreira dos Santos, *Entre as leis e as letras: Escrevivências identitárias negras de Luiz Gama* (Salvador: Quarteto Editora, 2017), 73. Nevertheless, the name Gama chose for this possibly fictional cemetery is symbolic, since Benedict was an early

reflection on kinship through matriarchal lineage: “Here there is no altar or golden throne/ To the vile merchant of human flesh./ Here the respectful son bows/ Before the maternal gravestone, and the tears fall from his face/ In a stream, revealing silently/ The history of the past...” [*Aqui não se ergue altar ou trono d’ouro/ Ao torpe mercador de carne humana./ Aqui se curva o filho respeitoso/ Ante a lousa materna, e o pranto em fio/ Cai-lhe dos olhos revelando mudo/A história do passado...*].³¹⁴ The son’s mourning of his lost mother activates the past of enslavement. If “A minha mãe” is a poetic reminiscence of a happy childhood, “No cemitério de S. Benedito” is a melancholic yet solemn fictionalization of an encounter between Gama and his lost mother. The two poems complement each other because they recreate a mother-and-son relationship within the two pinnacles of (earthly) life: birth and death. In life, the enslaved mother hides her suffering when embracing and kissing her children (“Minha mãe”); but death allows for a moment of dignity and honor in her name, and an acknowledgement of her enslaved past. It is a moment from which slavers, merchants of human flesh, and all those responsible for the “eternal horror” [*horror eterno*] of slavery are barred.³¹⁵

modern black saint. There were many black confraternities devoted to Saint Benedict of Palermo (São Benedito or San Benito, also called Saint Benedict of Quissama in Angola) in Brazil, Portugal, Spain, Spanish America, and Portuguese Africa. In Brazil, there were, for instance, the Brotherhood of Saint Benedict of the São Francisco Convent (Salvador), the Brotherhood of the Glorious Saint Benedict of the Morretes Village, among others. See Lucilene Reginaldo, “Rosários dos Pretos, «San Benito de Quissama»: hermandades y devociones negras en el mundo Atlántico (Portugal y Angola, siglo XVIII),” *Studia Historica: Historia Moderna* 38, no. 1 (May 31, 2016): 123-151; João José Reis, “Identidade e Diversidade Étnicas nas Irmandades Negras no Tempo da Escravidão,” *Tempo* 2, no. 3 (1996): 7-33; Silvio Adriano Weber, “Além do cativo: a congregação de escravos e senhores na Irmandade do Glorioso São Benedito da Vila de Morretes: século XIX,” Master Thesis, Universidade Federal do Paraná, 2009; Erin Kathleen Rowe, *Black Saints in Early Modern Global Catholicism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

³¹⁴ Gama, *Primeiras trovas burlescas de Getulino*, 2nd ed., 189.

³¹⁵ Gama, *Primeiras trovas burlescas de Getulino*, 2nd ed., 189.

Conclusion to Part II

Part II opened with an epigraph by Ambrosio Echemendía (1843-?), an Afro-Cuban poet who was enslaved to planter Diego Manuel Echemendía y Pino and his wife María Andre Muñoz González. In 1866, a group of patrons—most of them writers—raised the money to manumit him. In comparison to Manzano, very little is known about Echemendía. Still, under the pen name Máximo Hero de Neiba, he published profusely in the Havana Puerto Príncipe, and Trinidad presses.³¹⁶

According to Amauri Gutiérrez Coto, there seem to be four poems by Echemendía titled “A mi señor.” The one I chose for the epigraph is, I believe, the most complex (it is undated). Like Manzano’s and Gama’s poems, “A mi señor [IV]” uses the metaphor of slavery to declare affection. However, the object of affection here is the (former) enslaver himself—Fernando Echemendía, Diego Manuel’s son. Echemedía discusses his poetic practices as a free man:

But do not think, sir, that my lute,
Forgets my owner’s affection;
Or that I hated my sweet slavery,
For thanks to your goodness I live smiling,
That if I long to be free, it is by virtue,
Perhaps to sing with more effort:
Oh! Never imagine that even if I’m free

³¹⁶ Matthew Pettway, “Echemendía, Ambrosio,” In *Dictionary of Caribbean and Afro-Latin American Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), <https://www-oxfordreference-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780199935796.001.0001/acref-9780199935796-e-708>.

My spiritual enslavement to you does not *vibrate*.

Mas no penséis, señor, que mi laúd,

Olvidase el afecto de mi dueño;

Ni que odiase mi dulce esclavitud,

Pues gracia a su bondad, vivo risueño,

Que si anhelo ser libre, es por virtud,

Quizás por cantar con más empeño:

Oh! Nunca imaginéis que aunque sea libre

*Mi esclavitud del alma a vos no vibre.*³¹⁷

This is a love poem, a declaration of love to Echemendía's former owner. The metaphor of slavery is only possible because there is no more actual enslavement. The poetic voice desires freedom in order to be a better poet (*por cantar con más empeño*). I cannot offer here a thorough examination Echemendía's poetry—maybe this will be a new project—but I wanted to address it in this conclusion in order to show the different ways in which enslaved and formerly enslaved poets engaged with the metaphor of bondage in addressing their actual enslavement.

³¹⁷ Ambrosio Echemendía, *Poesía completa* (Leiden: Almenara, 2019), 136.

PART III

SEEING CRIMINALS AND MADMEN

Introduction to Part III

*Não me incomodo muito com o hospício, mas
o que me aborrece é essa intromissão da
policia na minha vida.*

Lima Barreto, *Diário do hospício* (1919)¹

There is not much in common between Brazilian religious leader Antônio Conselheiro (1830-1897) and Cuban general Antonio Maceo (1845-1896). The former was widely perceived as a villain: Conselheiro's religious fanaticism drove thousands of people out of their homes to found the town of Canudos in the middle of the Northeastern backlands in 1897. The latter, on the other hand, was a hero: Maceo was the General in Chief of the Cuban Liberation Army, whose battle skills and resilience granted him the nickname "El Titán de Bronce," the Bronze Titan.

Conselheiro and Maceo thus stood at opposite ends in late-nineteenth-century Brazilian and Cuban imaginaries: one as an atavistic, pre-modern, degenerated madman, and the other as a modern, autonomous, revolutionary soldier.

Despite their drastically different reputations, Conselheiro and Maceo lived similar posthumous lives. Their bodies were exhumed, their bones taken apart, and their skulls measured by the most prominent scientists of their time. After all, as the (in)famous men that they were, Conselheiro and Maceo were also potential scientific objects. In Maceo's case, to become a scientific object was a well-deserved honor that would confirm his genius. The members of the exhumation committee "understood that those remains deserved more than a dry anatomical description or a mere identity certificate" [*comprendieron que aquellos restos merecían algo más*

¹ "I don't mind the asylum too much, but what bothers me is this intrusion of the police in my life." Lima Barreto, *Diário do hospício* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2017), 34.

de una árida descripción anatómica, ó de un mero certificado de identidad.]² Conselheiro's skull, on the other hand, was supposed to hold "the evidence of crime and madness" [*evidência do crime e da loucura*] that he and his followers acted out in the Brazilian *sertão*.³

Shortly after the abolition of slavery in Cuba (1886) and Brazil (1888), the anti-slavery white bourgeoisies who had pressed for emancipation were now concerned with the supposed conversion of formerly enslaved subjects into citizens, discussing how they would fit into and influence the future of the nation. Former captives, on the other hand, were "left to their own devices," as Brazilian historian Maria Viotti da Costa puts it⁴, a condition Cuban independentist author Manuel Sanguily had already long acknowledged when describing the enslaved in 1894 as "left to themselves, to their miserable conditions" [*entregado a sí mismo, a sus miserables condiciones*].⁵ In the legal sphere, liberal discourses allegedly guaranteed individual freedom and formal equality among all men. In Brazil, both the imperial-era civil code and the newly proclaimed, Republican criminal code (1890) recognized such "racial equality." As historian Keila Grinberg states, "in Brazil race was rarely acknowledged at the level of legislation."⁶

² Montalvo, Torre, and Montané, "El cráneo de Antonio Maceo (estudio antropológico)," *Revista de medicina y cirugía*, no. 20 (October 25): 3.

³ Euclides da Cunha, *Os sertões*, 780.

⁴ In Brazil, Black intellectuals noticed a political indifference to the future of the formerly enslaved. A few months after the "Golden Law" [*lei áurea*] that emancipated all slaves in Brazil, Aristides Lobo, for instance, called out abolitionists who were not defending the newly emancipated, claiming that they were practicing a sort of "abolitionism in vain." Maria Viotti da Costa, *Da senzala à colônia* (São Paulo: Editora Unesp, 2012), 513, 497. In Cuba, the situation was different. Since Afro-Cubans played a crucial role in the Wars for Independence, they were part of the national polity from the early days of the Republic. In an unprecedented move in the Americas, the Constitutional Convention of 1901 approved universal male suffrage. Black autonomous participation in Cuban politics led to the creation of the Partido Independiente de Color in 1908, whose goal was to increase access of Afro-Cubans to public offices. See Alejandro de la Fuente, *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality, and Politics in Twentieth-Century Cuba* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

⁵ Manuel Sanguily, "Negros y blancos," *Hojas literárias* III, no. 1 (1894): 44.

⁶ Keila Grinberg, *A Black Jurist in a Slave Society: Antonio Pereira Rebouças and the Trials of Brazilian Citizenship* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019), xv. Grinberg, Paulina Alberto, Ana Lugão Rios, Hebe Mattos, Alejandro de la Fuente and other scholars have convincingly argued that this formal equality and the silencing of race in Brazilian legislation were at times seized by Afro-Brazilian

Likewise, in Cuba, the 1901 Constitution stated that “all Cubans are equal before the law” [*Todos los cubanos son iguales ante la ley*].⁷ Such liberal ideologies had informed abolitionist movements in the previous decades in both territories, which for the most part asserted a moral, spiritual, and physical equality among different racial groups.

Still, if the reformist and abolitionist campaigns had professed that all men were equal, that enslaved men and women had the same feelings of kinship and love for the homeland as Europeans did (see Chapter 1), emancipation revealed the fallacy of that so-called equality in the eyes of many of those who had claimed it. In the white cultural imaginary, newly emancipated Afro-Brazilians and Afro-Cubans went from being victims of an unjust, inhumane institution—slavery—to lazy wanderers and criminals or childlike, backward subjects. As such, they became key objects of scientific inquiry not as an enslaved workforce, but as potential citizens.⁸ In other words, if before abolition scientific studies on enslaved Africans or Afro-descendants aimed to produce managerial knowledge for planters and authorities, after emancipation the goal had shifted to identifying in populations of African descent the social “pathogens” that risked infecting the whole nation and, therefore, that could hinder national progress.

This was precisely the main idea that connected the scientists at the center of Part III of this study: Brazilian physician Raymundo Nina Rodrigues (1862-1906), Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz (1881-1969), and Cuban criminologist Israel Castellanos (1891-1977). To Nina

themselves in their own fight for inclusion. Paulina Alberto, *Terms of Inclusion: Black Intellectuals in Twentieth-century Brazil* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Ana Lugão Rios and Hebe Maria Mattos de Castro, *Memórias do cativo: Família, trabalho e cidadania no pós-abolição* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2005); Alejandro de la Fuente, *A Nation for All*.

⁷ Artículo 11, Constitución de 1901. Available at: <https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/constitucion-del-21-de-febrero-1901/html>.

⁸ Even before abolition in Brazil, Silvio Romero was already calling for such a shift: “The negro is not merely an economic machine; he is first of all, and despite his ignorance, an object of science.” *Estudos sobre a poesia popular do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Laemmert & C., 1888), 11. Nina Rodrigues quotes this passage in *Os africanos no Brasil* (Brasília: Editora Universidade de Brasília, 2004), 30.

Rodrigues, liberalism was “a misunderstanding, a sophistry,” an “appearance” and an “illusion” not because the state failed to enact and to provide the means for such equality, but because of an ontological difference among races.⁹ For Ortiz, it was Afro-Cubans’ “psychic primitiveness” that had characteristically marked “Cuban lowly life, informing its superstitions, organizations, languages, dances, etc.” [*la mala vida cubana, comunicándole supersticiones, sus organizaciones, sus lenguajes, sus danzas, etc.*].¹⁰

Ultimately, Nina Rodrigues’s, Ortiz’s, and Castellanos’s social evolutionist perspectives built an idea of Brazilian and Cuban societies in which different temporalities coexisted in and among people who were thought to be biologically different. People stuck in the “past” lived side by side—and at times within the same body—as people evolving from the “present” to a teleological, civilized “future.” The result of what anthropologist Johaness Fabian has dubbed “the denial of coevalness,” such coexistence—or lack thereof—led to potentially problematic confrontations that could happen on two levels: the individual and the social bodies.¹¹ First, confrontations could happen within the individual’s body and mind through racial mixing or miscegenation (*mestiçagem/mestizaje*). As the embodiment of the collision of distinct temporalities, the “mestiço” or “mestizo” had a higher potential for degeneration, that is, a manifestation of “inferior” characteristics inherited from the Black and indigenous groups interrupting “the natural course of social evolution.” Second, confrontations of racial groups

⁹ Raymundo Nina Rodrigues, *As raças humanas e a responsabilidade penal no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Centro Edelstein de Pesquisa Social, 2011). I will explain later on what this “ontological” difference means, but I borrow this expression from Lilia Mortiz Schwarcz, “Nina Rodrigues: um radical do pessimismo,” in André Botelho and Lilia Moritz Schwarcz (orgs.), *Um enigma chamado Brasil: 29 intérpretes e um país* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2009), 90-103.

¹⁰ Fernando Ortiz, *Los negros brujos (apuntes para un estudio de etnología criminal)* (Madrid: Librería de Fernando Fé, 1906), 16.

¹¹ Johaness Fabian, *Time and the Other. How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

thought to be far apart from one another could also happen within the Brazilian and Cuban social bodies, where the proximity of individuals seen as belonging to different temporalities resulted in criminal “manifestations of the conflict, of the fight for existence between the superior civilization of the white race and the sketches of civilization of the conquered or subjugated races” [*manifestações do conflito, da luta pela existência entre a civilização superior da raça branca e os esboços de civilização das raças conquistadas, ou submetidas*], as Nina Rodrigues put it.¹² For Ortiz and Castellanos, this encounter between different temporalities would happen in a specific space: the lowly world of Cuban society known as the *hampa*, where the encounter between the “*raza blanca*” and the “*raza negra*” would form a “grey zone, to say it graphically” [*campo gris, para decirlo gráficamente*], one profoundly marked by Afro-Cubans’ “primitive psyche,” as Ortiz described it.¹³

Whether it had the goal of building the positive image of a newly found republic or of identifying its illnesses, craniometry and anthropology more generally stood at the forefront of the burgeoning scientific theories of race and, therefore, of the self-fashioning of national republics.¹⁴ Typically, superior skulls were white(ned) while inferior skulls were black(ened). In that respect, Conselheiro and Maceo were even more promising in terms of their craniometric potential because both were mixed-race (*mestiços/mestizos*). What they offered, however, was as disparate as their public images in nineteenth-century Brazil and Cuba.

¹² Nina Rodrigues, *As raças humanas e a responsabilidade penal no Brasil*, 102.

¹³ Ortiz, *Los negros brujos*, 18, 21.

¹⁴ Besides Conselheiro and Maceo, other famous—and infamous—men had their skulls measured and analyzed by forensic physicians and criminal anthropologists. During the Ten Years’ War in Cuba, for instance, a stranger visiting General Máximo Gómez’s camp asked to measure his head. After initially denying such an “insane” request, Gómez accepted. See Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868-1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999). In Brazil, as we will see, Nina Rodrigues had also examined in the 1890s the skull of Afro-Brazilian, formerly enslaved outlaw Lucas da Feira, better known as the subject of many stories of robberies, murders, and rapes in the state of Bahia.

Simply put, the skulls and bodies of Afro-Brazilians and Afro-Cubans did not serve the purposes that scientists expected from them. As we will see in the following chapters, the quest for physical markers of racial difference failed, either because the results would not match expectations, or simply because there was not enough data—or skulls. Consequently, scientists also resorted to ethnology and research in psychiatric asylums, prisons, newspaper archives, and other spaces where racialized “deviants” could be easily found. These other approaches did not require measuring skulls; rather, they entailed picking brains. The two chapters in this section thus examine the writings of physicians and anthropologists in Brazil and Cuba who have employed both approaches to understand the minds, feelings, and thoughts of Africans and Afro-descendants at a moment when they could no longer be enslaved and became (potential) citizens.

The connections between Brazil and Cuba, however, go beyond historical contingencies and parallels. Nina Rodrigues and Ortiz read each other’s works and exchanged letters, and Ortiz extensively cited Nina Rodrigues in his first book, *Los negros brujos* (1906).¹⁵ Both authors also seem to have gone through a similar shift in their methodological approaches. Nina Rodrigues, who was initially optimistic about the potential of craniometry for the study of Brazilian criminality, eventually adopted a more psychological and sociological stance within racial science, all the while holding on to his deeply entrenched belief of a biological and ontological difference among racial groups. Likewise, Ortiz was at first a faithful practitioner of Lombrosian criminology and a firm believer in the “inferiority” of non-whites. But after the publication of *Los negros brujos* in 1906, Ortiz, who had never examined skulls himself, started

¹⁵ Although I did not see the letter myself because because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Fernando Ortiz archive in the Biblioteca Nacional José Martí is said to hold a letter by Nina Rodrigues. I read the letter as it was reproduced by Olivia Maria Gomes da Cunha, “Becoming Brujo,” in *The Things of Others: Ethnographies, Histories, and Other Artefacts* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2020), 135-203.

to assert the unique value of Afro-descendants within Cuban society, leaving behind his early defense of biological determinism and his citing of Nina Rodrigues altogether.¹⁶

By contrast, Castellanos was consistent in his approach and methodology throughout his entire career. A strong admirer of Ortiz's early work, Castellanos often described himself as his disciple, researching and publishing on criminology and physical anthropology well into the 1930s and 1940s, when the field itself had already lost a great deal of legitimacy in Europe and elsewhere in the Americas. In a way, as we will see in Chapter 6, Castellanos's prolific work and successful career shows how materialistic, biological understandings of race were not really dead or even dying by the middle of the twentieth century, as many scholars have claimed.

By looking into the works of Nina Rodrigues, Ortiz, and Castellanos, I hope to show how their conceptions of racialized interiorities informed and impacted not only their respective scientific fields but a century of public policies, legislation, health care, and policing methods in both countries. From poking the skulls of the dead to picking the brain of the living, this dual approach would become crucial to the crystallization of what came to be known in Brazilian and Cuban social thought as the ideology of racial harmony, which posited miscegenation as a catalyst for "civilization."¹⁷

How did the works of advocates for an ontological hierarchy among racial groups end up influencing ideological constructions of Brazil and Cuba as countries where people lived in

¹⁶ After *Los Negros Bujos*, Ortiz stopped citing Nina Rodrigues altogether. As Stephan Palmié states, Ortiz's multiple facets have allowed scholars to reclaim him as "a peripheral acolyte of European scientific racism, a highly class-conscious proponent of cultural elitism, an advocate of 'scientific' forms of political domination, a post-colonial theorist of dependency and capitalist hegemony, an ardent anti-racist, a possible initiate in one or more Afro-Cuban religions, a political conservative, a Marxist, a functionalist, a historicist, a modernist, and, as of recently, a postmodernist *avant la lettre*." Stephan Palmié, "Fernando Ortiz and the Cooking of History," *Ibero-amerikanisches Archiv*, Vol. 24, No. 3/4 (1998): 355.

¹⁷ I will elaborate on this connection further in the Coda.

harmony across social and racial lines? This apparent contradiction is one we may solve by identifying and tracing the concepts of fixity and plasticity in the respective works of Nina Rodrigues, Ortiz, and Castellanos. Although they do not use the term “plasticity” *per se*, all three authors engage in one way or another with the concept, which Kyra Schuller and Jules Gill-Peterson define as the “capacity of a given body or system to generate new form, whether internally or through external intervention.”¹⁸ Indeed, the idea of plasticity lays at the core of their often self-contradicting work, allowing and accounting for much of the contradictions themselves.¹⁹

At first, the theories formulated by Nina Rodrigues, Ortiz, and Castellanos seem straightforward: all individual bodies and minds are susceptible to change based on external and internal factors, but some racial groups are more malleable than others. Accordingly, on the one hand whites would be more *plastic* as autonomous individuals endowed with the ability to self-fashion and develop “superior” feelings of altruism and justice. And on the other hand, Black, indigenous, and mixed-race individuals would be lacking in plasticity and would therefore remain stuck in time, at the “childhood” stage of human evolution, essentially unable to self-transform and develop “the elevated abstractions of monotheism”²⁰ [*as abstrações elevadas do monoteísmo*]. However, in their analyses of Afro-diasporic religious practices in Bahia and Cuba, Nina Rodrigues, Ortiz, and Castellanos were faced with a conundrum: they had to mitigate

¹⁸ Kyra Schuller and Jules Gill-Peterson, “Introduction: Race, the State, and the Malleable Body,” *Social Text* 38, no. 2 (June 2020): 1.

¹⁹ In the 1930s, Gilberto Freyre would address malleability as a key characteristic of the Portuguese colonization that gave birth to the Brazilian nation. About the Portuguese “tendency” to miscegenation, Gilberto Freyre says that it “appears to have been due to the greater social plasticity of the Portuguese as compared with any other European colonizer.” Gilberto Freyre, *The Masters and the Slaves: A Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilization*, trans. Samuel Putnam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 185.

²⁰ Nina Rodrigues, *O animismo fetichista dos negros bahianos. Fac-símile dos artigos publicados na Revista Brasileira em 1896 e 1897* (Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Biblioteca Nacional, 2006), 27.

their ingrained belief in white superiority with their observations of the pervasiveness of Afro-diasporic religious beliefs and practices among all classes and racial groups, including whites. Impassible and plastic as they were, white minds were indeed susceptible to the appeal of Afro-diasporic spirituality. As we will see, this transmissible character of Afro-diasporic spirituality allowed for an understanding of race as a subjective property that could be further propagated.

Scholars who have examined the works of Nina Rodrigues, Ortiz, and Castellanos have focused on either their essentialist and biological understandings of race, such as the one grounded on physical anthropology, or on their culturalist approach to the subject, according to which race would not be a biological fact but a cultural construct. The chapters in this section challenge this dualist approach, arguing instead that this ambiguous understanding of race—as an essential trait *and* as a subjective, non-phenotypical property—is what made their works so fundamental in shaping ideologies of racial harmony. In other words, I aim to understand how Nina Rodrigues, Ortiz, and Castellanos tried to examine the feelings, thoughts, and minds of Afro-descendants in the hope of exorcizing atavistic traits and the fetishistic beliefs they supposedly embodied.

Chapter 5

The Failures of Nina Rodrigues

Born in the state of Maranhão to a slave-owning family and having lived most of his life in Bahia (both centers of cotton and sugar productions located in the Northeast of Brazil), Nina Rodrigues circulated among enslaved and formerly enslaved individuals all his life. Afro-descendants were and still are the majority of the population in the city of Salvador—home to the Bahia Medical School—and led most of the commoner revolts in the state.²¹ In an allegedly Catholic country (a description Nina Rodrigues would firmly refuse), he visited *candomblé* houses and watched their rituals, interviewed practitioners about their past and current religious practices, hypnotized them, and consumed works by French, North American, and Brazilian writers on Afro-diasporic religions. Before and during the seventeen years in which he taught at the Bahia Medical School as a medical-legal expert, Nina Rodrigues published on various subjects such as the anthropological constitution of the Brazilian population, endemic diseases, collective psychosis, state sanitary legislation, criminal imputability, the institutionalization of legal medicine, criminology, craniometry, Afro-Brazilian religions, illnesses that afflicted Afro-Brazilians, and even history (particularly, the history of the Portuguese colonization of Brazil).²² He was one of the few Brazilian thinkers of his time who not only listened to Europeans, but also “was heard by

²¹ See João José Reis, *Rebelião escrava no Brasil: a história do levante dos malês, 1835* (São Paulo, SP: Brasiliense, 1987), 179. According to José Reis, throughout the nineteenth century in Bahia “free and enslaved creole blacks tried to open a space for themselves in the new nation since they were born Brazilian and felt like they belonged to the decolonizing process.”

²² For a comprehensive and detailed account of Nina Rodrigues’s prolific work, see Mariza Corrêa, *As ilusões da liberdade: a escola Nina Rodrigues e a antropologia no Brasil*, 3rd ed. (Rio de Janeiro: FIOCRUZ, 2013).

them.”²³ Besides editing and publishing in Brazilian medical journals such as the *Gazeta Médica da Bahia*, Nina Rodrigues also saw his essays printed in prestigious international publications such as Cesar Lombroso’s *Archivio di antropologia criminale psichiatria e medicina* and the *Archives d’anthropologie criminelle, de criminologie et de psychologie normale et pathologique*, edited by French criminologist Alexandre Lacassagne and sociologist Gabriel Tarde.

In his scientific quest to access Afro-Brazilians’ bodies and minds, Nina Rodrigues could not ignore previous attempts to imagine, depict, and portray the inner lives of Africans and Afro-descendants, even if addressing such attempts would take him to different cultural practices, namely Romantic literature. For him, although the legal abolition of slavery had been “the biggest and most useful reform” in Brazilian society, the “sentimental coating” with which the matter had been addressed resulted in the “illusion” of equality that he so firmly denied.²⁴ Within the abolitionist movement, to advance the “noblest humanitarian sentiments,” he claimed,

It was necessary or convenient to lend the Negro the psychic organization of the more educated white peoples. He was given supremacy in the stoicism of suffering, he was made the conscious victim of the most blatant social injustice. ... The noble feeling of sympathy and pity ... had conferred to the black man ... qualities, feelings, moral gifts or ideas that he did not have, that he could not have...

...foi necessário ou conveniente emprestar ao negro a organização psíquica dos povos brancos mais cultos. Deu-se-lhe a supremacia no estoicismo do sofrimento, fez-se dele a vítima consciente da mais clamorosa injustiça social. ... O sentimento nobilíssimo da

²³ Dain Borges, “‘Puffy, Ugly, Slothful and Inert’: Degeneration in Brazilian Social Thought, 1880-1940,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* Vol. 25, No. 2 (May 1993): 239.

²⁴ Raymundo Nina Rodrigues, *Os africanos no Brasil* (Brasília: Editora Universidade de Brasília, 2004), 17.

*simpatia e piedade ... ao negro havia conferido ... qualidades, sentimentos, dotes morais ou ideias que ele não tinha, que ele não podia ter...*²⁵

Nina Rodrigues offers here a sort of literary criticism of the racial ventriloquism enacted by abolitionist or reformist Romantic authors such as Bernardo Guimarães, Antônio Frederico de Castro Alves, and even Joaquim Manuel de Macedo. In attempting to depict the psychological suffering inflicted upon enslaved peoples in Brazil, these authors had created a “pathological sentimentalism” which, if left unchecked, could cause the downfall of Brazilian society.²⁶ The danger was clear. While prior to abolition the enslaved “were simply considered as work machines” [*se consideravam simples máquinas de trabalho*]²⁷ and were therefore excluded from the national narrative, the end of slavery in Brazil turned them into “a citizen like any other, who if left to their own devices could supplant or dominate whites” [*um cidadão como qualquer outro, e entregue a si poderia suplantiar ou dominar o branco*].²⁸ As a consequence, Nina Rodrigues warned his readers: “The sympathy of the abolitionist campaign still dominates in the country and everyone instinctively wants to project themselves as protectors of the black race” [*Todavia domina nopaís a simpatia da campanha abolicionista e institivamente todos se querem pôr de protetores da raça negra*].²⁹

²⁵ Nina Rodrigues, *Os africanos no Brasil*, 17.

²⁶ Still, as we have seen, it was not only in literature that the white bourgeoisie had attempted to imagine how enslaved peoples felt, thought, and suffered. What Nina Rodrigues calls “pathological sentimentalism” was also present in medical texts and political essays, such as the ones examined in Part I.

²⁷ Nina Rodrigues, *Os africanos no Brasil*, 17.

²⁸ Nina Rodrigues, *Os africanos no Brasil*, 18.

²⁹ Nina Rodrigues, *Os africanos no Brasil*, 18.

Moved by a feared overturning of white supremacy in Brazil, Nina Rodrigues mobilized the scientific apparatus of his time.³⁰ “[We] consider the immediate or delayed supremacy of the black race to be harmful to our nationality,” [*consideramos a supremacia imediata ou mediata da raça negra nociva à nossa nacionalidade*] he wrote, adding that “if left unrestrained, its influence would be harmful to the progress and to the culture of our people” [*prejudicial em todo caso a sua influência não sofrada aos progressos e à cultura do nosso povo*].³¹ For instance, Nina Rodrigues lashed out against the rumors of a possible immigration of African Americans from the United States to Brazil, calling the idea an “aberration of criminal sentimentality” [*aberração de um sentimentalismo criminoso*] which could trigger an “attack to our nationality” [*atentado contra a nossa nacionalidade*].³² Although he apparently did not share the feeling of abjection experienced by Harvard biologist Louis Agassiz (one of his main sources) when the latter visited Brazil in the 1860s and came into close contact with people of color, Nina Rodrigues was nevertheless worried about the social consequences of such contacts and contagions between and among racial groups.³³ When looking back at his work, Nina Rodrigues claimed in the first years of the twentieth century that his goal was to “feel and touch ... possible germs of precocious decadence that deserved to be known and studied in the quest for reparation

³⁰ As we will see, Nina Rodrigues’s observations of *candomblé* practices will again turn its Afro-Brazilian practitioners in automatons.

³¹ Nina Rodrigues, *Os africanos no Brasil*, 22.

³² Nina Rodrigues, *Os africanos no Brasil*, 24. There is no record of a possible immigration of African Americans to Brazil at that time. The subject was indeed discussed by Brazilian authorities in the 1920s.

³³ In a letter sent to his mother in 1846, Louis Agassiz reports his first time being around Black people in a hotel restaurant in Philadelphia: “I can scarcely express to you the painful impression that I received, especially since the feeling that they inspired in me is contrary to all our ideas about the confraternity of the human type [genre] and the unique origin of our species. ... And when they advanced that hideous hand towards my plate in order to serve me, I wished I were able to depart in order to eat a piece of bread elsewhere, rather than dine with such service.” Cited in Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: Norton & Company, 1996), 77.

and prophylaxis” [*sentir e a tocar ... possíveis germes de precoce decadência que mereciam sabidos e estudados, em busca de reparação e profilaxia*].³⁴

As a physician of Brazilian society, Nina Rodrigues foresaw a specific future for the Afro-Brazilian population. Just like Silvio Romero whose words he often quoted, Nina Rodrigues claimed that “Black people are not just an economic machine; they are first of all, and despite their ignorance, an object of science” [*O negro não é só uma máquina econômica; ele é antes de tudo, e mau grado sua ignorância, um objeto de ciência*].³⁵ In spite of this claim and of himself, Nina Rodrigues would hear his scientific objects talk back and, ultimately, witness the failure of his own project. As many scholars have claimed, what we consider scientific knowledge is produced not only by the scientist but also—and at times solely—by their objects. In Nina Rodrigues’s case, however, these “objects” sometimes objected to being treated as such. As Fred Moten puts it, “[t]he history of blackness is a testament to the fact that objects can and do resist.”³⁶

In in the following sections of this chapter, I will first situate Nina Rodrigues’s work within the broader, shifting context of Brazilian cultural and literary thought. Then we will consider Nina Rodrigues’s incursions in craniometric examinations, focusing on two particular cases: that of the Bahian bandit Lucas Evangelista dos Santos, known as Lucas da Feira; and that

³⁴ Nina Rodrigues, *Os africanos no Brasil*, 15. The biological vocabulary fits into the question of “social hygiene” that Nina Rodrigues, Fernando Ortiz, and other ideologues of race aimed to tackle. His work, therefore, was part of the “general medicalization of social thought” that Dain Borges and others identify in Brazilian racial thinking in the nineteenth century, one that “saw society as an organism, and compared the social scientist to the role of the physician.” Dain Borges, “‘Puffy, Ugly, Slothful and Inert’: Degeneration in Brazilian Social Thought, 1880-1940,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 25, no. 2 (May 1993): 235.

³⁵ Silvio Romero, *Estudos sobre a poesia popular do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Laemmert & C., 1888), 11. Nina Rodrigues quotes this passage in *Os africanos no Brasil* (Brasília: Editora Universidade de Brasília, 2004), 30.

³⁶ Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 1.

of the religious leader Antônio Vicente Mendes Maciel, also known as Antônio Conselheiro. In both cases, Nina Rodrigues failed to find craniometric markers of crime and degeneration, which led him to resort to psychological and sociological explanations for criminality and madness, respectively. Finally, we will move to Nina Rodrigues's most famous work: *O animismo fetichista dos negros bahianos* [The Fetishist Animism of Bahian Blacks, 1896/1900], in which he abandoned craniometry and physical anthropology altogether to embark on a quasi-ethnographic endeavor aimed at understanding the Afro-Brazilian religion of candomblé. To conclude, I will demonstrate how this text promotes an understanding of race unrelated to skin color or phenotype, but based, on the contrary, on subjectivity and feeling—religious feeling in particular.

Fear, Freedom, and Fury

All in all, Nina Rodrigues was one of the loudest voices marking a shift within the (white) Brazilian cultural imaginary in relation to the depiction of people of African descent, who went from being enslaved victims to becoming free-roaming criminals. Such a shift had started long before the actual abolition of slavery. As we have seen in the conclusion of Part I, already in the late eighteenth century fears of revenge and revolt loomed large in the minds of white reformists who advocated for “better treatment” of the enslaved. Later on, when famous Brazilian abolitionist writers such as Antônio de Castro Alves (1847-1871) and Bernardo Guimarães (1825-1884) deployed Romantic tools to sensitize their audiences to the inhumanities of slavery, they also mobilized the fear of rebellion.³⁷ Indeed, white fear is palpable even in the

³⁷ See Celia Maria Marinho de Azevedo, *Onda negra, medo branco: o negro no imaginário das elites — século XIX* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1987).

pages of the most sentimentalist writings exploiting the suffering of captives. In Castro Alves's "Estrofes do solitário" [*Stanzas of the Lonely Man*], for instance, the Romantic poetic voice addresses those who want to wait for abolition: "And you fold your arms... Cowardice!/ And you whisper with fierce hypocrisy:/ — We must wait.../ Wait? Wait for what? For the populace,/ This wind that shatters thrones,/ To come and start upheavals?" [*E vós cruzais os braços... Covardia!/ E murmurais com fera hipocrisia:/ — É preciso esperar.../ Esperar? Mas o quê? Que a população,/ Este vento que os tronos despedaça,/ Venha abismos cavar?*].³⁸

In a less sentimental tone, pro-slavery writer, politician, and lawyer José de Alencar had already exposed the dangers that white bourgeois families faced by living so intimately with the enslaved. In Alencar's 1857 comedy of manners *O demônio familiar* [The Familiar Demon], Pedro, an enslaved boy who serves as page to prominent young doctor Eduardo, manages to create chaos within the family he served. By mimicking his master's handwriting (even though he does not know how to read or write), Pedro causes misunderstandings between Eduardo, his sister Carlotinha, and their respective suitors. Pedro's ultimate goal is to match each of them with wealthier people, who could then make him a coachman. In the end, after hearing Pedro's confessions of all his wrongdoings, Eduardo manumits him. "The only innocent is the one who has no imputation, and who has just played a child's prank driven by the instinct of friendship" [*O único inocente é aquela que não tem imputação, e que fez apenas uma travessura de criança levado pelo instinto da amizade*], announces the magnanimous and God-like Eduardo in his final speech. Pedro's childlike behavior, however, does not grant him forgiveness or

³⁸ The theme of revenge appears elsewhere in Castro Alves's poetry. For instance, in his "A criança" [The Child], the poetic voice addresses an enslaved child who had lost their mother to the "fierce lash" and asks them what do they want. The child answers, "— Friend, I want the iron of revenge" [*Amigo, eu quero o ferro da vingança*]. Antônio Frederico de Castro Alves, *Os escravos*, 1883. Available at http://www.dominiopublico.gov.br/pesquisa/DetalheObraDownload.do?select_action=&co_obra=16727&co_midia=.

understanding. The freedom he gains is intended as a punishment rather than a gift. Eduardo explains:

I rectify him, turning the automaton into a man; I restore him to society, but I expel him from the bosom of my family and I close the door of my house on him forever. (*To Pedro, giving him a piece of paper.*) Here; this is your manumission; it will be your punishment from this day forward, for your faults will be yours alone; for the morals and the law will demand from you a severe account of your actions. Now that you are free, you will feel the need for honest work; you will appreciate the noble sentiments that you do not understand today; for you will not have a master to watch over you, to advise and direct you; because you will not have a family to feed you, and cherish you!

Eu o corrijo, fazendo do automato um homem; restituo-o á sociedade, porém expulso-o do seio de minha família e fecho-lhe para sempre a porta de minha casa. (A Pedro, dando-lhe um papel.) Toma; é a tua carta de liberdade; ella será a tua punição de hoje em diante, porque as tuas faltas recahirão unicamente sobre ti; porque a moral e a lei te pedirão uma conta severa de tuas acções. Livre, sentirás a necessidade do trabalho honesto; apreciarás os nobres sentimentos que hoje não comprehendes; porque não terás um senhor que vele sobre ti, que te aconselhe e te dirija; porque não terás uma família que te alimente, e te estime!*³⁹

If the manumission paper turns the automaton into a young man, being a free Black male in nineteenth-century Brazil is itself a punishment because Pedro will lose access to domestic

³⁹ José de Alencar, *O demônio familiar* (Rio de Janeiro: Typographia de Soares & Irmão, 1858), 157.

bourgeois life (the doors will be forever closed on him) and to the allegedly paternalistic care it entailed, becoming a subject of the law in full.⁴⁰ In this paraphrase of God banishing Adam from the Garden of Eden masked as a twisted critique of slavery,⁴¹ Alencar argues that the enslaved are a constant threat to the masters because they are “venomous reptiles who bite us on the heart when we least expect it!” [*reptis venenosos, que quando menos esperamos nos mordem no coração!*].⁴² Their familiarity and inclusion within bourgeois domestic affairs end up harming, albeit lightly, his own masters.⁴³

A decade later, the mischiefs and pranks of a character such as Pedro become much more dangerous in Joaquim Manuel de Macedo’s 1869 *As vítimas-algozes: quadros da escravidão* [Victims-Perpetrators: Scenes of Slavery]. Macedo, who in 1844 seemed so concerned with the pathological impacts of bondage in the minds of the enslaved (see Chapter 2), shifts the center of his antislavery argument from the enslaved to the slavers themselves, warning the planter class about the danger captives posed to their lives and properties. In the three novellas included in *Vítimas-algozes*, Macedo didactically exposes the “hatred toward the masters [which] was already incubated in the slave’s soul” [*ódio aos senhores [que] já estava incubado na alma do escravo*].⁴⁴ As a “moral syphilis that contaminated the masters’ house, farm, and family,” slavery

⁴⁰ Of course, the enslaved were always a subject of the law. Alencar is mobilizing the old trope of the benevolent, paternalistic slave owner.

⁴¹ Eduardo seems to be repeating to Pedro what God said to Adam: although “he has become as one of Us, to know good and evil,” he has to “till the ground from whence he was taken.” Genesis 3:22-23 (21st Century King James Version).

⁴² Alencar, *O demônio familiar*, 62.

⁴³ Ultimately, however, Alencar’s play seems to claim that the enslaved are never ready to become citizens because they have been permanently infantilized by slavery. Instead of seeing manumission as the punishment it was intended to be, Pedro’s response to Eduardo is simply to kiss his hand and to exclaim, referring to himself in the third person: “Pedro will become a coachman at a Major’s house!” In a clear infantilization of the character, Pedro speaks of himself in the third person throughout the whole play. Pedro rarely uses the pronoun “I,” even after being manumitted, thus suggesting his inability to become a self-possessing agent.

⁴⁴ Joaquim Manuel de Macedo, *As vítimas-algozes: quadros da escravidão*, 3rd edition (São Paulo: Editora Scipione, 1991), 21.

had to be abolished not because of the harm it inflicted on the slave but because of the potential violence—physical and moral—it could inflict on slave owners.⁴⁵ The enslaved characters in Macedo’s stories are Simeão, a Creole slave who, although raised by his masters inside the big house and despite not having to work, still develops such resentment that he kills the master’s wife, daughter, and son-in-law. Macedo also tells the story of the African sorcerer Pai-Rayol and the *mucama* Esméria who, dominated by Pai-Rayol, seduces her master and poisons his children with a mysterious substance. Finally, we have Lucinda, a twelve-year-old enslaved *mucama* who uses her precocious sexuality to lead her young mistress (the eleven-year-old Cândida) to promiscuity and moral ruin. The three stories, aimed at an imagined white patriarch, picture the destruction of families either by physical violence or by moral corruption.

Besides actual death, the main fear Macedo tries to instill in his reader is the inversion of the master-slave relationship that lied at the foundation of the traditional Brazilian family. In all three novellas, the masters become in one way or another “enslaved to their slave.”⁴⁶ This dramatic mobilization of white fear marks a sharper distance from sentimental anti-slavery rhetoric, which Macedo himself notes in the opening remarks of the book.⁴⁷ “Let us forget Bug-Jargal, Toussaint Louverture and Pai-Simão; the slave we are going to expose to your eyes is the slave who lives in our houses and farms, the man who was born a man, and who slavery has turned into a pest or beast.”⁴⁸ Like Alencar (and many others) before him, Macedo sees the institution of slavery as a dehumanizing “social cancer,” as the “beast-mother” who birthes

⁴⁵ Macedo, *As vítimas-algozes*, 4.

⁴⁶ Macedo, *As vítimas-algozes*, 105, 164.

⁴⁷ Although *As vítimas-algozes* is a work of fiction, Macedo’s rhetorical strategy is to constantly refer to lived experience: “It is our commitment and goal to bring to your spirit ... facts that you have observed, truths that no longer need to be demonstrated,” announces the author in the message to the readers. Macedo, *As vítimas algozes*, 1.

⁴⁸ Macedo, *As vítimas-algozes*, 4.

perversion and “surrounds you [slave owners] with enemies.”⁴⁹ If it were not for the institution of slavery, the characters in Macedo’s stories would be men and women like any other, “brothers before God.”⁵⁰

Nina Rodrigues, however, did not blame slavery for his fear of the “supremacy” of Black people. He instead blamed race—Blackness—casting slavery to a remote past that did not seem to inform his post-abolition present. In a counterpoint to both Macedo and Alencar but closer to the former, Nina Rodrigues argued that free people of color were *not* men and women like any other, and less so in the inside. But what could be the alternative to the sentimental rhetoric that would have simply placed white feelings in Black bodies? Nina Rodrigues’s solution would be a disciplinary one, insisting on a clear epistemological separation between science and sentiment. “Science, which does not know these feelings,” he wrote, “is in its full right to freely exert criticism and to extend it impartially to all ethnic elements of a people.”⁵¹ In excluding any sort of subjectivity and affect from knowledge-making, Nina Rodrigues advanced what Lorraine Daston has dubbed the epistemic virtue of objectivity.⁵² Sentiment taints the progress of science, whose aim is to obtain “an image untainted by subjectivity.”⁵³

Despite his claims at objectivity, Nina Rodrigues’s criticism seems to focus on one particular “ethnic element.” As an advocate of what is today known as scientific racism, he explained Brazil as a nation through the mixture of three main “anthropological groups” as he called them: *negros* (Africans and Afro-descendants), *índios* (Indigenous peoples), and *brancos*

⁴⁹ Macedo, *As vítimas-algozes*, 2, 29.

⁵⁰ Macedo, *As vítimas-algozes*, 73.

⁵¹ Nina Rodrigues, *Os africanos no Brasil*, 18, 21.

⁵² The term is self-explanatory, but according to Daston epistemic virtues are “virtues properly so-called: they are norms that are internalized and enforced by appeal to ethical values, as well as to pragmatic efficacy in securing knowledge.” Lorraine Daston, *Objectivity* (New York: Zone Books, 2010), 40-1.

⁵³ Lorraine Daston, *Objectivity*, 43.

(whites).⁵⁴ Ultimately, Nina Rodrigues defended a fixed hierarchy among these groups, in which the “black race” and the “indigenous race” would be greatly inferior to the “white race.” In Nina Rodrigues’s evolutionist perspective, the term “anthropological groups” referred to their distinct positions in the line of civilizational progress, which led to biological, sociological, affective, and therefore ontological differences. As Lilia Schwartz explains, the difference between races in Nina Rodrigues’s thought was not “a synonym of pluralism, but an ontological mark because it was drawn by nature.”⁵⁵ In a terminology that implied a temporal rather than spatial difference, to be “inferior” meant to be located on lower point of the civilizational ladder, at the top of which stood the white European man. No matter how free, Afro-Brazilians were not “ready” to fully become citizens because they were too far behind in terms of human evolution. While (male) whites were attempting to build a modern nation, Black and indigenous people challenged that aspired modernity by their very existence. As Nina Rodrigues put it, “the black race in Brazil . . . will always constitute one of the factors that justify our inferiority.”⁵⁶

Perhaps one of his best-known works, *As raças humanas e a responsabilidade penal no Brasil* [Human Races and Penal Responsibility in Brazil, 1894] proposes different penal codes for each region, where the distinct “anthropological groups” would have mixed in specific ways. For him, Black and indigenous peoples could not be imputed in the same way as whites, since, as more “primitive” anthropological groups, they would be comparable to children: “The black man

⁵⁴ At the end of the nineteenth century, the term “anthropology” referred more often to the biological domain. According to Mariza Corrêa, while “ethnography seems to be reserved to the (cultural) definition of human groups,” intellectuals such as Silvio Romero and Nina Rodrigues seem to mainly “refer to the biological domain in this definition.” Mariza Corrêa, *As ilusões da liberdade: a escola Nina Rodrigues e a antropologia Criminal*, 41.

⁵⁵ Lilia Katri Moritz Schwarcz, “Quando a Desigualdade é Diferença: Reflexões sobre Antropologia Criminal e Mestiçagem na Obra de Nina Rodrigues,” *Gazeta Médica da Bahia*, Supl. 2 (2006): 52.

⁵⁶ Nina Rodrigues, *Os africanos no Brasil*, 21.

does not have a bad character, just an instable character like a child,” Nina Rodrigues wrote.⁵⁷ In this racialized theory of criminal liability, Nina Rodrigues postulated that atavistic and degenerated people—non-whites—should be subject to specific kinds of state tutelage or sent to psychiatric asylums rather than imprisoned.

In order to prevent the “supremacy of the black race” and preserve the hegemony of whiteness, Nina Rodrigues embarked on his most ambitious project yet: the “reconstruction of the social or popular psychology of the black race in Brazil.”⁵⁸ This is where skulls enter the narrative. They represent the two main currents of Nina Rodrigues’s research: criminality and madness.

Lucas da Feira: Criminality

When Nina Rodrigues published his craniometric study about Lucas Evangelista dos Santos in 1891, the name Lucas da Feira had already come to represent a cautionary tale, a folklore character, and a symbol of antislavery resistance.⁵⁹ Born in 1807 to enslaved African

⁵⁷ Raimundo Nina Rodrigues, *As raças humanas e a responsabilidade penal no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Centro Edelstein de Pesquisa Social, 2011 [1894]), 72. This is a literal translation of a passage in French anthropologist Armand Corre’s *Le crime dans les pays créoles*, one of Nina Rodrigues’s main sources: “Le Noir n’est pas de caractère méchant, mais seulement de caractère instable, comme l’enfant, et, comme chez l’enfant.” Armand Corre, *Le crime en pays créoles (esquisse d’ethnographie criminelle)* (Lyon: A. Storck, 1889), 124.

⁵⁸ Nina Rodrigues, *Os africanos no Brasil*, 145.

⁵⁹ Lucas da Feira’s story circulated in folk song, such as the one recorded by Sylvio Romero in the 1880s, in which Lucas speaks in the first person while he is being taken to Salvador for his death sentence. Sylvio Romero, *Estudos sobre a poesia popular do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Typ. Lammert & C, 1888), 143-4. Evangelista was also the protagonist of the poem “O remorso de Lucas,” by Moraes Filho, in which his crimes appear motivated by a desire of revenge against enslavement—a trope thoroughly reproduced throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Mello Moraes Filho, *Cantos do Equador* (Rio de Janeiro: Typ. de Leuziger & Filhos, 1881), 121-3. The first lengthily account about Lucas da Feira, was Arthur Cerqueira da Rocha Lima and Virgílio César Martins Reys, *Lucas da feira: O Salteador* (Cachoeira: Libro Typographia, 1986. After that, Evangelista also appears in anthologies of the most famous criminals in Brazil, historical and folkloric novels, graphic novels, etc. For instance, Lucas da Feira gained a chapter in the anthology *Os crimes célebres do Rio de Janeiro*, by Hermeto Lima (Rio de Janeiro: Empresa de Romances Populares, 1921), in the novel of manners *Dois metros e cinco*:

parents (Inácio and Maria) in the plantation Sacco do Limão (Bahia), Evangelista ran away while still a teenager, forming a group with other maroons and freed men of color who would commit robberies, murders, and rapes on the roads around the village of Feira de Santana in the 1840s. Local authorities failed over and over in capturing Evangelista, posting awards for his capture and that of his companions. In 1848, an informant reported Evangelista's location to the police who then found him, shot him in the arm, and arrested him shortly after. During his interrogation by police authorities, Evangelista admitted to some crimes but denied many others. He was sentenced to death and was publicly hanged on September 25, 1849.

Lucas Evangelista's remains were buried but did not stay underground for long. Five or six years after his death, the physician José Francisco da Silva Lima was passing by the village of Feira de Santana when he "sought to acquire that important piece with the intention of offering it to the Faculty of Medicine of this state," as Nina Rodrigues recounts.⁶⁰ Silva Lima asked the gravedigger to exhume the body and confirmed its identity through the presence of a hanging rope and a scar where Evangelista's arm had been amputated after the gunshot. Taken out of the grave, Evangelista's skull, humerus, and the rope with which he was hanged were then brought to the Legal Medicine Office in the Bahia Medical School, where they joined a growing collection of skulls.

aventuras de Marcos Parreira, by J. M. Cardoso de Oliveira (Rio de Janeiro: F. Briguiet, 1936), and is the main character in *Lucas, o demônio negro: romance folclórico baiano*, by Sabino de Campos (Rio de Janeiro: Pongetti, 1957), and in Muniz Sodré, *O bicho que chegou da feira* (Rio de Janeiro: Francisco Alves Editora, 1991). For a thorough account of Lucas Evangelista's life in the Recôncavo Bahiano, see Zélia Jesus de Lima, *Lucas Evangelista: O Lucas da Feira. Estudo sobre rebeldia escrava em Feira de Santana (1807-1849)*, Master's Thesis in History defended in the Universidade Federal da Bahia, 1990. Lima understand Evangelista's actions as a form of slave rebellion.

⁶⁰ Raymundo Nina Rodrigues, "Estudos de craneometria. O craneo do salteador Lucas e o de um índio assassino," *Gazeta Médica da Bahia*, no. 10 (April 1892): 433. It is astounding to see the ease with which physicians had access to the remains and graves of Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous populations in late-nineteenth-century Brazil. This was not the case in Cuba, as we will see on Chapter 6.

It is not exactly clear when Nina Rodrigues performed his craniometric examinations, but he published the data in 1892 in four installments in the medical journal *Gazeta Médica da Bahia* under the title “Estudos de craniometria. O crâneo do salteador Lucas e o de um índio assassino” [*Craniometric Studies. The Skull of the Robber Lucas and that of a Murderer Indian*]. In 1895, Nina Rodrigues revisited his text and published it in the Italian journal *Archivio di Psichiatria, scienza penale ed antropologia criminale*, under the title “Nègres criminels au Brésil.”⁶¹ This new version included some revisions and an expanded conclusion on Lucas Evangelista’s skull. In the pages that follow, we will analyze both texts in order to understand the motives and consequences of Nina Rodrigues’s failed attempt to explain Lucas da Feira’s criminal mind through skull measurements.

The main goal of both essays, as the author exposes early on, is to contribute to the fields of criminal sociology and anthropology in Brazil, and to the writings of the Italian criminalist school more broadly. According to Nina Rodrigues, while Brazil had absorbed and discussed European theories on criminology, “in the positive terrain of observation our contribution has been almost null or very insignificant” [*no terreno positivo da observação a nossa contribuição tem sido quasi nulla ou pelo menos muito insignificante*].⁶² The measurements and examination of a known Brazilian criminal’s skull, therefore, would help fill such blatant gap.⁶³ Or, as the author puts it in the 1895 essay, “I believe few populations would be, like Brazil is, in conditions to offer the Italian criminalist school a more brilliant confirmation of the doctrines it defends”

⁶¹ This article was only translated into Portuguese in 1939 and published in *As colectividades anormaes*, a collection of Nina Rodrigues’s texts compiled by Arthur Ramos.

⁶² Nina Rodrigues, “Estudos de craneometria. O craneo do salteador Lucas e o de um índio assassino,” 385.

⁶³ Nina Rodrigues’s work on Lucas da Feira would become part of a work in progress on “criminal associations in Brazil”—which he never completed.

[*Creio que poucas populações estarão, como a do Brasil, em condições de oferecer à escola criminalística italiana uma confirmação mais brilhante às doutrinas que ela defende*].⁶⁴

Before exposing the results and analysis of the craniometric measurements of Evangelista's skull, however, Nina Rodrigues tells his story.

Running away from his master in 1828, the *crioulo* Lucas organized, with the assistance of other maroon slaves named Flaviano, Nicolao, Bernardino, Januário, José, Joaquim e Manuel, a gang of robbers who between then and 1848 infected the main roads of the then-village Feira de Sant'Anna by stealing and murdering.

*Fugindo da casa do seu senhor em 1828, o crioulo Lucas organizou com o concurso de outros escravos marrões de nome Flaviano, Nicolao, Bernardino, Januario, José, Joaquim e Manoel uma quadrilha de salteadores que desde então até 1848 infectou, roubando e assassinando, as principais estradas da então villa da Feira de Sant'Anna.*⁶⁵

From this opening sentence, the reader can gather four important pieces of information that will later become crucial. First, Lucas had been enslaved before becoming a maroon, a self-liberated individual. Second, Lucas was a *crioulo*, that is, a Black man born in Brazil to two enslaved Africans. Third, he was not a lone thief but the leader of a group of maroons. Fourth, Nina Rodrigues saw Lucas's activity as a disease—an infection—that threatened the village's roads, its infrastructure of circulation and commerce. These four characteristics will become more relevant as Nina Rodrigues's analysis develops into an examination of Evangelista's skull.

⁶⁴ Raymundo Nina Rodrigues, "Lucas da Feira," in *As coletividades anormais* (Brasília: Edições do Senado Federal, 2006), 104

⁶⁵ Nina Rodrigues, "Estudos de craneometria. O craneo do salteador Lucas e o de um índio assassino," 386.

For these measurements, the physician followed the method established by Paul Broca—one of the main proponents of craniometry and the founder of the Société d’anthropologie de Paris—although he had to proceed “without his [Broca’s] special gadgets” [*embora sem os seus aparelhos especiaes*].⁶⁶ The conclusions are anticlimactic. Evangelista’s skull does not display any particular signs of criminality, even when compared to a broad range of skull measurements: namely, the skulls of four Black men Nina Rodrigues held in his office, those of two “black assassins” measured by French colonial physician Armand Corre, the skulls of white murderers compiled by different authors, and the average measurements of Parisians’ skulls.⁶⁷ According to Nina Rodrigues,

Lucas’s skull appears advantageously among the other four black skulls with which we compared it. Above all, its capacity is excellent.

Finally, on an examination such as the one we were able to perform, the skull does not offer anything abnormal or shocking.

O craneo de Lucas figura com vntagem entre os outros quatro craneos de negro com que o comparamos. Sobretudo, a sua capacidade é excelente.

⁶⁶ Nina Rodrigues, “Estudos de craneometria. O craneo do salteador Lucas e o de um índio assassino,” 435. The material precarity of his legal medicine office is a constant source of complaints in Nina Rodrigues’s texts. For instance, in the case of Lucas da Feira, he is unable to perform his examinations following the preferred Austrian method because he did not have access to the right tools or devices. Whether explicit or implicit, these complaints seem to be part of Nina Rodrigues’s efforts to bring legitimacy and institutional support to the field of legal medicine, which was very recent in Brazil in the 1890s. For a thorough history of Brazilian scientific institutions, see Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, *O espetáculo das raças: cientistas, instituições e questão racial no Brasil, 1870-1930* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1993).

⁶⁷ While in his first study on Evangelista’s skull (published in Brazil) the author spends considerable time presenting the different measurements and the comparisons with other skulls, the second article spends less time on numbers to go straight to the final analysis.

*Enfim a um exame como poderíamos fazer, o craneo nada offerece de anormal e chocante.*⁶⁸

Lucas's skull looks at first glance perfectly normal. He certainly has characteristics particular to black skulls, but also characteristic that belong to superior skulls, excellent measurements, equal to the white races. In fact, his anomalies are not shocking.

*O crânio de Lucas parece à primeira vista perfeitamente normal. Tem certamente caracteres próprios aos crânios negros, mas também caracteres pertencentes aos crâneos superiores, medidas excelentes, iguais às das raças brancas. Aliás, suas anomalias não são chocantes.*⁶⁹

Such findings clearly baffle Nina Rodrigues who hoped the Brazilian population would provide a confirmation of Italian criminological doctrines, as he had explained earlier. He then goes on to imagine what could explain the skull's silence. "Could it be a case of miscegenation?" [*Trata-se de um caso de mestiçagem?*], he asks.⁷⁰ No, since official documents recognized Evangelista as the son of two Africans, and he was widely described by those who knew him as "certainly black" [*realmente negro*].⁷¹ Could it be, then, that these findings represent "individual traits of the robber's skull ...?" [*um caracter individual do craneo do salteador ...?*]. That is where the 1892 article stops. In 1895, however, Nina Rodrigues goes further, wondering even if "the

⁶⁸ Nina Rodrigues, "Estudos de craneometria. O craneo do salteador Lucas e o de um índio assassino," 531.

⁶⁹ Nina Rodrigues, "Lucas da Feira," 106.

⁷⁰ Nina Rodrigues, "Estudos de craneometria. O craneo do salteador Lucas e o de um índio assassino," 484.

⁷¹ Nina Rodrigues, "Lucas da Feira," 106.

insignificant anomaly of Lucas's skull could make us doubt his criminality?" [*a insignificante anomalia do crânio de Lucas poderia nos fazer duvidar de sua criminalidade?*].⁷² No, Evangelista was a real criminal who "confessed ... to have murdered more than twenty people, to have robbed uncountable times, to have kidnapped and raped more than six girls, etc." [*confessou ... haver assassinado mais de vinte pessoas, roubado a mais não poder, raptado e violado mais de seis moças, etc.*].⁷³ Out of explanations for Lucas Evangelista's exceptional skull, Nina Rodrigues will go so far as to question—just this once—the discipline of criminology itself: "Are criminological studies at fault here?" [*Será que os estudos sobre os criminosos se achem em falha aqui?*] Once again, his answer is also negative. "I do not believe that. In my opinion, it is only necessary to supplement, in Lucas's case, the physical study of the criminal with his psychological study" [*Não o creio. Na minha opinião, é precisa completar, em Lucas, o estudo físico com seus estudo psicológico*].⁷⁴

This psychological study becomes an immersion into Lucas Evangelista's "past," in an imagined Africa, where he supposedly lived as a Black man stuck in a time of savagery. "Lucas was indeed a superior Black," Nina Rodrigues claims. "In Africa, he might have been a monarch" [*Lucas era realmente um negro superior: tinha qualidades de chefe; na África tal vez tivesse sido um monarca*].⁷⁵ Evangelista, after all, had made himself "leader of the gang" instead of acting like "black slaves" who would have sought revenge through suicide; he made sure not to give names of any of his accomplices when he was interrogated by the authorities, claiming he could never betray those who had helped him in the past. Moreover, Evangelista never attacked his former slavers, claiming that he had only murdered those who had come after him or those

⁷² Nina Rodrigues, "Lucas da Feira," 106.

⁷³ Nina Rodrigues, "Lucas da Feira," 106.

⁷⁴ Nina Rodrigues, "Lucas da Feira," 106.

⁷⁵ Nina Rodrigues, "Lucas da Feira," 106-7.

who had betrayed him. All these great deeds will eventually prompt Nina Rodrigues to ask: “Do African chiefs act any differently?” [*Será que os chefes africanos se conduzem de outro modo?*].⁷⁶

It is, of course, a rhetorical question. Nina Rodrigues does not know much about Africa. Instead, he resorts to the work of Armand Corre, who had categorized crimes in colonial environments between “intrinsic” and “extrinsic” attacks.⁷⁷ Intrinsic crimes would be a product of the values of a specific society. Extrinsic crimes, on the other hand, resulted from the “shock” or coexistence between individuals with different morals or, to use Nina Rodrigues’s words, individuals at different stages of human evolution. Lucas da Feira would have committed the latter more than the former because, as an Afro-descendant, he lived in accordance with a different set of morals.

Lucas is indeed a criminal for us other Brazilians who live under the European civilization. In Africa, he would have been, on the contrary, a brave warrior, a famous king. He was a domesticated savage who resumed among us all the freedom of his attitudes.

*Lucas é bem um criminoso para nós outros brasileiros, que vivemos sob a civilização europeia. Na África, ele teria sido, ao contrário, um valente guerreiro, um rei afamado. Era um selvagem domesticado que retomou entre nós toda a liberdade de suas atitudes.*⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Nina Rodrigues, “Lucas da Feira,” 107.

⁷⁷ Corre, *Le crime en pays créoles*.

⁷⁸ Nina Rodrigues, “Lucas da Feira,” 108.

Nina Rodrigues's phrasing here emphasizes that the origin of Lucas's crimes is his unwarranted freedom, on which he was not authorized to act because, first, he was enslaved, and second, he lived in Brazil. But he does not dwell much on Lucas's enslavement, as José de Alencar or Joaquim Manuel de Macedo would have done. Quite literally, the physician justifies Lucas's crimes by transporting his mind to Africa while keeping his body in Brazil. In this oddly cartesian move, Lucas is a criminal because he has been misplaced—he would not have committed crimes if he were in Africa, where his mind belonged. This teleological approach was not original in anthropological knowledge. As Johannes Fabian has argued, the creation of exotic and strange "others" was the result of the manipulation of time. At the turn of the century, socio-cultural evolutionists such as Nina Rodrigues manipulated time by spatializing it, that is, by placing the savage/primitive at a distance from the white anthropologist's civilization both temporally (they were in earlier stages of evolution) and geographically (they inhabited different spaces). In Fabian's words, "[anthropology] promoted a scheme in terms of which not only past cultures, but all living societies were irrevocably placed on a temporal slope, a stream of Time—some upstream, others downstream."⁷⁹ Though Nina Rodrigues clearly espoused this vision, the fact that he was not a European "armchair" anthropologist such as the ones Fabian examines demands a different analysis.

For Nina Rodrigues, Lucas da Feira's mentality existed in an evolutionary past which entailed also a spatial distance (Africa and not Brazil). Still, Lucas da Feira and Afro-descendants in general were located very much in the same space as Nina Rodrigues: Brazil and, more precisely, Bahia. Nina Rodrigues could not claim the spatial distance Fabian sees as crucial for socio-cultural evolutionism. Facing the skull's silence and the impossibility of geographically

⁷⁹ Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 17.

separating himself from Lucas da Feira, he had to split Lucas in two, mind and body. It is from this split that he saw criminality emerge.

Though he may have been the first of Nina Rodrigues's failures, Lucas da Feira was certainly not the last nor the most remarkable one. Almost ten years after he analyzed Lucas's skull, Nina Rodrigues would venture to study the skull of another infamous criminal who terrorized the state of Bahia: Antônio Vicente Mendes Maciel, the Antônio Conselheiro. And just like in the case of Lucas Evangelista, Antônio Conselheiro's skull would prove to be deceptively normal.

Antônio Conselheiro: Madness

Perhaps one of the most well known narratives about Antônio Conselheiro and the Canudos War is Euclides da Cunha's 1902 *Os sertões* [*Backlands: The Canudos Campaign*].⁸⁰ In its 900 pages, Cunha offers a treatise on the physical and geological characteristics of the Brazilian *sertão* or backlands (Part I: The Land); an ethnological study of the backland inhabitants (Part II: The Man); and an incredibly detailed narrative of the war between Canudos dwellers and the Brazilian military forces (Part III: The Battle). From August to October of 1897, Cunha had followed the fourth and last military expedition sent by the newly proclaimed Republic to the town of Belo Monte, founded in the interior of the state of Bahia on an abandoned farm (Canudos) by the messianic leader Antônio Vicente Mendes Maciel (the

⁸⁰ Although Cunha's remains one of the most well-known accounts of the war and *Os sertões* has become part of the Brazilian literary canon, non-Brazilians might be more familiar with Mario Vargas Llosa's fictionalized narrative of the war, *La guerra del fin del mundo* (1981), known in English as *The War of the End of the World*.

“Conselheiro”) and his mass of followers.⁸¹ After three failed expeditions in the previous months, during which the *sertanejos* drove off around five thousand soldiers, the fourth expedition led by general Artur Oscar de Andrade Guimarães destroyed Canudos little by little, without capitulation from those who resisted the repeated military attacks.

In the final chapters of *Os sertões* (“Last Days”), Cunha recounts the end of the war in an anticlimax. There is no final battle, heroic conclusion, or magnificent act tying up his testimony of the Canudos War.⁸² “We will forgo describing the last moments. They are impossible to describe. The story we are telling was a deeply moving and tragic one to the very end. We must finish it hesitantly and with humility,” Cunha writes.⁸³ Beyond the author’s lament, the final pages of *Os sertões* are a thought experiment about the future of a country that the author struggled to understand through the so-called “racial question.” The final pages focus on a detailed description of Antônio Conselheiro’s body, “the natural representative of the environment in which he was born.”⁸⁴ If on the one hand Conselheiro’s lifeless body was proof

⁸¹ There is no unanimity among sources on the amount of dwellers in Canudos. Among various estimates, there were between 10 and 25 thousand people there following Conselheiro. Cunha had been commissioned by the newspaper *Estado de S. Paulo* to write about the war.

⁸² The “Canudos War” was in fact a massacre of thousands of peoples by four military expeditions sent by the newly formed Brazilian Republic in 1897. Canudos was an old farm on which messianic leader Antônio Vicente Mendes Maciel and his followers founded the settlement Belo Monte—although it remained popularly known as Canudos. It attracted thousands of mostly impoverished and landless people (some estimates project up to 25 thousand dwellers) with the goal of forming a millenary, self-sufficient, anti-republican community. As Robert Levine defines it, Canudos was “a social movement that cut across the line dividing former slaves and free rural folk.” Robert Levine, “Editor’s Introduction: The World out of Which Canudos Came.” *Luso-Brazilian Review* 30, no. 2 (1993): 1. The engineer Euclides da Cunha was sent to the battlefield by the newspaper *Estado de S. Paulo* following the fourth and last military expedition. In 1902, Cunha published *Os sertões* (*Backlands: The Canudos Campaign*), a massive volume in which he attempted to explain the Canudos phenomenon and recount the military narrative.

⁸³ Euclides da Cunha, *Backlands: The Canudos Campaign*, trans. by Elizabeth Lowe (New York: Penguin, 2010), 1022. Throughout this chapter I will be using Lowe’s translations of *Os sertões* as well as my own.

⁸⁴ Euclides da Cunha, *Os sertões: Campanha de Canudos* (Lisboa: Livros do Brasil, 2000), 256.

of the victory of the newly established Republic over the “monarchist *jagunços*,”⁸⁵ on the other it was “a rare document of the atavism” that dominated the *sertanejos*, themselves a product of racial miscegenation.⁸⁶

Equally as interested in the “racial question” as he was in the military narrative, Cunha sees in Conselheiro’s body the hermeneutic key of that religious phenomenon that had mobilized the whole country—or, as Cunha himself defines it, the “collective psychosis” that afflicted the Canudos dwellers.⁸⁷ Conselheiro was not killed by military forces, who found him already in an initial stage of decomposition:

At dawn that day a commission located Antonio Conselheiro’s corpse. It was lying in a hut near the arbor, and it was found with the help of a prisoner. Under a shallow layer of dirt, the remains of the “notorious and barbaric agitator” appeared on a reed mat, wrapped in a filthy sheet around which pious hands had scattered a few withered flowers. The corpse was was hideous. Clothed in his old blue tunic, his hands crossed at his chest, his face swollen and gaunt, and his deep eyes full of dirt, Conselheiro was barely recognized by those who had been closest to him in life.⁸⁸

All of those present shared Cunha’s attention to Conselheiro’s grotesque face. The expeditionary photographer Flávio de Barros took a picture of the corpse and the delegation produced a written

⁸⁵ As Elizabeth Lowe explains, *jagunço* is a “gunman or outlaw, usually a cowboy who can be hired as a mercenary; in this text the term is often synonymous with *sertanejo*, the native inhabitant of the backlands; *tabaréu*—greenhorn, comes from the word *tabareo*, a new army recruit, and connotes a backwoods rustic, someone who is awkward and lacks education; *caipira*—country bumpkin, a term used in southern Brazil.” Elizabeth Lowe (trans.), “Notes,” in Euclides da Cunha, *Backlands: The Canudos Campaign* (New York: Penguin, 2010), 1026.

⁸⁶ Cunha, *Os sertões*, 256.

⁸⁷ Cunha, *Os sertões*, 298.

⁸⁸ Cunha, *Os sertões*, 779.

record confirming Antônio Maciel's identity, since "it mattered that the country was convinced that, after all, that terrible antagonist was extinct."⁸⁹ But neither photography nor official identification were enough for the military commission, who then decided to keep Conselheiro's head. Severed from the putrefying body that was returned to the grave and readily forgotten, the head became a face:

Later they reburied it. The thought occurred to them that they should preserve the head. This was the head on which so many curses had been heaped. Since they did not want to exhume the body again, a twist of a knife did the trick. The corpse was decapitated and the horrible face, running with scars and pus, again faced the victors.⁹⁰

Now a face, Antônio Conselheiro's head is defined by adjectives that inspire horror: swollen, gaunt, horrible. Cunha had finished *Os sertões* convinced that the war had been a crime, an "attack against the *sertanejos*."⁹¹ His dramatic, adjective-heavy description does not redeem Antônio Conselheiro, but it is nevertheless a product of the author's morbid, hopeless gaze while he witnessed part of the massacre, the disappearing of prisoners and "women who flung themselves on their burning homes, with their children in their arms."⁹²

Yet, to Major Dr. Miranda Curio, sanitary chief of the military expedition, what mattered was not the face but what it concealed. Inside Conselheiro's head, there could be answers to the questions that circulated through newspapers and street rumors. What led thousands of people to follow a messianic leader through the *sertão*, abandoning their previous lives and selling all their belongings? What could justify the resilience of those individuals who, to everyone's surprise,

⁸⁹ Cunha, *Os sertões*, 780.

⁹⁰ Cunha, *Backlands: The Canudos Campaign*, trans. by Elizabeth Lowe, 966.

⁹¹ Cunha, *Os sertões*, 735.

⁹² Cunha, *Os sertões*, 779.

overcame three military expeditions sent by the Brazilian government? Who, in the end, was Antônio Maciel? Inside Conselheiro's head, one would perhaps find the key to understanding Brazil through the lense of craniometry and phrenology.

Afterward they took it to the coast, where the skull was greeted by crowds dancing in the streets. Let science have the last words. There, in the relief of expressive circumvolutions, was the evidence of crime and madness.⁹³

The exterior-interior motion that determines the stucture of *Os sertões* ("The Land," "The Man," "The Struggle," from the environment to the individual) appears again in a condensed version on the final pages of the book. The gaze moves from the "head" to the "face" and then to the skull, as if Cunha was textually opening Conselheiro's head. The head emerges when it is still connected to the body, albeit with the potential of detachment ("The thought occurred to them that they should preserve the head"); then the decapitation reveals the "horrible face, running with scars and pus." Antônio Maciel's death, made visible here in the rotting flesh, starts to corrode the skin, making visible layers of muscular tissue. Finally, the text introduces us to the skull, which displays "expressive circumvolutions" where one could find "the essential lines of crime and madness." As he describes Conselheiro's skull, Cunha also abandons the pejorative adjectives that he had used to describe the body and head of Canudos's leader—horrible, cursed, horrendous, full of scars and pus. The desadjectivated skull does not incite passionate reactions, be it horror or joy. It is sterile and objective as the craniometric science that would have the last word in analyzing it.

⁹³ Cunha, *Os sertões*, 780.

As Leopoldo Bernucci argues, Cunha “manages to make the Canudos’s chaotic topography mirror Conselheiro’s psychic topography.”⁹⁴ The mind of one man is used as metonym for the *sertanejos* and, consequently, for the Brazilian people as well: Conselheiro’s biography “is a compendium and summary of *sertanejo* society,” claims Cunha. “His life illustrates the etiology of the disease that consumed him.”⁹⁵ If Antônio Maciel’s life story was able to bring light to the pathology that allegedly afflicted him, as we will see, his skull would show material proof of his alleged madness.

Cunha was not alone in displaying hope that Conselheiro’s skull contained the explanation for the religious, social, and political phenomenon of Canudos. Besides putting into motion the newly proclaimed Republic’s military apparatus, Antônio Maciel and his followers mobilized the Brazilian social and medical sciences. Periodicals, newspapers, and magazines speculated about Conselheiro’s biography, his cause of death (was it tetanus, dysentery, or asphyxia?); about the destiny of the severed head and what the skull would have to say to the sciences. Newspapers such as *O Paiz* and *Minas Geraes* stated that Conselheiro’s head was kept in an alcoholic solution.⁹⁶ Others, such as *A Republica*, from the state of Maranhão, claimed that the major dr. Miranda Curio was conserving it in lime.⁹⁷ However preserved, the fact is that Antônio Maciel’s head would move from the shadows of “atavism” (the backlands) to the spotlight of modern science (the coast, the city). In this movement from darkness to light, the skull would become famous. The newspaper *República* from Rio Grande do Norte, for instance, supported the claim made by “some friends” to transport Conselheiro’s skull to the National

⁹⁴ Leopoldo Bernucci, “Prefácio,” in Euclides da Cunha, *Os sertões: Campanha de Canudos* (São Paulo: Ateliê Editorial, 2002), 23.

⁹⁵ Cunha, *Backlands: The Canudos Campaign*, trans. by Elizabeth Lowe, 300.

⁹⁶ *O Paiz* (Oct. 12, 1897): 2; *Minas Geraes* (Oct. 29, 1897): 4.

⁹⁷ *A República* (Fortaleza, Oct. 6, 1897): n/p.

Museum, in Rio de Janeiro, because “the study of Antônio Maciel’s skull offers particularities worthy of being scientifically signaled.”⁹⁸

The severed head triggered such an excitement in the press that some journalists resorted to parody and fiction as a way to examine it. In a chronicle for the *Gazeta de Notícias* of Rio de Janeiro, an anonymous author combined craniometry and spiritism—discourses that were very much in fashion among educated *cariocas* at the time—to invoke the spirit of the late Paul Broca who, as mentioned earlier, had been the champion of anthropometry and craniometry in Europe. Employing a vocabulary borrowed from Kardecist Spiritism, the author asks a psychic friend to invite Broca’s spirit to finally perform an examination of Conselheiro’s head. After eleven long minutes, the psychic starts writing in “tiny, narrow letters” what Broca was telling him from the other realm.

Here I am. I am in a not very wide valley, squeezed between rough hills... I am in the Canudos camp. What a stench! What a stench!

Flying continuously in concentric circles, the crows rotate in the air. They no longer come down to earth: they are full. Some have already died of indigestion... Piled up, like sardines in brine, there are corpses, so many corpses on the ground full of mud, of blood, of ashes. What a stench! What a stench! I circulate (flying, of course, because spirits don’t walk) I circulate among the corpses, looking for the wreckage of the Igreja Nova, where the mortal remains of the one who called himself Antônio Maciel in life must be...

⁹⁸ *A República* (Natal, Oct. 28, 1897): 2. It made sense to send the skull to the National Museum, where scientists such as Ladislau Netto and João Batista de Lacerda performed craniometric examinations in the Department of Biological Anthropology. See Guilherme José da Silva e Sá et al, “Crânios, corpos e medidas: a constituição do acervo de instrumentos antropométricos do Museu Nacional na passagem do século XIX para o XX”, *História, Ciências, Saúde-Manguinhos*, v. 15, no. 1 (2008): 197-208.

Here is the Igreja Nova. Towers and walls have fallen, but on the ground between huge pieces of debris is the great bell, all dented, bitten by the rust... Here must have been the main altar ... Ah! here is our Antônio Conselheiro...

Here I have his bald, polished head in my hands, yellow as old ivory... I crack it open...

Here I have his brain... Oh! So heavy! So heavy!

Aqui estou. Estou n'um valle não muito amplo, apertado entre montes asperos... Estou no arraial de Canudos. Que máo cheiro! Que máo cheiro!

Numa revoada contínua, em circuitos concentricos, rodam no ar os corvos. Já não baixam á terra: estão fartos. Alguns já morreram de indigestão.... Empilhados, como sardinhas em salmoura, ha cadaveres, cadaveres, cadaveres, sobre um chão de lodo, de sangue, de cinzas. Que máo cheiro! Que máo cheiro! Vou (voando, está claro, porque os espíritos não andam) vou por entre os cadaveres, á procura dos destroços da Igreja Nova, onde devem estar os restos mortaes d'aquelle que se chamou em vida Antonio Maciel...

Cá está a Igreja Nova. Torres e paredes cahiram: mas, no chão entre pedronços enormes, está o grande sino, todo amolgado, mordido da ferrugem... Aqui devia estar o altar-mor... Ah! Cá está o nosso Antonio Conselheiro...

*Aqui tenho nas mãos sua cabeça calva, pedida, amarella como mortim velho... Racha-a... Aqui tenho o seu cerebro... oh! Que peso! Que peso!*⁹⁹

⁹⁹ *Gazeta de Notícias*, Oct. 10, 1897.

Conselheiro's head is that heavy because "he was talented, the madman!" [*tinha talento, o maluco!*]. In his examination of the skull and brain, Broca's spirit identifies Antônio Maciel's psychological characteristics. The "speech circumvolution" [*circumvolução da palavra*], for instance, is massive because Conselheiro spoke "with the power of conviction" [*poder de convicção*], seducing every person who listened to him. The location of the written word, on the other hand, was "weird, fantastical, irregular" [*esquisita, fantástica, irregular*] since Conselheiro "was a believer in his own way, the prophet!" [*tinha uma crença ao seu modo, o profeta!*]. In this perhaps involuntary satire of anthropometry, Broca's spirit merely reiterates clichés and preconceptions that circulated in the press, turning Conselheiro's skull into the talk of the town.¹⁰⁰

When it finally was examined by scientists, however, Conselheiro's severed head would not confirm what they expected. The skull would not be sent to the National Museum in Rio de Janeiro or examined by the spirit of Broca. The task would fall to Nina Rodrigues, who had already analyzed the skull of Lucas da Feira and other phenomena of what was then called "collective madness" [*loucura coletiva*], such as the choreiform abasia epidemic in Bahia.¹⁰¹ In fact, Antônio Conselheiro had already been one of his objects of inquiry, albeit at a distance.

A few months before the end of the war, when Canudos dwellers were still resisting military onslaught, Nina Rodrigues had written an essay on "The Epidemic Madness of Canudos" [*A loucura epidêmica de Canudos*], published in November of that year in the *Revista*

¹⁰⁰ *Gazeta de Notícias*, Oct. 10, 1897.

¹⁰¹ Coreiform abasia was an illness that caused involuntary, dance-like movements of the body. Nina Rodrigues, "A abasia coreiforme epidêmica no Norte do Brasil," in *As coletividades anormais*, ed. Arthur Ramos (Brasília: Edições do Senado Federal, 2006). This article was originally published in 1890.

Brazileira.¹⁰² Aware of writing while the events he proposed to examine were still taking place, Nina Rodrigues opened this first essay by proposing a distinction between historical and medical-scientific knowledge. While historians had to wait for the end of the war to grasp “the faithful narrative of the successes of Canudos” [*narração fiel dos sucessos de Canudos*], there was no need for such delay in investigating the conditions that made that phenomenon possible, that is, “the social and ethnic stratification in which Antônio Maciel’s madness dug the deep foundations of his almost indestructible material and spiritual power” [*estratificação social e étnica em que a loucura de Antônio Maciel cavou os fundos alicerces do seu poder material e espiritual quase indestrutível*].¹⁰³ Objective at first, this epistemological distinction favored scientific knowledge over historical narrative, just as science was better qualified to examine the issue of “o negro” than sentimental rhetoric, as we have already seen. As a physician, Nina Rodrigues did not need to restrict himself to the mere course of events; he could examine the serious matter of “epidemic madness” based on the racial composition of the Brazilian population.

In his 1897 article, Nina Rodrigues determined that Antônio Maciel was “a simple madman” [*um simples louco*], but stated that his madness registered with “instrumental precision the reflection, if not of a time, at least of the environment where it emerged” [*precisão instrumental o reflexo senão de uma época pelo menos do meio em que elas se geraram*].¹⁰⁴ By

¹⁰² Raymundo Nina Rodrigues, “A loucura epidêmica de Canudos,” in *As coletividades anormais* (Brasília: Edições do Senado Federal, 2006), 25. Nina Rodrigues published this essay before Cunha wrote *Os sertões*.

¹⁰³ Nina Rodrigues, “A loucura epidêmica de Canudos,” 41-2.

¹⁰⁴ The specific diagnoses that Nina Rodrigues attributes to Conselheiro—chronic delirium, systematic progressive psychosis and primary paranoia—would require just an examination of Conselheiro’s story. Unable to access Conselheiro’s skull at the time, Nina Rodrigues performs an indirect anamnesis from secondary sources about Conselheiro’s life. As we will see, the analysis of the skull was supposed to confirm these ideas—which did not happen. Nina Rodrigues, “A loucura epidêmica de Canudos,” 42.

connecting man to environment, the physician made a movement similar to that of Euclides da Cunha in *Os sertões*, whose first and second parts, “The Land” and “The Man,” are an attempt to “outline, albeit palely, before the eyes of future historians, the most expressive current traits of Brazil’s backlands sub-races.”¹⁰⁵ The parallels between *Os sertões* and “The Epidemic Madness of Canudos” are no accidents. As Leopoldo Bernucci, Mariza Corrêa, and others have demonstrated, Cunha read Nina Rodrigues’s article and even paraphrased it.¹⁰⁶ Ultimately, Nina Rodrigues proposed that the *sertanejos*’ “ethnic note” [*nota étnica*] contained “all the conditions for an epidemic emergence of madness” [*todas as condições para uma constituição epidêmica de loucura*].¹⁰⁷ But what would this ethnic note be? This was a central issue for Nina Rodrigues not only in his analysis of Antônio Conselheiro’s madness, but in his intellectual project as a whole.

According to Nina Rodrigues, the *mestiço* population that made up the masses led by Antônio Conselheiro was predisposed to follow that “somber anchorite” because they were influenced by “savage or barbarian ascendants, indians or blacks” [*ascendentes selvagens ou bárbaros, índios ou negros*].¹⁰⁸ Within this population prone to deviations, Conselheiro would have caused “a collective delusional state (...) a true state of vesanic multitude” [*estado delirante coletivo ... um verdadeiro estado de multidão vesânico*].¹⁰⁹ In short, the *sertanejo* population, predisposed to social and mental deviations due to racial degeneration, would have found in Antônio Conselheiro and in the *sertão* the most favorable means for the development of collective madness.

¹⁰⁵ Cunha, *Os sertões*, 65.

¹⁰⁶ Leopoldo Bernucci, note n. 66 in Cunha, *Os sertões*, 200.

¹⁰⁷ Nina Rodrigues, “A loucura epidêmica de Canudos,” 49.

¹⁰⁸ Raimundo Nina Rodrigues, “A loucura das multidões,” in *As coletividades anormais* (Brasília: Edições do Senado Federal, 2006), 85.

¹⁰⁹ Nina Rodrigues, “A loucura das multidões,” 87.

On November 4, 1897, almost a month after the discovery of Conselheiro's corpse, Nina Rodrigues finally opened the box containing the skull of the "madman from Canudos," brought to Salvador by Major Dr. Miranda Curio. The brain cavity had been filled with lime.¹¹⁰ There he began the examination that would satiate scientific and popular curiosity about Antônio Conselheiro and would advance—so he hoped—the understanding of that religious phenomenon. But what did Nina Rodrigues find when he measured Antônio Maciel's skull? What anomalies prompted him to materially justify the diagnosis of "systematized degenerate delirium" [*delirios sistematizados dos degenerados*] which he had already attributed to Conselheiro?¹¹¹ To Nina Rodrigues's surprise, none. Conselheiro's skull did not exhibit any sign of his expected degeneration.

Nina Rodrigues published the results of the craniometric measurements and subsequent analysis in 1901 in the French journal *Annales medico-psychologiques* as one case study (among others) in the article "The Madness of the Madmen. New Contribution to the Study of Epidemic Madnesses in Brazil" [*La folie des foles. Nouvelle contribution à l'étude des folies épidémiques au Brésil*].¹¹² We can almost hear the note of disappointment in Nina Rodrigues's text when he states that "Antonio Conselheiro's skull did not present any anomaly that would reveal traces of degeneration: it is a *mestiço* skull in which anthropological characters of different races are

¹¹⁰ As the newspaper *A República* (Fortaleza) reported on November 6, 1897, "The day before yesterday, in the forensic medicine office, the box with Antônio Conselheiro's skull was opened, brought by the Major Dr. Miranda Curio, as witnessed by the office's director, Dr. Nina Rodrigues, the *conservador* pharmaceutical Francisco Hermelino Ribeiro, the Medical School director Dr. Pacifico Pereira, dr. Juliano Moreira and other employees. The skull was found covered in lime and calcium chloride, with no encephalic mass, which had been substituted for lime. Dr. Nina Rodrigues required the skull to be washed in order to perform the medical-legal examination."

¹¹¹ Nina Rodrigues, "A loucura das multidões," 60.

¹¹² Raymundo Nina Rodrigues, "La folie des foles. Nouvelle contribution à l'étude des folies épidémiques au Brésil," *Annales médico-psychologiques*, no. 13 & 14 (1901): 19-132; 189-199; 370-381; 3-18. In Portuguese, the text was only published in 1939, in the volume Arthur Ramos edited of Nina Rodrigues's work, *As colectividades anormais*.

associated” [*O crânio de Antônio Conselheiro não apresentava nenhuma anomalia que denunciasse traços de degenerescência: é um crânio de mestiço onde se associam caracteres antropológicos de raças diferentes*].¹¹³ To prove his “finding,” the physician then provides a table with the “most important” measurements of Conselheiro’s head, including of his skull (vertical and horizontal diameter, total brain diameter, etc.) and facial features (nose width and length, lower jaw diameter, etc.). Nina Rodrigues then concludes:

It is therefore a normal skull.

This conclusion, which agrees with the information we have collected about the personal history of this madman, confirms the diagnosis of chronic delirium of systemic evolution. Antônio Conselheiro was really a strong suspect of being degenerate, in his capacity as a mestiço; because of this, and in the impossibility of examining him directly, we have carefully sought to retrace his history.

É pois um crânio normal.

Esta conclusão, que está de acordo com as informações recolhidas sobre a história do alienado, confirma o diagnóstico de delírio crônico de evolução sistemática.

*Antônio Conselheiro era realmente muito suspeito de ser degenerado, na sua qualidade de mestiço; por causa disso, e na impossibilidade de examiná-lo diretamente, procuramos com cuidado refazer sua história.*¹¹⁴

When searching Antônio Conselheiro’s skull for evidence of the racial degeneration that would have made him prone to madness, Nina Rodrigues—yet again—does not find any. It is another

¹¹³ Nina Rodrigues, “A loucura das multidões,” 89.

¹¹⁴ Nina Rodrigues, “A loucura das multidões,” 90.

failure of the materialist approach to the human psyche; a symptom of the change that was beginning to take place in the fields of anthropology and psychology in Brazil, and which was already underway in Europe with the decline of Broca's craniometry and of Lombroso's phrenology and criminal anthropology.

Faced with such an impasse, however, Nina Rodrigues did not give up on his previous diagnosis, nor did he renounce the thesis that, as a *mestiço*, Conselheiro had hereditary characteristics that made him predisposed to insanity. In much the same way as he had done with Lucas da Feira, Nina Rodrigues left Antônio Maciel's deceptively "normal" skull behind and turned instead to Brazil's backlands as the explanation for the Canudos phenomenon.

In an inversion of Cunha's previous movement (from the exterior to the interior), Nina Rodrigues shifts his gaze from the interior (the skull) to the exterior (the environment). He proposes Conselheiro's childhood and the social environment where he had lived as a possible explanation for his and his followers' "madness." This moment marks an important shift in Nina Rodrigues's scientific thought and practice: the constitution of a gaze decidedly concerned with social factors and their impacts on the development of mental conditions or on the occurrence of crimes. As Mariza Corrêa argues, "the more psychological Nina Rodrigues's observations became, the more sociological his analyses appear; madness, for instance, progressively appears as an expression of social relations between men."¹¹⁵

According to Nina Rodrigues, there were two versions of Conselheiro's childhood. In the first, Conselheiro would have been an "indocile, rebellious [child] ... cruel and animated by the worst feelings" [*indócil, rebelde, ... e animado dos piores sentimentos*].¹¹⁶ But Nina Rodrigues did not accept this narrative, which would have been commissioned "in order to turn this

¹¹⁵ Mariza Corrêa, *As ilusões da liberdade*, 108.

¹¹⁶ Nina Rodrigues, "A loucura das multidões," 90.

madman into a kind of physical degenerate” [*com o fim de fazer deste louco um tipo de degenerado físico*]—a thesis that the skull itself had invalidated.¹¹⁷ The second version, with which Nina Rodrigues agreed, presents a calm and docile Antônio Maciel, “which is in line with what we know regarding the protection he gave, after the death of his father, to his sisters, who lived with him until they got married” [*o que está de acordo com o que sabemos relativamente à proteção dispensada, com a morte de seu pai, às suas irmãs, que viveram com ele até se casarem*].¹¹⁸ Suddenly, Conselheiro’s life story proves his normality.

The Canudos episode, therefore, could not be explained by the sole madness of a *meneur*, but by processes of contagion inherent to phenomena of collective madness. For Nina Rodrigues, it was unlikely that Conselheiro still exercised a leadership role towards the end of the war. In the terminal period of his psychosis, he would have become “the idol, the divinity; and the works of fanaticism and the fight it provoked were reserved especially for the mob, for the sectarians” [*o ídolo, a divindade; as obras do fanatismo e a luta provocada por ele eram reservadas especialmente à turba, aos sectários*].¹¹⁹ But what would explain the madness of Conselheiro’s followers? Not so much heredity (biological determinism), but the environment.

At first, we believed that only hereditary disposition was favorable to the transmission of collective madness. Later we were forced to greatly expand the limits we had originally set, including predisposition causes such as organic depletion, misery, diseases, intoxication, debilitating addictions, excesses of all sorts.

¹¹⁷ Nina Rodrigues, “A loucura das multidões,” 90.

¹¹⁸ Nina Rodrigues, “A loucura das multidões,” 90.

¹¹⁹ Nina Rodrigues, “A loucura das multidões,” 91.

*Acreditou-se a princípio que só a predisposição hereditária fosse favorável ao contágio da loucura coletiva. Mais tarde foi-se obrigado a ampliar, de muito, os limites previamente fixados, incluindo-se na predisposição as causas de esgotamento orgânico, a miséria, as doenças, as intoxicações, os vícios debilitantes, os excessos de toda sorte enfim.*¹²⁰

Nina Rodrigues acknowledges here the possibility that biological inheritance is not the only factor predisposing the individual to “collective madness.” Material circumstances—that is, factors outside the body—would also play a role. When bodily materiality fails, Nina Rodrigues is forced to resort to the environmental materiality of the *sertão* as an etiological explanation for the Canudos phenomenon.¹²¹

After moving from the exterior (the *sertão*) to the interior (cranial measurements) in search for explanations for the Canudos phenomenon, Nina Rodrigues thus returned to the exterior because the interior proved to be hermeneutically insufficient. Just like Cunha, Nina Rodrigues’s analysis of Antônio Conselheiro also literalizes a problem of appearance and reality that is central to his work as a whole.¹²² Although, in his eyes, Conselheiro was likely to be a degenerate, his skull was in fact normal. At the same time, even though the skull looked normal, Conselheiro was a madman. In a way, the illusion of normality presented by the skull recalls the

¹²⁰ Nina Rodrigues, “A loucura das multidões”, 99.

¹²¹ As Filipe Pinto Monteiro and Mariza Corrêa have argued, this theory of collective madness is borrowed from French sociologist Gabriel Tarde. For an in-depth discussion of Nina Rodrigues’s uses of Tarde’s theories, see Filipe Pinto Monteiro, “O ‘racialista vacilante’: Nina Rodrigues e seus estudos sobre antropologia cultural e psicologia das multidões (1880-1906),” *Topoi*, v. 21, no. 43 (jan./apr. 2020): 193-215.

¹²² In Cunha, Bernucci describes this tension as a “mechanism of combating appearance with reality or first impression with empirical data,” the result of Cunha’s baroque language, which plays with antitheses and illusions such as the *sertanejo* who seems weak but who is actually strong. Leopoldo Bernucci, “Prefácio,” 24.

“illusion of victory” that the fourth military expedition experienced in the face of the “unexpected silence of the enemy” on Favela Hill.¹²³ We can even say, perhaps, that Nina Rodrigues was faced with a deceptively normal skull just as the illusion of formal equality proposed by nineteenth-century liberalism masked what he perceived as an ontological difference among racial groups. Or, as Dain Borges puts it, Nina Rodrigues was faced with a deceptively normal skull “just as the Catholic festivals of black Bahians camouflaged fetishist beliefs.”¹²⁴

From Poking Skulls to Picking Brains

The play between the visibility, deception, and the invisible influence of Afro-Brazilian minds is one of the most constant elements in Nina Rodrigues’s oeuvre. Unable to confirm theories of a supposed biological inferiority of non-whites such as Lucas da Feira and Antônio Conselheiro, the individual body—particularly the skull—opened space to the social, collective body. And yet again, empirical evidence failed to produce the expected outcome, demanding changes and adaptations in the theories they were supposed to confirm. In his ethnographic and clinical studies, however, Nina Rodrigues’s goal was not necessarily to “confirm” the primitivism or inferior position of Afro-descendants on the ladder of human evolution; for him, this was a given, an indisputable fact. Rather, in works such as *O animismo fetichista dos negros baianos* (1896, 1900), *Paranoïa chez les nègres* (1903), and in the texts included in the posthumous *Os africanos no Brasil*, Nina Rodrigues aimed to better grasp the “mental state” of the Black population in Bahia, which necessarily entailed understanding their “religious

¹²³ Cunha, *Os sertões*, 540-541.

¹²⁴ Borges, “Puffy, Ugly, Slothful and Inert,” 243.

feelings” [*sentimentos religiosos*].¹²⁵ Such religious feelings were, as we are about to see, prone to pathologization. In *candomblé* houses and in psychiatric asylums, then, Nina Rodrigues set himself to understand the minds of the Afro-Brazilians through the lens of social evolutionism.

Conflating Blackness and religion, race ceases to be a solely biological element to become a chiefly subjective state—changeable, porous, mutable. In these texts, Nina Rodrigues partially neglects his craniometric efforts to propose instead an understanding of Blackness through subjective manifestations, such as religious trances and psychopathologies. He sees Afro-diasporic religious practices as evidence of a primitivity that allowed for the development of certain mental pathologies, which he then categorizes with the same classifications European psychiatrists used for white, usually female populations—namely hysteria and paranoia. This seemingly paradoxical move points to the ambiguous status of race in nineteenth-century Brazil. Nina Rodrigues’s equally ambiguous contribution will inform much of Brazilian social thought in the following decades, including the whole field of Afro-Brazilian studies. His observations further develop some of his previously stated ideas on autonomy, agency, and self-possession in relation to Blackness, since both in the religious trances and in some of the psychiatric conditions he observed the subjects did not have control over their actions or subjectivities.

This feature is clear in *O animismo fetichista dos negros baianos*. Published in installments in the *Revista brasileira* throughout 1895, the study was well received by pioneers of cultural anthropology such as Marcel Mauss.¹²⁶ It had the goal of “specifying the nature and

¹²⁵ Raymundo Nina Rodrigues, *O animismo fetichista dos negros bahianos* (Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Biblioteca Nacional, 2006), 328. Published in 1896 in several installments, this text first appeared in Portuguese in the periodical *Revista Brasileira*. In 1903, Nina Rodrigues compiled these essays, translated them into French, and published them as *L’animisme fétichiste des nègres de Bahia*. Here I examine mostly the 1896 version, in its fac-simile edition published in 2006. Occasionally I turn to the French version.

¹²⁶ See Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, “Review of *O animismo fetichista dos negros bahianos*,” *Revista de Antropologia* 50, no. 2 (2007): 881–86.

form of the religious feelings of black Bahians” [*precisar a natureza e a forma do sentimento religioso dos negros bahianos*]¹²⁷ who had been hiding their religious beliefs behind the “exteriority of Catholic cults” since the arrival of enslaved Africans in Brazil during the transatlantic slave trade.¹²⁸ In other words, Nina Rodrigues built yet another scenario of deception and masquerade: Catholicism was the mask for fetishist practices and feelings.

But already in the first few pages of *O animismo fetichista*, Nina Rodrigues emphasizes that Afro-diasporic religions have a much broader reach in Bahia. Saturated with *terreiros*, Salvador is a city where “whites, mulattoes, and individuals of all colors and shades” [*brancos, mulatos e indivíduos de todas as cores e matizes*] would consult Black sorcerers [*feiticeiros*] in order to cure illnesses, afflictions, and recover from personal tragedies.¹²⁹ Against what others might have thought at the time, people of all races and classes took part in the *candomblé* rituals. The pervasiveness of these practices was such that race itself became transmissible:

However, it should not be believed that these practices limit and circumscribe their influence on the most stupid and ignorant blacks of our population. Tylor states that the communicative prestige of fetishist beliefs is such that even the European settled in Africa experiences its action, and it is not difficult to discover hanging to his neck a bone, a claw, or a similar object, which he wears in secrecy. It is what is stated there when they say that the individual is able to—*become black*.

Não se vá acreditar no entanto, que estas practicas limitem e circunscrevam a sua influência aos negros mais boçaes e ignorantes da nossa população. Tylor afirma que é

¹²⁷ Nina Rodrigues, *O animismo fetichista dos negros bahianos*, 76.

¹²⁸ Nina Rodrigues, *O animismo fetichista dos negros bahianos*, 76.

¹²⁹ Nina Rodrigues, *O animismo fetichista dos negros bahianos*, 330.

*tal o prestígio comunicativo das crenças fetichistas, que mesmo o europeu estabelecido na África experimenta a sua ação, não sendo difícil descobrir-lhe no pescoço um osso, uma garra ou um objeto semelhante, que ahi traz às escondidas. É o que ali se expressa, dizendo que o indivíduo está apto a se — tornar negro.*¹³⁰

This passage points to an underexamined aspect of Nina Rodrigues's work and of turn-of-the-century Brazilian social thought in general. Just like religious behaviors, Nina Rodrigues suggests, blackness itself is transmissible. At first glance, this equation between blackness and "fetishist beliefs" seems merely metaphorical; by no means is Nina Rodrigues suggesting that light-skinned people can suddenly become dark-skinned. However, if adopting fetishist practices does not make one's skin turn darker, then it is the very meaning of blackness that shifts. Becoming black thus involves not skin color, but interiority. This is what Dain Borges suggests when discussing Nina Rodrigues and naturalist writers in Brazil: "When Brazilian naturalists spoke of 'race,' they meant such contagious psychic influences as well as the forces of heredity."¹³¹

To better understand the process—metaphorical or not—of becoming black, we must first turn to Nina Rodrigues's source: Victorian anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor (1832-1917), one of the first to articulate a conception of "culture" in its modern anthropological meaning.¹³² Nina Rodrigues cites Tylor's *Primitive Culture* (1871) multiple times in the *O animismo*

¹³⁰ Nina Rodrigues, *O animismo fetichista dos negros bahianos*, 330.

¹³¹ Dain Borges, "The Recognition of Afro-Brazilian Symbols and Ideas, 1890-1940," *Luso-Brazilian Review*, vol. 32, no. 2 (Winter 1995): 62.

¹³² George Stocking, *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 72.

fetichista, which informs the book's theoretical stance on social evolutionism.¹³³ Tylor's main purpose in *Primitive Culture* was to argue that man's inner life (spiritual, cultural, affective) was governed by the same natural laws of evolution as his material life, and therefore was a privileged subject of scientific inquiry.¹³⁴ Concerned with the idea of "evolution of mental phenomena," Tylor's main contribution to Nina Rodrigues's thought was precisely the idea that "savage" groups were located in an earlier stage of the development of the human mind. In that sense, the "savage" had their own morality, albeit an "inferior" one in relation to European standards. This is precisely the thought that Nina Rodrigues had developed in his examination of Lucas da Feira's skull, and which he again presents in his most famous work, *As raças humanas e a responsabilidade penal no Brasil*, comparing the minds of Afro-descendants to those of children.¹³⁵

It is in one of the chapters titled "Animism" that Tylor discusses the possibility for white subjects to "become black." The passage has not received much attention since its publication, which is all the more puzzling considering how it apparently goes against much of what Tylor himself preconized. As historian of anthropology George Stocking explains, Tylor's theory of mental evolution purported the potential progress of all humankind through three "alternative processes:" independent invention, inheritance, and transmission.¹³⁶ Transmission (or diffusion) would follow a one-way path from the civilized to the primitive; or, as Tylor himself put it, "Civilization is a plant much oftener propagated than developed."¹³⁷ Yet, when discussing

¹³³ Nina Rodrigues cites the French edition of *Primitive Culture*, translated from English by Mme. Pauline Brunet and published in Paris in 1876.

¹³⁴ Stocking, *Race, Culture, and Evolution*, 79.

¹³⁵ "The black man does not have a bad character, just an instable character like a child." Nina Rodrigues, *As raças humanas e a responsabilidade penal no Brasil*, 72.

¹³⁶ Stocking, *Race, Culture, and Evolution*, 79.

¹³⁷ Metaphors borrowed from other scientific fields (this time from botany) were a common feature in anthropological texts of the time. We will further explore this subject in Chapter 6.

fetishism in West Africa, Tylor shifted the orientation of his diffusionist paradigm, putting the white European man, initially the source of civilization, on the receiving end of the fetishist influence.

Thus the one-sided logic of the barbarian, making the most of all that fits and glossing over all that fails, has shaped a universal fetish-philosophy of the events of life. So strong is the pervading influence, that the European in Africa is apt to catch it from the negro, and himself, as the saying is, “become black.” Thus, even yet some traveler, watching a white companion asleep, may catch a glimpse of some claw or bone or such-like sorcerer’s trash secretly fastened round his neck.¹³⁸

Here Tylor articulates fetishism as a disease that one could “catch” and thereby “become black.” The white European becomes susceptible to the strong influence of African religious practices instead of a propagator of his own civilization. Such contagion depends on the exposure of the white man to fetishistic practices, and therefore it is spatialized. Tylor explains that the expression “to become black” is not his own creation, but a common “saying” in the Western coast of Africa. The sources he gives to this paragraph, however, do not seem to provide this specific information.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom*, vol. 2, 2nd ed. (New York: Henry Hold and Co, 1883), 159.

¹³⁹ The quote from Tylor is part of a very long paragraph on the pervasiveness of fetishist beliefs in West Africa. Among the sources Tylor gives for this paragraph, I could not find a direct reference to the possibility for a white European to “become black.” The closest reference to it is in Ludewig Romer’s *A Reliable Account of the Coast of Guinea* (1760), in which the author says he was “disgusted that some men of our nation have received trinkets from the fetish priest and have worn them on their bodies, underneath their clothing, as has been occasionally noticed by their room-mates.” Ludewig Ferdinand Romer, *A Reliable Account of the Coast of Guinea*, trans. Selena Axelrod Winsnes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 104. Cécile Fromont also mentions early modern sources on West Africa, Portugal, and Brazil, that cite the use of amulets like *bolsas de mandingas* by European Christians. These packets that mixed European design and African symbolism, says Fromont, reveal “the deep and mutually transformative connections that transoceanic commerce created between European and African material

Whether or not the expression was common in West Africa, the fact is that Nina Rodrigues transported this alleged scenario to Bahia. Like Tylor's European traveler, he wandered around Salvador catching glimpses of "hidden" animistic signs on the bodies and in the behaviors of white, upper-class individuals. "To use Tylor's expression, or rather the expression consecrated on the Coast of Africa, it can be affirmed that in Bahia all classes, even the so-called superior, are apt to *become black*" [*Para nos servir da expressão de Tylor ou melhor da expressão consagrada na Costa d'África, pode-se afirmar que na Bahia todas as classes, mesmo a dita superior, estão aptas a se tornarem negras*].¹⁴⁰ Except for a "small minority" of "superior spirits," says Nina Rodrigues, people of "all colors and hues" consulted the "negros feiticeiros" for their ailments and misfortunes.¹⁴¹ They either openly acknowledged their belief in the supernatural power of talismans and witchcraft, or publicly mocked it while secretly listening and consulting these *feiticeiros*. "It is because in Brazil miscegenation is not only physical and intellectual, but also affective or emotional, and therefore also religious" [*É que no Brasil o mestiçamento não é só físico e intelectual, é ainda afectivo ou dos sentimentos, religioso igualmente portanto*].¹⁴² Spelling out a meaning of race in contradistinction with what is generally understood as "scientific racism," Nina Rodrigues connected body and mind through a biological metaphor that referred to subjective processes, thus arguing against a biological, fixed meaning of race that had previously informed his own work.

As scholars have shown, late-nineteenth-century racial theories were more about uneven distribution of abilities and characteristic across racial groups than about fixed meanings.

and spiritual realms." Cécile Fromont, "Paper, Ink, Vodun, and the Inquisition: Tracing Power, Slavery, and Witchcraft in the Early Modern Portuguese Atlantic," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 88, n. 2 (Jun. 2020): 464.

¹⁴⁰ Nina Rodrigues, *O animismo fetichista dos negros bahianos*, 330. Emphasis in the original.

¹⁴¹ Nina Rodrigues, *O animismo fetichista dos negros bahianos*, 330.

¹⁴² Nina Rodrigues, *O animismo fetichista dos negros bahianos*, 330.

“Unevenly distributed plasticity, rather than biological determinism, characterizes nineteenth-century ideas of racial and sexual difference,” Kyla Schuller and Jules Gill-Peterson claim.¹⁴³ Although these authors refer here to the U.S.-American context, the same argument could be made about Brazil—and, as we are about to see, Cuba. The very conception of miscegenation as a key feature of Brazilian society overturns the rigidity of racial categories. Although there is no direct citation in this passage, Nina Rodrigues also seems to gesture at Sylvio Romero who in the 1880s had stated that “every Brazilian is mixed-race, if not in blood, at least in ideas” [*Todo brasileiro é mestiço, quando não no sangue, nas ideias*].¹⁴⁴ While for Romero this miscegenation would have a “happy ending” with the future whitening of the Brazilian population, for Nina Rodrigues the potential for white people to “become black” was a threat to Brazilian society. In other words, Nina Rodrigues displays here a specific understanding of the plasticity of different races that would inform public governance and—so he hoped—the future of the country. As he stated in the introduction to *L’animisme fétichiste*, his job as a physician was to dedicate himself to the “betterment or improvement of the people” [*l’amélioration ou du perfectionnement*] and therefore to serve his “dear country” [*chère patrie*].¹⁴⁵

Because plasticity is crucial within such a biopolitical aspiration, as Schuller and Gill-Peterson argue, it lies at the center of the idea of race in the Western world. Individual plasticity is usually ascribed to white(ned) bodies who have the potential to self-transform and to evolve. Racialized bodies, on the other hand, are “seen as rigid, inflexible, overly reactive, and

¹⁴³ Kyla Schuller and Jules Gill-Peterson, “Introduction,” 6.

¹⁴⁴ Sylvio Romero, *Historia da litteratura brasileira*, vol. 1 (Rio de Janeiro: H. Garnier), 4.

¹⁴⁵ Nina Rodrigues, “Introduction,” in *L’animisme fétichiste des nègres de Bahia* (Bahia: Reis & Comp, 1900), vii.

insufficiently absorptive.”¹⁴⁶ We can see this clearly in Nina Rodrigues’s work, particularly in his discussion over criminal responsibility and racialized populations in Brazil.

In *As raças humanas e a responsabilidade penal no Brasil*, Nina Rodrigues discusses at length the “organic incapacity” of racialized groups to become civilized. “Neither a domesticated and imprisoned savage aboriginal nor a Black African reduced to slavery will, by simply living with the white race, have changed their nature” [*Um índio selvagem aprisionado e domesticado, um negro africano reduzido à escravidão, não terão, pelo simples fato da convivência com a raça branca, mudado de natureza*].¹⁴⁷ The very idea that Afro-Brazilians were forever stuck at an earlier stage of evolution is an explicit example of this uneven distribution of plasticity. However, the plasticity Nina Rodrigues ascribes to white bodies and minds seems to cross a line when they live in very close quarters with people of color and run the risk of becoming black. If, as we have seen, plasticity entails “the capacity to be formed by outside pressure, yet to maintain internal coherence,” then a mind that “becomes black” loses its coherence, at least if we follow Nina Rodrigues’s espoused racial theories.¹⁴⁸ To become black would mean to be part of a different anthropological group and, thus, to lose previous subjective coherence, that is: a dissolution of their racialized selves.

With this warning comes the seed of a possible, alternative thought. It would seem, after all, that the “superior” white mind is not the strongest because it is an easy prey for Afro-Brazilian affective practices crystallized in a *potential for blackness*. If “to become black” means to adopt *candomblé* practices and animistic beliefs, then spirituality and race are conflated. Nina Rodrigues may have regarded whiteness as too plastic in a space where blackness prevailed—be

¹⁴⁶ Kyra Schuller and Jules Gill-Peterson, “Introduction: Race, the State, and the Malleable Body,” *Social Text* 38, no. 2 (June 2020): 12.

¹⁴⁷ Nina Rodrigues, “As raças humanas e a responsabilidade penal no Brasil,” 65.

¹⁴⁸ Kyra Schuller and Jules Gill-Peterson, “Introduction,” 1.

it Tylor's West Africa or his own Bahia. The characteristic that made white Europeans superior was precisely what put them and their society in alleged danger. The result was that the whole Portuguese colonization process was a failure: not only did Africans and Afro-descendants not fully convert to Catholicism, but the conversion was also inverted, setting up a potential counter-evangelizing effort.

Here in Bahia ... far from the Negro converting to Catholicism, it is Catholicism that receives the influence of fetishism, adapting itself to the rudimentary animism of the Negro who, in order to make it assimilable, materializes, gives body and objective representation to all monotheistic mysteries and abstractions.

*Aqui na Bahia ... longe do negro se converter ao catholicismo, é o catholicismo que recebe a influencia do fetichismo, se adapta ao animismo rudimentar do negro que, para tornal-o assimilavel, materializa e dá corpo e representação objectiva a todos os mysterios e abstracções monotheistas.*¹⁴⁹

This is the main difference between Nina Rodrigues and his European sources. Unlike Tylor, Nina Rodrigues was speaking from a space where the majority of the population was Black and where he could observe the “phenomenon” he discussed. If, for Tylor, the spatial distance from the “primitivism” of West Africa allowed for his argument about the temporal distance in his socio-evolutionist thought, the same was not possible for Nina Rodrigues. Nina Rodrigues inhabited a space where individuals living in different temporalities cohabited and mixed not only physically—and this was of utmost importance—but also and mainly psychically. Going

¹⁴⁹ Nina Rodrigues, *O animismo fetichista dos negros bahianos*, 107.

back to our previous discussion on Fabian and the manipulation of time in anthropology, we must ask: What kind of thought emerges when temporal distance is lacking its spatial component?¹⁵⁰

Concerned with the collusion of different temporalities within the same space, Nina Rodrigues failed to acknowledge that there was a specific kind of tension, or collusion, within his own work: that of European theories of mental development, psychiatry, and criminality with his observations of Bahian society. At the same time as he saw the potential for a contamination of Afro-Brazilian religious practices and beliefs among whites, he also argued for the racialization of the Yoruba experience. As Peter Fry and Yvonne Maggie point out, it is remarkable that Nina Rodrigues, “in spite of having demonstrated that all Bahians, wealthy and poor, Black, mulattoes, and whites, adhere to the Yoruba cosmology, continues to interpret these beliefs as an alleged mentality particular to African blacks.”¹⁵¹ This insistence on candomblé as a racialized form of spirituality informs Nina Rodrigues’s understanding of the *estado de santo*, the trance state during which a *santo*, or an orisha, takes over an initiate’s body. If only Black people experienced “true” trance states, what was specific, then, about their minds that allowed for such experience?

Race and Madness

This is where psychiatry comes in. The transition seems appropriate because madness has traditionally been defined as a lack of rationality.¹⁵² And that lack of rationality, or of rational

¹⁵⁰ See the yoll.

¹⁵¹ Yvonne Maggie and Peter Fry, “Apresentação,” in Raymundo Nina Rodrigues, *O animismo fetichista dos negros bahianos* (Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Biblioteca Nacional, 2006), 20.

¹⁵² See, for instance, Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1965); and Louis Arnorsson Sass, *Madness and Modernism: Insanity in the Light of Modern Art, Literature, and Thought* (New York: BasicBooks, 1992).

agency, is precisely the element that Nina Rodrigues used to link Afro-Brazilian spiritual experiences to French psychiatry. So it makes sense, at least if we follow Nina Rodrigues's thought, that he would move from *candomblé* worship houses to mental asylums. If we understand madness simply as the absence of reason or rationality, then the illness of nostalgia or *banzo* that we examined in Part I is precisely a form of madness caused by slavery. Historians have recently shown the high proportion of enslaved or free people of color in mental hospitals and asylums in nineteenth- and early-twentieth century Brazil.¹⁵³ Likewise, the enslaved or formerly enslaved madwoman is a common figure in literary works all over Latin America.¹⁵⁴

Already in *Animismo fetichista*, Nina Rodrigues reads the *estados de santo* as a form of hysteria, or, more specifically, as states of “hysterical sonambulism” [*sonambulismo hysterico*] that were provoked by the music played in the rituals and the drums in particular.¹⁵⁵ Around the same time as the French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot interpreted medieval phenomena of demoniac possession as hysteria, Nina Rodrigues translated Afro-Brazilian spirit possessions into that same language. When describing the affective power of the drums played at *candomblé* rituals, for instance, he says that “the tam-tam of the Salpêtrière would not have been more effective for Charcot’s hysterics” [*o tam-tam da Salpêtrière não teria mais efficacia para os histéricos de Charcot*].¹⁵⁶ The cause was the “extremely neuropathic or hysterical background of blacks” [*o fundo extremamente nevropathico ou hysterico do negro*].¹⁵⁷ In other words, there was

¹⁵³ See, for instance, Daniele Corrêa Ribeiro, “Entre a escravidão e a loucura: escravos e libertos no Hospício de Pedro II (1852-1888),” in *Escravidão, doenças e práticas de cura no Brasil*, org. Tânia Salgado Pimenta and Flávio Gomes (Rio de Janeiro: Outras Letras, 2016), 150-163; and Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, “O homem da ficha antropométrica e do uniforme pandemônio: Lima Barreto e a internação de 1914,” *Sociologia & antropologia*, v. 1, no. 1 (2011): 119-150.

¹⁵⁴ See, for instance, Aluísio Azevedo, *O Mulato* (1881); Maria Firmina dos Reis, *Úrsula* (1859), Cirilo Villaverde, *Cecilia Valdés* (1882), among many others.

¹⁵⁵ Nina Rodrigues, *O animismo fetichista dos negros bahianos*, 335.

¹⁵⁶ Nina Rodrigues, *O animismo fetichista dos negros bahianos*, 85.

¹⁵⁷ Nina Rodrigues, *O animismo fetichista dos negros bahianos*, 168.

something in the “profoundly superstitious character of normal blacks” [*caráter profundamente supersticioso do negro normal*] that made their subjectivity more porous “to this neuropathic mysticism” [*para este mysticism nevropathico*].¹⁵⁸ The racialized experience of *candomblé*, therefore, allowed for its also racialized pathologization.

Still, labeling Afro-Brazilian religious experiences with French psychiatric terms did more than merely make the intelligible legible for Brazilian medicine. If they shared a diagnostic or psychiatric label, Afro-Brazilians and white women (who made up the majority of hysterical patients) had one more thing in common. According to Paul Christopher Johnson, this thing was automatism, that is, the inability (or perhaps voluntary renunciation) of rational agency.¹⁵⁹ When experiencing an *estado de santo*, the bodies of Black Bahians were not moved by their own “selves” but by the “saints” or orishas. Likewise, the hysterical women in Charcot’s hospital were not moving by their own will, but as automatons. The psychiatric labels that connected them, therefore, also ended up creating what Nina Rodrigues deemed false equivalences between racial groups.

Deeply invested in Afro-Brazilian minds and their influence on the national narrative, Nina Rodrigues then started visiting mental asylums, interviewing patients, and taking their photographs in order to better understand and distinguish “the different kinds of monstrosities of the spirit” [*as diferentes espécies de monstruosidades do espírito*] that afflicted people of African descent.¹⁶⁰ Having proved that Brazilian *mestiços* such as Conselheiro and his followers suffered from “progressive systematic madness,” and that Black Bahians could also display hysterical

¹⁵⁸ Nina Rodrigues, *O animismo fetichista dos negros bahianos*, 168.

¹⁵⁹ Paul Christopher Johnson, *Automatic Religion: Nearhuman Agents of Brazil and France* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2021).

¹⁶⁰ Nina Rodrigues, “A paranoia nos negros,” trans. Martha Gambini, *Revista Latinoamericana de Psicopatologia Fundamental*, vol. VII, no. 4 (2004): 220.

symptoms and behaviors, Nina Rodrigues then moved to refute previous claims made by Brazilian psychiatrists that people of African descent were less prone or unable to develop paranoia.¹⁶¹ In his 1903 essay “Paranoia among blacks” [*Paranoia chez les nègres*], he commented at length on clinical cases observed by himself or his colleagues in order to argue that “the manifestation of paranoia in blacks is fundamentally the same as the paranoia in whites” [*a manifestação da paranóia nos negros é fundamentalmente a mesma que a paranóia nos brancos*].¹⁶² Would this conclusion—along with the previous ones on hysteria—not go against Nina Rodrigues’s own thesis that Afro-descendants had an “inferior mental capacity” in relation to whites? Here’s where the interplay of deception, appearance, and reality reappears. Citing again the work of French anthropologist Armand Corre, Nina Rodrigues states that Afro-Brazilians were very capable of manifesting “the illusion of talent” with the “inferior” faculties of memory and mimicry at their disposal.

To Nina Rodrigues, Black people could suffer from paranoia even more than whites because of their “little solidity of the psychic synthesis, which in the final analysis constitutes the personality, the vigor, the predominance of the highest social instincts” [*pouca solidez da síntese psíquica, que em última análise constitui a personalidade, o vigor, a predominância dos mais elevados instintos sociais*].¹⁶³ Race also informed the difference between the degree of systematization of paranoia and the “exuberance, richness, and brilliance” [*a exuberância, a riqueza e o brilho*] of delirious manifestations.¹⁶⁴ To put it simply, while well-systematized

¹⁶¹ For Nina Rodrigues, paranoia was “the systematization of all mental activity as pride and suspicion” [*a sistematização de toda sua atividade mental no sentido do orgulho e da desconfiança*]. Nina Rodrigues, “A paranoia nos negros,” 222.

¹⁶² Nina Rodrigues, “A paranoia nos negros,” 231.

¹⁶³ Nina Rodrigues, “A paranoia nos negros,” 235.

¹⁶⁴ Nina Rodrigues, “A paranoia nos negros,” 235. For instance, one of the cases of systematized delusions that Nina Rodrigues recounts is that of Lino Marqueton, a “negro de raça pura” who was an inmate at the São João de Deus asylum in Salvador. Lino had developed “ideas of grandeur associated

delusions—that is, complex beliefs that are organized and logically related—were rarer among Black subjects because they depended on said “solidity of intelligence,” the exuberance of delusions would depend on “fundamental feelings” and “instincts,” both of which people of color possessed, according to Nina Rodrigues:

Now, nothing authorizes us to believe that instincts, fundamental feelings, are weaker in inferior races than in superior ones; ... And since paranoia consists essentially in the excitation of the instinct of conservation, it is understandable that this vigorous instinct, little dominated by superior social feelings in the inferior races, when reverberating in an intelligence still poorly organized and poorly developed, must produce disorder, confusion, stupor, which are so often associated with paranoia among blacks...

*Ora, nada nos autoriza a acreditar que os instintos, os sentimentos fundamentais, sejam mais fracos nas raças inferiores do que nas raças superiores; ... E como a paranóia consiste essencialmente na excitação do instinto de conservação, compreende-se que esse instinto vigoroso, pouco dominado por sentimentos sociais superiores nas raças inferiores, ao repercutir numa inteligência ainda mal organizada e mal desenvolvida, deva produzir a desordem, a confusão, o estupor, que se associam tão freqüentemente nos negros com a paranóia, em vez de provocar os delírios rigorosos e sistematizados das formas complexas da paranóia.*¹⁶⁵

with ideas of persecution.” He believed he possessed an extraordinary amount of gold coins given to him by an old African sorcerer, and that part of this fortune was in Heaven, the other part inside his own body. He felt like he had gold coins up to his neck, but he felt chased by the Virgin Mary and by his own mother, who had turned into a serpent and was in actuality the devil. Nina Rodrigues, “A paranoia nos negros,” 140.

¹⁶⁵ Nina Rodrigues, “A paranoia nos negros,” 235.

In other words, there was a semblance of psychic equality between all racial groups insofar as they develop the same mental illnesses—hysteria, systematic madness, paranoia. If one looked closer, however, the “essential” difference among these racial groups would become visible not only in terms of the complexity of the delusion or illness, but also in terms of its content. “Only in some cases is the delusion not anchored in preoccupations and ideas about witchcraft” [*apenas em alguns casos o delírio não repousa em preocupações e idéias de feitiçaria*], Nina Rodrigues stated about the cases of paranoia among Afro-descendants.¹⁶⁶ In other words, under the “weak veneer of civilization” [*fraco verniz de civilização*] that would cover the “inferior races” of Brazil, one would find the “savage background” [*fundo selvagem*] in which Afro-Brazilians and *mestiços* truly lived.¹⁶⁷ Their animistic beliefs were not “an atavistic phenomenon of our population” [*fenômeno atávico de nossa população*], that is, a step downwards on the evolutionary ladder.¹⁶⁸ Instead, animism was a “normal state; it represents the phase of civilization to which this population in fact belongs and which the surfaces of a more advanced civilization that it apparently adopted, was not able to change” [*um estado normal; elas representam a fase de civilização que pertence, de fato, a essa população, e que as superfícies de uma civilização mais avançada, que ela em aparência adotou, não conseguiram modificar*].¹⁶⁹

Nina Rodrigues’s depiction of Black psyches as having “little solidity” brings us back to the question of plasticity. If intelligence and reason are the features that give solidity to the psyche and therefore are the base for higher mental faculties, racialized psyches were too unsubstantial and therefore more prone to be affected by—rather than affect—exterior and

¹⁶⁶ Nina Rodrigues, “A paranoia nos negros,” 236.

¹⁶⁷ Nina Rodrigues, “A paranoia nos negros,” 236.

¹⁶⁸ Nina Rodrigues, “A paranoia nos negros,” 237.

¹⁶⁹ Nina Rodrigues, “A paranoia nos negros,” 237.

interior factors. Madness and Blackness would thus conflate, since Blackness was understood as “the prerequisite for creating madness,” as Therí Pickens puts it.¹⁷⁰ However, as with Nina Rodrigues’s concern with “becoming black,” this lack of solidity was not always an exclusive trait of Black psyches. Indeed, as we will see in the next chapter, Fernando Ortiz would take Nina Rodrigues’s metaphor of malleability and (lack of) solidity a step further, positing the concept of liquid psyches as a central feature of Cuban society. In his early works on the field of criminology, Ortiz—like Nina Rodrigues—would be faced with the pervasiveness of Afro-descendants’ religious beliefs and practices in Havana, and his response would be to turn all psyches into liquid form.

¹⁷⁰ Therí A. Pickens, *Black Madness: Mad Blackness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 4.

Chapter 6

Fernando Ortiz in the (Psychic) Flow

Contagion, illusion, appearance, reality: if these terms mark Nina Rodrigues's gaze over Brazilian society around the turn of the century, they become even more present in the writings of Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz Fernández (1881-1969) in the early twentieth century. Unlike Nina Rodrigues, Ortiz was not a physician but had been trained as a lawyer. Like Nina Rodrigues, however, he was one of Cuba's first scholars to study Afro-Cuban religious practices, and just like him Ortiz was profoundly invested in the ways in which Afro-descendants had informed Cuban "mentality," particularly through spiritual beliefs and practices. Starting his career as a young public intellectual with writings on criminality and prisons in Havana, Ortiz was heavily informed by the Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso and saw Afro-Cuban religious practices as a pathogen that was infecting the island. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, however, Ortiz shifted his perspective and became one of the most vocal intellectuals advocating for the importance and value of Afro-Cuban cultural practices.

While many scholars have studied what Stephan Palmié describes as Ortiz's "intellectual trajectory from biological determinism to a humanistic social science and beyond," I propose a different narrative arc by looking not only at Ortiz himself but also at his precursors and successors: namely, the members of the Sociedad Antropológica de la Isla de Cuba (1877-1919) and the Cuban criminologist Israel Castellanos (1891-1977), Ortiz's main successor in the field of criminology physical anthropology.¹⁷¹ By centering my analysis on these three fundamental actors in the formation of the Cuban social sciences, I will show how the white bourgeoisie's

¹⁷¹ Stephan Palmié, "Fernando Ortiz and the Cooking of History," *Ibero-amerikanisches Archiv*, vol. 24, no. 3/4 (1998): 354.

investment in depicting, imagining, and fabricating the minds and feelings of Africans and Afro-descendants revolved around one particular figure, the *brujo* or Black sorcerer, who condensed the fears, expectations, and ignorance of Cuban intellectual elites in their concern with an increasingly non-white Cuban social body.

We begin in the late-nineteenth century, an incredibly turbulent period in Cuba. From 1868 onward, Cubans fought and endured numerous anti-colonial wars in a period that encompassed the abolition of slavery (1886) and an intervention by the United States (1898-1902), all of which culminated in the foundation of the Republic of Cuba in 1902.¹⁷² Throughout the period, the participation of Africans and Afro-descendants in Cuban civil society and in the military remained a contested issue. As David Sartorius has argued, while twentieth-century accounts of Cuban independence associate anti-imperialist sentiments with plights for racial equality (or “race-transcendence”), many Cubans of African descent chose to pledge their loyalty to the colonial government, and publicly so.¹⁷³ Amidst these wars and battles—both military and textual—partisans on either side of the conflict mobilized racial-scientific knowledge in order to either resist Spanish colonial rule or to support it.

In his book *Blancos y Negros* (1889), for instance, Afro-Cuban writer Rodolfo Fernández de Trava Blanco de Lagardère questioned the theory that Afro-descendants’ skulls and brains were different—and inferior—from those of white people. Considered the “most vocal African-descended supporter of the Spanish colonial rule,”¹⁷⁴ Lagardère wrote his book in response to

¹⁷² After the Ten Years’ War (1868-1878) came the Guerra Chiquita (1879-1880) and finally the Cuban War of Independence (1895-1898). Cuba declared independence from Spain in 1898, but only became an independent republic in 1902, when the United States left.

¹⁷³ David Sartorius, *Ever Faithful: Race, Loyalty, and the Ends of Empire in Spanish Cuba* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).

¹⁷⁴ David Sartorius, “Lagardère, Rodolfo de,” in *Dictionary of Caribbean and Afro-Latin American Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), online.

white autonomist Benjamin de Céspedes's 1888 *La prostitución en la ciudad de la Habana*, a treaty on the inferiority and immorality of the *raza negra* and its “malignant influence” [*influencias maléficas*] in Cuban society—namely, prostitution.¹⁷⁵ In Céspedes's view, which many of his contemporaries shared, the “black race” was bound to disappear because of its inferior character. He describes this evolutionist claim as if it were a military war: “The smallest organic or moral resistances must be annihilated, without mercy for the selection of the most vigorous constitutions in the struggle for existence” [*Las menores resistencias orgánicas o morales deberán ser aniquiladas, sin piedad por la selección de constituciones más vigorosas en la lucha por la existencia*].¹⁷⁶ Furthermore, Lagardère conflated Céspedes's autonomist ideology with his astoundingly racist claims that either predicted the disappearance of the *raza negra* or insisted on its inferiority. Criticizing not only Céspedes but also other members of the Sociedad Antropológica de la Isla de Cuba such as José R. Montalvo and Antonio Zambrana, Lagardère claimed that there were no inferior or superior racial groups; rather, there were “belated races” [*razas atrasadas*] that were so because of a lack of education, as was the case with the Afro-descendant population in Cuba.¹⁷⁷ Ultimately, Lagardère anchored his understanding of racial equality in Christian ideology in order to argue that Afro-descendants could be worthy Spanish citizens.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ Benjamin de Céspedes, *La prostitución en la ciudad de La Habana* (Havana: Establecimiento Tipográfico O'Reilly, 1888), 90.

¹⁷⁶ Céspedes, *La prostitución en la ciudad de la Habana*, 143. According to Armando García González, Céspedes's racist claims go against his previous argument for racial mixing as a path towards natural selection. Armando García González, “Racismo, ciencia y autonomía en Cuba,” in *De la ciencia ilustrada a la ciencia romántica: Actas de la II jornada sobre “España y las expediciones científicas en América y Filipinas”*, ed. Alejandro R. Díez Torre, Tomás Mallo and Daniel Pacheco Fernández (Madrid: Doce Calles, 1995): 173.

¹⁷⁷ Rodolfo de Lagardère, *Blancos y negros* (Havana: Imprenta Universal, 1889), 14.

¹⁷⁸ For a more detailed account of Lagardère's views and how they related to the political landscape at the time, see Sartorius, *Ever Faithful*, 138-141. See also García González, “Racismo, ciencia y autonomía en Cuba,” 169-180.

On the other side of the political spectrum, Afro-Cuban independentist writer Rafael Serra y Montalvo criticized craniologists who “maintained that the superiority or inferiority of the race depends exclusively on the capacity of the skull and the cephalic index” [*han sostenido que la superioridad ó inferioridad de la raza depende exclusivamente de la capacidad del cráneo y del índice cefálico*], and condemned anthropologists who vouched for the “superiority of the Aryans” [*superioridad de los arios*].¹⁷⁹ As we can see from these brief examples, anthropological theories about race never ceased to inform debates about the present and future of the *siempre fiel isla*.

A prominent figure in Latin American and the Caribbean archives since the early moments of colonization by Spain and Portugal, the *brujo* inspired fears and excitement in the minds of colonial and religious authorities, writers, physicians, and, later on, the press. As Pablo Gómez has argued, early modern Black ritual practitioners and healers “led an epistemological revolution in the Caribbean intellectual spaces that existed both in parallel and in conversation with European-sponsored projects that explored the natural world.”¹⁸⁰ Already in seventeenth-century Cartagena de Indias, for instance, the unlicensed Black healer Paula de Eguiluz visited bishop Cristóbal Pérez de Lazarraga almost daily between 1647 and 1648 in order to treat his many health afflictions.¹⁸¹ The case of Eguiluz—abundantly documented by her three Inquisition trials—and other prominent Black healers demonstrate, according to Gómez, “that black ritual practitioners provided health care services to denizens of all social extractions and origins in

¹⁷⁹ Serra was agreeing with French author Jean Finot (whom he calls Juan Tinot) and his newly published book *Le préjugé des races* (1905). Rafael Serra y Montalvo, “El prejuicio de las razas,” in *Para blancos y negros: ensayos políticos, sociales y económicos* (Havana: Imprenta El Score, 1907). For a more detailed analysis of Serra’s argument, see Alejandra Bronfman, *Measures of Equality: Social Science, Citizenship, and Race in Cuba, 1902-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 69-75.

¹⁸⁰ Pablo Gómez, *The Experiential Caribbean: Creating Knowledge and Healing in the Early Modern Atlantic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 4.

¹⁸¹ For Paula de Eguiluz’s story, See Gómez, *The Experiential Caribbean*, Chapter 7.

towns and cities around the Caribbean basin during the seventeenth century.”¹⁸² Indeed, long before the Sociedad Antropológica de la Isla de Cuba, Ortiz, and Castellanos came into the picture, *brujos* already constituted a powerful—albeit contested—presence in the Caribbean landscape.

Of course, much had changed from the seventeenth to the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Chief among these changes was the fixation of racial categories as well as their relationship to slavery—the conflation of *negro* and *esclavo*, of *brujo* and blackness. After the abolition of slavery in Cuba and throughout the wars of independence against Spain, the *brujo*, along with the *ñáñigo*, became the main focal point of a white gaze concerned with the future of the Cuban Republic. The *brujo* was not only seen as the atavistic, primitive mind that needed to be overcome or done away with, but also considered to be the pervasive element of criminality in the underbelly of Cuban society.

Already before the abolition of slavery in 1886, free Afro-descendants regarded as vagrants and *delincuentes* were objects of numerous police investigations and raids. Worried eyes were moving from potential rebellious slaves to dangerous free and emancipated blacks—either for the crimes they allegedly committed or for the lack of “civility” they displayed in their customs. This fear was already palpable in the *cuadros de costumbre* that circulated in the Cuban press in the mid-nineteenth century, as Jorge Camacho, Daylet Domínguez, and others have shown. Among the most evident ones, José Victoriano Betancourt’s “Los curros del Manglar o el triple velorio,” a short story published in 1848 in the magazine *El artista*, recounts the time when the author observed a funeral of a *negro curro*, depicting all those in attendance as abject,

¹⁸² Gómez, *The Experiential Caribbean*, 166-7.

animalistic subjects.¹⁸³ Betancourt was perhaps one of the first authors in Cuba to describe free blacks as delinquents and criminals, which has led Daylet Domínguez to identify “a correlation between the visible signs of the body and the ‘criminal’ character of the subject.”¹⁸⁴

On the eve of abolition, the relationship between Afro-Cuban cultural practices and criminality became even more crystalized with *Los criminales en Cuba y D. José Trujillo*, an edited volume published in 1882 which contains one of the “first ethnographic document on ñañigo practices.”¹⁸⁵ Titled “Los ñañigos: su historia, sus prácticas, su lenguaje,”¹⁸⁶ the report was penned by Havana’s police chief D. José Trujillo and published earlier that year in the periodical *Correspondencia de Cuba*. In the volume, the text is framed by a series of newspaper reports of the police’s actions against the associations of ñañigos, as well as by descriptions of crimes committed by its members. One of its main anxieties in the report is the dissemination of *ñañiguismo* among whites, and Trujillo specifically describes and names the “five white ñañigos associations” [cinco corporaciones de ñañigos blancos].¹⁸⁷ *Ñañiguismo* was criminalized as an “illicit association” since the 1879 penal code, while *brujería* escaped criminalization until the 1901 Constitution.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸³ Jorge Camacho offers an interesting analysis of this short story in “Los monstruos de la perifería: los personajes de José Victoriano Betancourt,” in *Miedo negro, poder blanco en la Cuba colonial* (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2015), 59-81.

¹⁸⁴ Daylet Domínguez, *Ficciones etnográficas: literatura, ciencias sociales y proyectos nacionales en el Caribe hispano del siglo XIX* (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2021), 350.

¹⁸⁵ Domínguez, 354. This massive yet odd volume, which was edited by Carlos Urrutía y Blanco as sort of homage to José Trujillo y Monagas, contains among other things his memoirs, some of his essays, and a list of all the “criminals” he apprehended throughout his career, with photographs and descriptions of their crimes.

¹⁸⁶ José Trujillo y Monagas, *Los criminales de Cuba y d. José Trujillo; narración de los servicios prestados en el cuerpo de policía de la Habana* (Barcelona: Estab. tip. de F. Giró, 1882), 363-374.

¹⁸⁷ Trujillo y Monagas, *Los criminales de Cuba*, 370.

¹⁸⁸ Alejandra Bronfman, “‘En Plena Libertad y Democracia’: Negros Brujos and the Social Question, 1904-1919,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 82, no. 3 (2002): 551.

Around the same time as D. José Trujillo led police forces against members ñáñigo associations and Betancourt depicted them in criminalizing language, the members of the Sociedad Antropológica de la Isla de Cuba were discussing these issues through the lens of contemporary scientific theories. Afro-Cuban religious practices were an important topic in their meetings, as were physical markers of criminality and racial inferiority—besides heated discussions on how to identify them. In the sections that follow, I argue that although nineteenth-century anthropology was mainly focused on the body and its precariously racialized markers, the minds and spirits of Afro-Cubans were already a major object of concern in these debates. Looking at Fernando Ortiz’s early works, we will see how references to bodily processes as rhetorical and descriptive devices served to invent a specific kind of Afro-Cuban subjectivity focused on the figure of the *brujo*. Ortiz’s *Los negros brujos* (1906), in particular, illustrates how biological metaphors allowed for a conception of racialized subjectivities as liquid substances, a framework within which subjectivities and mindsets were seen as easily transferred—or “transfused,” to use Ortiz’s own term. Finally, we will briefly turn to Israel Castellanos’s attempts to solidify—or harden, so to speak—Ortiz’s claims, the very success of which shows how the biologization of race was far from being a thing of the past in the mid-twentieth century.

Body Snatchers

Founded in 1877 as a branch of the Sociedad Antropológica de Madrid, the Sociedad Antropológica de la Isla de Cuba centered its activities around two main purposes: the study of the man of the past (pre-historic man) and the examination of human racial groups in the present.¹⁸⁹ Its creation conferred institutional legitimacy to the many racial debates that had been

¹⁸⁹ Jorge Pavez Ojeda, “El retrato de los ‘negros brujos’. Los archivos visuales de la antropología afrocubana (1900-1920),” *Aisthesis*, no. 46 (2009): 85.

taking place in the Real Academia de Ciencias Médicas, Físicas y Naturales de La Habana (1861-1962), which since 1875 awarded an annual prize to the best work in anthropology. As Armando García González and Consuelo Naranjo Orovio have put it, the Sociedad Antropológica “served to channel and enhance the work and research that was being carried out in Cuba on the ethnic makeup of the country.”¹⁹⁰ In his inaugural speech on October 7, the society’s first president Felipe Poey called members to focus on the specificities of the Cuban racial landscape, summarizing his claim in a catchy motto: “In short, may our Anthropology be Cuban rather than general” [*En una palabra, sea cubana nuestra Antropología, antes que general*].¹⁹¹ With the aim of producing anthropological knowledge with a *costumbrista* twist, the Sociedad Antropológica de la Isla de Cuba would try to make the most of its geographical location in the Caribbean.¹⁹²

Such orientation was also clear in Luis Montané’s speech at the society’s inaugural session. Returning to Cuba in 1874 after finishing his anthropological training in France with none other than Paul Broca himself, Montané (1848-1936) was the only member who had professional training in anthropology. In his speech, he also emphasized the island’s “admirable geographical position” [*admirable posición geográfica*] for the study of anthropology as a “center for a multitude of races or varieties of races” [*centro de reunion de multitud de razas o*

¹⁹⁰ Armando García González and Consuelo Naranjo Orovio, “Antropología, raza y poblacion en Cuba en el último cuarto del siglo XIX,” *Anuario de estudios americanos*, vol. lv, no. 1 (1998): 272.

¹⁹¹ Felipe Poey, “Discurso del Sr. D. Felipe Poey,” *Boletín de la Sociedad Antropológica de la Isla de Cuba*, vol. I (1879): 9.

¹⁹² I use *costumbrismo* here to mobilize the term’s epistemological value. As Daylet Domínguez argues in *Ficciones etnográficas*, the literary tradition of the *cuadro de costumbres* and the genre of *costumbrismo* became a central referent for the social sciences (particularly anthropology) in nineteenth-century Cuba and Puerto Rico due to its ability to create social types. It is no surprise, therefore, that many of the founding members of the Sociedad Antropológica de la Isla de Cuba were also literary authors, such as Francisco Calcagno, Esteban Borrero, Antonio Zambrana, and Antonio Bachiller y Morales. Daylet Domínguez, *Ficciones etnográficas*. Jill Lane coined the term “scientific costumbrismo” to refer to texts that borrowed *costumbrista* aesthetic conventions to make scientific claims. Jill Lane, *Blackface Cuba, 1840-1895* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

variedades de razas].¹⁹³ According to Montané, the significance of Cuba for the development of anthropological knowledge went beyond the coexistence of different races. It was the intimacy of such coexistence that made Cuba a particularly promising anthropological laboratory: “Two races with which you live intimately must first of all be the object of your persevering investigations: the black African race and its Creole descendants ... and the so-called Mongolic race, better known still than the first” [*Dos razas con las cuales vivís íntimamente deberán en primer lugar ser objeto de vuestras perseverantes investigaciones: la raza negra africana y sus descendientes criollos ... y la llamada raza mongólica, mejor conocida todavía que la primera*].¹⁹⁴ In calling for the society’s members to investigate people with whom they lived intimately, Montané thus placed the Cuban anthropologist in a privileged space for the study of the “varieties that characterize the human race” [*variedades que caracterizan al género humano*]¹⁹⁵—that is, its anatomical, psychological, pathological, intellectual, and linguistic aspects.¹⁹⁵

As the good student of Broca’s that he was, Montané insisted on a specific kind of anatomical aspect. Craniology, “one of the most important branches of Science” [*una de las ramas más importantes de la Ciencia*], needed Cuban skulls to advance.¹⁹⁶ “Our future [skull] collections, which we hope will increase in a short time, will be for us a source of original research and fruitful in practical results,” Montané added [*Nuestras futuras colecciones (de*

¹⁹³ Luis Montané, “La antropología en Cuba,” *Boletín de la Sociedad Antropológica de la Isla de Cuba*, vol. I (1879): 13.

¹⁹⁴ Montané, “La antropología en Cuba,” 13. The intimacy between the enslaved and their slavers was already an important topic in Cuban literature throughout the nineteenth century. The novels penned by the writers in Domingo del Monte’s literary circle (see Chapter 3) synthesized such intimacy in the tragic figure of the *mulata*. See, for instance, Anselmo Suárez y Romero’s *Francisco* (1839); Antonio Zambrana’s *El negro Francisco* (1875), Cirilo Villaverde’s *Cecilia Valdés* (1839/1882), and Félix Tanco y Bosmeniel, *Petrona y Rosalía* (1838).

¹⁹⁵ Montané, “La antropología en Cuba,” 13.

¹⁹⁶ Montané, “La antropología en Cuba,” 11.

cráneos), que esperamos aumentarán en poco tiempo, serán para nosotros una fuente de investigaciones originales y fecundas en resultados prácticos].¹⁹⁷ Montané's hope for a growing collection of Cuban skulls, however, would be somewhat frustrated. In spite of repeated requests for the examination of Black and Asian skulls in both the Real Academia and the Sociedad Antropológica, most published works on the subject would focus on pre-historic, indigenous skulls.¹⁹⁸

One of the few exceptions was the work by French physician Henry Dumont (spelled Enrique Dumont in the Society's annals), who won the Real Academia's prize in 1876 for best work in anthropology. "African Men of Color who Live in the Island of Cuba: Compared Anthropology and Pathology" [*Hombres de color africanos que viven en la Isla de Cuba: antropología y patología comparadas*] listed all the African ethnicities that had come to Cuba through the slave trade—*congos, carabalís, minas, macuas, mandingas, gangás, lucumís*, etc.—describing their psychological, anatomical, and pathological traits. Along with these descriptions, Dumont provided anthropometric and craniometric measurements for certain individuals ("Examen de sujetos") and even included photographs of skulls, people, and body parts afflicted by certain illnesses. Though "Hombres de color africanos que viven en la Isla de Cuba" was discussed at length in the Academia's annals of 1877, Dumont's work was only published in 1915 in the *Revista bimestre cubana* in a translation by Israel Castellanos.¹⁹⁹ As a French physician, Dumont was somewhat of a celebrity among Cuban anthropologists; even in his absence, he was often mentioned and cited during meetings at the Real Academia and Sociedad

¹⁹⁷ Montané, "La antropología en Cuba," 14.

¹⁹⁸ See, for instance, Luis Montané, "Consideraciones sobre un cráneo deformado," *Boletín de la Sociedad Antropológica de la Isla de Cuba* I (1879): 92-96.

¹⁹⁹ Dumont's work had been discovered by Fernando Ortiz. *Anales de la Academia de Ciencias Médicas, Físicas y Naturales de la Habana*, 1876.

Antropológica. When the Academia announced the award, the commission responsible for the decision (presided over by Montané) commended Dumont for exploring “a still virgin terrain” [*un terreno todavía virgen*], adding that Dumont would always have the merit of being “the first to inaugurate among us the field of anthropology [*el primero a inaugurar entre nosotros los trabajos antropológicos*].²⁰⁰

Despite Dumont’s pioneering effort in providing craniological measurements of Africans and Afro-Cubans, other members of the Sociedad Antropológica did not really follow his cue. As Israel Castellanos would insist almost forty years later, there were very few craniological studies published about the Cuban population, and few skulls were readily available for measurements, particularly those of criminals and *brujos*. “The skulls of dead sorcerers have not been collected by any researcher, and, therefore, do not appear in any museum, neither anatomical nor anthropological” [*Las calvarias de los brujos supliciados no han sido recogidas por investigador alguno, y, por lo tanto, no aparecen en ningún Museo, ni anatómico, ni antropológico*], Castellanos lamented.²⁰¹ Apart from Dumont’s study, which Castellanos claimed was the only craniological work on Afro-Cubans, “the skulls of sorcerers or *ñañigos* have not been studied” [*no se han estudiado cráneos de brujos, ni de ñañigos*].²⁰²

It wasn’t for lack of trying. Members of the Sociedad discussed in numerous meetings the need for more skulls to advance anthropological knowledge. In one of the society’s first meetings, for instance, on August 20, 1877, the members read a letter they had sent to the bishopric of Havana asking for the Church’s collaboration in the not-so-dignified task of

²⁰⁰ *Anales de la Real Academia de Ciencias Médicas, Físicas y Naturales de la Habana*, vol. XIII (1876), 34.

²⁰¹ Israel Castellanos, *La brujería y el ñañiguismo en Cuba desde su punto de vista médico-legal* (Havana: Imprenta de Lloredo y Ca., 1916), 20-21.

²⁰² Castellanos, *La brujería y el ñañiguismo*, 21.

graverobbing. The goal was to start “collections of human bones and particularly all kinds of skulls” [*colecciones de huesos humanos y muy particularmente toda clase de cráneos*] that would be fundamental for the society’s work. The letter asked for the archbishop’s permission to retrieve all kinds of bones, “both from the cemeteries of this capital and from all the others that exist in the cities, towns, and villages of the jurisdiction of this diocese” [*tanto de las procedencia de los cementerios de esta capital como de todos los demás que existen en las ciudades, villas y pueblos de jurisdicción de esta diocesis*].²⁰³ In particular, the members of the Sociedad wanted permission to retrieve bones from “private cemeteries that exist on some plantations” [*cementerios particulares que existen en algunos ingenios*], since they probably held bones that could not be found anywhere else—clearly, those of enslaved people. The archbishop agreed. And so the Sociedad Antropológica received permission to collect bones from urban cemeteries and plantations, with the caveat that they could only retrieve bones previously moved to the ossuaries—when those existed.

The Church’s permission, however, did not seem to have much impact. In the meeting that took place on February 3, 1884, the society’s members discussed again ways of getting hold of more skulls. Naturalist Aristides Mestre reminded his peers that they should publish Broca’s *Craniological and Craniometric Instructions of the Société d'anthropologie de Paris* [*Instructions craniologiques et craniométriques de la Société d'anthropologie de Paris, 1875*], which contained directions on where and how to exhume skulls and other bones for craniometric analyses.²⁰⁴ José Manuel Mestre seconded that suggestion, adding that such instructions should be published in the *Crónica Médico Quirúrgica* in order to reach physicians who worked in the

²⁰³ Manuel Rivero de la Calle (comp.), *Actas. Sociedad Antropológica de la Isla de Cuba* (La Habana: Comisión Nacional Cubana de la UNESCO, 1966), 7.

²⁰⁴ Manuel Rivero de la Calle (comp.), *Actas. Sociedad Antropológica de la Isla de Cuba* (La Habana: Comisión Nacional Cubana de la UNESCO, 1966), 8-9.

countryside and on plantations. This led to Nicolás J. Gutiérrez's recounting of two frustrated attempts at starting a skull collection. First, Gutiérrez had tried to exchange a collection of skulls he had seen in Philadelphia for a collection of snails he himself owned. The snails were sent to Philadelphia, but "we still haven't received the skulls" [*aún no se han recibido los cráneos*].²⁰⁵ Second, Gutiérrez had contacted farm owners and rural physicians asking them to exhume buried skulls. The answer he received from one of the rural physicians shows how getting the Church's permission never went beyond bureaucracy.

One of the latter [rural physicians] replied that he had not been able to collect more than three skulls, since the cries that the Negroes launched prevented him from obtaining a higher number of skulls; and this leads Dr. Santos Fernandez to state that rural doctors have a real excuse because slaves rebel [against it], driven by their beliefs and concerns.

*uno de estos últimos [médicos del campo] contestó que no habia podido recojer más que tres cráneos pues los gritos que los negros lanzaban le impidieron el que fuera mayor numero los conseguidos; y esto hace manifestar al Dr. Santos Fernandez que tienen verdadera excusa los médicos de campo porque las dotaciones se sublevan impulsadas por sus creencias y preocupaciones.*²⁰⁶

While the Church had not authorized the collection of bones directly from cemeteries or graves, this rule was clearly not observed when the skulls in question belonged to enslaved subjects.

²⁰⁵ Manuel Rivero de la Calle (comp.), *Actas. Sociedad Antropológica de la Isla de Cuba* (La Habana: Comisión Nacional Cubana de la UNESCO, 1966), 175. The supposed equivalence between *caracoles* (snails or their shells) and human skulls also sheds light not only on the scarcity of skulls in Cuba but on the abundance of skulls by Afro-descendants in the United States.

²⁰⁶ Manuel Rivero de la Calle (comp.), *Actas. Sociedad Antropológica de la Isla de Cuba* (La Habana: Comisión Nacional Cubana de la UNESCO, 1966), 175.

Ultimately, to be a good anthropologist one also had to be a graverobber, just as doctor José Francisco da Silva Lima was when he exhumed Lucas da Evangelista's skull from the grave in Bahia and sent it to Nina Rodrigues. Unlike Silva Lima, though, Santos Fernandez's attempt failed because the community of enslaved peoples whose family and friends were buried in that particular graveyard did not allow the robbery. Their resistance was not interpreted by the physicians and anthropologists as a legitimate act of defense of the dead. Gutiérrez described it as an irrational reaction based on their "beliefs," therefore discrediting them—both beliefs and rebellion. Of course he did not need to explain what *he* would do if he saw somebody snatching buried bodies that belonged to his ancestors and relatives. Incidentally, Fernando Ortiz would later claim that the profanation of graves and the use of body parts in Afro-Cuban religious rituals was one of the utmost marks of atavism in the practices of *brujería*. However, Afro-diasporic religions had no monopoly on graverobbing and the fetishization of corpses and body parts. Such practices, as discussions about the exhumation of skulls in the Sociedad Antropológica make clear, were also a feature of civilized, Western science. In other words, in "conjuring science out of violated bodies," as Stephan Palmié puts it, Cuban anthropologists themselves tried to engage in a "form of witchcraft."²⁰⁷ They just weren't as successful.

There was one particular Cuban skull, however, that anthropologists did measure, photograph, and analyze. It was the skull that belonged to General Antonio Maceo. Examined by Montané himself (along with Joaquín L. Dueñas and José R. Montalvo), Maceo's skull was supposed to confirm the genius of the war hero. Amidst debates over Afro-Cubans' potential citizenship and their contribution of to the wars of independence, Montalvo and Montané could not simply call Maceo inferior. Still, as we have seen, they embraced the racial theories that

²⁰⁷ Stephan Palmié, *Wizards and Scientists: Explorations in Afro-Cuban Modernity and Tradition* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 248, 259.

positioned the *raza negra* at an earlier stage of human evolution. How did they reconcile these contradictory positions? Here is where Maceo's racial identity would play a strategic role.

As a *mestizo*, Maceo had the ambiguous potential of being either a degenerate or a civilized subject in the eyes of late-nineteenth century anthropology. And yet, somehow, Montalvo, Montané, and Torre already knew the answer, pre-determined as it was by history—and beauty. Before measuring Maceo's skull, the authors described it in the following terms:

Yes, this skull is beautiful for its lines, in general; whether viewed from above (norma verticalis) or viewed from the side, the eye always perceives the harmonic curve that, leaving the origin of the nose, will be lost in the lower part of the occipital region.

*Sí, este cráneo es bello por sus líneas, en general; ya se le mire desde arriba (norma verticalis) ya se le contemple de perfil, el ojo percibe en todas ocasiones la curva harmónica que saliendo del origen de la nariz va a perderse en la parte inferior de la región occipital.*²⁰⁸

Maceo's skull was beautiful from all angles. The pamphlet included two photographs, as if the authors wanted to share their sense of marvel with the reader. Evidently, Montalvo and his coauthors were paying homage to Maceo, a war hero, whose bodily remains “deserved something more than an arid anatomical description or a mere identity certificate” [*merecían algo más de una árida descripción anatómica, o de un mero certificado de identidad*].²⁰⁹ It may be true that, in 1879, Montané had emphasized the anthropologist's need to remain “most of all

²⁰⁸ Montalvo, Torre, and Montané, “El cráneo de Antonio Maceo (estudio antropológico),” *Revista de medicina y cirugía*, no. 20 (October 25, 1900): 4.

²⁰⁹ Montalvo, Torre, and Montané, “El cráneo de Antonio Maceo,” 3.

immune to sentimentality” [*más que nada extraño a todo sentimentalismo*], for “science has not been developed to satisfy our tastes or flatter our pride” [*la ciencia no se ha formado para contentar nuestros gustos ó halagar nuestro orgullo*].²¹⁰ But eventually, Maceo’s skull seemed to interfere with such claims of scientific objectivity, and the anthropologists’ reaction was at first aesthetic.²¹¹

The authors continue their aesthetic appreciation of Maceo’s skull while describing it with a blend of scientific terms (“bóveda cerebral,” “parte supra nasal”) and aesthetic vocabulary (“harmoniza”). Soon enough, however, they expose the standard behind these assessments: “this head could be confused with that of the best endowed European because of these proportions” [*esta cabeza pudiera confundirse con la del europeo mejor dotado en orden a esas proporciones*].²¹² The skull’s beauty thus stemmed from its Europeanness. In the end, such aesthetic judgement fit within Montalvo, Montané, and Torre’s imagined hierarchy of human races.

Yet the Europeanness of Maceo’s skull was a deception that concealed something less beautiful in the eyes of the authors: his African ancestry. “In the lower, infra-nasal part of the jaw, although slightly prognathous, one can find a characteristic feature of the black race, as it also exists in the curvature of the upper alveolar arch, in the shape of an upsilon [*En la parte*

²¹⁰ Montané, “La antropología en Cuba,” 16.

²¹¹ Adding to the deferential tone, these comments on Maceo’s skull come right after a quotation by French anthropologist Mathias Duval about statesmen Léon Gambetta’s brain: “If I were not afraid of voicing an opinion that was too unscientific in its form, I would gladly say that this brain seems beautiful to me” [*Si no temiese emitir así una posición poco científica en su forma, diría de buena gana, que este cerebro me parece muy bello*]. Théophile Chudzinski and Mathias Duval, “Description morphologique du cerveau de Gambetta,” *Bulletins de la Société d’anthropologie de Paris*, III^o Série, Tome 9 (1886): 152. Quoted in Spanish in Montalvo, Torre, and Montané, “El cráneo de Antonio Maceo,” 2. As Duval’s comment suggests, this sort of aesthetic judgement of a skull or brain was not common in craniometric analyses and in physical anthropology in general, which for the most part aimed to provide an “objective” examination distanced from subjective or emotional attachments.

²¹² Montalvo, Torre, and Montané, “El cráneo de Antonio Maceo,” 4.

inferior, infra-nasal del maxilar, aunque ligeramente prognata, pudiera encontrarse un rasgo característico de la raza negra, como existe también en la curvatura de la arcada alveolar superior, en forma de upsilon].²¹³ While the top of the skull was characteristically European—and beautiful—the lower part was markedly Black. The authors explain the presence of these two distinct racial markers by stating what all readers had probably understood by then. Maceo, after all, “was mixed-race” [*era un mestizo*]. And while mixing “the white and the black” [*del blanco y del negro*] could be advantageous when the former prevailed (as had apparently been the case with Maceo), it could very well create an inferior being when both influences were balanced, or even worse when the “black race has an advantage” [*la negra lleva en ella la ventaja*].²¹⁴

Within this racial ambiguity, the location of the racial markers in Maceo’s skull was strategic. While the lower part of the skull displayed what they saw as markers of blackness, the upper part was undoubtedly white. It was in the upper part that one could collect crucial measurements used to determine the cephalic index and cranial capacity, and eventually to calculate the brain’s weight. At the time, the cephalic index and cranial capacity were the ultimate indicators of intellectual ability (“intelligence”) and therefore justified assessments of racial inferiority or superiority. Let us recall, for example, that when Nina Rodrigues analyzed Lucas da Feira’s and Antônio Conselheiro’s skulls, he made sure to collect and examine precisely these measurements, which were higher than expected for purported “degenerates” and “blacks.”

As it turned out, not only did Maceo have a high cephalic index and cranial capacity, but he also had a higher frontal curve and a lower posterior curve. According to the authors, the

²¹³ Montalvo, Torre, and Montané, “El cráneo de Antonio Maceo,” 4.

²¹⁴ Montalvo, Torre, and Montané, “El cráneo de Antonio Maceo,” 4.

“frontal region is the noblest; the other is the animal, savage, material part” [*La región anterior es pues la más noble; la otra, es la parte animal, salvaje y material*].²¹⁵ In other words, Maceo had a “white” brain. He was “*closer to the white race, equal[ed] it, and even surpass[ed] it in the general conformation of the head*” [*se aproxima más á la raza blanca, la iguala, y aún la supera por la conformación general de la cabeza*].²¹⁶ Such whiteness endowed Maceo with a higher degree of intellectual plasticity, materialized in the skull itself. The authors noted that sutures in the frontal part of Maceo’s skull were still open, which meant that the frontal part of his brain—the noblest one, as we just saw—was still growing. Maceo’s (imagined) brain thus explained his ability to evolve as a subject and develop “superior” intellectual faculties.

But as the authors went on to scrutinize the skeleton from head to toe in a downward motion, Maceo somehow regained his blackness. In addition to the jaw, “many anthropological characters reintegrate Maceo into the black type—in particular, the proportions of the big bones of the skeleton” [*muchos caracteres antropológicos reintegran a Maceo en el tipo negro,—en particular, las proporciones de los huesos largos del esqueleto*].²¹⁷ With a beautiful, white mind and a strong, Black body, Maceo embodied the positive potential of Cuba’s racially mixed population in that he displayed the best characteristics of each racial group. Historian Ada Ferrer has argued that the analysis of Maceo’s skull “suggested in muted but bizarre form the anxieties about civilization and culture occasioned by Maceo’s unquestionable prominence and power.”²¹⁸ Along similar lines, Alejandra Bronfman has claimed that *El cráneo de Antonio Maceo* “was a product of the intersection of the exigencies of war, an increasingly influential discourse on

²¹⁵ Montalvo, Torre, and Montané, “El cráneo de Antonio Maceo,” 8.

²¹⁶ Montalvo, Torre, and Montané, “El cráneo de Antonio Maceo,” 15. Emphasis in the original.

²¹⁷ Montalvo, Torre, and Montané, “El cráneo de Antonio Maceo,” 15.

²¹⁸ Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868-1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 559.

equality, and the powerful sway of scientific positivism.”²¹⁹ It was definitely all that, but also more.

The examination performed by Montalvo, Torre, and Montané also provides, I suggest, a glimpse of the relationship between appearance, reality, illusion, and fear that white scientists projected onto Afro-Cuban bodies and minds. Craniometry mimicked physiognomy in a narrative that reproduced an all-to-familiar game of appearance and reality within Cuba’s racial landscape. Although Maceo’s skull proved his already established greatness, the exceptional character of the publication “El cráneo de Antonio Maceo” within Cuban anthropology mirrors Maceo’s own exceptionality in the eyes of the anthropologists who examined him. The pamphlet was, after all, one of the only craniological studies of an Afro-Cuban performed by the members of the Sociedad Antropológica, even though they were eager to collect—rob even—and examine as many skulls as they could get their hands on. Maceo’s “European” skull in a Black body gave hope to pessimistic racialists, including Montalvo and Montané, who could rest assured that Cuba possessed a potential for self-governance and civilization since even its Afro-descendant leaders were biologically whitened. This was a crucial lesson at a time when the island was under U.S.-American occupation.

Let us not forget, however, that the authors saw miscegenation as a double-edged sword. While the “mixing of white and black” [*cruzamiento del blanco y del negro*] could create an advantageous group when whiteness prevailed (such as in Maceo), it could also and even more easily create “an inferior group” when there was a balance between whiteness and blackness, or when the latter prevailed over the former. Surreptitiously, then, Maceo’s skull also metonymized white fears, for it concealed, or rendered invisible, his Black body after his death. It rendered it

²¹⁹ Alejandra Bronfman, *Measures of Equality: Social Science, Citizenship, and Race in Cuba, 1902-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 2.

invisible because, as the title of the pamphlet tells us, what mattered the most was Maceo's skull, which was evidence for the magnificence of his brain.

Psychic Friction

The interplay between appearance and reality, or between body and mind, was ubiquitous in turn-of-the-century Cuba. In the Sociedad Antropológica, Montané had announced in 1879 the “progressive disappearance of the black race” [*desaparición progresiva de la raza negra*], mainly because of prostitution among women of color, which would be the “very frequent cause of sterility” [*causa muy frecuente de esterilidad*].²²⁰ At the same time, the pervasiveness of Afro-Cuban religious practices in Havana was an object of concern. In 1879, Enrique José Varona, for instance, used Tylor's “law of survivals” to explain the existence within a given society of older “practices and customs which appeared at first sight very strange” [*usos y costumbres á primera vista mas extraños*].²²¹ While the law of survivals was commonly used to explain the existence of Western “superstitions” such as the custom of hanging a horseshoe on the door to bring good luck, it became a “dangerous” possibility when it entailed “the friction of the black race with the uneducated people of the white race” [*el roce de la raza negra con las personas incultas de la*

²²⁰ Manuel Rivero de la Calle (comp.), *Actas. Sociedad Antropológica de la Isla de Cuba* (La Habana: Comisión Nacional Cubana de la UNESCO, 1966), 81-2.

²²¹ According to Tylor, survivals were “processes, customs, opinions, and so forth, which have been carried on by force of habit into a new state of society different from that in which they had their original home, and they thus remain as proofs and examples of an older condition of culture out of which a newer has been evolved.” Edward Burnett Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom*, Vol. 1, 2nd ed. (New York: Henry Holt and Co, 1883), 16. George Stocking argues that, against cultural Darwinism's traditional position of the survival of the fittest, Tylor's methodology depended on the “survival of the unfit.” George Stocking, *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 96.

raza blanca]; such friction, according to Varona, would cause an exchange of superstitions in all aspects of life, “especially the religious” one.²²²

The *roce* between Afro-Cubans and whites, discussed by Varona and Montané at that meeting, would favor Afro-Cubans because they were the ones spreading their beliefs as if they were illnesses. The choice of terminology matters here, as *roce* refers to touching, brushing, or friction, though Varona uses it to refer to a psychic form of contact that caused one’s subjectivity to “rub off” on the other. In that same session, Varona mentioned the ñañigos, a “mysterious association that lives among us without anyone truly knowing its nature and its true tendency [*asociación misteriosa que vive entre nosotros sin que nadie conozca verdaderamente su índole y su tendencia positiva*]. Varona recounted having observed a ñañigo initiation ritual accompanied with songs “belonging to the Catholic cult as well as others of a different nature” [*pertenecientes al culto católico con otros de índole distinta*²²³]. Yet, Varona insisted, groups of ñañigos were not formed only by Black people. Rather, during the wars of independence, “many whites had been part of the so-called *matiábulos*, who believed themselves free from death” [*muchos blancos formaron parte de los llamados matiábulos que se creían libres de la muerte*].²²⁴ Montané could not agree more. Instead of being condemned to disappear with the “*raza negra*,” “these customs have spread to the [other] races that populate this Island” [*esas costumbres se han extendido á las [otras] razas que pueblan esta Isla*].²²⁵ His conclusion, then, was that the *roce* among Black and white psyches clearly favored one over the other: “There is

²²² Manuel Rivero de la Calle (comp.), *Actas. Sociedad Antropológica de la Isla de Cuba* (La Habana: Comisión Nacional Cubana de la UNESCO, 1966), 90-91.

²²³ Manuel Rivero de la Calle (comp.), *Actas. Sociedad Antropológica de la Isla de Cuba* (La Habana: Comisión Nacional Cubana de la UNESCO, 1966), 91-2

²²⁴ Manuel Rivero de la Calle (comp.), *Actas. Sociedad Antropológica de la Isla de Cuba* (La Habana: Comisión Nacional Cubana de la UNESCO, 1966), 92.

²²⁵ Manuel Rivero de la Calle (comp.), *Actas. Sociedad Antropológica de la Isla de Cuba* (La Habana: Comisión Nacional Cubana de la UNESCO, 1966), 92.

no doubt that in general the customs of the inferior race have infiltrated little by little and as if unconsciously in the life of the superior race” [*No hay duda ninguna de que por lo general las costumbres de la raza inferior han ido infiltrándose poco a poco y como inconscientemente en la vida de la raza superior*].²²⁶

Members of the Sociedad Antropológica constantly voiced their concern with the degree of influence of Afro-Cuban spiritual beliefs and practices among whites. While there were discussions about the physical consequences of racial mixing and of an intimate coexistence between Blacks and whites, Cuban anthropologists were mainly worried about what they called the “psychic influence.” In a meeting in 1883, for instance, Antonio de León read part of his work titled “What Kind of Influence Does the Presence of Inferior Races Exert on the Countries Inhabited by the Caucasian Race” [*Que especie de influencia ejerce la presencia de las razas inferiores en los países habitados por la raza caucasica*]. Excited to hear more, Varona voiced his interest:

The psychic characteristics of the races must be the main object of our investigations, since the study that we have been developing will lead them to the following problem. When two races that differ in culture live together, which of the two will make its influence felt the most?

los caracteres psíquicos de las razas deben ser objeto principal de nuestras investigaciones, pues el estudio que venimos haciendo los llevará al siguiente problema.

²²⁶ In what may very well be the germ of the idea of the *real maravilloso*, Aristides Mestre intervenes in this discussion to say that he considers “el fetichismo la forma más natural del sentimiento de lo maravilloso.” Manuel Rivero de la Calle (comp.), *Actas. Sociedad Antropológica de la Isla de Cuba* (La Habana: Comisión Nacional Cubana de la UNESCO, 1966), 93.

*¿Cuando dos razas que difieren en cultura, viven juntas, cual de las dos hará sentir mas su influencia?*²²⁷

It seemed like a rhetorical question because all the attending members observed on a daily basis what they saw as the pervasiveness of Afro-Cuban spiritual practices among non-Blacks.²²⁸ Independentist writer Manuel Sanguily, for instance, used this claim to argue against the anthropological assumption of the inferiority of the *raza negra*, stating that “ferocious *ñañiguismo* is not practiced in Cuba exclusively by Blacks” [*el ñañiguismo feroz no es practicado en Cuba exclusivamente por negros*].²²⁹ By 1900, *ñañiguismo* and *brujería* still symbolized uncivilized, primitive, and potentially criminal practices in the eyes of many Cuban authorities and citizens. As such, they constituted an obstacle to Cuba’s main goal as a nation: “proving to the rest of the world (and themselves) Cuban capacity for self-understanding and self-rule,” as Alejandra Bronfman summarizes it.²³⁰ According to Bronfman, it was after 1901 that *brujería* also started being criminalized under charges of *asociación ilícita* and threat to the public health, in an effort to “hygienize” the island. On the other hand, the Constitution granted freedom of religion and association, which left *brujería* and *ñañiguismo* hanging between criminalization and civil rights.

²²⁷ Manuel Rivero de la Calle (comp.), *Actas. Sociedad Antropológica de la Isla de Cuba* (La Habana: Comisión Nacional Cubana de la UNESCO, 1966), 146.

²²⁸ For a more thorough account of the racial debates that took place within the Sociedad Antropológica, see Armando García González y Consuelo Naranjo Orovio, “Antropología, raza y población en Cuba en el último cuarto del siglo XIX,” *Anuario de estudios americanos*, vol. 55, no. 1 (1998): 267-289

²²⁹ Manuel Sanguily, “Negros y blancos,” *Hojas literarias*, vol. III (Jan. 31, 1894): 64. About Sanguily’s contradictory position about race in Cuba, see Armando García González, “Degeneración y africanización de la población cubana: 1878-1895,” *XIII Coloquio de Historia Canario-Americana*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1988): 435-451.

²³⁰ Bronfman ““En plena libertad y democracia,”” 552.

Psychic Transmission

Amidst this ambiguous legal status that allowed for both the persecution of Afro-Cuban religions and their defense, the *brujo* became its most visible symbol. Even more so in 1904, when the four-year-old white girl Zoila Díaz disappeared and was then found murdered and mutilated. The episode was thoroughly reported on by the Cuban press, particularly by one journalist: Eduardo Varela Zequeira, editor of the newspaper *El Mundo*. The two men charged with the crime—the African Domingo Bocourt, and the Cuban-born Victor Molina—were members of the cabildo Congos Reales. Bocourt (Bocú) was known as a *brujo*, and the narrative the police and press gave for the crime was that he had ordered Zoila's murder in order to cure a formerly enslaved woman, Juana Tabares, of a *daño* that had led nine of her children to die. According to the story, Bocourt needed the blood of a white girl because the *daño* that afflicted Tabares was caused by her former masters when she was still enslaved.

Bocourt and Molina were sentenced to death and publicly hanged in 1906, after which their brains were supposedly sent to none other than Luis Montané, then professor of criminal anthropology at the University of Havana and director of the Museo Antropológico Montané, named in his honor.²³¹ There is no record, however, of any manuscript or published study of the brains. Castellanos would later lament this absence, speculating that it was the amount of “university work” [*labor universitaria*] that had “prevented the crystallization of the study that, without a doubt, is the most intimate wish of Dr. Montané [*impedido la cristalización del estudio que, sin duda alguna, es el más íntimo deseo del Dr. Montané*].²³² As Aline Helg puts it, the case

²³¹ Alejandra Bronfman, *Measures of Equality*, 38. Stephan Palmié, *Wizards and Scientists*, 211-12. For a thorough account of the episodes of the case, see also Aline Helg, *Our Rightful Share: The Afro-Cuban Struggle for Equality, 1886-1912* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); and Ernesto Chávez Álvarez, *El crimen de la Niña Cecilia* (Havana: Editorial Ciencias Sociales, 1991).

²³² Israel Castellanos, *La brujería y el ñañiguismo en Cuba*, 22.

of the *niña* Zoila “became the touchstone in brujo-related matters.”²³³ The Cuban press instilled fear that *brujos* were everywhere, and that everyone was in danger. *Brujería*, newspapers claimed, was a “moral disease” that corrupted “a portion of our population which, perhaps, because of the wicked laws of atavism, sinks into the depths of depravity and closes its eyes to the light [of civilization].”²³⁴

On the day that Bocourt and Molina’s execution, *El Mundo* published an article by an author who opposed the death sentence. It was a young Fernando Ortiz who had followed the story from Spain and Italy, where he was studying and working as a consular officer for the Cuban republic. Judging Bocourt’s death as “meaningless,” Ortiz called on Cubans to “consider the criminal *brujería* that is corrupting our society with objective observation and cold serenity,” stating that “repressive measures will not do enough to eliminate such a complex phenomenon.”²³⁵ It was not the first time that Ortiz reflected on the Cuban penal system. In previous years, he had published articles on criminology in periodicals such as the *Diario de la Marina* and *Azul y rojo*.²³⁶ Evidently, Ortiz’s theoretical approach to criminology was heavily informed by Lombrosian theories. He had even published three essays in the *Archivio di psichiatria, neuropatologia, antropologia criminale e medicina legale*, the famous Italian journal directed by Lombroso himself, in 1905 and 1906. Rather understudied, these articles display many of the arguments that would become famous in Ortiz’s first book, *Los negros brujos* (1906).

²³³ Helg, *Our Rightful Share*, 112.

²³⁴ Quoted in Helg, *Our Rightful Share*, 112.

²³⁵ Quoted in Bronfman, *Measures of Equality*, 47.

²³⁶ The essays are “Rectificación criminológica,” published on the *Diario de la Marina* (September 29, 1902), “La teoría criminológica de Max Nordav,” published in the *Diario de La Marina* (April 26, 1903) and “El Presidio de la Habana,” which came out in the journal *Azul y Rojo* (January 4, 1902). See Tania de Armas Fonticoba, “‘Fernando Ortiz’ e ‘Israel Castellanos’ en la genealogía de la criminología en Cuba,” *Derecho y Cambio Social*, vol. 8, no. 25 (2011): 4.

In “La criminalità dei negri in Cuba” [*The Criminality of Blacks in Cuba*, 1905], Ortiz already dedicates a section to the “Criminali-Stregoni” [*Criminal-Sorcerers*], in particular to their “individual psychology.” Clearly inspired by the case of the *niña Zoila*, the “criminal-sorcerer”—the *brujo*—was for Ortiz “one of the most repugnant and harmful types of Cuban bad life.”²³⁷ The *brujo* was “almost always a delinquent, a relentless freeloader, often a thief, a rapist and murderer at times; a graverobber when he can.”²³⁸ The depiction of the Afro-Cuban *brujo* as a “graverobber” would become common from then on, even though anthropologists and physicians, as we have seen, had been desecrating the graves of the enslaved and of free people of color for years in the late-nineteenth century. Unsurprisingly, robbing or desecrating graves was only a mark of primitiveness when it was done by a Black person.

In the essay, Ortiz also lays the foundation for his theory on the criminal ontology of the *brujo* and the practice of *brujería* in general. The reason why the practice of witchcraft was so widespread in Cuba, Ortiz claimed, was a “lack of evolution.” If the *brujo* was a “born criminal” in Lombrosian terms, it was not because of atavism or some kind of evolutionary “step back,” but because of an abrupt change in their social milieu:

...it can be said that, when he [the sorcerer] was transported from Africa to Cuba, it was the social milieu that for him suddenly jumped ahead, leaving him with his compatriots, in the depths of his wild state, on the first steps of psychic evolution. For this reason ... the characteristics of the sorcerer can be defined as “psychic primitiveness”.... The sorcerer, and his followers, are immoral and criminal in Cuba because they have not progressed; they are savages led to a civilized land.

²³⁷ Fernando Ortiz, “La criminalità dei negri in Cuba,” *Archivio di psichiatria, neuropatologia, antropologia criminale e medicina legale*, vol. xxvi, no. I-II (1905): 597.

²³⁸ Fernando Ortiz, “La criminalità dei negri in Cuba,” 597-8.

...può dirsi che, quando fu trasportato d’Africa a Cuba, fu il mezzo sociale quello che, per lui, saltò improvvisamente avanti, lasciandolo coi suoi compatriotti, nella profondità del suo stato selvaggio, sui primi gradini dell’evoluzione psichica. Per questo ... i caratteri del fatucchiero possono definirsi della “primitività psichica” ... Lo stregone, y suoi adepti, sono in Cuba immorali e delinquenti perche no hanno progredito; son selvaggi condotti in un paese incivilito.²³⁹

Ortiz does not cite Nina Rodrigues anywhere in this essay, but his explanation of the *brujo*’s criminality is exactly the same as the one Nina Rodrigues gave for the crimes committed by Lucas da Feira in 1895. Like Lucas da Feira, the Cuban *brujo* was out of place not because he was individually atavistic, but because his “social medium” suddenly changed. In that respect, both Nina Rodrigues and Ortiz were informed by Armand Corre’s 1899 *Le crime en pays créoles (esquisse d’ethnographie criminelle)*, which both cite extensively. In it, the French anthropologist explained the higher rate of criminality among Africans and Afro-descendants in formerly French colonies by invoking a “clash” between the their psychic nature and the “environment of advanced civilization” [*milieu de civilisation avancée*] where they lived.²⁴⁰ In other words, what had once been understood as the cause of nostalgia among enslaved Africans and Afro-descendants (see Part I) was now being used to explain their alleged criminal behaviors. However, Nina Rodrigues and Ortiz used Corre’s general theory to explain specific crimes and events, and like Nina Rodrigues Ortiz did not name the cause of such a temporal

²³⁹ Fernando Ortiz, “La criminalità dei negri in Cuba”: 599.

²⁴⁰ Armand Corre, *Le crime en pays créoles (esquisse d’ethnographie criminelle)* (Lyon-Paris: Storck et Masson, 1889), 124.

clash: namely, the transatlantic slave trade. In fact, Ortiz barely mentioned slavery in his essay for the *Archivo*, referring to enslaved peoples only when comparing them to free people of color in terms of criminality.

Ortiz's "La criminalità dei negri in Cuba" appeared in 1905, one year earlier than the other essay published in *El mundo* on the day of Bocourt and Molina's execution. Both essays would serve as preliminary versions of Ortiz's first book, *Los negros brujos* (1906). We can see in them the preoccupation for the contagious nature of fetishism which became so prominent a feature in *Los negros brujos* and, later on, in Ortiz's work as a whole. For instance, Ortiz acknowledged that white individuals also partook in fetishistic beliefs, particularly the "whites who are as close psychologically to Africans as if ... they identified with them" [*bianchi feticisti che si avvicinano tanto psicologicamente agli africani quanto ... se identificano con questi*].²⁴¹

Published for the first time in 1906, *Los negros brujos (apuntes para un estudio de etnología criminal)* was reedited in 1917, after Ortiz had excluded two chapters and updated the "Advertencias preliminares" that prefaced the book.²⁴² But in both versions, *Los negros brujos* opens with a laudatory letter penned by Cesare Lombroso himself, who calls Ortiz's work "of extraordinary interest" [*de un interés extraordinario*] and suggests that future criminological work on Cuba will require "data on cranial, physiognomic, and tactile abnormalities in a number of criminals and brujos, and in an equal number of normal blacks" [*datos acerca de las anomalías craneales, fisionómicas y de la sensibilidad táctil en un determinado número de*

²⁴¹ Fernando Ortiz, "La criminalità dei negri in Cuba," 599.

²⁴² For a detailed description of the book, see Edward Mullen, "Los negros brujos: A Reexamination of the Text," *Cuban Studies* (1987): 111-129. According to Sarró, these two chapters ended up being part of Ortiz's second book, *Los negros esclavos* (1916). Ramón Sarró, "True brujos and imitators: A reading of Fernando Ortiz's *Los negros brujos* (1906)," *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* vol. 11, no. 1 (2021): 108-121.

delincuentes y brujos, y en un número igual de negros normales].²⁴³ Lombroso's suggestion stems from the fact that Ortiz does not give much attention to physiognomy or craniology in *Los negros brujos*.

What Ortiz does emphasize, however, are stories. As the author himself will recall more than thirty years later, he wrote *Los negros brujos* between 1902 and 1905, three years of which he spent in Italy and only one in Havana.²⁴⁴ Ortiz had gone to Spain in 1898, where he earned his doctorate in Law in 1901 and worked with Spanish positivist intellectual Manuel Sales y Ferré.²⁴⁵ His interest for the *mala vida* or bad life emerged after reading Constancio Bernaldo de Quirós's *La mala vida en Madrid. Estudio psicosociológico* (1901), which Ortiz discussed in a colloquium in comparison to the Cuban *mala vida*. "I was concerned because I knew very little about the lurid matter" [*Yo me vi muy apurado porque harto poco sabía del escabroso asunto*], Ortiz reminisced some thirty years later. He had learned about the Cuban "bad life" through Trujillo y Monagas's *Los criminales de Cuba* (1883) as well as through visits to the Museo de Ultramar, in Madrid, where he saw ñañigo objects and suits.²⁴⁶ Ortiz also collected newspaper

²⁴³ Cesare Lombroso, "Carta-Prólogo," in Fernando Ortiz, *Los negros brujos (apuntes para un estudio de etnología criminal)* (Madrid: Librería de Fernando Fé, 1906), xi-xii. In terms of publication history, it seems that Ortiz had the manuscript of *Los negros brujos* ready in 1905, when he sent it to Cesare Lombroso. In the Carta-Prólogo of *Los negros brujos*, Lombroso asks Ortiz to send him "la traducción de los trozos más interesantes de su libro." It would seem that Ortiz fulfilled Lombroso's requests, and that the requested translation ended up being published as "La criminalità dei negri in Cuba." Indeed, there are moments in which the *El mundo* article, the Italian essay, and *Los negros brujos* seem identical, in spite of the different languages.

²⁴⁴ Fernando Ortiz, "Brujos y santos," *Estudios Afrocubanos*, vol. III, no. 1-4 (1939): 85.

²⁴⁵ For a more detailed account of Ortiz's connections with Spain, see Consuelo Naranjo Orovio and Miguel Ángel Puig-Samper Mulero, "Fernando Ortiz y las relaciones científicas hispano-cubanas, 1900-1940," *Revista de Indias*, vol. LX, núm. 219 (2000): 477-503. For a thorough account of Ortiz's life, see Arcadio Díaz Quiñones, "Fernando Ortiz (1881-1969) y Allan Kardec (1804-1869): espiritismo y transculturación," in *Sobre los principios: los intelectuales caribeños y la tradición* (Buenos Aires: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, 2006), 289-318.

²⁴⁶ Fernando Ortiz, "Brujos y Santos," 85-6.

articles about cases of *brujería* in Cuba—such as the Zoila case—particularly the ones published in *El Mundo* between November and December of 1905.²⁴⁷

Besides Lombroso's "Carta-Prólogo" and Ortiz's own "Advertencias preliminares," the 1906 edition of *Los negros brujos* has eight chapters organized in two parts. The first part tackles the Afro-Cuban population in Havana and contains three chapters: "La mala vida cubana," "Los negros en Cuba," and "Los negros en Cuba (Continuación)."²⁴⁸ The second part focuses exclusively on the *brujos*: "La brujería," "La brujería (continuación)," "Los brujos," "Difusión de la brujería," and "Porvenir de la brujería." The second part also includes a chapter exclusively made of stories "published by the Havana press referring to various cases of witchcraft" [*publicadas por la prensa de la Habana referentes á varios casos de brujería*].²⁴⁹ In what follows, I will examine mainly Ortiz's "Advertencias preliminares" and the second part, the latter focusing on the figure of the *brujo*.

Liquid Psyches

Much has been said about Ortiz's "inventing" or "fabricating" the Afro-Cuban *brujo*.²⁵⁰ "The *brujo* isolated by Ortiz is pure creation," Olivia Maria Gomes da Cunha claims, "a mode of

²⁴⁷ Ramon Sarró, "True brujos and imitators: A Reading of Fernando Ortiz's *Los negros brujos* (1906), *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, vol. 11, no. 1 (1021): 110. Scholars have commented on the consequences of Ortiz's geographical distance from the events and practices he examined in *Los negros brujos*. Sarró, for instance, points to the fragmentation of the text and its lack of ethnographic evidence as one of these consequences. Ramón Sarró, "True *brujos* and imitators," 111-2. Edward Mullen, on the other hand, suggests that this distance "led to a peculiar self-consciousness toward Cuba and heightened Ortiz's awareness of certain features of Cuban language and culture that would have otherwise passed unnoticed." Mullen, "*Los negros brujos*," 115-6.

²⁴⁸ These second and third chapters were the ones the second edition of the book. The 1917 edition is not divided into parts and has seven chapters, focusing mostly on the *brujos* and their actions.

²⁴⁹ The 1906 edition also includes 48 sketches made especially for the book by Italian lawyer Gustavo Rosso, as well as six photographs of sentenced criminals.

²⁵⁰ Mullen might have been the first to propose a reading of *Los negros brujos* as a fictional text. Mullen, "*Los negros brujos*," 111-129.

knowing a heterogeneous set of relations between persons, non-human forces, objects and events.”²⁵¹ Calling *brujería* a “construct,” Stephan Palmié argues that it “acquired its tremendous power as a device for constructing overtly racialized notions of Cuban national selfhood precisely at a moment when Cuban versions of European science came into their own.”²⁵² In particular, Palmié calls attention to “the mutually constitutive character of magic and science” intrinsic to the relationship between Cuban anthropologists and *brujos*.²⁵³ Along similar lines, Alejandra Bronfman examines how the brujo was “rendered an object of social scientific scrutiny, both boldly constructed and undermined in the press and contested through appeals to the law.”²⁵⁴

Clearly, I share with these authors an understanding of the *brujo* both as a co-created invention and as a tool. In the following pages, I will expand on this idea by arguing that in *Los negros brujos* Ortiz used the “construct” of the *brujo*—and particularly its influential power within Cuban society—to develop a liquid conception of subjectivity and, consequently, of race. This liquid psyche conceived by Ortiz, as we will see, grew from a series of biological and bodily metaphors. In that respect, Ortiz had a lot in common with Nina Rodrigues.

As briefly mentioned in the introduction to this Part, the two authors shared more than an ideological stance on white supremacy and Lombrosian theories. They also exchanged letters and references. For instance, in a letter sent to Ortiz in 1903, Nina Rodrigues provided Ortiz with references to books about West African religious practices and mentioned he would send him a chapter of a forthcoming book titled “Black criminality in Brazil” [*A criminalidade negra no*

²⁵¹ Olivia Gomes da Cunha, “Becoming Brujo,” in *The Things of Others: Ethnographies, Histories, and other Artefacts* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 147.

²⁵² Palmié, *Wizards and Scientists*, 225.

²⁵³ Palmié, *Wizards and Scientists*, 204.

²⁵⁴ Bronfman, *Our Rightful Share*, 41.

Brasil]. “I take enormous pleasure in maintaining scientific relations with you,” Nina Rodrigues wrote.²⁵⁵ Ortiz had read Nina Rodrigues’s *O animismo fetichista dos negros bahianos* (1900), which he quoted extensively in *Los negros brujos*. Both authors also stressed their intention to contribute to the development of criminology. Reiterating what the founders of the Sociedad Antropológica de la Isla de Cuba had stated in 1879, Ortiz emphasized Cuba’s privileged position for the study of criminology in the “Advertencias preliminares.” “Criminal ethnography is in its infancy—especially with regard to black criminals, very little has been done—and Cuba ... offers a vast and superlatively tempting study base” [*La etnografía criminal está en sus inicios — especialmente con referencia al delincuente negro se ha hecho muy poco — y Cuba ... ofrece una vastísima base de estudio superlativamente tentadora*], Ortiz writes.²⁵⁶ *Los negros brujos*, then, presents itself as a “study in social pathology” [*estudio de patología social*] whose goal was “the higienization” [*la higienización*] of the island.

In her study of Ortiz’s fabrication of the *brujo*, Olivia Maria Gomes da Cunha also points to the parallels between Ortiz and Nina Rodrigues authors but advises that we be weary of analyses that focus on Nina Rodrigues’s “influences” on Ortiz, since the latter never again referenced the former in the subsequent volumes of the trilogy *Hampa afro-cubana*. Ultimately, Gomes da Cunha invites us to look beyond “topological inscriptions” and examine the methods utilized by the authors, particularly by Ortiz, to fabricate the Afro-Cuban *brujo*—that is, newspaper cuttings and statistical materials.²⁵⁷

My concern, however, is not necessarily for the “topological inscriptions” that these two authors share, but rather for their common *tropological* inscriptions—particularly, medical,

²⁵⁵ In Gomes da Cunha, “Becoming Brujo,” 135. Due to the pandemic, I was not able to do research in Ortiz’s archive myself.

²⁵⁶ Fernando Ortiz, *Los negros brujos*, xiv.

²⁵⁷ Gomes da Cunha, “Becoming Brujo,” 143.

biological, and organic tropes, such as the idea that society needs to be sanitized from the pathogen of fetishism. In his discussion of the “enormous semantic productivity” of Ortiz’s metaphors, Palmié reminds us that they “affected an amazingly wide discursive field,” informing and influencing judicial cases, press coverage, and public debates for at least two decades in Cuba.²⁵⁸ Palmié mostly refers to the metaphor of hygiene, according to which *brujería* would be a social pathogen. For Ortiz, the fight against Afro-Cuban religious beliefs and practices ought to be analogous to the campaign against yellow fever, which had been eradicated during the U.S. Occupation in an effort pioneered by physician Carlos Finlay.²⁵⁹ While hygiene metaphors are a common feature in positivist writings of the era—particularly in Italian criminology²⁶⁰—I argue that Nina Rodrigues and Ortiz shared a semantic field of organic and bodily tropes that became the raw material with which Ortiz conceived the figure of the *brujo* and developed a particular conception of race grounded in the psyche rather than the body. In other words, I am less interested in how Ortiz conceived of *brujería* as a disease than I am in how this biological conception of society crept into his understanding of the minds, feelings, and psyches of Cubans and of Afro-Cubans in particular—and vice-versa.

An attention to psyches, minds, and feelings is already present in Ortiz’s “Advertencias preliminares,” where he acknowledges the pioneering character of his study, however

²⁵⁸ Stephan Palmié, *Wizards and Scientists*, 238-9.

²⁵⁹ In this analogy, Ortiz says that “One wants to attack *brujería*, and, in general, delinquency, without studying the *brujo* and the delinquent, without discovering the factors that determine them. One wanted to extirpate yellow fever without studying the sick or discovering the factors of morbidity. And I make this comparison because nothing more than the total victory over yellow fever that we have achieved in Cuba thanks to the energetic application of medical and hygienic measures in line with the genial Cuban physician Dr. Finlay could better predict the result that will be obtained in the struggle against *brujería*...” Ortiz, *Los negros brujos*, 402. For an in-depth discussion of Ortiz’s deployment of the yellow fever metaphor and its Foucauldian implications, see Palmié, *Wizards and Scientists*, 235-238.

²⁶⁰ Edward Mullen briefly discusses the metaphor of the pathogenesis as a strong feature of Ortiz’s *Los negros brujos*. Edward J. Mullen, “Los negros brujos: A Reexamination of the Text,” *Cuban Studies*, vol. 17 (1987): 111-129.

incomplete.²⁶¹ In the 1917 edition, Ortiz added that it was important to disseminate the study of the “religious atavism that delays the progress of the black population of Cuba” [*atavismo religioso que retrase el progreso de la población negra de Cuba*] in order to achieve “its true freedom: mental freedom” [*su verdadera libertad: la mental*].²⁶² In spite of the constant reference to Lombroso’s criminology, Ortiz seems more interested in exploring the minds—or psyches, to use his own word—of Cuban “bad life.” For such exploration, biological and bodily metaphors are his tools of choice. Blood, disease, and body operate both as hermeneutic categories and as veneer, conferring some level of tangibility to Ortiz’s metaphysical operation.

Biology, craniology, and physical anthropology, for instance, appear as metaphors to describe subjective processes of miscegenation. Such semantic choice is not an accident, nor does it undermine the relevance of biological determinism in *Los negros brujos* and in Ortiz’s early works in general. When discussing the degree to which whites and blacks from the “low strata” of society have psychologically merged, Ortiz uses the image of cranial sutures.

Both races were welded in these psychologically common or at least very similar strata, and today Cuban society develops psychically by an insensitive gradation from the whites, whose faculties place them at the level of the refined civilized man, to the black African who, restored to his native country would resume its libations in the bare skull of an enemy. The welding was complete, not only psychologically, but also physiologically, because for this to be carried out there were the same causes, equally extensive contact and intimate and permanent at the same time.

²⁶¹ Ortiz spends a good portion of his *Advertencias Preliminares* in a *captatio benevolentiae* where he insists on the “limited pretentions” [*limitadas pretensiones*] of the work, justifying the title “apuntes ... no por falsa modestia sino porque, efectivamente, no es sino una recopilación de ellos” [*notes ... not for false modesty but because it is not more than a compilation of them*]. Ortiz, *Los negros brujos*, xiv.

²⁶² Fernando Ortiz, *Los negros brujos*, 2nd ed. (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1973), 7.

Ambas razas se soldaron e estas capas psicológicamente comunes o muy afines por lo menos, y hoy la sociedad cubana se desarrolla psíquicamente por una gradacion insensible desde el blanco, cuyas dotes lo colocan al nivel del hombre refinadamente civilizado, hasta el negro africano que restituido a su país natal reanudaría sus libaciones en el cráneo mondo de un enemigo. La soldadura fue completa, no solo psicologica, sino tambien fisiologica, pues para que esta se realizada fueron las mismas concausas, igualmente extenso el contacto e intimo y permanete a la vez.²⁶³

Soldadura, or welding, is the exact same word used to refer to skull sutures in different races, such as Montalvo, Torre, and Montané did in “El cráneo de Antonio Maceo.” As an adult skull, Cuban society was already formed; its sutures had closed because the Black and white races had completely fused together. There was not much more room for growth or development, unlike Maceo’s skull. The element that bound these two races together was the “psychic primitiveness” that the *raza negra* imparted to the island. The Afro-Cuban psyche is the locus where Ortiz develops his theory. When describing the processes of racial mixing in Cuban Society that led to the formation of a specific kind of *hampa*, for instance, Ortiz writes that

It was necessary that some social strata be accessible to blacks and whites at the same time, especially in that both races, from various points of view, lived in a common environment favorable to *fusion*, or, what is the same, that the psyches of whites and blacks in certain social layers had the same intellectual, emotional, etc. demands that were, in short, homogeneous. And there is no doubt that this was the case in the lowest

²⁶³ Ortiz, *Los negros brujos*, 13-4.

layers of our society, where the physical and psychic *transfusion* between all races has been and is intense.

*fue preciso que algunos estratos sociales resultaran accesibles a la vez a blancos y negros especialmente, en que ambas razas, desde varios puntos de vista, vivieron en un ambiente común favorable a la fusión, o, lo que es lo mismo, que las psiquis del blanco y del negro en ciertas capas sociales tuvieran unas mismas exigencias intelectuales, emotivas, etc., que fueran, en fin, homogéneas. Y no cabe dudar de que así fue en las capas ínfimas de nuestra sociedad, donde la transfusión física y psíquica entre todas las razas ha sido y es intensa.*²⁶⁴

We have here a pair of scientific-biological terms—fusion and transfusion—describing processes of mutual psychic affection.²⁶⁵ I would argue, in fact, that “fusion” operates as an organizing concept in *Los negros brujos*. The term appears at least 33 times in the book with different prepositions: fusion, transfusion, diffusion, confusion, infusion. In each of these times, fusion refers to a dialectic collision, or friction (*roce*), between different entities—races, people, classes, chemical elements—that result in some level of amalgamation. In the quote above, for instance, Ortiz comments on the psychic fusion between blacks and whites, which is a result of the physical and psychological transfusion, or exchange, of racialized qualities. *Transfusión*, according to

²⁶⁴ Ortiz, *Los negros brujos*, 12.

²⁶⁵ I mean affection here as the process of affecting one another. Even in his definition of the “lower strata” of Cuban population, Ortiz specifies that he does not refer simply to economic status but rather to “those where the primitive psychology of the various ethnic components vibrates with the same tuning fork, even when the economic tonality is diverse” [*aquellos donde la psicología primitiva de los varios compoennte étnicos vibra con un mismo diapason, por más que la tonalidad económica sea diversa*]. Ortiz, *Los negros brujos*, 12.

the 1899 Diccionario de Autoridades, was the noun of “transfundir,” which in its turn meant to “pour a liquid little by little from one vase to another” [*echar un liquido poco a poco de un vaso en otro*].²⁶⁶ The main example that the Autoridades offers for *transfusión* is, not surprisingly, blood transfusion. Given the history of the connection between blood and race in the Iberian world, Ortiz’s choice is telling.²⁶⁷ A more descriptive *transfusión* appears later on, when Ortiz describes the approximation of “white masses” [*masas de blancos*] to the “African psyche” [*psíquis africana*] “as a law analogous to the one demonstrated by the physical experiment of the communicating vessels” [*como una ley análoga a la demostrada por el experimento físico de los vasos comunicantes*]. Connecting to each other through a lower tube, the communicating vessels balance to the same level of liquid. Ortiz thus implies that the minds of white and Black subjects are also connected, contain the same liquid substance, and balance to the same level, even though they are shaped differently.

In briefly mentioning Ortiz’s choice of metaphors, Ramon Sarró says that it “prefigures the famous theory of ‘transculturation’ he [Ortiz] developed decades later.”²⁶⁸ This is indeed the case, as other scholars have also pointed out. What I would like to insist on, however, is that through hydrodynamic law and metaphors of fusion and (trans)fusion, Ortiz offers a liquid understanding of subjective processes. If *fundir* means “to melt or liquify metals or minerals” [*derretir o liquidar los metales o minerales*] as well as to “to mold the molten metal into shape” [*dar molde en formas al metal fusión*], according to the same 1899 dictionary, then the dialectic

²⁶⁶ Real Academia Española, *Diccionario de la lengua castellana*, 13rd ed. (Madrid: Imprenta de los Sres. Hernando y compañía, 1899), 976.

²⁶⁷ On limpieza de sangre, see María Elena Martínez, *Genealogical fictions: limpieza de sangre, religion, and gender in colonial Mexico* (Stanford University Press, 2008).

²⁶⁸ Sarró, “True *brujos* and imitators,” 115.

process of mutual psychic affect is also a process of melting a solid substance, transmitting it in its liquid form, and shaping it back into a solid form.

The concept of liquidity, or fluidity, had already emerged in the nineteenth century to refer to processes of modernization or revolution. “All that is solid melts into air,” said Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto*, referring to the bourgeois revolution.²⁶⁹ From there on, from Marshall Berman to Habermas to Zygmunt Bauman, philosophers and political thinkers have gone back to the idea of modernity—whichever modernity they referred to—as the end of fixed categories and traditions, the death of any sense of security and solidity.²⁷⁰ Still, if liquidity was the preferred metaphor to refer to (post-)modern feelings of doom, this was not the case in *Los negros brujos*. For Ortiz, psychic transfusions, vessels communicating liquids, and fusing minds served not to emphasize that something was lost or suddenly changed. Rather, the liquidity of the psychic form functions in *Los negros brujos* as a malleable entity that is easily transferable, moldable—and yet integral to the formation of the subject. The liquid that whites and Blacks had in common was fetishism. Fetishism could appear in different ways or take cover under Catholic imagery and symbols, but it was still there, being slowly transfused. “In the psychological evolution of the black race in Cuba,” says Ortiz, “superstition emerged where almost all other African social factors were drowned” [*en la evolución psicológica de la raza negra en Cuba la superstición sobrenadó allí donde fue el naufragio de casi todo los demás factores sociales africanos.*]²⁷¹ Afro-Cuban “superstition” here referred to fetishism, a theme for

²⁶⁹ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, trans. Jeffrey C. Isaac and Steven Lukes (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 77.

²⁷⁰ Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982); Jürgen Habermas and Larry Kert, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1998); Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004).

²⁷¹ Ortiz, *Los negros brujos*, 118.

which Nina Rodrigues appears as one of Ortiz's main sources. Just like the Afro-Brazilian, claims Ortiz, "the Afro-Cuban, even when he claims he's Catholic, is still a fetishist" [*El afro-cubano, aun cuando llegue a decirse catolico, sigue siendo fetichista*].²⁷² Catholicism in *Los negros brujos* is a mere costume, or mask, that conceals the true animistic beliefs of Cubans of all races and classes.

We thus arrive at another variation of fusion that does a lot of conceptual work for Ortiz. The Catholic veil that covered fetishistic beliefs was one of the main factors behind its *diffusion*. Another was the intimate "contact that since childhood they had, especially Cubans, with black slaves, with their parents or neighbors, from school games, and above all due to poor intellectual stratification [*contacto que desde niños vivían, especialmente los cubanos, con los negros esclavos, con sus padres o compañeros de solar, de juegos de escuela, y sobre todo por deficiente estratificación intelectual*].²⁷³ Ortiz thus reiterates the idea of intimacy among races that José de Alencar, in Brazil, and Montané, in Cuba, had already put forward. Although he does not mention it directly, breast milk—a liquid substance, like blood—had long been thought to transmit "bad" traits from Black or indigenous wet nurses to white Creoles or *mestizos* in Latin America and the Caribbean.²⁷⁴

Such diffusion was not that surprising, however, because the attraction whites felt for African beliefs caused a sort of irresistible vertigo. Here is where Ortiz refers to Edward Burnett

²⁷² Ortiz, *Los negros brujos*, 118.

²⁷³ Ortiz, *Los negros brujos*, 317.

²⁷⁴ About discussions on the morality of wet nurses in Latin America see, for instance, Bianca Premo, "Misunderstood Love': Children and Wet Nurses, Creoles and Kings in Lima's Enlightenment," *Colonial Latin American Review* 14, n. 2 (2005): 231-261; and Chapter 3 of Jorge Camacho, *Miedo negro, poder blanco en la Cuba Colonial*.

Tylor, repeating the same quote as Nina Rodrigues reproduced in *O animismo fetichista dos negros bahianos*:

In spite of their relatively remarkable psychological advance, black superstitions attract them [whites], produce a kind of vertigo in them, and they fall into them from the height of their civilization; as if the upper strata of their psyche suffocated them, they shed them and return to primitiveness, to the nakedness of their spirits, which a remnant of modesty attenuates with a simple loincloth of civilization, helping to enhance even more their shameful regressive fall. Tylor already said it when dealing with this phenomenon:

“...this influence is so universal (that of fetishism) that the European established in Africa frequently experiences its assaults and comes to accept the ideas of the Negro, or, to use the usual expression of the coast, is fit to become black.

*A pesar de su relativamente notable avance psicológico, las supersticiones negras los atraen [a los blancos], le producen una especie de vértigo y caen en ellas desde la altura de su civilización; como si los estratos superiores de su psiquis le sofocaran, se desprenden de ellos y vuelven a la primitividad, a la desnudez de su espíritu, que un resto de pudor atenúa con un simple taparrabos de civilización, que contribuye a que resalte más aún toda su vergonzosa caída regresiva. Ya lo dijo Tylor tratando de este fenómeno: “...esta influencia es tan universal (la del fetichismo) que el europeu establecido en África experimenta con frecuencia sus asaltos y llega a aceptar las ideas del negro, o, para servirnos de la expresión usual de la costa, se hace apto para volverse negro”.*²⁷⁵

²⁷⁵ Ortiz, *Los negros brujos*, 336.

What does *volverse negro* means here? As we have seen in the previous chapter, Nina Rodrigues's "tornar-se negro" displaced the biological idea of race, allowing for it to become a subjective feature. For Nina Rodrigues, the potential of blackness lied in the adoption of the beliefs, customs, and religious practices of Africans and Afro-Brazilians. In *Los negros brujos*, Ortiz also mobilizes race as an affective feature related to one's subjectivity rather than physical traits. Olivia Maria Gomes da Cunha reads Ortiz's engagement with Tylor as a "curious homology between the terms *brujo* and *negro*," and that "becoming *brujo* and *volverse negro* are similar possibilities of transformation—or *transfusión*—since both are mediated by affects not limited to the laws of the spirit or of biology."²⁷⁶ While I agree that *volverse negro* implies a condition that can be transmitted or "transfused," I do not see the conflation between becoming *brujo* and becoming black. Ortiz, after all, does not conceive the possibility that anyone can become a *brujo*. As other scholars have effectively argued, in *Los negros brujos* the distinction between the African *brujo* and the Creole *brujo* is also a distinction between the true and the false sorcerer, and Ortiz clearly foresees the disappearance of the former while depicting the dangers of the latter.²⁷⁷ Ortiz "always projects the true *brujería* elsewhere, to a rapidly disappearing past," says Ramon Sarró.²⁷⁸ To Sarró, Ortiz's main concern in *Los negros brujos* was precisely this moment of transition between the "authentically African *brujería*, like that behind Zoila's case," and "a new *brujería* [that] was emerging among the young generation," which could damage Cuban society even further.²⁷⁹ By examining the photograph of Bocourt included in *Los negros brujos*, Jorge Pavez Ojeda offers a similar interpretation, arguing that in "publishing Bocú's photograph, Ortiz seeks to produce a 'disappearing' effect, that is, to show

²⁷⁶ Cunha, "Becoming Brujo," 184.

²⁷⁷ Sarró, "True *brujos* and imitators."

²⁷⁸ Sarró, "True *brujos* and imitators," 110.

²⁷⁹ Sarró, "True *brujos* and imitators," 112.

an image of what is deemed to disappear.”²⁸⁰ Ultimately, while Ortiz is indeed concerned with the allegedly violent practices of the *negros brujos*, be them African or Creole, the object of his fear was the propagation of the belief in brujería rather than the possibility of anyone becoming a brujo. It was this belief in brujería, or in fetishism, that would allow for the possibility of a white person to become Black.

From Body to Mind, and Back Again

As I have already suggested in the introduction of this chapter, in the decades following the publication of *Los negros brujos*, Ortiz changed his approach to Afro-Cuban matters. The most common narrative about Ortiz’s trajectory is that he moved from criminology to transculturation as his main working concepts, or from or from Cesare Lombroso to Bronislaw Malinowski as his main referents, or from criminal to cultural anthropology.²⁸¹ However one chooses to describe this shift, the point is that Ortiz abandoned his initially very racist conception of Afro-Cuban culture and subjects to a more humanist approach that acknowledged the fundamental contributions of Afro-Cuban culture to the island.

Still, criminal anthropology in Cuba did not end with Ortiz coining the term “transculturation” in *El contrapunteo del tabaco y del azúcar* (1940). Criminal anthropology had a successful life in the work and writings of another criminologist, Israel Castellanos, a self-taught criminal anthropologist who wrote extensively on brujería and ñañiguismo in Cuba well

²⁸⁰ Jorge Pavez Ojeda, “El retrato de los ‘negros brujos’. Los archivos visuales de la antropología afrocubana (1900-1920),” *Aisthesis*, no. 46 (2009): 90.

²⁸¹ See, for instance, Arcadio Díaz-Quiñones, “Fernando Ortiz (1881-1969) y Allan Kardec (1804-1869): espiritismo y transculturación,” in *Sobre los principios: Los intelectuales caribenhos y la tradición* (Bernal: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, 2006), 289-318; Stephan Palmié, “Fernando Ortiz and the Cooking of History,” “Edward Mullen, “Los negros brujos: A Reexamination of the Text.”

into the twentieth century.²⁸² Indebted to Ortiz, Castellanos acknowledges *Los negros brujos* as “the first and most profound consideration of Afro-Cuban fetishism” [*la primera y más profunda consideración del fetichismo afro-cubano*].²⁸³ However, if Ortiz was more concerned with the liquid psyche of Afro-Cubans and its transmission across race and class, Castellanos was obsessed with the body and its modes of visualization. He wrote articles on the hands and jaws of madmen and criminals, on the height and weight of delinquents in Cuba, on fingerprints, and on the hair of different races—besides, as we saw, complaining about the lack of craniological data about Cuban criminals and brujos. To Castellanos, one could not fully apprehend criminality without paying close attention to the body (particularly the face and the head). Visualizing the Black body was a way of fixating it.

Criminality, for Castellanos, could not be detached from Afro-Cuban spiritual and cultural practices. The brujo and the ñañigo were then his favorite objects of analysis. In his *La brujería y el ñañiguismo desde el punto de vista medico legal*, which won the Legal Medicine prize from the Academia de Ciencias Médicas in 1916, Castellanos goes over the skull, the brain, the viscera, height, width, digital impressions, thorax, skin, forehead, ears, eyes, nose, and jaw of brujos and ñañigos, among other physical and behavioral features, in what Palmié has called a failed “attempt to dissect the brujo’s physiology in search of typologically salient features.”²⁸⁴ Contrary to Ortiz’s ascription of liquidity to race and his focus on descriptions of Afro-Cubans’ psychic life, Castellanos aimed to fixate *brujería* and Blackness in the body. He could have

²⁸² According to Tania de Armas Fonticoba, Castellanos published more than mil articles and essays in Cuba and abroad throughout his career. He was also a member of prestigious organizations such as the Vienna Criminological Society, and directed the National Bureau of Identification (Gabinete Nacional de Identificación) in Cuba. Tania de Armas Fonticoba, “‘Fernando Ortiz’ e ‘Israel Castellanos’ en la genealogía de la criminología en Cuba,” *Derecho y Cambio Social* vol. 8, no. 25 (2011): 1-13.

²⁸³ Castellanos, *La brujería y el ñañiguismo desde el punto de vista médico-legal*, 7.

²⁸⁴ Palmié, *Wizards and Scientists*, 244. It failed because, as Palmié tells us, Castellanos could not find many distinctive physical traits that distinguished the brujos and ñañigos from the “normal.”

never proposed, like did Ortiz, that the mere practice of Afro-Cuban religious beliefs meant to become Black. Rather, his focus on visibility and materiality allowed for a much more solid (at least for him) apprehension of race and spirituality. Before his award-winning study *La brujería y el ñañiguismo en Cuba*, Castellanos had already expressed his obsession with establishing a physical and psychological type of the Afro-Cuban brujo. In “El tipo brujo (Acotación de etnología criminal cubana),” published in 1914 in the *Revista bimestre cubana*, Castellanos had analyzed around a hundred photographs of Afro-Cuban brujos and almost twenty images of ñañigos. Still, he warned the reader that his goal was not to help them identify the Afro-Cuban brujo in a crowd, but rather to “know positively and scientifically an abstract identity, an antisocial type, whose physical and psychic characteristics are almost unknown to us” [*conocer científica y positivamente una entidad abstracta, un tipo antisocial, cuyos caracteres físicos y psíquicos nos son casi desconocidos*].²⁸⁵ In his analysis, however, Castellanos relentlessly tries to fixate the “type” of the brujo in specific physical and psychological characteristics. Such attempt, of course, fails in its inception precisely because the materiality provided by the photographs are insufficiently solid.

Not all the sources that shed light on the scientific study of Cuban brujos have been explored. There is still a long way to go. We ignore all their anthropometric characteristics, from the cephalic index to the height. ... If our study, instead of being an analysis of 100 photographs, were a positive test carried out on the dissection plate, in jail cells or in prison galleys, we would have useful conclusions. Many characters could *solidify* and confirm the relationship between epilepsy and witchcraft, such as thoracic asymmetry, which is twice more frequent in epileptics than in delinquents.

²⁸⁵ Israel Castellanos, “El tipo brujo (Acotación de etnología criminal cubana),” in *Cuaderno de estudios afrocubanos, volumen XIV* (San Juan: Editorial Nuevo Mundo, 2020), loc. 310 (Kindle edition).

*No están explotadas todas las fuentes que aportan luz al estudio científico de los brujos cubanos. Todavía queda mucho por recorrer. Ignoramos todos sus caracteres antropométricos, desde el índice cefálico hasta la talla. ... Si nuestro estudio en vez de ser un análisis de 100 fotografías, fuese un examen positivo realizado sobre la plancha de disección, en las celdas de la cárcel o en las galeras del presidio, tendríamos provechosas conclusiones. Muchos caracteres podrían solidificar y confirmarnos la relación de la epilepsia y de la brujería, como la asimetría torácica, que es dos veces más frecuente en el epiléptico que en el delincuente.*²⁸⁶

Although he heavily relies on Ortiz previous study of the Afro-Cuban brujo, Castellanos finds the material he has available too untenable—or *liquid*—to provide final conclusions. Only the anthropometric study of the brujo, he claims, would bring *solidity* to his analysis. Such study, however, could only be done with the corpses of Afro-Cuban brujos and ñañigos, which of course required their deaths. In other words, Castellanos proposes the annihilation of the Afro-Cuban brujo in order to be able to study his type. It is, for a criminologist like him who saw the brujo and the ñañigo as harmful elements in Cuban society, the perfect solution. Like the members of the Sociedad Antropológica who were keen to rob the graves of the enslaved, Castellanos was driven by a morbid impulse in order to solidify the liquid substances of brujería and race.

Such morbid impulse appears again in *La brujería y el ñañiguismo en Cuba* (1916), in which Castellanos starts by following Ortiz's interest in the "psychic qualities" [*cualidades*

²⁸⁶ Castellanos, "El tipo brujo," loc. 314. My italics.

psíquicas] of the brujo and the ñañigo to quickly become more and more invested in “equally knowing their physical characteristics” [*caracteres físicos*]. Such characteristics, says Castellanos, “Legal Medicine will undoubtedly teach us” [*sin duda no los enseñará la Medicina Legal*].²⁸⁷ As I have previously stated, Castellanos complained about the scarcity of anthropological studies of Cuban criminals, particularly skull measurements. But that does not stop him of finding physical markers for the criminal *ñañiguismo* or the primitive *brujería* that proliferated in Cuba: both brujos and ñañigos had darker skin; the *brujo* had a wider forehead than the criminal *ñañigo*, the *brujo* had a more prominent chin, and so on. He bases such remarks almost solely on the observation of photographs taken of Afro-Cuban brujos and ñañigos taken by the police, including the photographs that Ortiz had already published in *Los negros brujos* of the corpses of Bocourt and Molina. The ñañigo and the brujo, according to Castellanos, were “simple defined bodies, endowed with African properties, characterized by special psycho-anthropological energies” [*simples cuerpos definidos, dotados de propiedades africanas, caracterizados por especiales energías psico-antropológicas*].²⁸⁸ That is, they were first and foremost bodies to which psychic traits were ascribed.

Castellanos’s investment on physical markers goes as far as to use these traits to establish an essential difference between the brujo and the “pseudo-brujo.” For instance, when analyzing the photograph of a Black *curandero* who was accused of raping a young woman, categorically states that he was not a true brujo, but rather a fake sorcerer:

It is because the studied subject is not a born or bona fide brujo ... but a pseudo-brujo. To be an archetype of Afro-Cuban *brujería*, he lacks the persistent characters of the black

²⁸⁷ Castellanos, *La brujería y el ñañiguismo en Cuba*, 18-19.

²⁸⁸ Castellanos, *La brujería y el ñañiguismo en Cuba*, 8.

continent, from the necklaces, the beard, the bundled head to the African type of its predecessors.

*Pues que el sujeto estudiado no es brujo nato o de buena fe ... sino un pseudo-brujo. Para ser un arquetipo de la hechicería afro-cubano le faltan los caracteres persistentes del continente negro, desde los collares, la barba, la cabeza liada hasta el tipo africano de sus predecesores.*²⁸⁹

It was not enough to practice “witchcraft” to be a brujo, but also to display specific physical characteristics that would associate the practitioner to Africa. Still, the lack of anthropological data undermined Castellanos’s attempt to solidify what Ortiz had liquidified. He would try to fill such gap with his morbid impulse, that is, with the photographs of the corpses of Afro-Cuban brujos—particularly, Bocourt, and Sylvestre Erice (Papá Silvestre), founder of the Sociedad Santa Rita de Cássia. According to Pavez, the publication of these images “aims to illustrate the deadly power of criminology in its search for ‘light,’ and the conception of photography as a ‘weapon of truth,’ which pursues supposedly ‘extinct varieties’ until effective proof is obtained of its ‘extinction.’”²⁹⁰ More than an argument for photography, the corpses of Afro-Cuban brujos in Castellanos’s work are also his ultimate attempt of fixating and solidifying the evasive existences of these Cuban “types,” since their antropometric and anthropological measurements were not possible. Through these images, Castellanos is able not only to contain and control the existence of the brujos but also to prevent the transfusion of their anthropological characteristics to other members of Cuban society.

²⁸⁹ Castellanos, *La brujería y el ñañiguismo en Cuba*, 44.

²⁹⁰ Jorge Pavez Ojeda, “El retrato de los ‘negros brujos’”, 102.

In spite of its failures, Castellanos and his approach to criminality had a remarkably thriving career until his death in 1977. Throughout all these decades, Castellanos published more than a thousand articles and essays in Cuba and abroad, was a member of prestigious organizations such as the Vienna Criminological Society, and taught at the Instituto de Criminología de Madrid, Universidad de Madrid, and University of Florida, besides winning awards such as the Lombroso Prize in 1932.²⁹¹ He also directed the National Bureau of Identification (Gabinete Nacional de Identificación) in Cuba, working closely with the Secret Police during the regime of Fulgencio Batista. After Batista was overthrown in 1959, Castellanos moved to Puerto Rico, where he worked with the police force, and then taught courses on criminal anthropology at the University of Miami.

²⁹¹ Alejandra Bronfman, *Measures of Equality*, 132, 201.

Conclusion to Part III

The failure of craniometry and physical anthropology in the works of Nina Rodrigues, Ortiz, and Castellanos, however, did not mean the end of physical anthropology or of the biological or quantitative approach to human diversity. Scientists have not stopped using cranial, facial, and body measurements to quantify and determine human races. As Iris Clever reminds us, there is a “persistent interest in the deterministic study of human races from both a typological and biological point of view.”²⁹² After all, we live today in the midst of a boom in racial quantification through biometric technologies (such as technologies of facial recognition). Imbued with an alleged objectivism, these technologies reproduce racial prejudices and stereotypes.² In proposing the historical analysis of the failures, although momentary, of the so-called scientific racism in its anthropological iterations, this Part also invites to a critical examination of the alleged objectivism of contemporary biometric technologies.²⁹³

²⁹² Iris Clever, "Quantifying Race: How Numbers Divide Us" (presentation), 2021.

²⁹³ Shoshana Amielle Magnet, *When Biometrics Fail: Gender, Race, and the Technology of Identity*, 2011.

CODA: CONSCRIPTS OF FEELING

In the novel *Ponciá Vicêncio* (2006), writer Conceição Evaristo tells the story of a Black woman—Ponciá—from her childhood to her adult life in twentieth-century Brazil. Ponciá moves from a small rural village to a favela in the big city. Leaving her family behind, she gets married and works as a maid, living a precarious affective and material life. Slowly, she starts dissociating from herself. She spends a whole night in front of the mirror, calling out her name but not answering to her own interpellation. She asks “the man” (her husband) to not call her Ponciá anymore. All she experiences is “the profound absence, the profound separation from herself” [*a profunda ausência, o profundo apartar-se de si mesma*].¹ She barely uses her body, appearing disaffected, unmovable. Even when her husband hits her, she remains still, her eyes empty.

Ponciá’s lack of expression throughout the novel contrasts with her abundant interior life as it is told by the omniscient narrator. Ponciá longs for the river near her childhood home, for the water and the clay that she would shape into figurines. She longs for her grandfather who lived through the last years of slavery, and whom she physically and psychically resembles so much, according to those who knew him. She carries her family’s memories, her last name an inheritance from their once masters. Yet she expresses none of that to the world. Her husband thinks she is ill; her neighbors suggest committing her to a mental asylum. Ponciá performs what Xine Yao has recently called “affective disobedience” or “unfeeling,” that is, “a form of antisocial discontent about, if not outright defiance of, the compulsory norms for expressing feeling along with susceptibility to the feelings of others.”² To Yao, unfeeling is a reaction to the

¹ Conceição Evaristo, *Ponciá Vicêncio* (Rio de Janeiro: Pallas, 2018), 43.

² Xine Yao, *Disaffected: The Cultural Politics of Unfeeling* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 7.

power structures that determine “the intelligibility of feelings as signifiers of human interiority.”³ In other words, unfeeling is a reaction against expectations of the correct and virtuous expression of oneself, of one’s perception about the feelings of another. There is indeed something defiant about Ponciá’s apparent disaffection. She does not perform her subjectivity as others expect her to do. Still, the novel focuses on her inner experience of disassociation, proposing Ponciá’s disaffection as a result of her subjective suffering. The narrative comes to an end when Ponciá meets her mother and brother again and moves back to her childhood home with them. There, she shifts from stillness and disaffection to constant movement and hyperexpression: she “cried, laughed, grumbled,” walking in circles and constantly working with clay.⁴ She never becomes what her neighbors would call normal. Ultimately, Ponciá’s healing does not mean expressing the “right feelings that structure the politics of recognition.”⁵ Rather, she develops yet another way of not subjecting to the conscripts of feeling, albeit a generative one.

I open this Coda with *Ponciá Vicêncio* because it posits both an alternative and a horizon to this dissertation’s narrative arc. In Parts I and III, I demonstrated how white elites in Cuba and Brazil depicted, invented, and theorized the subjectivities of Africans and Afro-descendants, positing their feelings as an object either of medical knowledge within the institution of slavery (Part I), or of domination by white supremacist national projects after abolition (Part III). In Part II, on the other hand, I examined two of the many ways in which Afro-descendants have moved within and against the cultures of feeling that permeated nineteenth-century Cuba and Brazil—self-narratives and poetry. In particular, I showed their engagement with one of the main tools of

³ Yao, *Disaffected*, 11.

⁴ Evaristo, *Ponciá Vicêncio*, 110.

⁵ Yao, *Disaffected*, 7.

producing normative feelings (the lyric) as a way of not complying with the affective regimes of their time. The fact that much of their poetry has been overlooked attests to this non-compliance.

The last chapter of this dissertation ends in the 1910s. A century later, in 2006, Conceição Evaristo published *Ponciá Vicêncio*. There is a whole new story between these two moments. Both in Brazil and Cuba, the first half of the twentieth century saw the emergence and consolidation of the so-called ideologies of racial harmony and racial inclusivity. Promoted in the first decades of the century by intellectuals such as Gilberto Freyre in Brazil, and readers of José Martí in Cuba, these ideologies were rooted in the imagination of an inner, collective subjectivity resulting from centuries of racial and cultural mixing. Contrary to the U.S.-American regime of racial segregation and to theories of scientific racism, the myth of *mestizaje*—as it has also been called—posited miscegenation as a catalyst for “civilization” (Brazilian racial democracy) or for the construction of a national polity beyond racial lines and hierarchies (Cubanness). In the final decades of the twentieth century, historians, sociologists, and activists firmly rebutted these ideologies for their silencing of the racial violence inherent to the colonial project. Recently, however, scholars have started to shed light on the ways in which Afro-Cubans and Afro-Brazilians themselves have also seized this ideal of equality to gain and secure their rights to full participation in Brazilian and Cuban societies.⁶

To this day, the ideas of racial democracy and inclusivity still permeate public debates and contemporary national imaginaries. This dissertation exposes the role of feeling in the emergence of these ideologies. As I have shown in Part III, even the main proponents of scientific racism in Brazil and Cuba (Nina Rodrigues and Ortiz) have inadvertently theorized processes of racialization that debilitate their own ideas of blackness and white supremacy as

⁶ See Paulina Alberto, *Terms of Inclusion*, for the Brazilian case, and Alejandro de la Fuente, *Nation for All*, for the Cuban case.

biologically determined. By reading Nina Rodrigues and Ortiz against the grain, I hope to have opened new potential readings of Gilberto Freyre, on the one hand, and of José Martí, on the other.

Belatedness

In 1952, Martinican philosopher Frantz Fanon described the attempt of temporally fixating blackness: “You have come too late, much too late. There will always be a world—a white world—between you and us...”⁷ Four decades later, Homi Bhabha conceptualized Fanon’s sense of arriving “too late” into modernity as “the belatedness of the Black man.” Such belatedness, Bhabha argued, would come to question “the temporality of modernity within which the figure of the ‘human’ comes to be *authorized*.”⁸ It is from this time-lag—between the self-defined civilized white world and the “primitive” Black world—that Bhabha posits modernity as being grounded on the denial of freedom, citizenship, and the possibility of self-fashioning to those deemed as others.⁹

This dissertation is an attempt to narrate this story of coerced belatedness in Cuba and Brazil. The chapters included here draw a genealogy of an imagined, racialized affect—one that has informed and impacted contemporary public policies, medical practices, and policing methods throughout the Atlantic world. In doing so, my goal has also been to establish new connections between past discourses on racialized subjectivities, and the current culture of

⁷ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove, 1967), 101.

⁸ Homi Bhabha, “‘Race’, Time and the Revision of Modernity,” *Oxford Literary Review* 13, no. 1/2 (1991): 193.

⁹ Bhabha, “‘Race’, time and the Revision of Modernity,” 198.

necropolitics targeting people of African descent in the Americas.¹⁰ By critically examining the co-constitution of discourses on whiteness and blackness in nineteenth-century Cuba and Brazil, I hope that this study invites further reflections about the role that the “stage of interiority,” to use Denise Ferreira da Silva’s term once again, has had in our conceptions of race and racism.¹¹

¹⁰ A recente study (2021) by the Brazilian Forum of Public Safety and the United Nation Children’s Fund has shown that of the almost 35 thousand deaths of young people between 2016 and 2020 in Brazil, 80% were black. <https://www.unicef.org/brazil/media/16421/file/panorama-violencia-letal-sexual-contra-criancas-adolescentes-no-brasil.pdf>.

¹¹ Denise Ferreira da Silva, *Toward a global idea of race* (Minneapolis: University of of Minnesota Press, 2007).

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