

Our Black *América*:
Transnational Racial Identities in Twentieth-Century Cuba and Brazil

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Introduction: Discovering Black Transnationalism in Martí's *América*

Since the early 2000s, renewed scholarly investigations into black transnationalism have produced fresh insight into the formation and function of racial identities in a globalized world. In literary studies, for example, scholars such as Brent Hayes Edwards and Vera Kutzinski have contributed significantly to our understanding of the transnational relationships between black writers of the early twentieth century. Additionally, historians such as Marc Gallicchio and Minkah Makalani have used their work to document the development of twentieth-century black radical thought across continents and hemispheres. This research has helped to define—and re-define—those movements of the early twentieth century in which “black subjects could strengthen their individual nationalist struggles through *international racial* formations, transnational, race-based networks.” Taken together, “these alternatives represented the hope for an engaged, black internationalism that could generate new conceptions of ‘citizenship,’ new conceptions of the meaning of a ‘national community’” (Stephens, “Black Transnationalism” 605). With the exception of Kutzinski, however, the majority of scholarship on black transnationalism has eschewed any extended consideration of how this historical phenomenon affected the Luso-Hispanic world. *From Toussaint to Tupac* (2009), a seminal anthology on black transnationalism, fails completely to acknowledge Afro-Latin contributions to black consciousness movements of the past century and even Davarian Baldwin and Makalani’s excellent collection *Escape from New York* (2013)—which is explicitly devoted to studying forms of black transnationalism “beyond Harlem”—counts only two of its nineteen contributions as related to black struggles in Latin America. Therefore, despite the excellent and extensive corpus of scholarship on black transnationalism now established across multiple disciplines, there exists no authoritative study of this movement in the Luso-Hispanic context.

Without research into this area, we are left with an incomplete view of both the complexity and reach of black transnationalism in the early-to-mid-twentieth century. Yet we know that during this time period, a good number of Afro-Latin American authors were writing explicitly on the topic of race. Scholars such as Richard Jackson and Miriam DeCosta-Willis have worked tirelessly to expose the rich corpus of writings by Afro- and Afro-Hispanic writers, and Eduardo Duarte has done the same in the context of Afro-Brazil. This dissertation seeks to marry the research of these critics with the most recent studies on black transnationalism and in doing so, identify the (as yet unarticulated) connections between Hispanophone and Lusophone authors of African descent.

Black transnationalism, as it turns out, was not a phenomenon confined to the United States, Britain, France, and French Caribbean territories, but one that exercised considerable influence throughout Latin America. Studying only Anglophone and Francophone manifestations of this ideology risks marginalizing the very real contributions that Luso-Hispanic writers have made to racial consciousness movements—including black transnationalism itself—in the Western Hemisphere. As this dissertation demonstrates, a number of black Latin American writers—all of whom were also engaged activists—used the principles and practices of black transnationalism to challenge their countries' hegemonic paradigms of national racial identity: *mestizaje*, in the case of Cuba, and *mestiçagem* in the case of Brazil. In doing so, these individuals permanently altered the direction of Cuban and Brazilian racial discourse by insisting upon blackness as a distinct element of subjectivity—one that resisted subsumation by raceless nationalisms. Studying their works provides a more richly textured account of the *décalage* of black transnationalism—what Edwards identifies as the “differences within unity” of this movement—while also revealing how Latin American forms of black transnationalism act as a

correction to *and* a continuation of José Martí's legacy of transnational thought (*The Practice of Diaspora* 14). Whereas in his 1891 essay against U.S. imperialism, "Nuestra América," Martí promoted a Latin Americanism based on the erasure of racial categories, the writers of "Our Black América" assert the significance of race as a characteristic with political value in both national and transnational contexts.¹ Their work legitimizes the value of racial distinctives within mixed societies like Cuba and Brazil, countering tendencies within *mestizaje* and *mestiçagem* to reject categories of difference. Whereas, in response to scientific racism, proponents of *mestizaje* and *mestiçagem* had sought to invalidate distinct racial identities, the artists studied in this dissertation instead embraced racial difference.² In their work, they argue that the claiming of a specifically black identity was not necessarily a divisive act, for indeed, such a choice could potentially create a much larger community, linking African-descended people across Latin America.

My use of the term "black transnationalism" in lieu of the more common "black internationalism" is intended to remind the reader of the long and productive history of transnational thought in Latin America—that very tradition that is exemplified in Martí's writing, but which stretches as far back as Simón Bolívar's campaigns for independence. The introduction of black transnationalism to Latin America at the start of the twentieth-century heralded a new direction for this centuries-long tradition. Significantly, it was at this moment in history that Afro-Latin subjects began to see themselves as part of a racial community that transcended the borders of established nation-states, a community rooted not in a sense of shared

¹ Martí writes in "Nuestra América" that in an America united against the interests of the United States, "No hay odio de razas, porque no hay razas" (134).

² Although *mestizaje* and *mestiçagem* must be understood as protest ideologies operating against biological determinism and its related theories, it is beyond the scope of this project to offer a complete history of scientific racism in Latin America. Fortunately, Aline Helg has written an excellent overview of the influence of scientific racism in Cuba in her article "Race in Argentina and Cuba," and Thomas Skidmore has provided the same in his canonical book *From Black into White*, an intellectual history of race in Brazil.

Latin Americanness, but in shared Africanity. A new people within a people was thus created, giving Afro-Latin subjects the grounds to challenge nationalist models of identity that denied the distinctiveness of the black experience in order to promote a homogenous national “self.” Each of the writers included in this study challenged these nationalist models in some way, and although their tactics varied, each was strengthened by his identification with the global African diaspora.

Curiously, in a region that has typically subordinated discussions of race to discussions of class, it was these writers’ engagement with Marxism that initially emboldened their racial rhetoric. Indeed, the Cuban and Brazilian writers whose work occupies “Our Black *América*” were significantly influenced by socialism’s approach to race in the early twentieth century. The first three writers studied in this dissertation, the Cuban poets Nicolás Guillén and Regino Pedroso, along with the Brazilian poet Solano Trindade, were themselves all members of the Communist Party. Their writings from the late 1920s to the mid-1940s reflect their Marxist commitments, as their poetry explores forms of black subjectivity that were closely aligned with that era’s socialist agenda. Committed to the idea of universal liberation, these three writers envisioned a world in which people of *all* races were free from the constraints of capitalism. Yet they did not accept that social harmony could only be achieved by sacrificing racial distinctives—precisely the argument of *mestizaje/mestiçagem*. Instead, Guillén, Pedroso, and Trindade wrote about blackness as a distinctly revolutionary characteristic, imagining it as a force capable of liberating the individual, the nation, and communities across the globe. In this way, their work reflects an early strategy of the Third Communist International, which promoted racial consciousness as a tool for social revolution, while offering an alternative to Cuba and Brazil’s nationalistic discourses that downplayed race.

The final writer studied in this dissertation, the Brazilian author Abdias do Nascimento, engaged with Marxism a different way—not as a supporter, but as a critic. His 1951 play *Sortilégio*, later rewritten as *Sortilégio II* (1979), presents an even more radical view of black subjectivity than that elaborated by Guillén, Pedroso, and Trindade—men with whom he shared important goals, and with whose work he was deeply familiar.³ The racial ideology exhibited in *Sortilégio II* prioritizes black liberation over universal freedom and, in addition, promotes a political philosophy that is focused on the individual rather than the system. As such, Nascimento’s work acts as an explicit response to early Marxist work on the race question, rejecting its universalist premises—which Nascimento considered too vulnerable to appropriation—and insisting upon a more radical and Afrocentric approach to racial struggle. This reformation of the previous generation’s Marxist-inspired approach thus demonstrates black transnationalism’s capacity to evolve in response to the relative success (or failure) of its strategies.

The analysis of these Latin Americans authors’ contributions to black transnationalism is divided into seven chapters. The first provides a definition for the movement itself and traces the history of its development, beginning with its genesis in the immediate post-WWI era and continuing through to its maturation in the 1920s and 30s. As other scholars have noted, black transnationalism is not a single ideology or practice, but a collection of ideologies and movements oriented toward black liberation. For this reason, the first chapter of this dissertation discusses political manifestations of black transnationalism—including Garveyism, Pan-

³ One of the historiographical objectives of this dissertation has been to trace—as closely as is possible—the friendships between these four men. Guillén and Pedroso were close collaborators, as were Trindade and Nascimento, yet there were also transnational linkages between the four writers. Guillén met Trindade and Nascimento during his trip to Brazil in 1947—a meeting which inspired Trindade to write a poem dedicated to the Cuban poet and entitled, “O meu irmão de Cuba.” Furthermore, Nascimento was at least familiar with Pedroso’s work, as evidenced in his activities with the Teatro Experimental Negro (TEN), detailed in chapter seven of this dissertation.

Africanism, and Black Bolshevism—and their artistic complements, such as the Harlem Renaissance, Negrismo, and Negritude. Particular attention is devoted to the ways in which each of these movements was introduced to Latin America and came to influence racial discourse in the region, sowing the first seeds for future theorizations of black identity that challenged Latin America's "raceless" paradigms.

The next section of the dissertation, which encompasses the second, third, and fourth chapters, focuses on black transnationalist thought in Cuba. The first chapter of this section studies the evolution of Cuban racial discourse during Cuba's three wars of independence and its early years as a republic. Special attention is paid to the rise of *mestizaje* ideology in early twentieth-century Cuba and the enduring force of this nationalistic discourse, which characterizes Cuban national identity as a fusion of Spanish and African elements. It also documents the early history of socialism in Cuba, and how Black Bolshevism and other forms of black transnationalism presented an alternative to *mestizaje* paradigms during the first decades of the twentieth century.

Having established this foundation, the following chapters are dedicated to the poetry of Nicolás Guillén and Regino Pedroso, respectively. The third chapter situates Nicolás Guillén's work as the vanguard of black transnationalism in Latin America. His pioneering valorization of the physical characteristics of blackness is uncovered in poems from three of his collections: *West Indies Ltd.* (1934); *España, un poema en cuatro angustias y una esperanza* (1937) and *La paloma de vuelo popular* (1958). The chapter that follows analyzes Regino Pedroso's work, focusing on his epic poem *Más allá canta el mar* (1938) and how it elaborates an existential view of blackness to complement Guillén's corporeal representations of the race. By characterizing blackness as an essentially revolutionary element—Guillén, on the level of the

body, and Pedroso, on the level of the spirit—these two authors challenged *mestizaje*'s simplistic celebrations of racial mixing and suggested a much more powerful conception of race. In exalting what Nancy Morejón calls “Cuba’s deep Africanity,” they inscribed their work within diasporic networks that connected the struggles of Cuban blacks to other members of the African-descended community.

The following section of the dissertation is focused on Brazil and begins with the fifth chapter, which provides a historical overview of racial ideology in Brazil and the racial activism of Marxists and other political groups that operated in Brazil during the first half of the twentieth century. It documents the development of *mestiçagem* ideology—Brazil’s national paradigm of racial mixing—and studies its relationship to the myth of racial democracy, or the idea that Brazil’s history of “harmonious miscengenation” prevented the development of invidious racism in that country. What we discover in tracing the evolution of this discourse is that *mestiçagem* exerts its power as, in the words of Michael Hanchard, a “form of hegemony, articulated through processes of socialization that promote racial discrimination while simultaneously denying its existence, [that] assists in the reproduction of social inequalities between whites and nonwhites while simultaneously promoting a false premise of racial equality between them” (6). This is the criticism of *mestiçagem* that both Solano Trindade and Abdias do Nascimento express in their creative works, which are the subject of the sixth and seventh chapters of this dissertation.

Trindade’s criticism of *mestiçagem* is traced through his development of the symbol of the *quilombo* in his epic poem “Canto dos Palmares,” published in 1944. Evoking the uniquely Brazilian practice of racial resistance found in *quilombo* settlements, Trindade sees in this symbol a potential focus point for black liberation in the twentieth century, as he re-imagines the historical Palmares as a modern-day Afro-Socialist utopia. Abdias do Nascimento extends this

metaphor even further in his work, which is studied in the seventh and final chapter of this dissertation. This chapter analyzes how Nascimento's most famous dramatic work, *Sortilégio II* (1979), engages with socialist discourses of race, as articulated by Jean-Paul Sartre in his famous essay on Negritude, "Orphée noir," ultimately to reject them and establish a uniquely Afrocentric subjectivity in Brazilian literature. This chapter seeks to demonstrate how Nascimento's lived experience of a so-called "raceless" society disillusioned him to socialism's universalist approach, leading him to develop the political philosophy of Quilombismo, which prioritized black liberation above all other social goals.

This study of how blackness is treated in the writing of these four authors follows the development of black transnationalist thought in Latin America over five decades of this past century. Though an imported phenomenon at the start of the twentieth century, black transnationalism was quickly adopted by Afro-Latin American authors as an ideology that both emphasized their solidarity with black rights movements worldwide and spoke to their specific historical experiences and struggles, including the unique challenge of discussing race in ostensibly race-blind societies. As these writers claimed a distinctly black identity all their own, their work shattered the myth of Latin American racelessness, irrevocably changing the direction of racial discourse throughout Martí's *América*. This is the history traced on the pages of this dissertation, which has been my privilege to write.

Chapter One: The Origins of Black Transnationalism and its Introduction to Latin America

“What’s in a name?”: Definitions of Black Trans-/Inter-/nationalism(s)

In order to understand the ways in which black transnationalism influenced cultural representations of race in Latin America—and vice versa—it is first necessary to trace the origin and spread of this ideology during the first half of the twentieth century. Many forms of black transnationalism developed in the years following World War I, in places as disparate as the United States, Britain, and the West Indies. Two principles, however, were common to all of these black transnationalisms. The first was an Afrocentric view of history: the belief that the black experience of the past was distinct from, yet equally valid to, white interpretations of history. The second principle built off of this historical perspective. It held that the history of the Atlantic slave trade—and the suffering caused by it—served to unite blacks throughout the African diaspora. This second principle eventually developed into the praxis of black transnationalism—the various movements of black solidarity that came to be known under the umbrella term of black transnationalism. This chapter studies some of the most prominent manifestations of black transnationalism—in both its political and cultural movements—and their reception in Latin America. The historical overview contained within illustrates the diversity of viewpoints within black transnationalism and attempts to explain the appeal of certain forms of black transnationalism in the Caribbean and South America, while also laying the groundwork for the analysis of the ways in which the aforementioned Latin American artists adapted black transnationalist thought to their own racial environments. It also outlines the most important ways in which black transnationalist movements engaged with and were received in

Latin America, and finally, it considers which elements of black transnationalism were preserved—and which were discarded—in the “translation” of this ideology into Cuban and Brazilian society in the early to mid-twentieth century.

Before studying the effects of this movement in Latin America, however, it is essential to answer a basic question: what *is* black transnationalism? Scholars have defined black transnationalism in several different—but not mutually exclusive—ways. Davarian Baldwin, for example, regards black transnationalism as both a “mindset” and a “moment” that manifest a “New Negro analytic,” one that “charts broadly the New Negro experience as an overlapping and contested architecture of race consciousness that moved around the United States, traveled along a range of expressive frequencies, and was translated (or not) into other languages and frames of local and global discourse” (Introduction). Employing a distinct yet complementary definition, the editors of the influential anthology *From Toussaint to Tupac* consider black transnationalism as a political movement born of a particular form of consciousness. In their words, this consciousness understood clearly the “interconnection and interlocution of black struggles across man-made and natural boundaries” (1). Consequently, it manifested itself on the human level as a series of struggles centered on the ideal of “universal emancipation, unbounded by national, imperial, continental, or oceanic boundaries—or even by racial ones” (xi).

Such consciousness might be traced back to the Haitian Revolution, which, as Ada Ferrer writes in *Freedom's Mirror*, inspired blacks across the diaspora to “think about their enslavement and to imagine other possible futures” (11). Yet it clearly found its apex in the early twentieth century, where many different black transnationalisms came to flourish. The development of these interlinked movements of the early twentieth century resulted from a

confluence of social, economic, and political factors. Each of these elements, however, found its roots in one pivotal moment in history: the Great War.

The Rise of Black Transnationalism in the Wake of World War I

Though some scholars trace the roots of black transnationalism to the slave revolts of the eighteenth century and earlier demonstrations of racial resistance, the first manifestations of black transnationalism “proper” are generally associated with the period of World War I and its immediate aftermath. Historians have thoroughly emphasized the repercussions of the Great War on white European and North American populations, yet “the war to end all wars” also had a major human and cultural impact on Africa and the communities of the African diaspora. Black participants in the war as well as observers—whether from the United States, France, or Costa Rica—shared key experiences and interpretations of the conflict that engendered a sense of solidarity among these disparate populations.

At the start of the war, many people of color understood the conflict as an opportunity to advance racial politics and achieve greater equality with whites; by its close, however, such hopes had failed to materialize. The collective disillusionment suffered by the black community post-WWI thus set the stage for the development of black transnationalism, described by historian Adriane Smith-Lentz as the fusion of “an indigenous militant black politics with a new, internationalized vision” (10). This amalgamation yielded the many variants of black transnationalism that emerged in the following decades, including global political initiatives, migratory cultural movements, and religious revivals that sought to unite people of African descent across national borders. While distinct from one another, each of these forms of black transnationalism was shaped by a common history rooted in the experience of the Great War.

One way to understand the racial repercussions of World War I is through the eyes of black soldiers, and the ways in which their experiences of this conflict were transmitted to and received by communities of color around the globe. Black soldiers served in the American, French, and British armies, fighting on both the Western Front and in Africa. However, it is the experiences of African American and black French colonial soldiers in particular that are best documented and most instructive in terms of how the war's failed promises eventually gave rise to movements of black transnationalism. In both the French and American contexts, black soldiers' experience of war was defined by a central paradox: for each opportunity apparently presented by military service, it seemed that an equivalent right was denied. This paradox exhibited itself across all facets of military life, and throughout the duration of soldiers' military experience, from the earliest days of their training to their eventual homecomings. It is significant as well that the first forms of black transnationalism found the greatest initial popularity in the United States and in France, for these are where the injustices experienced by blacks during the Great War were most clearly laid bare.

"We Return Fighting: " The Betrayal of African American Soldiers in the Great War

From the time of its initial engagement until the war's end, the United States employed approximately 400,000 black troops in its military, half of whom served in Europe (Lentz-Smith 4).⁴ Upon the United States' declaration of war in April 1917, military service instantly became a subject of controversy in the African American community. Mere days following the declaration of war, certain influential black newspapers, such as the *Baltimore Afro-American*, pronounced their opposition to the idea of blacks serving in the war, questioning why African Americans

⁴ The most comprehensive overview of African Americans' service in WWI can be found in Chad Williams's *Torchbearers of Democracy* (2010), while Adriane Lentz-Smith's *Freedom Struggles* (2009) provides a nice complement, focusing on how the black experience of WWI informed future civil rights movements.

should risk their lives for a country in which they were treated as second-class citizens. More commonly, however, black periodicals promoted military service, motivated by reasons that ranged from “patriotic loyalty, to sympathy with Wilson’s war aims and a belief that support [for the war] would advance group interests” (Jordan 89).⁵ Even before the U.S.’s official involvement, black journalists had described the war as an opportunity to bring justice to “the darker races,” imagining that the conflict would give African Americans an important participatory role in the broader fight against global oppression. Perhaps no writer believed as strongly in this possibility as W.E.B. Du Bois, who contended in his editorial “The African Roots of War”—published in 1914, a full three years before the United States declared war—that:

The domination of one people by another without the other’s consent, be the subject people black or white, must stop.... In this great work who can help us?... Who better than the twenty-five million grandchildren of the European slave trade, spread through the Americas and now writhing desperately for freedom and a place in the world? And of these millions first of all the ten million black folk of the United States, now a problem, then a world-salvation. (714)

Du Bois’s argument here rests on a premise discussed earlier in his editorial—that the cause of the war was not, in fact, tension in the Balkans, but Europe’s capitalist lust for the resources of Africa; however, it is nevertheless demonstrative of the general hopes of the black community in

⁵ William G. Jordan provides a nuanced overview of the black press’s response to the war in his monograph *Black Newspapers and America’s War for Democracy* (2001). In his estimation, although many black newspaper editors declared their support for the war, they did so partially out of fear that if they were to do otherwise, they would be declared disloyal by the government. The influence of black newspapers on public opinion cannot be ignored, given that these newspapers functioned, in the words of Vassell and Burroughs, “to create connections—exchanges of ideas and information—that [led] to the development of a collective, albeit varied, political, social, economic, cultural, and spiritual consciousness” (258). In the years of the conflict and the immediate thereafter, black newspapers’ reporting on the war did much to build a sense of solidarity between Africa and its diasporic communities around the world, and it was this sense of solidarity that would later be transposed into political, cultural, and religious movements of black transnationalism.

the face of war. Du Bois envisioned a uniquely salvific role for African Americans, seeing the conflict as an opportunity for black Americans to use their military service to prove their worth to the world and thereby liberate themselves from their subjugation.

Initially, many black intellectuals shared Du Bois's optimism regarding the potential contributions of African Americans during the Great War. Being called to military service gave black soldiers—along with their families and communities—an unprecedented sense of purpose and belonging in a national project. In the words of Charles H. Williams, one of the earliest historians of black participation in the Great War, “Many a Negro, as he left home and loved ones, for the first time thought of himself as a part of the Government and as sharing equally with every other citizen in the performance of his duty” (23). Blacks who voluntarily enlisted in the army saw themselves as contributing to Wilson's “war for democracy” on two fronts, expecting that their defense of Europe's freedom would also eventually earn them increased freedoms at home, as Du Bois himself had imagined. African Americans thus immediately answered the call to service; just one week after the United States' declaration of war, so many African Americans had voluntarily enlisted that the War Department met its race-based quota, and the military had to begin rejecting African American volunteers (Bryan). Since they could no longer enlist, many African Americans lobbied passionately to be included in the draft, despite the likelihood that the military would reflect the same structures of racism that characterized the home front, e.g., segregating troops, providing only inferior equipment and training for black soldiers, and permitting—if not encouraging—other forms of discrimination against African American servicemen. In an editorial entitled “Let Us Unite,” published in the April 14, 1917 edition of the *Afro-American Ledger*, the writer criticized proposals from Southern legislators that would have exempted blacks from the draft. Arguing that blacks had as

much a right to serve as any other American and would demonstrate the utmost loyalty to the country in their task, he declared, “The country needs soldiers—not white soldiers or black soldiers—but soldiers, and their [*sic*] ought to be manliness enough in those who are in control of the government to see that there shall be no distinctions save between patriots and traitors”

(4). Editorial writers such as these, and the African Americans who enlisted at rates higher than white Americans, were eager to prove that they were an essential component of the American war effort, and by extension, an essential component of American society, worthy of equal treatment to whites (Scheiber 439).

History has shown that the early optimism of the African American community regarding the benefits of military service was not wholly misplaced, as this experience did provide blacks in uniform with some material and psychological benefits. For one, service gave many African Americans increased educational and leadership opportunities; for this reason, the majority of black intellectuals, including Du Bois, supported the creation of a training camp for black officers—Fort Des Moines—despite the fact that it was a segregated institution. In his recent monograph studying the officers trained at this camp, Adam P. Wilson writes that such men would come to “serve as the vanguard of civil rights” in their era, first by proving the enormous capabilities of black soldiers and later by becoming effective advocates for racial justice in America after the war (1).

Even those who did not surpass the lower ranks, however, benefited from the specialized training and international travel that military service offered. As has been well documented in the literature about African Americans in the Great War, exposure to French culture proved transformative for many who served in Europe. Many soldiers whose lives had been shaped by the tyranny and terror of Jim Crow perceived France as a more racially inclusive society. France

offered African American soldiers a chance to break free of the strict segregationist practices that they were subject to at home and in their own military camps. An ocean removed from Jim Crow, some black soldiers interacted with white civilians on a level of human intimacy and mutual respect that many had never before experienced.⁶ Furthermore, African Americans' interactions with French colonial soldiers from Africa and the West Indies allowed them to see black lives that were undefined by legal segregation, while at the same time enlightening them as to the common struggles of black communities. Naturally, linguistic and cultural differences meant that not all of these interactions were harmonious. Nonetheless, the exchange between black soldiers from different regions of the world was politically significant, in that it allowed these groups an opportunity to learn about their shared experiences of oppression, and thus laid a foundation for more organized pan-Africanist movements in the following decades. Though true racial equality was more rhetoric than reality in WWI-era France, the fact remains that at the time, many African American soldiers understood and experienced France as a more racially inclusive society, and this image of France was also widely disseminated in the black press back home.⁷ The long-term impact of this experience is described compellingly by Chad Williams, who writes that black servicemen "found a sense of both comfort and hope in the potential of interracial democracy through their contacts with French civilians. Suddenly, America and its undemocratic treatment of black people ceased to be the norm" (166). This expansion in the

⁶ Of particular symbolic significance were the relationships that developed between African American soldiers and white French women. As Chad Williams writes, "By having sex with white French women, black soldiers not only consciously violated the most explosive racial taboo in the United States but made a statement about the fallacy of the color line and the potential of white and black people to interact with each other on the most intimate of levels" (170). Of course, sexual relationships between African Americans and French women were no indication of absolute racial equality in France; other blacks (especially French colonial subjects) were discriminated against harshly, as discussed in the subsequent section of this chapter.

⁷ Tyler Stovall's research, including his 1996 monograph *Paris Noir*, has done much to demythologize the image of France as a color-blind nation. His recent article on racial violence in France during the Great War, "'The Color Line' Behind the Lines," shows the extent to which the war exacerbated racial tensions in France, resulting in a significant number of attacks on black French colonial troops during the years of the conflict.

black social perspective was one significant element that contributed to the development of black transnationalism in the post-war years.

Another important factor that furthered the development of black transnationalism in the United States was the intense disillusionment that African American soldiers and their communities suffered when it became clear that black soldiers would not be appreciated for their efforts either during or after the war. Lentz-Smith states succinctly, “Military service did not offset racial hierarchies, it entrenched them” (126). In large part, blacks serving in World War I did not see combat; of the African American troops serving in Europe, less than a quarter were sent to the front lines (Tooley 222). Racial prejudice made the idea of placing African American soldiers in direct combat with a white enemy repellant to many generals; for this reason, black servicemen were largely employed in service-oriented roles—principally as stevedores, transporting the goods that white troops required on the Western Front (Scheiber 444).

Even while relegated to such inferior positions, African Americans frequently found themselves under attack—not merely from their German enemies, but also from their own white comrades-at-arms. Attacks on African American soldiers by white American servicemembers were not unheard of, and rarely were the white instigators of such violence punished for their actions (Keene 88).⁸ In court proceedings initiated following the end of the war, soldiers testified to seeing black servicemen shot by white officers and finding the decomposed bodies of black soldiers who had been lynched on the Western Front (“Soldiers Testify to Army Lynchings” 6). Black soldiers invented various strategies of resistance against such attacks; in his memoir of the war, for example, veteran Ely Green relayed the tale of a group of black soldiers who secretly collected weapons from the bodies of the dead in order to defend themselves against the white

⁸ Incidents such as these abound in the autobiographies of black soldiers, including Green’s and that of Harry Haywood (pseudonym Haywood Hall), who would later rise to prominence as a black radical leader.

officers who threatened violence against them (421-23). Such creative tactics were necessary when black soldiers had few options for formal recourse against such attacks. The military justice system disproportionately punished black soldiers for minor and even perceived offenses, including insubordination to white officers, and instituted curfews, random personnel checks, and other mechanisms designed to discipline black soldiers harshly and remind them of “their place” in the socio-military hierarchy. Such treatment betrayed the relative benefits of military service and destabilized black soldiers’ faith that their sacrifices would be honored with expanded civil rights.

Black soldiers’ experiences of homecoming also dashed the hope that the African American community would benefit from black soldiers’ sacrifices. When black soldiers returned home, they found that not only did they continue to be treated as second-class citizens by white Americans, but that their social standing was often actually worse than before they had left to serve. Violence against blacks increased following the war and was exacerbated by class conflict between white and black laborers, culminating in the Red Summer of 1919, when seventy-seven blacks—eleven of them veterans—were lynched, and race riots broke out from Washington, DC to Chicago to Omaha (Onion).⁹ By this point, it was clear that black soldiers would not be repaid for their service with equal rights.

This tragic realization seemed to embolden blacks to band together against racial violence on U.S. soil; in the words of Du Bois from that year: “We *return*. We *return from fighting*. We *return fighting*” (“Returning Soldiers” 245). Some veterans organized formally in associations such as the League for Democracy, founded by black Army lieutenant Osceola McKaine, and

⁹ Cameron McWhirter’s popular history, *Red Summer* (2011), is an accessible account of the major race riots that broke out across the United States that summer. The Red Summer was not confined to the United States, however; major riots also rocked Britain during the same time period. Jacqueline Jenkinson analyzes the intersection of race and colonialism in these riots in *Black 1919: Riots, Racism, and Resistance* (2009).

Marcus Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA).¹⁰ Others pledged themselves to the African Blood Brotherhood (ABB), a Marxist secret organization whose membership, as Winston James attests, was disproportionately comprised of African American and West Indian veterans of the Great War (168). As they took a renewed stand against Jim Crow, African American veterans' newfound understanding of the global struggles of their race helped them to situate their activism in a new, transnational light. Their time in France, spent in contact with black colonial subjects of Britain and France, revealed that although racial oppression was perhaps less institutionalized in other countries, it was no less a part of their experience (as discussed below). Therefore, as they sought reform within their own country, many of these veterans also looked outward, to the other members of "the darker races" in need of support. In the coming years, black Americans would come to lead organizations and movements that would live out this concern for black rights on a global scale.

A Parallel Struggle: Black British and French Colonial Soldiers in the Great War

Just as the Great War and its aftermath served to heighten African Americans' racial consciousness and contribute to an environment that fostered black transnationalist movements in the United States, this conflict also radicalized other populations of the African diaspora that were either directly involved in or witnesses to the war. Although ex-soldiers of the French and British militaries did not organize formal campaigns for racial justice on the same scale as African American veterans—likely because there was no analogous system of legalized racial oppression, like segregation, to mobilize against at home—their experiences of the war served in other ways to catalyze the development of a black transnationalist consciousness. The 600,000

¹⁰ As one of the most significant movements of black transnationalism, the UNIA is discussed in greater detail in the following section of this chapter.

French and two million British colonial soldiers that served in the war often suffered many of the same injustices to which African American servicemen were subject to during the actual fighting; they too received inferior training, equipment, and positions, were often housed in substandard accommodations with insufficient food, and were treated with second-rate medical care when they were injured or sick.¹¹ Though blacks served in the French army in unprecedented numbers—including, importantly, in combat positions—the empire’s recruitment strategy was founded upon principles of biological determinism and the racist ideology of *les races guerrieres*. For example, advocates for the use of Senegalese troops touted “their innate fighting qualities” (Lunn 528). In both the French and British armies, people of color (including non-blacks) were segregated from other troops, though the demarcations were not based explicitly on race, but on country of origin. Even so, such systems functioned effectively as racial segregation. Furthermore, at times, the French army concentrated black soldiers into a single unit in order to use them as “shock troops” against the Germans, resulting in disproportionate numbers of injuries and fatalities in trench warfare, as these black soldiers took the brunt of German shells and machine guns.¹²

While black troops suffered under the structural injustices of the French and British military systems, they were also targeted in acts of discrimination and racial violence committed by white civilians. Though France’s official racial ideology was that of a “color-blind” republic, it became clear during the years of the war that true racial equality in France was more myth than reality. The relative openness of French citizens towards African American soldiers—considered

¹¹ Nearly three quarters of all French colonial troops were black, with the majority of these soldiers hailing from Africa, though France’s Caribbean colonies were also represented in the French military. Approximately 15,000 West Indians served in the British West Indies Regiment (Goldthree 59). Richard S. Fogarty’s monograph, *Race and War in France* (2008), provides a comprehensive overview of French colonial troops’ contributions during the Great War, while William Dean’s 2010 article “Morale Among French Colonial Troops on the Western Front During World War I: 1914-1918” specifically details the ill treatment that these troops suffered.

¹² Comparing the fatalities suffered among combatants, Dunn reveals that the losses of Senegalese troops were 20 percent higher than those of white French soldiers (532).

exotic for their status as foreigners—did not necessarily extend to black soldiers from the French colonies. Civilian attitudes towards French colonial troops were especially complex and sometimes manifested in violent ways. The Great War marked the first time in history that many white French citizens had come into contact with large numbers of blacks, and their responses to these troops ranged from genuine appreciation and admiration (especially for the distinguished *tirailleurs sénégalais*) to outright disgust and hatred. The French military's own racist propaganda was partially responsible for its citizenry's negative attitudes; in his article "The French Colonial Army and the Great War," William Dean notes how French officials' efforts to promote the supposed savagery of their African servicemen led to the creation of a racial myth that outlasted even the war itself (505). Autobiographical accounts of the war often attested to white Frenchmen's fear of black servicemen stationed in their communities. This fear managed to manifest itself in attacks against black troops and colonial laborers, as Tyler Stovall documents in his article about racial violence in WWI-era France, entitled "The Color Line Behind the Lines."

This fact polarized black French colonial soldiers. Following the Armistice, some troops returned to their home countries determined to work within the colonial system to improve blacks' lives, whereas others, disillusioned with the Republic's empty recitations of "liberté, égalité, fraternité," began agitating for revolutionary reform. The well-known Senegalese veteran and politician Blaise Diagne was the most prominent black leader to adopt the accommodationist approach. But by the mid-1920s, Diagne's ideology had fallen out of favor with the more radical pan-Africanist movement that was pushing total systemic revolution. Leading this group were the African veterans Lamine Senghor of Senegal and Max Bloncourt of Guadeloupe. Both men were initially involved with Marxist politics, though Senghor eventually became dissatisfied with

communism's failure to prioritize racial issues during the early 1920s and broke with the official Communist Party in order to found his own organization, the *Comité de Défense de la Race Nègre* (CDRN) in 1926. He died one year later of tuberculosis, but not before publishing the essay "Le Mot Nègre," one of the most coherent and compelling expressions of early black transnationalist thought. In "Le Mot Nègre," Senghor expertly deconstructs the inherent racism of imperialism, explaining how the French empire employed racial terms to divide blacks and keep them in subjugation to an unjust system. He ridicules the artificial colonial hierarchy that separates "hommes de couleur," from "noires" and "nègres," declaring the former superior to the latter two. He also calls for a reclaiming of the term "nègre" and its transformation from insult to rallying cry, as he apostrophizes French colonizers, "Oui, messieurs, vous avez voulu vous servir de ce nom comme mot d'ordre scissionniste. Nous, nous en servons comme mot d'ordre de ralliement: un flambeau!" (1).¹³ Senghor envisions this "flambeau" igniting not just a racial revolution, but also an economic one. This vision of black solidarity that Senghor promotes in "Le Mot Nègre"—that of black anti-imperialism—is an important precursor of later pan-Africanist ideologies that combined the pursuit of racial justice and economic liberation. In time, Senghor would also prove to be an important influence on the intellectuals involved in the colonial Negritude movement, as they pursued national self-determination alongside racial equality.¹⁴

Just as the Great War radicalized a number of French and American soldiers, it had a similar effect on black British soldiers returning home. Following the end of the conflict, the Empire demonstrated its ingratitude towards black soldiers by excluding black troops from

¹³ See the first chapter of Brent Hayes Edwards's *The Practice of Diaspora* for an extended discussion of the word "nègre," its connotations, and the difficulty of its translation.

¹⁴ David Murphy provides a helpful overview of Senghor's influence—and a strong argument for why the CDRN should not be considered a failed organization—in his 2013 article "Defending the 'Negro race': Lamine Senghor and Black Internationalism in Interwar France."

British victory celebrations (Jenkinson, “‘All in the Same Uniform?’” 212). Soon after the Armistice, black British veterans also found themselves targeted during the race riots of 1919, when white mobs of mostly working-class Britons attacked working-class blacks in port cities across the nation.¹⁵ Many of these blacks had come to Britain during the war, either to serve in the military or as laborers supporting the war effort. The post-war backlash against black veterans in Britain was similar to that which African Americans faced when they arrived home, paralleling the race riots of the Red Summer of 1919 and leading “to emotions of betrayal and unrewarded wartime ‘blood sacrifice’ among Britain’s black colonial population” (212). Outraged, black veterans began organizing on behalf of their race, often joining together with black student unions and labor organizations whose existence had predated the war and was revived after it. Out of these alliances, organizations such as the African Progress Union and the Society for Peoples of African Origin—both founded in 1918—grew in membership and prominence. These organizations enjoyed a particularly robust following in London, which became a hub of black transnationalism in the decade to follow, as well as in some British colonies in the Caribbean.¹⁶

To summarize, the injustices of the Great War and its aftermath produced an intense disillusionment among blacks in the French and British metropolises, similar to that experienced by African Americans. When combined with these groups’ newfound awareness of blacks’ struggles elsewhere in the world—an awareness engendered largely by the relationships formed between these communities on the Western Front—their indignation took on an international

¹⁵ Jenkinson’s extended analysis of these riots is found in her monograph *Black 1919: Riots, Racism, and Resistance in Imperial Britain* (2008).

¹⁶ Marc Matera’s recent monograph, *Black London* (2015), studies the rise of black transnationalism in London during the postwar period and how this led to freedom movements in the British colonies. His work is complemented by Minkah Makalani’s 2011 volume *In the Cause of Freedom*, which devotes significant attention to the rise of black radicalism—particularly as affiliated with Marxism—in London and elsewhere.

scope. This transformed both Paris and London into fertile environments for the development and dissemination of black transnationalist ideologies in the decade following WWI.

However, the general consensus of historians is that the same phenomenon did not occur in the African colonies of the British and French empires—the frequently ignored African Front of the Great War. Although R.J. Reid has asserted in *A History of Modern Africa* that African soldiers' experience of the war led them to form “quasi-political” associations formed on the basis of “protest identities,” other historians dispute the idea that such organizations were founded as the result of any sort of racial consciousness movement (179). Fogarty and Killingray, for example, argue that while such associations may have formed in the early post-war years, their activities do not explicitly link them to global movements of black transnationalism (108).

Three factors serve to explain why veterans who served in Africa did not immediately participate in racially conscious political movements, as their comrades in the United States, France, and Britain did. First, African troops who did not serve on the Western Front were significantly more isolated than their comrades in Europe; though they suffered the same second-class treatment that soldiers on the Western Front did, they were also denied the limited benefits that this other group received. Soldiers in Africa had few opportunities to interact with whites on anything approximating equal footing—either as unit mates or as civilians—and they also lacked the chance to forge relationships with black troops from other nations and to compare experiences with them, as happened on the Western Front. As a result, the racial education of African soldiers took a different route than that of black soldiers in Europe. Second, the fact that soldiers in Africa had been shielded from the “total warfare” of the Western Front—though not from great losses—may also serve to explain this population's relatively peaceful

reincorporation into colonial society. As Fogarty writes of French soldiers in Africa, “The war had not ‘brutalized’ them and propelled them to make maximal demands for change, nor certainly to intervene violently in politics” (117). Finally, Fogarty and Killingray note that the idea that veterans were “owed” special treatment by the empire was stronger in the French and British metropolises than in the colonies, which also may explain why African veterans did not organize *en masse* to demand their due (121). In fact, some African veterans may have believed that they *had* already received what they were owed by the empire. Fogarty notes that at least in French West Africa, “many veterans did benefit from enhanced prestige in their communities” after their service ended, and some used that prestige to work within the colonial system for change, like Blaise Diagne (117). Therefore, although Africa would be a subject of great interest for black transnationalists in the immediate post-war period and African activists would eventually represent an important segment of this movement, it does not appear that the experience of soldiers in Africa played a significant role in the initial development of this ideology.

Instead, it was principally the experiences of the black soldiers whose lives had intersected on the Western Front that proved the greatest catalyst for the development of racial consciousness in post-WWI Europe and the United States. In Harlem, London, and Paris, the need for racial equality appeared ever more urgent as the war ended and blacks were denied the advantages that they had expected to receive in recognition of their service. This situation gave rise to various movements of black transnationalism, the most prominent of which are discussed in the subsequent section of this chapter. Concentrated originally in these American and European epicenters, these movements quickly traveled on cultural currents to places as far-flung as Panama, Kenya, and Trinidad. Black transnationalism manifested as political campaigns,

religious revivals, and artistic movements, all of which would serve to redirect racial discourse in the early twentieth century—including in Latin America. Within their diverse expressions, these movements presented common metaphysical and political questions to modern society: what does it mean to be black and what is the responsibility of those who identify as black towards one another? While movements such as Garveyism and Black Bolshevism answered these questions differently, their parallel formulation of such inquiries represented a key moment in the transformation of modern race relations.

Political Movements for Black Solidarity: Garveyism, Pan-Africanism, and Black Bolshevism

The most well recognized manifestations of black transnationalism were the political movements that arose from the aftermath of WWI. The first of these was Garveyism, led by Marcus Garvey, the charismatic Jamaican-born founder of the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). His organization, headquartered in Harlem beginning in 1914, rose to prominence during the years of the Great War. Garvey's cry of "Africa for Africans" resonated with people of African descent from all parts of the world and the appeal of his emphasis on racial improvement allowed the organization to boast more than one million members at its height (Drowne and Huber 12). "More metaphor than movement," according to the editors of *From Toussaint to Tupac*, Garveyism was "a rhetorical, stylistic, and organizational model easily replicated" (11). In its many iterations, which spanned from South Africa to Panama to Canada, Garveyism embodied a quality that many scholars have identified as fundamental to the movement of black transnationalism itself: the idea of difference within unity. The UNIA unified its members around the central tenets of black self-determination and sovereignty, but it was also

adaptable to the individual racial circumstances of the countries in which it organized. This gave Garveyism the ability to empower the members of Montreal's UNIA chapter—many of them West Indian immigrants—to organize for improved economic conditions for the city's black railroad workers, while simultaneously inspiring African Americans to protest lynching in the Jim Crow South.¹⁷ Garveyism was also a force in Latin America, particularly in countries where there were large numbers of foreign black workers. In Cuba alone, the UNIA boasted fifty-two chapters—the largest number outside of the United States. In Panama, there were forty-seven chapters, twenty-three in Costa Rica, eight in Spanish Honduras, six in Colombia, five each in Guatemala and Nicaragua, four in Mexico, and one each in Ecuador, Puerto Rico, Venezuela and Brazil (Martin 16).¹⁸ Garveyism was on the decline by 1926, following a series of scandals involving Garvey himself, but the pan-Africanist message that it had championed would find other standard-bearers to carry it through the next decade.¹⁹

Another black transnationalist organization, which was founded at the same time as Garvey's but outlasted the UNIA, was the Pan-African Congress (PAC). It was organized and led by W.E.B. Du Bois, by then a prominent figure as the editor of the NAACP's influential newspaper, *The Crisis*. The Pan-African Congress was, in fact, a continuation of an earlier effort in which Du Bois had participated: the similarly named Pan-African Conference of 1900, organized by the Bajan Henry Sylvester Williams. Hosted in London, the original Pan-African Conference brought together representatives—principally from the United States, Britain and the

¹⁷ See Marano's 2010 article "Rising Strongly and Rapidly" for a history of the UNIA's activities in Canada; Robert A. Hill has stewarded the broadest account of Garvey's life and published it in *The Marcus Garvey and United Negro Improvement Association Papers* (1983).

¹⁸ While the UNIA's activities in Cuba and Central America have been studied by scholars such as Lara Putnam, Frank Guridy, and Marc MacLeod, very little is known about the affairs of the UNIA in other countries in Latin America. See Putnam's 2013 monograph *Radical Moves*, Guridy's 2003 article "Enemies of the White Race" and MacLeod's 2003 article, "Sin dejar de ser cubanos."

¹⁹ A complete history of Garvey's life and the trajectory of the UNIA can be found in Ewing's 2014 *The Age of Garvey*.

British colonies—to discuss the struggles shared by black men across the world. Its goals were four-fold, as summarized by Marika Sherwood in her 2012 article “What Does Pan-Africanism mean?”:

To secure civil and political rights for Africans and their descendants throughout the world;

To encourage friendly relations between the Caucasian and African races;

To encourage African people everywhere in educational, industrial and commercial enterprise;

To approach governments and influence legislation in the interests of the black races; and to ameliorate the condition of the oppressed negro in all parts of the world. (107)

Having strategized on these objectives, the Conference concluded with a speech by Du Bois entitled “To the Nations of the World,” wherein he delivered his now-iconic observation that “The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line.” In this discourse, he urged cooperation among the races, appealing to the audience to: “Let no color or race be a feature of distinction between white and black men, regardless of worth or ability.”

The emphasis on cross-racial solidarity adopted by the PAC was one element that would differentiate this organization from Garveyism, since it eschewed the kind of self-separatism promoted by the UNIA. Another distinguishing characteristic was its particular form of racial uplift ideology, which promoted the creation of a black bourgeoisie. This was a key tenet of Du Boisian thought, which he later championed as his thesis of the “Talented Tenth”—the goal of building a cadre of classically educated blacks whose life purpose would be to elevate the race from its dejected circumstances. By contrast, Garvey’s organization was largely comprised of

working-class blacks who shared its populist ideals, a fact which has led scholars such as Judith Stein to study Garveyism as a class movement.

Though the first Pan-African Conference did not survive long after its initial convocation, the organization's ideals were revived by Du Bois in 1919, when he organized the first meeting of the Pan-African *Congress* (PAC) in Paris.²⁰ The location of the event and its timing were strategic. Du Bois and his fellow organizers, Blaise Diagne, of Senegal and M.E.F. Fredericks of Sierra Leone, scheduled the event in Paris during the Paris Peace Conference as a way of pressuring the international delegates of that conference to consider the needs of African and African-descended peoples in their treaty negotiations. Like the Pan-African Conference before it, while the Congress succeeded in calling attention to the plight of blacks under oppressive governments, including colonial structures, its demands did not call for total revolution. The French journalist Maurice Delafosse, reporting on the meeting, observed that its resolutions primarily called for the exercise of "la bonne colonization," not an overhaul of existing governments (qtd. in Hargreaves 238).

Subsequent meetings of the Pan-African Congress, however, were more radical in their ideology. The radicalization of the organization paralleled that of its leader, as Du Bois immersed himself in socialist ideology and came to draw a parallel between racial and economic exploitation.²¹ The evolving mission of the Pan-African Congress was also influenced by other racial ideologies of its time, like Garveyism. Although Du Bois was at first vociferously critical of Garvey's "bombastic" approach to black solidarity, he eventually came to adopt certain tenets of the UNIA's ideology. For example, following the second Pan-African Congress, convened in

²⁰ See Contee's article from 1972 entitled "Du Bois, the NAACP, and the Pan-African Congress of 1919" for a history of the extraordinary measures that Du Bois undertook to organize the Pan-African Congress of 1919, which was planned in short measure and faced significant obstacles from the French government.

²¹ A history of Du Bois's intellectual radicalization is provided in Ratcliff's 2013 article "The Radical Evolution of Du Boisian Pan-Africanism."

1921, Du Bois published the first official document calling for an independent Africa. At the subsequent meeting of the PAC in 1923, special attention was paid to Latin American issues. The charter of this Third Pan-African Congress included a condemnation of Latin America's well known "whitening policies," known as "blanqueamiento" in Spanish and "embranquecimento" in Portuguese. These laws were enacted at the beginning of the twentieth century and encouraged white immigration (particularly from Spain and Italy) to Latin American countries in order to "whiten" the racial stock of said countries. Both Cuba and Brazil exercised such policies. The Third Pan-African Congress denounced these, as Du Bois reported in his recap of the Congress for *The New Republic*, and the PAC included in its charter a call for blacks from Brazil and Central America to "no longer be satisfied with a solution to the Negro problem which involves their absorption into another race, without allowing Negroes as such full recognition of their manhood and their right to be" ("The Negro Takes Stock").

Two more meetings of the Pan-African Congress were held in 1923 and 1927, but there would not be another until 1945, in Manchester, England. During the interval, Du Bois engaged in an intense program of personal study that allowed him to write one of the major works of his career, *Black Reconstruction in America* (1935). In the work, Du Bois connects the liberation of racial minorities to that of workers, writing, "The emancipation of man is the emancipation of labor and the emancipation of labor is the freeing of that basic majority of workers who are yellow, brown, and black" (16). This shift in ideology was reflected in the program developed for the Pan-African Congress of 1945, which departed from the earlier accommodationist policies of the PAC and called instead for colonial workers to organize against imperialism. Both Du Bois's call for African self-governance and his support of labor reform echoed earlier principles promoted by the UNIA while also prefiguring the ideology of Black Bolshevism, another black

transnationalist movement that would have a particularly strong and lasting impact in Latin America.

Black Bolshevism was born of the cooperation between a number of prominent black intellectuals—representing the United States, the West Indies, and Africa—and the Third Communist International (the Comintern). The Comintern's first major undertaking to mobilize blacks was to invite prominent black radicals to visit the newly-formed Soviet Union; the Surinamese American Otto Huiswoud and Jamaican American Claude McKay were among the first to make the trip, arriving in 1922 to attend the Comintern's Fourth World Congress. The speech they co-delivered on that occasion called for the Comintern to address the "Negro problem" in a serious manner, with attention to the psychological repercussions of slavery and the brutal violence of Jim Crow, particularly in the South. Describing this region of the United States, Huiswoud declared, "When you enter there it is like Dante's Inferno.... It is almost a country all by itself. Eighty percent of the Negroes live on the land. They are discriminated against and disenfranchised, and it is there that the class struggle is waged in its most brutal form" (4).

Huiswoud's depiction of the American South as "a country all by itself" foreshadowed the policy that the Comintern would soon develop regarding the oppression of blacks—what has come to be known as the "Black Belt Self-Determination Thesis" or more simply, the "Black Belt Thesis." Formalized in 1928 at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern, and strongly influenced by Lenin and Stalin's experience with subaltern nations in Russia, this theory envisioned African Americans as an oppressed nationality within the United States and encouraged blacks to secede from their home territory and establish an independent nation within United States territory that would be undergirded by revolutionary principles. One can see, even

in this brief description, the similarities between the Black Belt thesis and earlier ideologies, Garveyism in particular. However, by 1928, the moment of Garveyism in America had passed, and the Great Migration meant that many African Americans had escaped the oppression of the Jim Crow South and were living in more integrated communities than ever before. Therefore, many believed that to pursue secession—in reality, voluntary self-segregation—would be to take a step backwards in history. For this reason, the Comintern’s strategy was ultimately rejected by members of the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA).²²

This Black Belt Thesis was also proposed in Cuba and Brazil, the two Latin American nations with the highest percentages of black citizens.²³ The first meeting of socialist parties in Latin America, the *Primera Conferencia Comunista Latinoamericana*, convened in Buenos Aires in 1928, and included a panel to discuss the applicability of this strategy not only to Cuba and Brazil, but also to Peru, where it could be used to address the racial inequality between whites and indigenous peoples. As a member of that panel, the *mestizo* Peruvian socialist, José Carlos Mariátegui, contributed a speech (delivered *in absentia*, due to poor health) that identified “el problema indígena” as one rooted in class conflict, not racial conflict.²⁴ He also critiqued the potential of the Comintern’s racial strategy to resolve this problem, insisting, “Las posibilidades de que el indio se eleve material e intelectualmente dependen del cambio de las condiciones económico-sociales. . . . La raza, por si sola, no ha despertado ni despertaría al entendimiento de

²² Tomek argues in “The Communist International and the Dilemma of the American ‘Negro Problem’” (2012) that the Black Belt Thesis was flawed for another reason: it underestimated American blacks’ preference to ally along racial lines rather than along class lines. Her article examines in-depth the limitations of this proposal and its influence as a failed strategy on the subsequent work of the Comintern.

²³ Alejandro de la Fuente documents that this strategy was proposed by the Partido Comunista Cubano at its first meeting in 1934. It was referred to as the “Faja Negra”—which, as De la Fuente notes, is an almost-literal translation of the phrase “Black Belt” (*A Nation for All*).

²⁴ Mariátegui’s chronic infirmities, which confined him to a wheelchair, prevented him from attending the conference in Argentina in person. Marc Becker provides an analysis of Mariátegui’s discourse in his 2006 article “Mariátegui, the Comintern, and the Indigenous Question in Latin America,” and which studies what Mariátegui’s speech indicates about the tenuous relationship between the Comintern and local Latin American Communist parties.

una idea emancipadora. Sobre todo, no adquiriría nunca el poder de imponerla y realizarla” (“Planteamiento de la cuestión”).

At this point in time, a “race-first” Comintern strategy was not viable in Latin America, and especially not among the ethnically and linguistically diverse indigenous communities of the Andes, who did not perceive themselves as members of a common race. Moreover, at this moment in history, Latin America was experiencing the rise of *mestizaje* ideology, which celebrated racial mixing as a key element of Latin American identity. Thus the practice of racial segregation—even voluntary self-segregation, like the Comintern’s strategy called for—ran counter to many Latin Americans’ self-image and threatened what was perceived to be a defining characteristic of their national identities.

Other socialist intellectuals shared Mariátegui’s doubts about the Comintern’s strategy for improving race relations in Latin America. Dr. Hugo Pesce Pescetto, a physician and fellow Peruvian Marxist, provided a gloss on Mariátegui’s work at the same conference, extending his comrade’s argument to include the Afro-Latin community. In his section of the presentation, Pesce stressed that the social ills suffered by indigenous peoples and Afro-Latin Americans were the result not of racial prejudice, but class exploitation. Writing specifically about the experience of blacks in the region, Pesce compared their situation to that of African Americans in order to highlight how the two communities experienced discrimination differently. He declared that:

El negro, en América Latina, no sufre el mismo desprecio que en Estados Unidos; donde siempre hay resistencia de parte de las otras razas para establecer contacto con él, lo que no se traduce en disposiciones o, costumbres de aislamiento limitadoras, bajo este concepto, de su libertad. Tampoco encuentra arraigo el prejuicio de inferioridad o incapacidad para ciertas ocupaciones, ya que la

constatación de todos los días demuestra que el negro puede llenar muy bien todas las funciones sociales toda vez que no se le impide prepararse para ellas.

(“Importancia del problema racial”)

To illustrate this last point, Pesce cited examples from Cuba and Brazil, where some blacks (though relatively few) could be counted as members of the bourgeoisie. All of these elements, according to Pesce’s logic, pointed to the fact that “en general, el problema negro no asume un acentuado aspecto racial,” and therefore rendered inappropriate a race-based solution like that of the Comintern (“Importancia del problema racial”). Given the fact that Latin America did not exhibit the same institutional division of the races as the United States—although it did exhibit its own forms of racial discrimination—Pesce determined that this particular strategy would have likely proven unfruitful. As an alternative, he made the following recommendations: that the Comintern pursue land reform, create special organs to promote class solidarity and empower members of the proletariat (of all races) to pursue social revolution, and work to abolish laws that punished indigenous and black populations (for example, the “leyes de conscripción vial,” which effectively forced racial minorities into service on infrastructure projects throughout the Andes (“Importancia”).

Despite the rejection of the Black Belt Thesis in the United States and Latin America, the Comintern’s new racial policy represented an important moment in history, as the Communist Party assumed the role of the first major organization to include racial and economic liberation as simultaneous objectives of its political agenda. It was also one of the first organizations to officially recognize the racially specific struggles of the Afro-Latin community—which were often overlooked or misinterpreted (sometimes willfully) as problems related solely to class

status.²⁵ The work of the Comintern on these issues was disseminated to the public through its official publications, including *The Negro Worker*. Issued from 1928 to 1937, *The Negro Worker* was published by the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers (ITUCNW), an organization founded by the Comintern to address the specific concerns of black workers worldwide.²⁶ Trinidadian George Padmore, a leading black Marxist and prolific pamphleteer, edited the newspaper from 1928 to 1933. Padmore also wrote a number of books during his lifetime, including *The Life and Struggle of Negro Toilers* (1931), a history of black workers around the world. This volume includes a chapter on blacks in Latin America, which opens with a blunt assessment of race relations in the region: “In spite of the loud and pompous declarations about equal rights contained in all the constitutions of the Latin American Republics, it is, however, a fact that in the economic, social, and political practice of these countries the Negroes do not enjoy these constitutional rights” (61). Padmore was especially concerned with the status of black foreign workers in Latin America, as they were frequently subject to even worse treatment than that suffered by national blacks. He observes that on plantations in places such as Colombia and Honduras—the conditions of which were similar to those in Cuba, though Padmore does not name that country—“cases are not rare when these foreign black slaves become the victims of the most brutal chauvinistic persecution on the part of the native workers themselves” (62).

In Padmore’s assessment, the situation in Latin America—as in other regions of the world—called for a mobilization of the “tremendous revolutionary potentialities of the Negro toiling masses.” He advocated a two-pronged strategy attacking both imperialism and racial

²⁵ The Comintern’s mobilization of racial minorities was not a charitable initiative, of course, but a strategic element of its overall agenda designed to topple capitalist systems and achieve global revolution.

²⁶ Hakim Adi’s monograph *Pan-Africanism or Communism* (2013) is the most recent and most complete history of the ITUCNW.

discrimination, which paralleled the approach advocated by the Comintern (78). Soon, black Marxists in Latin America would take up the call of Padmore, rejecting Mariátegui and Pesce's earlier assertion that discrimination in the region had no racial element, and instead embracing a racially conscious perspective. Indeed, as the following chapters of this dissertation reveal, it was Black Bolshevism that had the most lasting impact on racial discourse in the region, as a form of black transnationalism that was capable of challenging *mestizaje* in uniquely subtle, yet effective, ways.

Black intellectuals in Cuba were some of the first in Latin America to interpret the oppression of blacks as distinctly racial *and* simultaneously connected to other forms of oppression. A review of local black periodicals during the 1930s reveals that some of Cuba's most prominent thinkers understood racial prejudice to be a manifestation of bourgeois hegemony necessitating a revolutionary solution. Even if they did not openly identify themselves as socialist, the rhetoric of these writers often reflected ideological similarities with Black Bolsheviks. One of the outlets through which this perspective was disseminated was the magazine *Adelante*, published by the organization known as the Asociación Adelante from 1935 to 1939.²⁷ An editorial entitled "Cultura, justicia social, igualdad y confraternidad," published in the magazine's first issue, declares the *Adelante*'s intention: "luchar contra la injusticia social y por la completa igualdad social, económica y política de todas las personas" (206). Lest this objective appear overly vague, the editorial clarifies the magazine's position as follows:

²⁷ Scholars of Cuban culture have debated the role of *Adelante* in forming public opinions of Afro-Cuban art in the 1930s. Miguel Arnedo Gómez's 2011 article, "Debates on Racial Equality and Afro-Cuban Culture in *Adelante*" takes the position that the magazine ultimately aided in the broad acceptance of Afro-Cuban cultural forms, serving as a challenge to Alejandra Bronfman and Robin Moore's earlier studies that emphasize *Adelante*'s bourgeois critique of such art. See Bronfman's *Measures of Equality* (2004) and Moore's *Nationalizing Blackness* (1997) for such analyses.

Esa lucha se iniciará esta revista desde el punto de vista del individuo negro, por ser éste el más bárbaramente oprimido y criminalmente explotado de todos los núcleos integrantes de la población cubana. No se nos oculta, empero, y así lo reconocemos, que sólo la acción conjunta de *todos los explotados*, de *todos los oprimidos sin distinción alguna*, puede lograr la total igualdad social, económica y política que proclamamos. Pero la experiencia adquirida de las luchas en que el negro ha tomado parte preponderante, para ser burlado siempre, aconseja que éste vaya a esa fusión de fuerzas con *consciencia de clase*, sabiendo el rol que en la misma va a desempeñar, planteando demandas específicas, y sobre todo, con conocimiento pleno del valor tradicional, histórico, cultural, numérico, emocional, etc., que representa, a fin de que su actuación dentro del conjunto resulte todo lo desenvuelta, eficaz y atinada que da la seguridad de sentirse eficiente cooperador; y no la apocada, incompleta y tímida de quien sólo pudiera estimarse mero beneficio. (206, emphasis mine)

The vocabulary that the editors of *Adelante* employ reflects the same line of thinking that Black Bolsheviks adopted in categorizing racial struggles as one element of a larger problem. Though the magazine was by no means a socialist organ, its mission statement describes blacks as uniquely qualified to undertake the battle for social equality. The reason: their centuries of racial oppression had equipped them with a particular class consciousness that would help them to liberate other subaltern groups. One can hear the echoes of Padmore's "Negro toiling masses" in this kind of phrasing.

The connection between racial and class consciousness was a common subject in *Adelante*, as well as in other prominent Cuban media of the era, such as the magazine *Hoy*. One

frequent contributor to *Adelante* was Gustavo Urrutia, who, though not a Marxist, was undoubtedly influenced by some of the key concepts of Marx's writings. In an article entitled "Racialismo y racismo en Cuba" published in *Adelante* in 1936, Urrutia praises Marxism's emphasis on class consciousness for inspiring in Cubans another form of consciousness—one with a definitively racial dimension. Urrutia himself does not use that term; in fact, he endeavors mightily to avoid it. He instead talks about a consciousness that "no es cuestión de razas" but instead a solidarity based on "afinidades espirituales y liga de intereses materiales" (232). By avoiding the term racial consciousness—and by extension, the idea of black solidarity—Urrutia shielded himself from the accusation of "separatism," that old charge that had been used throughout Cuban history to shame and silence blacks who had demanded race-specific rights. And yet, he recognizes that something *like* black consciousness exists, as he writes that Marxism has engendered in Afro-Cubans a new "actitud antipática para los esclavistas acostumbrados a ejercer su dictadura mental sobre los negros; pero simpática y cooperadora para los blancos verdaderamente revolucionarios" (232). Urrutia's mention of revolutionaries—who he later contrasts to reactionaries and pseudo-revolutionaries—clearly owes much to socialist ideology, as does his use of the term "esclavistas," which references modern day oppressors while invoking the historical condition of blacks. One also notes that he mentions the particular oppression of blacks—not just Cubans in general.

In a speech that he delivered in 1937 in Havana, Urrutia argued that Marxism was, in fact, the prevailing ideological commitment of politically aware Afro-Cubans. In this speech, entitled "Puntos de vista del nuevo negro," Urrutia describes the Cuban New Negro as:

el que ha salido ya de la desorientación en que sumió a su raza y al resto de las masas populares cubanas, el fracaso de nuestras revoluciones por la verdadera

democracia, y que se ha orientado de nuevo al convencerse de que ni aun la genuina democracia liberal podría garantizarle la justicia económica y social colectiva, por su escénica eminentemente individualista y plutocrática. Se ha orientado hacia la promoción de alguna forma de socialismo—de izquierda en la mayoría de los individuos—compatible con nuestra idiosincrasia y con la realidad de nuestras relaciones internacionales. (239)

Though he later clarifies that not all Afro-Cubans are Marxists, it appears that Urrutia promotes socialism as the “natural” choice for those who have come to recognize their subaltern status within Cuban society. He depicts socialism as a beacon of hope for many Afro-Cubans disillusioned with Cuba’s past approaches to the race problem.

Urrutia was not the only Afro-Cuban intellectual to identify the potential power of Marxist ideology in Cuba; Nicolás Guillén did as well. A vocal Marxist, Guillén went far beyond Urrutia’s more distanced support of socialism to advocate for socialism as the ultimate solution to inequality of any kind—including and especially racial inequality. He argued in a 1941 article for *Hoy* that although not all Afro-Cubans shared his views, they should: “Cierto es que no todos los negros son comunistas; cierto también que sólo una pequeña parte de la población negra cubana lo es, aunque a nuestro juicio toda debiera serlo, o por lo menos sentir simpatía y respeto hacia el único partido que ha hecho frente con original postura a la discriminación ejercida por el ‘chauvinismo’ blanco” (“Lo prohibido” 166). Although Guillén’s writings continually stressed the importance of cross-racial collaboration against capitalism, he clearly saw Marxism as offering special advantages to Cuban blacks, and his compatriot and contemporary Regino Pedroso did as well. The subsequent chapters of this dissertation, which study the poetry of both Guillén and Pedroso, explain why socialism was an incredibly compelling political system to

these artists and why they believed that it held the key to solving Cuba's fraught history of racial injustice.

As some of the most prominent black intellectuals in Latin America, these Cuban thinkers came to serve as a model for other black Latin Americans working through issues of race relations in their own countries. Writing about blackness in Brazil, for example, Solano Trindade's poetry also adopted a Marxist perspective and therefore reflects much of the same ideology that Guillén promotes. In Latin America—especially in places like Cuba and Brazil, where the discussion of racial differences was culturally taboo in the early twentieth century—Marxist rhetoric enabled such writers to talk about race in a sidelong way, and therefore, to write more openly than they would have been able to if they had employed a more direct racial vocabulary. By modeling Marxist attitudes towards race that emphasized solidarity between blacks and white (and indigenous peoples), these writers appeared to support popular ideas of “racial democracy” while at the same time criticizing the unfortunate reality of discrimination against blacks. In this way, the political ideology of Black Bolshevism became integrated into Latin American art, where it would be further developed in the cultural movements that came to fruition in the 1930s and beyond.

Cultural Movements of Black Transnationalism: The Harlem Renaissance, Negritude, and Negritude

At the same time that black transnationalist politics were spreading across the globe, cultural movements dedicated to the black arts were also proliferating, particularly in the Americas. The 1920s and 30s in particular saw the birth of a number of black cultural movements centered in the Americas that would prove to have global influence, the most

prominent being the Harlem Renaissance, Negrismo, and Negritude. All three intersected with Black Bolshevism and Pan-Africanism in some form, and Marxist ideology influenced the creative output of many of these movements' principal figures. By valorizing black culture and seeking to rescue it from obscurity, these movements contributed to the construction of what Paul Gilroy later termed "the Black Atlantic"—the incursion of blackness into modernity (ix). Early scholarship on the Black Atlantic focused primarily on the influence of these cultural movements in Anglophone and Francophone territories, and although this bias endures to some extent, a number of specialists have recently endeavored to expand the territorial confines of Black Atlantic studies. Kate Baldwin's latest monograph, for example, argues that the Soviet Union ought to be counted as a Black Atlantic space, given the Comintern's huge influence on Harlem Renaissance authors, while Etusco Taketani argues that the Black Atlantic should be expanded to the Pacific, given the ways in which Asia and Asian race relations figure prominently in the imaginaries of many of these same African American writers. With the exception of the large corpus of scholarship on the relationship between Langston Hughes and Nicolás Guillén, very little has been written on the diasporic character of the black arts in Latin America. The subsequent section, therefore, provides the most comprehensive overview to date of the intricate and overlaid networks of literary black transnationalism that connected points as distant as Harlem, São Paulo, and Mexico City. Understanding the exchange between these movements in Latin America provides fresh insight into how black transnationalism was absorbed into and practiced in cultures with distinct racial ideologies, including those that upheld racial mixing, or *mestizaje/mestiçagem*, as the social ideal. It also lays the groundwork for analyzing the distinct expressions of black transnationalist thought produced by the Afro-Latin artists studied in this dissertation.

The Harlem Renaissance and Black Subjectivity in the Segregated States

During World War I President Wilson sought to deepen the United States' ties with Latin America, and the region remained a subject of intense political and cultural interest following the armistice, especially for many of the black intellectuals associated with the Harlem Renaissance. The transnationalist mindset that had germinated on the battlefields of France took root in their work as authors, musicians, and artists explored the black experience within and beyond the U.S.'s borders. Latin America, with its reputation for racial mixing, was an intriguing landscape for many Harlem Renaissance writers and, consequently, a considerable number of the novellas, poems, jazz scores, and sculptures created by artists from this movement are, in effect, a comparative study of race in the U.S. and Latin American contexts.²⁸ Using this framework, they asked the questions "What does it *mean* to be black?" and "What is it *like* to be black?" Without a pre-determined formula like the U.S.'s unofficial "one-drop rule" for defining race in Latin America, members of the Harlem Renaissance imagined black solidarity as conceived through common experiences rather than biological or phenological similarities. Indeed, this would also be the attitude that most Afro-Latin writers ascribed to, as race has never been as much a biological construct in Latin America as in the United States. Owing to what they perceived as common experiences, Harlem Renaissance writers felt a kinship with their Latin American counterparts; as Alain Locke wrote in his foreword to *The New Negro*, "the New Negro must be seen in the perspective of a New World" (xxv). Some African American intellectuals also saw it as their duty to stimulate their fellow blacks to fight for racial justice within the Latin American

²⁸ A subject of debate among the foremost scholars of this period has been to what extent the artists of the Harlem Renaissance understood Latin America's assimilationist model to be a practicable alternative to Jim Crow. David Levering Lewis has famously asserted that some of the key figures of the Harlem Renaissance "deceived themselves into thinking that race relations in the United States were amenable to the assimilationist patterns of a Latin country" (*When Harlem Was in Vogue* 305-6). George Hutchinson, however, flatly rejects the idea that the Harlem Renaissance was an assimilationist movement (*The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White* 433).

context. As the black intelligentsia of the United States experienced what Locke called “the dramatic flowering of a new race-spirit” following WWI, their increasing concern for other populations of the African diaspora was demonstrated in the attention that they paid to black issues in Latin America (xxvii).

The relationship between the Harlem Renaissance and Latin America was not defined merely by abstract ideological commitments, however. In many cases, African American writers’ interest in Latin America was fueled by their travel to the region. James Weldon Johnson was one of the first prominent African Americans to travel to Latin America, as early in his career he was appointed by President Theodore Roosevelt to serve as a diplomat in both Venezuela and Nicaragua. When he published *The Book of American Negro Verse* in 1922, Johnson dedicated an entire section of his preface to Afro-Latin poets, who he named “among the greatest poets of Latin America” (109). He considered the Cuban poet Plácido (Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés) and the Brazilian Machado de Assis as exceptionally talented among writers of all races, writing that they ranked as “great in the literatures of their respective countries without any qualifications whatever” (109). Following a brief biographical sketch of Plácido, Johnson ended his panegyric to Afro-Latin poetry with a startling prediction:

In considering the Aframerican poets of the Latin languages, I am impelled to think that, as up to this time the colored poets of greater universality have come out of the Latin-American countries rather than out of the United States, they will continue to do so for a good many years. (109)

The Crisis reprinted this section of Johnson’s book in its January 1922 edition, and in doing so, introduced its readers to the long history of the black arts in Latin America.

That *The Crisis* decided to reprint this particular excerpt of Johnson's book, and the fact that it was published in the same month as Du Bois's "The Negro Takes Stock," is indicative of the level of interest that Latin America evoked in African American circles in this time period. As black transnationalist writers looked abroad for models of race relations that did not resemble Jim Crow, they were sometimes seduced by the supposedly "raceless" societies of the Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking Global South. In the 1920s and 30s, some key figures of the Harlem Renaissance traveled to Latin America and reported their findings, which—even when contrary to the experience of the travelers themselves—frequently reaffirmed the myth that Latin America was a region where blacks lived free of racism ("African American Views" 47).²⁹ Robert Abbott's reporting on his 1923 trip to Brazil did just that. When Abbott, the owner and publisher of the *Chicago Defender*, published his reflections on his voyage, his positive reporting on Brazilian race relations painted the country as a racial paradise.³⁰ Some African Americans were so inspired by Abbott's reports that they formed associations to encourage mass immigration to Brazil.³¹ Their campaigns, however, were thwarted by Brazil's official *embranquecimento* policy and the cooperative (and covert) efforts of Brazil and the United States to prevent black

²⁹ A spate of books published a decade earlier had helped bolster the myth of racial democracy in Brazil—these were published even prior to Gilberto Freyre's *Casa-grande e senzala* (1933), the volume that is generally considered responsible for popularizing this ideology within Brazil. They included James Bryce's *South America: Observations and Impression* (1914) and Harry Johnston's *The Negro in the New World* (1910). In the 1920s, the Secretary of the NAACP, Roy Nash, published a history entitled *The Conquest of Brazil* (1926), which also contributed to this racial mythologizing of Brazil; it argued that slavery in Brazil was less brutal than in other parts of the Americas.

³⁰ This was despite the fact that Abbott faced blatant racial discrimination during his voyage, such as when he was turned away from the Palace Hotel in São Paulo on account of the color of his skin (Andrews 137). Fikes notes that such discrimination occurred more than once on Abbott's trip, which raises the question of how much the journalist's own biases influenced his reporting (177).

³¹ The most prominent organization of this type was known as the Brazilian American Colonization Syndicate, which formed in Chicago and was led in part by Abbott himself. Micol Seigel details the history of this organization's work and attempts to foster African American immigration to Brazil in his chapter in *Extending the Diaspora* (2009).

immigration to the South American country.³² Despite this, interest in Latin America continued to be high in the black community, and many writers and artists sought to develop ties with the region and explore the possibilities of black subjectivity outside of the Jim Crow context.

No Harlem Renaissance writer better embodied the spirit of black transnationalism than Langston Hughes. Nancy Cunard, one of the literary curators of the Harlem Renaissance and editor of the anthology *Negro*, called him “the traveling star of colored America” (530). Hughes traveled extensively through Latin America, including to Mexico and Cuba. During his late adolescence, Hughes spent a year living outside Mexico City, where his father owned and operated a ranch. Visiting the metropolis on the weekends, he befriended a number of the members of the *Contemporáneos* movement, and was introduced by Carlos Pellicer to Xavier Villarrutia and Efraín Huerta—two poets whose later work would mirror Hughes’s critical stance on U.S. race relations.³³ Villarrutia later became Hughes’s first Mexican translator, publishing four of the African American writer’s pieces in a 1931 volume of the magazine *Contemporáneos*, one of the foremost Latin American reviews (and which gave birth to the eponymous literary movement of the 1920s and 30s). Hughes’s early poetry includes cultural references to Mexico, including in the poems “In a Mexican City,” “Up to the Crater of an Old Volcano,” and “Mexican Market Woman,” as well as in the short story “Mexican Games.” Writing of the significance of Hughes’s time in Mexico, Edward Mullen suggests that “What initially may have been the result of chance was soon transformed by Hughes into one of the

³² Meade and Pirio document how the United States and Brazilian governments cooperated to follow the activities of African American organizations intending to establish black colonies in Brazil. The two governments were so concerned about the potential for black radicalism to flourish in Brazil that by 1921 they agreed that the U.S. would deny all visa requests for black Americans interested in settling in Brazil. This policy remained in effect until the end of the decade (94-97).

³³ Here, I am speaking of Villarrutia’s *North Carolina Blues* (1938), which is titled in English and dedicated to Hughes, and Huerta’s collected verse, published in *500,000 Azáleas* (2000).

most powerful experiences of his life” (“Langston Hughes in Mexico and Cuba” 258).³⁴ Not only did Hughes’s sojourn in Mexico provide him with unique thematic material for his early work, but it also helped to cement his Spanish language skills, which would serve him in his later career and allow him to develop meaningful interchanges with some of his Afro-Latin contemporaries.³⁵

Hughes’s facility with Spanish allowed him to expand his personal and professional networks later in his career with repeated trips to Cuba. He made three trips in total, though it was his visits to the island in 1930 and 1931 that were arguably the most important for both the poet’s own intellectual development and for the dissemination of his work in Latin America. It was during his 1930 trip that Hughes met the Cuban critic José Fernández Antonio de Castro, who had translated Hughes’s iconic poem “I, Too” into Spanish and published it in the journal *Social* in 1928. Castro proved an important contact for Hughes, and introduced him to two other Cuban writers who shared the African American writer’s socialist beliefs and who would influence and inspire his future career: Nicolás Guillén and Regino Pedroso. As many excellent scholars—chief among them, Vera Kutzinski and Martha Cobb—have written extensively on the Hughes-Guillén relationship, I will go no further than to highlight the key discoveries of their research: the friendship of these two poets was enduring and the collaborations between them fruitful. It is generally understood that Hughes’s conversations with Guillén helped the latter to refine his unique Afro-Cuban aesthetic, which he debuted in *Motivos de son*, published just one year after their first meeting. For his part, Hughes worked to promote Guillén’s poetry in the United States, publishing his first translation of Guillén’s work in the November 1931 volume of

³⁴ Mullen’s article provides the most detailed chronology of Hughes’s travels in Latin America, and I am significantly indebted to it in my writing of this chapter. He also summarizes the reception of Hughes’s work in Latin America in his 1976 article “The Literary Reputation of Langston Hughes in the Hispanic World.”

³⁵ Richard Jackson details Hughes’s many friendships and collaborations with Afro-Latin writers in his article from 1981 entitled “The Shared Vision of Langston Hughes and Black Hispanic Writers.”

The Crisis. Years later, he brokered a contract with the publisher Anderson and Ritchie for a book-length translation of Guillén's work—a project that Hughes undertook in partnership with Howard University's esteemed Hispanist Ben Frederic Carruthers. The English language translation of Guillén's poetry was published in 1948 as *Cuba Libre*, but unfortunately, the volume was not a commercial success, though Hughes labored hard to promote it. Kutzinski attributes this to the fact that Hughes's translations were overly conservative—in fact, they were almost defensive in the way that they “refuse Negro dialect”—and therefore failed to capture the linguistic experimentation that made Guillén's early poetry so appealing (and provocative) (“Fearful Asymmetries” 134). The high price of the volume may have also contributed to its poor market performance; as Kutzinski notes, the limited edition *Cuba Libre* was designed as a Christmas gift and, with its elaborate binding, cost nearly double the usual price of Hughes's own volumes of poetry (124). Hughes completed comparatively fewer translations of Regino Pedroso's poetry and never attempted to compile them into a marketable collection.³⁶ Despite their commercial failures, however, Hughes's translations remain historically significant. In forging relationships with authors from Latin America and exploring the relationship between race and language in his translations, Hughes lived out the ideals of black transnationalism and served as a model for other artists to imitate.

Even for those African American intellectuals who did not travel to the region, Latin America provided a fertile landscape for the re-imagining of race relations in the early twentieth century. For the authors Nella Larsen and Jessie Redmond Fauset in particular, Latin America's unique racial hierarchies provided a new context within which to examine the

³⁶ Kutzinski mentions Hughes's translations (plural) of Pedroso's poetry in her book *The Many Worlds of Langston Hughes*, but does not cite specific examples. My research identified only one translation by Hughes that has been preserved—his translation of an excerpt of Pedroso's epic poem “Más allá canta el mar,” published in a 1950 issue of the magazine *Phylon* as “Dawn.”

meanings of “whiteness” and “blackness.” In Larsen’s *Passing* (1926), the persistence of racist prejudice in Brazil is contrasted with that same nation’s official discourse of “racial democracy.” This hypocrisy is examined through the interactions of two couples: Clare Kendry and John (Jack) Bellew—an African American woman who “passes” as white and her (white) racist Brazilian husband—and Irene Westover and Brian Redfield—a light-skinned black woman and her darker husband, a man who longs to resettle in Brazil because he believes that he and his children will find more opportunity there than in the United States. It is significant that Larsen originally titled the book *Nig*, the nickname that Jack Bellew uses for Clare, though the novel’s publisher ultimately deemed this title unacceptable. Spanish and Portuguese speakers will recognize “nig” as a translation of the nickname “negra” (in Spanish) or “nega” (in Portuguese). This term of endearment used across Latin America “has its roots in slavery,” as Zita Nunes observes, but in the modern-day context, is often “detached from any direct identification of race (except in *Passing*, by contrast)” (137). Larsen’s play on words points to the role of language in the construction of race—a theme which the author highlights throughout *Passing*. In Nunes’s analysis of the significance of language in *Passing*, she argues convincingly that:

South America speaks Jack as much as he speaks it. The symptom, his adoption of the term *Nig*, betrays as much. South America endures in and through him because it contains within itself a relation that national purity/racial purity is impossible.... There is an effect of translation here that mimics not only miscegenation, but also the ambivalence surrounding it. (137-38)

In the character of Jack Bellew, Larsen demythologizes the supposed “racial paradise” of Brazil and demonstrates the insufficiency of *mestiçagem* as a solution to racial tension, revealing how this ideology relies upon an unspoken assumption of blackness being absorbed into whiteness

(and ultimately eliminated). Although racial mixing is a reality, ideologies of racial superiority prevail. Even as her character Brian longs to move to Brazil, imagining that there, he and his children will be liberated from the racism that they suffer in the United States, Larsen reveals that this is not necessarily so. Her analysis of Brazilian race relations is thus particularly notable for the way in which it resists common idealizations of this Lusophone country, and for its critique of assimilationist ideologies.

Like *Passing*, Jessie Fauset's novel *Plum Bun* (1928) also juxtaposes the U.S. system of racial categorization with that of Brazil, in order to test the limits of the color line and alternative models of race relations. Ultimately, it too rejects an assimilationist model, condemning one of its main characters, Maria, for hiding her black heritage, while celebrating Anthony and Angela, Fauset's two protagonists who choose—after much deliberation—to live as outwardly black, even though they could both “pass” as white. It is significant that the book ends with Anthony and Angela in Paris, which, for Harlem Renaissance writers, was a symbolically charged site. Because of its history as the birthplace of black transnationalism during WWI, Paris was understood to be a place where authentic black identities could be lived and expressed free of the constraints of Jim Crow or more insidious form of racial discrimination, like the subtle color hierarchy of Brazil. The conclusion of *Plum Bun* thus further reinforces Fauset's critique of *mestiçagem*, revealing that although assimilation may promote racial harmony, it does so at too great a price, for it requires the erasure of black identity. Therefore, it must be in Paris, and not Brazil, where Fauset's black characters finally settle in to their racial selves. When taken with Larsen's *Passing*, these two novels serve as an important challenge to scholarly assertions that the Harlem Renaissance welcomed assimilationist models. Both carefully probe the troubled underbellies of *mestiçagem* and do not shy from exposing the racist assumptions of this

ideology—which operated, at the time, as a complement to *embranquecimento*—nor do they fail to recognize the persistent prejudices that prevented the achievement of true racial harmony in Brazil.

For all of the interest that Harlem Renaissance writers displayed in Latin America, Latin Americans also expressed great interest in the works produced by this movement. Black newspapers and magazines in South America and the Caribbean published translations of works by New Negro authors. Poetry was particularly popular because it was a form that was more easily disseminated than novels or plays, although many of these latter works would eventually be translated as well. A good number of poems from Hughes's *The Weary Blues* (1926) were translated to Spanish almost immediately after their initial publication and featured in the Mexican journals *Crisol*, *Social*, and *Contemporáneos*; the Argentinean journal *Sur* (with translations provided by none other than Jorge Luis Borges); and the Cuban magazine *Revista de la Habana* and the daily newspaper *El Diario de la Marina*, along with other outlets.³⁷ *El Diario de la Marina* also regularly featured the work of Du Bois, Walter White, Countee Cullen, Claude McKay, and James Weldon Johnson. In Brazil, the São Paulo-based newspaper *Tribuna negra* included a regular column dedicated to publishing the work of African American writers in Portuguese. The first issue of the paper, dating from 1935, includes translations of two Countee Cullen poems, with promises to include translations of Langston Hughes or Claude McKay in the future issues (Almeida 3). The journal *Revista Acadêmica* also published two verses of Hughes's famous poem "I, Too" and two of his blues poems in one of their 1935 issues (Camilo 264). Later on, *Revista Acadêmica* took an important step to satisfy readers' interest in the Harlem Renaissance in its 1942 issue, which included an article by Gilda Morais Rocha entitled

³⁷ For a full timeline of the Spanish language translations of Hughes's work, see Kutzinski's 2012 book *The Worlds of Langston Hughes* (xi-xv).

“Poesia Negra Norte-Americana.” Although it did not include translations of any poems, the article did provide biographical sketches of the major figures of the Harlem Renaissance and praised their work as the first literary movement to “realizar corajosamente as personalidades de cor, indiferentes ao público branco ou negro” (qtd. in Camilo 266).

The works of African American authors were also very frequently included in anthologies published in Latin America, including the *Antología de la poesía negra americana* (1936), edited by the Urugyuan Ildefonso Pereda Valdés and published in Argentina, and in the Cuban Emilio Ballagas’s anthology entitled *Mapa de la poesía negra americana* (1943), also published in Argentina. They were also included in anthologies published in Brazil, although there was a significant time lag in their large-scale translation to Portuguese. It was not until 1955 that the poetry of Hughes and others was featured in *Videntes e sonâmbulos*, a collection of North American poetry translated by Oswaldino Marques. The dissemination of Harlem Renaissance writers’ work through these anthologies, as well as through local newspapers and literary magazines, had caused something of a chain reaction in Latin America, with significant political, social, and cultural repercussions. It served to galvanize activists working on racial equality issues as well as those who resented the United States’ involvement in Latin American politics. As certain groups in Latin America moved towards the Left and grew resentful of American interference in their own political and social affairs, the hypocrisy of Jim Crow became fodder for the condemnation for the United States. This was especially the case in Cuba, as we will see in the subsequent chapters of this dissertation. Socially, the writings of the Harlem Renaissance contributed to the general development of racial consciousness in Latin America, catalyzing a process that had been underway since the Great War and the first mobilizations of black transnationalist organizations such as the UNIA. Finally, in the cultural realm, the writings

of the Harlem Renaissance served in part to spark the creation of two other major literary movements that would exercise considerable influence in Latin America: the Spanish language movement Negrismo and the Francophone Negritude.

Negrismo: Latin America Rediscovered its African Heritage

Paralleling the Harlem Renaissance in the United States both chronologically and thematically, Negrismo was the earliest cultural manifestation of black transnationalism in Latin America.³⁸ The poetry of this movement celebrated and explored blacks' contributions to Latin American culture—in some cases more authentically than others. In order to articulate the difference between the first, “exoticizing” stage of Negrismo and its later, more race-conscious period, Edward Mullen separates the movement into two phases, which he describes as follows:

an initial phase marked by the exclusive participation of white intellectuals... that produced a highly picturesque but external view of black culture marked by a predominance of sensuous image and onomatopoeic rhythms, and a later phase characterized by a more serious depiction of the black experience by writers such as Nicolás Guillén and Regino Pedrosa. (“The Emergence of Afro-Hispanic Poetry” 442-43)

Because of the history of racial mixing in Latin America and the social emphasis on *mestizaje* ideology in this era, it was not unthinkable that white authors would be the first to write extensively about Latin America's African inheritances. The father of Negrismo—the white Puerto Rican poet Luis Palés Matos—inaugurated the movement in 1926 when he published the poem “Pueblo negro” in the local newspaper *La Democracia*. After that, Negrismo was first

³⁸ Negrismo, like its Francophone Caribbean parallel, Negritude, had political components as well—hence, the overtly political subject matter of the *negrista* poets studied in this dissertation. Robin Moore's *Nationalizing Blackness* (1997) is a particularly astute study of the intersection of *negrista* politics and cultural production.

popularized in the Antilles, and with the exception of Palés Matos, the movement's initial members were almost exclusively Cuban. These included Alejo Carpentier, José Zacarías Tallet, Emilio Ballagas, Ramón Guirao, and eventually, Guillén and Pedroso. *Afrocubanismo* quickly became an important subcurrent of Negrismo, though in later years, writers from other countries would add their contributions to the *negrista* style, as it flourished in places as distant as Uruguay, Colombia, and Costa Rica. In Brazil, Raul Bopp's *Urucungo* (1932) and Jorge de Lima's *Poemas negros* (1947) were the most important poetic contributions to this movement. As it branched out across Latin America, Negrismo morphed from a principally nationalistic movement to one that reflected the ideals of black transnationalism both in practice and ideology.

Negrista art was disseminated through many of the same institutions and networks that simultaneously circulated the work of Harlem Renaissance writers. Local newspapers, literary magazines, translations (including the aforementioned translation of Nicolás Guillén's poetry completed by Langston Hughes), and anthologies all served as conduits for the cultural products of this movement, as they distributed its work throughout Latin America and beyond. Studying these publications provides a sense of how black transnationalism operated in this era, as one finds poems written by South American, Caribbean, and Central American authors alongside each other in the same anthologies, as in Ballagas's *Mapas*. A particularly interesting case study is that of the journal *Quilombo*, the preeminent black magazine of Brazil during this time period. It began publication in the late 1940s, under the auspices of the Teatro Experimental do Negro (TEN), and was edited by the activist Abdias do Nascimento, the founder of that organization. Literary scholars have generally assumed little interchange between Spanish American and Brazilian writers, as the latter generally point to European movements as key influences;

however, *Quilombo* demonstrates that the black intelligentsia of early to mid-twentieth century Brazil was particularly interested Spanish American writers' work on race. The very first issue of *Quilombo* includes a feature article written by the Argentinian critic Efraín Tomás Bo (a naturalized Brazilian) that is entitled "Poesia Afro-Americana." The piece compares early examples of Negrismo from Puerto Rico, Cuba, Brazil, and Venezuela to later poetry such as that produced by Guillén and Pedroso. While Bo terms the former "poesia de escasso e nenhum valor," he considers the latter to be an expression of "true" blackness that is neither overly ideological nor overly tragic in its evocation of history (5). He also recommends Guillén as the vanguard of this ideal black poetry, and features two of the Cuban writer's poems in the article itself. In his analysis of black art, Bo focuses significant attention on the historical significance of slavery as an experience that unites blacks from different locations within the African diaspora, writing that because of slavery, "existem caracteres intrínsecos da alma lírica do negro em sua manifestação artística e que estes caracteres, oriundos de seus sentidos profundos, só o negro pode sentir e expressar (5, emphasis mine). Bo's argument here is an essentialist one, but it is not typical of the biological essentialism that dominated the early twentieth century. Instead, it expresses an experiential essentialism—one that is foundational to many forms of black transnationalism, and particularly to the forms of black transnationalism that took root in Latin America. In fact, it was this same mindset that allowed Harlem Renaissance writers to explore their own commonalities with black Latin Americans. With racial systems varying from country to country, black solidarity was often imagined in historical terms—as shared histories formed the basis for shared present-day struggles.

Other Brazilian writers shared Bo's high esteem for Guillén's poetry, and dedicated their own to translating it to Portuguese for dissemination in the Lusophone world. A number of

Brazilian modernists—themselves practitioners of the *negrista* aesthetic—were critical to the popularization of Guillén’s work in Brazil. According to Vera Lins, the earliest translation of Guillén’s work was a Portuguese version of the poem “Sons,” completed by Carlos Drummond de Andrade in 1946 and published in the newspaper *Diário Carioca*. In early 1947, the modernist authors Jorge de Lima and José Lins de Rego wrote articles about Guillén for the socialist journal *Tribuna Popular*, published in Rio, while Sérgio Millet published select verses from Guillén’s *West Indies, Ltd.* and a review of his *El son entero* in the leading news daily *Estado de São Paulo*.³⁹ Upon the Cuban poet’s visit to Rio de Janeiro later that year, he was received at the Academia Brasileira de Letras with an homage presented by Manuel Bandeira, the modernist poet and literary critic who had himself participated in the Negrismo movement in Brazil. The speech was published in *Jornal do Comércio* immediately thereafter (“Nicolás Guillén: *As elegias antilhanas*”).

Negrista poetry also found an audience in North America. Aside from Langston Hughes’s translations of Guillén and Pedroso’s work, Guillén was also featured in Cunard’s *Negro*. Now a frequently overlooked text, at the time of its publication in 1934, *Negro* was significant for the broad transnational perspective that it applied to black art; the anthology included contributions from Haitian, Cuban, Brazilian, and Kenyan poets (amongst others) alongside works by the key figures of the Harlem Renaissance. The anthology itself thus embodies the kind of pan-Africanist mentality that changed discussions of race from a national concern to a global concern.

The archives of *The Crisis*, the NAACP’s influential magazine, also suggest that there was a broad audience for *negrista* poetry in the United States. In the February 1938 issue of *The*

³⁹ The *Tribuna Popular* was one of the most popular publications of this era and distributed close to 50,000 copies daily during the 1940s (Buonicore).

Crisis, Arthur B. Spingarn, then serving as the legal chairman of the NAACP, highlighted Guillén's two volumes of poetry *Cantos para soldados y sones para turistas* and *España: poema en cuatro angustias y una esperanza* as particularly notable among all books published by black authors during the previous year. Calling the two books "brilliant and poignant poetry," Spingarn wrote about Guillén's work in a way that suggests a deep familiarity with the Afro-Cuban author, and other articles in *The Crisis* do the same (47). A 1940 *Crisis* review of a cultural pamphlet distributed by the Pan American Union congratulates the organization for including Guillén, Pedroso, and Ballagas as major literary figures; the article does not belabor the identities of these poets, but assumes the reader's familiarity with their work (Ivy 333). These subtle clues point to a more significant truth—that *negrista* poetry was available and well circulated within the United States and that educated readers were familiar with this Latin American art form.

The social contributions of *negrista* literature have been hotly debated among scholars; while some consider the movement little more than an exoticizing appropriation of black culture—like primitivism, which partially inspired the first phase of the movement—other scholars insist that Negrismo represented a major step forward for the discussion of blackness in Latin American literature. As René Depestre writes, "In twentieth century West Indian 'Negrismo' the Negro is no longer represented as the clown of universal history; he is no longer an object of denigration and scorn. On the contrary, his specific cultural features are now integrated with an effort to renovate poetry" (55). Although the gains of early Negrismo were modest, they did lay the groundwork for a profound rethinking of race in the region, which included the introduction of black transnationalist ideologies into Spanish and Lusophone America. If we accept Mullen's schematization of the movement, it is easier to recognize the second wave of *negrista* authors as those who most closely reflected black transnationalist

thinking in their work. While, overall, Negrismo was unique in its promotion of *mestizaje* ideologies, its second phase also explored alternative constructions of black identity. It is in the period that begins in the 1930s that we see *negrista* authors—including all of the authors featured in this dissertation—enacting black transnationalism through their cultural exchange with other writers and through their theorizations of blackness as a transnational subjectivity capable of existing within—and yet as a challenge to—paradigms of racial mixing.

Francophone Black Transnationalism: The “Belligerence” of Negritude

Both the Harlem Renaissance and the second wave of Spanish American Negrismo served to inspire the Francophone political and cultural movement known as Negritude, which emerged onto the global stage in the late 1930s. Led by a trinity of black intellectuals—the Martinican Aimé Césaire, the Senegalese Léopold Sédar Senghor, and the Guinean Léon-Gontran Damas—the chief aim of Negritude was self-determination, both for blacks and for France’s colonial territories.⁴⁰ The movement’s incorporation of the word “nègre”—hitherto a pejorative term in French—into its name was a bold choice, and one that was doubtless influenced by the rhetoric of other black transnationalist movements of the time such as Garvey’s United Negro Improvement Association (emphasis mine), the Harlem Renaissance (as in Locke’s *The New Negro* and Cunard’s *Negro*), and Lamine Senghor’s activism.⁴¹ Like both the Harlem Renaissance and Negrismo, Negritude’s principal weapon was the written word, and the movement’s seminal texts are all works of poetry: Damas’s *Pigments* (1937), Césaire’s *Cahier*

⁴⁰ Though these three writers are generally accepted as the leaders of Negritude, there were also a number of women whose intellectual work paved the way for this movement. The work of the Nardal sisters, for example, is profiled by Shireen K. Lewis in her brief article from 2000 entitled “Gendering Negritude: Paulette Nardal’s Contribution to the Birth of Modern Francophone Literature.”

⁴¹ The word “Negritude” first appears in Aimé Césaire’s extended poem *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* in 1939, although the reclamation of the word “nègre” dates to the aforementioned article by Lamine Senghor, “Le mot nègre,” from 1927.

d'un retour au pays natal (1939), and the anthology entitled *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache*, edited by Senghor in 1948. What distinguishes Negritude from these movements, however, is its “belligerent” character, described by scholars like Mamadou Badiane, who notes that the dire political situation of blacks in the French colonies produced art that was more revolutionary than that created in the United States or in early twentieth century Cuba (1). Negritude—more so than the Harlem Renaissance or Negrismo—also promoted Pan-Africanist (capital “P”) or back-to-Africa ideology, particularly through the work of Césaire, who imagined Africa as a utopian motherland.

Due to its ideological extremism, the reception of Negritude in Latin America was mixed. In Cuba, for example, Negritude was introduced to the island relatively early, thanks to the work of Lydia Cabrera. A well-respected ethnologist and disciple of Fernando Ortiz—arguably Cuba’s preeminent anthropologist and a figure whose work on *mestizaje* is critical to this dissertation—Cabrera was already famous in her own right for her pioneering studies of Afro-Cuban culture, which included her transcriptions of Afro-Cuban folktales published as *Cuentos negros* (1936).⁴² Having spent time in Paris following World War I, Cabrera was immersed in the currents of black transnationalism that were pulsating across the globe, and her academic interest in the African roots of Caribbean culture led her to collaborate with Aimé Césaire on the translation of his *Cahier* into Spanish. The translated volume was published in 1943 and included illustrations by Wilfredo Lam, the Afro-Chinese Cuban artist who was known for his syncretistic visual aesthetic, and who was also a friend of Césaire. The publication of the *Cahier* in Spanish thus represented an important intersection of the black transnationalist movements of Negrismo and Negritude in Latin America. However, despite the cultural cache of its translator and illustrator,

⁴² *Cuentos negros* was first published in French in 1936 as a series of short stories in the magazine *Cahier de Sud*. It was compiled as a book in French in 1936 (*Contes negres de Cuba*) and only translated into Spanish in 1940.

the Spanish *Cahier* did not popularize Negritude in Cuba. Emily A. Maguire blames Cabrera's translation for this, arguing that Cabrera was unable to capture the truly revolutionary elements of Césaire's poem ("Two Returns to the Native Land"). Therefore, although Cabrera's translation marked a significant *moment* of transnational black collaboration, it did not necessarily transform racial discourse in Cuba.

Perhaps more significant to the reception of Negritude in Latin America was Nicolás Guillén's personal relationship with Jacques Roumain. Roumain—an acclaimed poet, the founder of the Haitian Communist Party, and a key figure of Negritude—met Guillén in Paris in 1937 while en route to the *Segundo Congreso de Escritores para la Defensa de la Cultura*.⁴³ In a tribute published after the Haitian writer's death, Guillén praises Roumain for his self-sublimation, noting that although his education and family ties positioned him for success within the largely mulatto Haitian aristocracy, courage led the poet to renounce his social status, as he instead "[t]omó partido por el pueblo haitiano, por el negro explotado, y rompió con la 'mulatería' burguesa para ponerse junto al campesino que se encorva de sol a sol los *combites*" (Prologue *Nuestra América* 393). The two shared a common social vision for their work, with Guillén noting that Roumain's posthumous novel *Gouverneurs de la rosée*, widely considered to be his *magnum opus* and a seminal work of Haitian literature, was a work in which the author "alcanza el punto más alto en su concepción de la literatura y las artes como medios de servicio público y expresión humana" (Prologue *Nuestra América* 393).⁴⁴ When the Imprenta Nacional de Cuba published a Spanish language translation of *Gouverneurs de la rosée* in 1961, Guillén provided the commentary for that edition. For Guillén, the value of the novel corresponded in

⁴³ At the *Segundo Congreso*, Guillén and Roumain also rendezvoused with Langston Hughes, whom Roumain had befriended during the 1930s, as an exile living in New York.

⁴⁴ The English-language translation of this work was completed by none other than Hughes, assisted by Mercer Cook. Martha Cobb's study of the intersecting lives and ideologies of Hughes, Roumain, and Guillén may be found in *Harlem, Haiti, and Havana* (1979).

large part to its socialist agenda; Roumain's narrative centers around the efforts of his protagonist, Manuel, a Haitian laborer who travels to Cuba to work on a sugar plantation, but arrives home to find his community socially fractured. Using techniques adapted from his time in Cuba, Manuel attempts to unite those around him and motivate them to political action. The plot therefore touches upon both the ideology and practices of black transnationalism, as it follows Manuel's development of a transnational racial and social consciousness and his efforts to inspire the same in his home community.

The emphasis on Antillean solidarity in *Gouverneurs de la rosée* is emblematic of Roumain's political philosophy and it was an ideal shared by Guillén. In his journalism, Guillén frequently stressed the need for solidarity between Haiti and Cuba, as the two countries shared not only similar histories, but also similar present-day challenges. Writing for the magazine *Hoy* in the early 1940s, Guillén exudes intense admiration for the island nation that he declares “un pueblo acostumbrado desde su nacimiento a luchar y morir por sus derechos” and condemns the social prejudice that his countrymen directed towards the many thousands of Haitian laborers who emigrated to Cuba to work the sugar harvests during the United States' occupation of their homeland (“Haití” 156).⁴⁵ These men are to be pitied, not scorned, he argues, for they are “víctimas de la crueldad y el egoísmo de los plantadores de caña y las compañías azucareras,” the same predatory market forces that held Cuba in an economic and cultural vice grip (“Haití” 232). This same view is the principal theme in Guillén's poetic collection published in 1934, entitled *West Indies Ltd.*, which laments the state of other Antillean islands vulnerable to capitalist exploitation—such as Martinique and Guadeloupe—which were precisely those associated with Negritude.

⁴⁵ MacLeod concludes that over 600,000 Haitian and West Indian immigrants came to Cuba in the first three decades of the twentieth century (“Undesirable Aliens” 599).

In “Elegía a Jacques Roumain en el cielo de Haiti,” the extended elegy that Guillén wrote following Roumain’s death in 1944, the Afro-Cuban poet envisions a future for Haiti and Cuba in which the two countries are liberated from their past and current trials. The closing lines of the poem are a song of solidarity whose whispered and hopeful chorus foretells the Antillean nations’ triumph over slavery’s social scars and capitalism’s crushing fist:

Cantemos, pues, querido,
 pisando el látigo caído
 del puño del amo vencido,
 una canción que nadie haya cantado:
(Florece plantada la vieja lanza)
 una húmeda canción tendida
(Quema en la mano la esperanza)
 de tu garganta en sombras, más allá de la vida,
(La aurora es lenta, pero avanza)
 a mi clarín terrestre de cobre ensangrentado. (27)⁴⁶

Guillén appoints himself the executor of Roumain’s revolutionary vision, promising to continue the fight from this side of the grave. His staunch belief in the eventual triumph of socialism is evidenced in the imagery that he chooses to employ here, as in the metaphor of a slowly arriving dawn. Two of Guillén’s chosen images in these lines also point to the salvific role promised to the descendants of African slaves in the battle for the Antilles; his references to the “vieja lanza” evokes the battle weapons of African tribes, which will be used against the historical influence of the slaveholder’s whip—el “látigo caído.” Works such as these, therefore, were one mechanism

⁴⁶ Citations from “Elegía a Jacques Roumain” are from the Biblioteca Ayacucho edition, which does not include line numbers.

that allowed for the entry of Negritude ideology into the Cuban social consciousness. Given Guillén's celebrity and the success of his poetry in Cuba and other countries in Latin America, it is likely he was largely responsible for the broadest dissemination of Negritude ideology in Latin America.

In Brazil, the archives of *Quilombo* reveal how Negritude was received by Afro-Brazilian intellectuals—in a word, enthusiastically. It appears as though the ideals of Negritude had particular resonance in Brazil, as evidenced by the fact that in the ten issues of *Quilombo* that the TEN published between January 1948 and June of 1950, Negritude and its politics figure prominently in the journal's reporting. *Quilombo* also published the first Portuguese translation of Jean-Paul Sartre's essay "Black Orpheus," a seminal text of Negritude that served as the preface to Senghor's 1948 anthology of black Francophone poetry, and which is a focal point of the seventh chapter of this dissertation. Almost every issue of *Quilombo* included advertisements encouraging the journal's readers to subscribe to *Présence Africaine*, an influential French magazine of Negritude. Roger Bastide, the famous French sociologist and pioneering scholar of Afro-Brazilian culture, wrote that the spirit of Negritude *already* existed in Brazil, even if that term had not been used. Citing black newspapers in Brazil that sought to promote black aesthetics in both art and personal beauty, as well as black history, he wrote, "La Negritude va constituer alors une prise de conscience, en opposition avec la pratique de 'se purifier le sang', de la valeur esthétique de la race noire. De ce point de vue, le sentiment de la Negritude existait avant le mot" (11). In his introduction to the reprint of *Quilombo* published in 2003, António Sérgio Alfredo Guimarães goes so far as to assert that *Quilombo* itself harnessed this "prise de conscience" and transformed it into "uma Negritude brasileira e nacionalista" (12). This Brazilian form of Negritude would later be embodied by the work of Solano Trindade and that of

Abdias do Nascimento, whose own ideology engaged very closely with that of Franco-Caribbean Negritude.

This brief history of cultural movements identifies the multiple levels on which the Harlem Renaissance, Negrismo, and Negritude intersected. On the ideological level, it is clear that many of the key figures of these movements shared leftist commitments; though none of these movements were propelled exclusively by Marxist ideology, all three were shaped in important respects by socialism's approach to the race question. On the level of literary practice, these three cultural movements shared similar tactics; all relied heavily on the publication of anthologies and on the black press to disseminate their work. The anthologies that they published are evidence of the interchange between them, as black writers from different countries were often included in a single anthology. Likewise, the translations made available in black newspapers published in French, Spanish, Portuguese, and English also testify to the multidirectional flow of creative energy between different diasporic communities. Finally, on the personal level, all three of these movements owe their global reach partially to the intimate relationships that existed between their most prominent writers. As we move forward, however, it will become clear exactly how black transnationalism—particularly in the form of Black Bolshevism—influenced Latin American racial discourse, and particularly how it helped Afro-Latin American authors identify the deficiencies of *mestizaje/mestiçagem* and assert a historically informed black subjectivity that resisted subsumation by paradigms of racial mixing.

Latin American Black Transnationalism: A Unique Movement

From the battlefields of France, the first sparks of black transnationalism ignited a movement that soon spread throughout the African diaspora. The transformative power of black

transnationalist ideology can hardly be overstated; it completely changed the way in which post-WWI society understood the concept of racial identity, defining it for the first time as something that transcended national borders, social class, and in some cases, even pigmentation. The political and cultural movements summarized in this chapter reveal the many different interpretations of black transnationalism that operated in every corner of the Americas and elsewhere in the decades following the Great War.

The wide variations in racial ideology between the different countries of Latin America produced distinct forms of black transnationalism across the region. For example, Cuba adopted black transnationalism in a way that diverged significantly from Brazil, as it was complicated by Cuba's comparatively more intimate relationship with the United States. Indeed, as this dissertation demonstrates, black transnationalism was received differently and adapted to unique ends in these two countries. However, in both of these countries, the practice of black transnationalism was initially most visible in the cultural sphere, though it eventually impacted politics as well. In Latin American countries where black activists were constrained either by specific legislation that banned race-based organizing (as in Cuba) or by controlling attitudes towards race that deemed any discussion of difference to be divisive (in both Cuba and Brazil), literature and performance were key in bringing about race consciousness. Because of their additional political commitments, the black transnationalism of these writers intersects with the other movements that were popular in Latin America in the early twentieth century. They were also related to distinctly Latin American concepts of nationhood. While the Harlem Renaissance was born out of a nation that was rising to dominance—both culturally and economically—in the interwar years, this was not the case for Latin American countries. Cuba and Brazil spent this time period dealing with repressive dictatorships and the increasing economic influence of U.S.-

owned corporations in the region. Because of the political pressure exerted by the United States in Latin America in this decade, there was considerable pressure to present a “united front” against what was perceived as neo-imperialism—a tendency that also affected the way in which race and race relations were discussed (or hushed). All of these elements contributed to the way in which black transnationalist ideology took shape in Latin America—both in the ways in which it was combined with other social discourses and the ways in which it traveled and was transmitted throughout the region. The remainder of this dissertation discusses these issues in more detail, starting with Cuba and concluding with Brazil.

Chapter Two: An Elusive Equality: Race Relations in the History of Cuba, 1868-1959

The influence of black transnationalist thought on the poetry of Nicolás Guillén and Regino Pedroso can only be grasped by first understanding the history of racial discourse in Cuba. Over the past 150 years, the ideal of racial equality has been intimately linked to Cuban national identity, and yet the way in which Cuba has pursued racial equality—through the promotion of *mestizaje*—seems antithetical to this very objective. By emphasizing the history of racial mixture (African and European) in Cuba, *mestizaje* requires that groups and individuals eschew self-identification with one racial group over another, nearly erasing the very idea of race itself. As Lino Duno Gottberg has observed, the discourse of *mestizaje* has ultimately served to create a Cuban national identity predicated upon “la disolución de las diferencias étnicas” (Introduction). In light of this fact, it might seem impossible that any forms of black transnationalism could be practiced in the Cuban context; after all, how could an ideology founded upon principles of racial pride find success within an environment that invalidated racial expressions of identity? However, this chapter shows that black transnationalist thought was indeed expressed in Cuban literature, and that it challenged the dominant model of *mestizaje*. In fact, the poetry of Guillén and Pedroso reveals that it was possible, within the framework of Marxist ideology, to promote racial solidarity without resorting to raceblindness, as did *mestizaje*. To demonstrate such, this chapter begins with a brief history of race relations in Cuba, which traces the development of *mestizaje* ideology through Cuba’s three successive wars for independence. It also outlines a number of political movements that challenged the claims of *mestizaje*, as these would create a precedent for the critiques found in the works of Guillén and Pedroso. Finally, it analyzes selected works by these two poets, in order to decipher the ways in which black transnationalism shaped and was expressed in their writings.

“Color cubano:” Cuba’s Intertwined Ideologies of Race and Nation

Historically, racial discourse in Cuba has been intimately intertwined with national discourse, so much so that the question of national identity is nearly inseparable from the question of racial identity.⁴⁷ Scholars point out that what they call “the myth of racial equality” has shaped Cuba’s vision of itself, and of its people, since the start of the first war for Cuban independence, known as the Ten Years’ War, in 1868. The inaugurating act of that conflict was one with exceptional racial repercussions, as the leader of the insurrection, the sugar plantation owner Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, gathered his slaves on October 10 to announce his rebellion against the Spanish empire and his manumission of his enslaved laborers. Céspedes then invited his now-former slaves to join his uprising as he read them the manifesto of the revolutionary forces, which affirmed the abolition of slavery (though not the political equality of blacks) as a criterion of Cuban sovereignty. Alongside this astounding declaration, however, was another racially significant statement—this one more problematic: a clause in the document that idealized the progressive “whitening” of the Cuban population through the support of exclusively white immigration.⁴⁸ The juxtaposition of these two points in the revolutionary manifesto symbolizes the paradox that would characterize Cuban race relations for the next near-century: the simultaneous promotion of racial equality and white supremacist ideology.

Cuba’s second war for independence was also racially fraught. Unsatisfied with the conditions of the Pact of Zanjón, signed in February of 1878 to end the Ten Years’ War, the formidable Cuban General Antonio Maceo led a protest in March 1878 against the treaty’s failure to abolish slavery. His rebellion in Baraguá was quickly quashed. Soon after, however,

⁴⁷ Chapter five will show that the same is true of Brazil, with regards to the myth of “racial democracy.”

⁴⁸ This section blames Spain for preventing “la inmigración blanca, única que en la actualidad nos conviene, [que] se ve alejada de nuestras playas por las innumerables trabas con que se la enreda y la prevención y ojeriza con que se la mira” (“Manifiesto”).

conflict resumed once again in earnest. By the following year, the conflict that would be known as the *Guerra Chiquita*, or Little War, had started. Describing this conflict in comparison to the Ten Years' War, Ferrer writes that the rebellion against the Spanish crown was "blacker than the first one: many white Liberal veterans of the first war rejected it publicly; slaves and former slaves embraced it; and black and mulatto officers gradually assumed its most prominent military positions" (77). This time, however, insurgent propaganda did not address the subject of race directly. The manifestos and other official publications released by the insurgency's controlling organization, the Revolutionary Committee, did not call for equal rights for blacks, but instead spoke of political freedom "in general terms" (Ferrer 84).⁴⁹ Even so, monarchists used the issue of race against the rebels. Opponents of the war—not only Spaniards, but also white Cuban Liberals—characterized the Little War as a "race war," capitalizing on Cubans' century-long fear of a repeat of the Haitian Revolution.⁵⁰ The white Cuban elite and citizenry simply could not accept the idea that independence from Spain would be won, and a new nation established, largely by Cubans of color. The insurgents were ridiculed in the Spanish colonialist press as "black savages" and their leaders accused of racism against whites (Ferrer 78). The revolutionaries' rebuttals of these claims and efforts to emphasize the "whitening" of their cause were ultimately ineffective (Ferrer 81). Colonialists had successfully provoked racial paranoia, and without support from the white Cuban elite, the insurgency collapsed.

In the 1890s, as Cuban rebels prepared to fight for independence for a third time, debates about race again became heated—but this time, it was the insurgents who wielded this

⁴⁹ Ferrer notes that the public rhetoric of Lt. General Antonio Maceo, the insurgency's mulatto hero, contradicted this, as he spoke openly of the need for emancipation and urged slaves to join his movement (84).

⁵⁰ Aline Helg provides an explanation and history of this cultural paranoia in *Our Rightful Share* (1995). Ferrer notes that some white leaders of the insurgency also chose not to deny their opponents' accusations of a "race war," as "white leaders could use the specter of race war to legitimate their own role as responsible leaders of a revolution inherently dangerous and to exalt themselves as guardians of a civilization in a movement with the potential to turn in another direction" (81).

ideological weapon most effectively, adopting a new rhetorical strategy that took an indirect approach to the subject. Rather than recognize any discrepancy between the races, or promote the leadership of one over another, the new insurgent rhetoric promoted the shared *cubanidad*, or Cubanness, of black and white Cubans. One of the best examples of this new paradigm of racial discourse is found in José Martí's widely disseminated 1893 essay "Mi raza," where the revolutionary leader envisioned an independent Cuba characterized by its commitment to racial equality. He urged his readers not to focus on racial difference between Cubans—since to do so is naturally divisive—but instead, to imagine a nation where blacks and whites would live in harmony, with individuals' success based on their own virtue and efforts, rather than their skin color. In the idyllic Cuba proposed in "Mi raza," Martí asserts, "Muchos blancos se han olvidado ya de su color, y muchos negros. Juntos trabajan, blancos y negros, por el cultivo de la mente, por la propagación de la virtud, por el triunfo del trabajo creador y de la caridad sublime." Two years later, the revolutionary manifesto authored by Martí declared that on some scale, Cuba had already attained this kind of racial utopia, having reversed the effects of centuries of slavery. This document, entitled the "Manifiesto de Montecristi," sustained that "Cubanos hay en Cuba de uno y otro color, olvidados para siempre—con la guerra emancipadora y el trabajo donde unidos se gradúan—del odio en que los pudo dividir la esclavitud." To some extent, this was true, as a united force could be found within the ranks of the insurgent Mambí Army itself, which was impressively integrated; Jorge Ibarra estimates that up to 60 percent of Cuba's total troops were Cubans of color, with black Cubans representing almost 40 percent of revolutionary leadership (*Cuba between Empires* 106).⁵¹ With blacks and whites allied in the fight for freedom, Martí's vision was translated into action.

⁵¹ Rafael Fermoselle confirms Pérez's estimate in his 1998 volume *Política y color en Cuba* (26). Of course, the high representation of blacks in the insurgent army did not mean that either a) racial equality had actually been

This kind of cross-racial cooperation would prove an important ideological weapon in the battle against Spain; as Ferrer notes, the idea of racial unification in this era was “profoundly counterhegemonic,” serving as a “powerful, if incomplete, attack on the ideological foundations of colonial rule” (138). By championing racial equality, Cuba’s revolutionaries disproved Spanish claims that, like the Little War, this third armed conflict was nothing more than an incendiary “race war.” Not only, however, was this rhetoric a show of force against the colonizer—it was also a warning to other world powers who might seek to interfere in Cuba’s future politics, particularly the United States. The transracial alliance of Cuba’s insurgency was wielded as proof of the nation’s capacity for self-governance, even though the way in which this was done was not exactly antiracist. Revolutionaries’ rhetorical emphasis on black-white alliances were intended to show that it was not blacks alone who led the insurgency against Spain—that it was whites who still held power. As such, the promotion of transracial alliance emphasized the white element of the insurgency’s leadership, a strategy that mimicked the insurgents’ public relations campaign during the Little War and responded to claims like those made by the American general Samuel B.M. Young, who deemed Cuba a nation governed by “degenerates” who were “absolutely devoid of honor or gratitude”—“degenerates” being thinly veiled code for “blacks” (qtd. in Tone 283). Although this strategy ultimately did not preclude the United States from imposing its own neoimperial interests upon Cuba as soon as independence was secured, it did rally Cubans against America’s interference in their domestic affairs. Unity against American incursions into Cuban politics would prove even more necessary in the years to come, as politicians from the United States sought to influence all realms of

achieved or b) that black soldiers were immune to racial discrimination. Helg details some of the forms of persecution suffered by black insurgents in chapter two of *Our Rightful Share*.

political and social life in Cuba, even race relations, as they promoted (unsuccessfully) the adoption of Jim Crow-type statutes on the island.⁵²

The racial discourse elaborated during Cuba's third war for independence—what Helg terms “Mambí ideology”—was both astoundingly progressive and tragically self-contradictory. To read Martí within the socio-historical context of the late nineteenth century is to understand Cuba's *apostól* as a completely revolutionary mind. At a time in which scientific racism was gaining momentum among the intellectual elite around the world, Martí was calling for his compatriots to transcend the idea of race itself and embrace man's common humanity. Even more astounding, he did this less than a decade after the official abolition of slavery in Cuba, which took effect in 1886.⁵³ Yet the premise of Martí's color-blind ideal was flawed. To erase race in the pursuit of racial equality requires a complicated logic. It implies the mutual exclusivity of racial and national subjectivity and pits the two against one another in a way that could only prove fatal. Even more unfortunately, in the years following Cuba's independence from Spain, a strange hermeneutic would be applied to Martí's writings that interpreted his vision of racial equality not as a future ideal, but as an already-achieved reality. With this racial ideology dominating the newly independent Cuba, any suggestion of division or discord between the races became seen as counterproductive to the national project and was silenced accordingly.⁵⁴ It was this attitude that Guillén and Pedroso would later confront—and seek to

⁵² Louis A. Pérez offers a complete history of the United States' infantilizing Cuban policy in *Cuba and the United States: Ties of Singular Intimacy* (2003), including the creation and adoption of the Platt Amendment in 1901, designed to restrict Cuba's international involvement and maintain strong U.S. involvement in Cuba's domestic politics. Helg's *Our Rightful Share* complements this with an overview of the United States' influence on Cuban social practices during the early twentieth century, including the outlawing of Afro-Cuban traditions and the forced introduction of U.S. educational curricula into Cuban schools (93-96).

⁵³ Note that Cuba and Brazil were the last countries in the Western hemisphere to abolish slavery. Brazil fully abolished the practice of slavery in 1888, two years after abolition took effect in Cuba.

⁵⁴ Alejandro de la Fuente observes that the myth of racial equality did not prevent Cuban politicians from promoting policies of *blanqueamiento*, designed to progressively whiten the Cuban population by facilitating Spanish

challenge—as they used their work to represent the particular struggles of Afro-Cubans and imagine new functions for black identity in the Cuban context.

Mestizaje's Malcontents: Afro-Cuban Responses to Cuba's National Ideology

First Signs of Resistance: The Veteranos de Color and the Partido Independiente de Color

Upon the neutralization of the conflict, Cubans of color immediately recognized that the objectives of Martí's vision had not been fully attained; however, the myth of racial equality stifled their objections to what they saw—rightly—as the enduring presence of racism in Cuban society. At various points in the decades following the 1895 war for independence, black Cubans' attempts to organize for racial justice were thwarted by a social framework that condemned discussions of racial difference as unpatriotic, and sometimes, even racist against white Cubans. And yet, despite this fact, brave protesters soldiered on, often risking much in speaking out against the myth of racial equality. Their work, in a very real sense, thus served to till the soil where the seeds of black transnationalism would later be planted in Cuba.

One of the first examples of an Afro-Cuban mobilization effort is found in the case of the Comité de Acción de Veteranos y Asociaciones de Color, a group of black veterans who convened in 1902 to demand greater opportunities for Cubans of color. Led by Capitan Campos Marquetti, the Veteranos de Color demanded a number of reforms be made to align the reality of the Cuban government with the ideology it professed. These focused primarily on employment policy, as many veterans of color had found themselves in severely reduced circumstances following their service in the war. Their two principal demands were that Cuban security forces be integrated and that public jobs be made available to qualified blacks, as these two

immigration to the island (*A Nation for All*, Part I). This is one indicator—among many—that so-called “racial equality” in Cuba was perhaps not as straightforward as it appeared.

governmental sectors were viewed as the most likely to hire Liberation Army veterans. Unfortunately, these appeals fell on deaf ears. Helg notes that the most prominent black politicians of the era, Juan Gualberto Gómez and Martín Morúa Delgado, did nothing to lend their support to the veterans' cause, instead choosing to undermine it for their own political gains. Gómez, in the closing session of the convention, advised the veterans "to temper their demands and not to jeopardize the newly constituted republic," while Morúa simply refused to attend any part of the meeting (126). As few black veterans were represented in the new Cuban government, the Veteranos de Color had no other politicians to advance their cause. With Gómez and Morúa choosing political expediency over justice, the demands of the committee went unfulfilled.

Six years later, a member of the Veteranos de Color rose to national prominence as the leader of a newly formed black political party—the first such political party in the Western hemisphere. In 1908, Evaristo Estenoz partnered with other black Cuban leaders to constitute the Partido Independiente de Color (PIC), whose manifesto declared that its mission would be to "mantener el equilibrio de *todos los intereses cubanos*, difundir el amor a la Patria, desarrollar relaciones cordiales, e interesar a todos en la conservación de la nacionalidad cubana, haciendo participar en la administración pública a los nacidos en esta tierra" (Estenoz 165, emphasis mine). The rhetoric of this document is careful—the language is whitewashed to remove any hint of partiality towards a particular race—yet there is no doubt that the PIC's platform would principally benefit communities of color, particularly in the labor sector. The establishment of the PIC came at a moment of major discontent within the black community, as ten years after the conclusion of the war, this group recognized with bitterness that independence from Spain had

left their social standing largely unchanged. Pérez describes the disillusionment of this community, which had sacrificed so much for such paltry returns, as follows:

[Black Cubans'] contribution to the cause of *Cuba Libre* had been on a scale well out of proportion to their numbers. Their compensation from free Cuba was well below the proportion to their numbers. They had been promised political equality and social justice. They received neither. ("Politics, Peasants, and People of Color" 526)

Led by black Cuban elites, many of whom had been generals in the Liberation Army, the PIC meant to reclaim the promises of independence, and therefore, its very existence was an affront to those who had declared the goal of racial equality already accomplished. President José Miguel Gómez ordered the party disbanded in 1910, invoking the recently passed Morúa law, which declared null political parties whose membership represented only one race.⁵⁵

The PIC regrouped, however, and two years later, staged protests against the Morúa law that would eventually devolve into the race war of 1912, commonly referred to as "La Guerrita de 1912." This conflict revealed the consequences that would be levied against those who threatened Cuba's perceived national unity with the enactment of racial politics.⁵⁶ The backlash was swift and effective; though the estimated number of rebel dead varies widely—between 1,200 and 12,000 by differing accounts—at the conclusion of the armed confrontation, it was impossible to deny that the PIC and those who had fought alongside it had been roundly

⁵⁵ The passing of this law was spearheaded by the same Martín Morúa who had earlier ignored the pleas made by the *Veteranos de Color* for equal employment opportunities in the government sector.

⁵⁶ De la Fuente sees the two diverging paradigms of race in Cuba—the "dominance of racism" and the "possibility of integration"—as manifested in historiographical interpretations of the race war of 1912 (*A Nation for All* Introduction). These divergent approaches are also detected in Afro-Cubans' attitudes towards the PIC at the time of its formation, many of whom rejected the party because of its racially divisive model. De la Fuente notes that the PIC was opposed by "the most prestigious Afro-Cuban veterans, 'colored' societies, and black politicians" (*A Nation for All* "Black Autonomous Mobilization: The PIC").

defeated.⁵⁷ The violence of the conflict showed that white Cubans were willing to defend their vision of an “equal” nation with increasing brutality: whereas the *Veteranos de Color* had been simply ignored, members of the PIC and suspected sympathizers were brutally castigated.

Post-WWI Movements of a Burgeoning Black Consciousness

The memory of the violence of *La Guerrita de 1912* effectively suppressed black political mobilization for the next ten years of Cuban history. However, the 1920s and 30s witnessed a dramatic increase in awareness of racial issues and the beginning of a transformation of racial discourse in Cuban society. This was due to both political and cultural factors. In politics, the actions of specifically “racial” organizations—both white and black—served to stimulate public debate on racial identity, and the introduction of socialism to the island also influenced Cuba’s racial discourse. In the cultural realm, the development of *afrocubanismo* proved to have additional sway over how race was discussed in Cuba. To begin, we will consider the work of black solidarity activists in Cuba. By the mid-1920s, black transnationalist ideologies were lapping at the shores of Cuba, having rippled outwards across the Atlantic from their epicenters in North America and the Caribbean. The first to make landfall was Garveyism. This was received with mixed results by Cubans, who found their own national discourse at odds with the “race first” message of Garvey’s Pan-Africanist UNIA. Among black immigrant laborers living in Cuba’s Oriente province, however, the organization found a particularly warm reception. Following Garvey’s visit to the island in 1921, Cuba became second only to the United States in terms of UNIA membership, boasting fifty-two chapters by the mid-1920s, by

⁵⁷ Helg estimates 2,000 killed in *Our Rightful Share* (225), but more recently, Tomás Fernández Robaina has placed the figure at 12,000 in his article “El Doce–1912.”

Tony Martin's count (16).⁵⁸ Guridy credits the success of Garveyism in Cuba to the appeal of the UNIA's performative mobilization tactics, as well as parallels between the organizations's rhetoric of racial uplift and homegrown ideologies of racial improvement, such as those promoted by Cuban *sociedades de color*. It bears repeating, however, that the UNIA's ideology of self-determination was never fully embraced by Cubans of color. Just as the PIC had been seen as a racially divisive organization, so too was the UNIA considered to be an institution that threatened the Cuban ideal of national racial unity and for this reason it was outlawed by President Gerardo Machado during his time in office ("Marcus Garvey in Cuba" 123). Commenting on Garveyism in 1929, the prominent black intellectual Gustavo Urrutia, founder of the influential newspaper column "Ideales de una raza," chided the UNIA's approach to black empowerment.⁵⁹ He wrote, "The ideology of Mr. Garvey has not had a warm reception among black Cubans.... The black knows that to attain the progress and extinction of the racial prejudices which mortify him, it is not necessary to break the brotherly links that link him to the white Cuban" (qtd. in "Marcus Garvey in Cuba" 124). More conservative, and conciliatory, ideologies of black empowerment proved most appealing to Cubans of color, particularly ideologies that stressed education and racial uplift, and led some Cubans to send their children to study at the Tuskegee Institute ("Racial Knowledge in Cuba" 93). Therefore, it is likely that the greatest contribution of black transnationalist organizations in Cuba was to renew awareness and discussion of racial discrimination on the island, a previously taboo subject.

⁵⁸ In the 2013 article "'Forging Ahead' in Banes, Cuba" Frances Peace Sullivan provides a case study of the UNIA's activities in the sugar town of Banes, as a microhistory of the organization's impact in Cuba. Frank Guridy also provides an overview of the UNIA's activities in the fifth chapter of his 2002 dissertation, "Racial Knowledge in Cuba."

⁵⁹ Rosalie Schwartz provides a fascinating history of the column "Ideales de la Raza"—itself a major influence on race debates in Cuba—in "Cuba's Roaring Twenties," published as a chapter in the anthology *Between Race and Empire* in 1998.

Despite the growth of black consciousness in Cuba, however, little changed for Afro-Cubans during this time period, as the nation's commitment to the myth of racial equality (ironically) often prevented meaningful social change. For example, as Alejandro de la Fuente documents in *A Nation for All*, racial discrimination persisted in Cuban labor practices despite legislation forbidding racially preferential treatment. Nicolás Guillén himself had strong words regarding the hypocrisy of race in Cuba and the ways in which racial practice frequently betrayed official ideology. In a 1929 article entitled “El blanco, he ahí el problema,” he admits sarcastically, “Teóricamente, pues, en nuestra patria no hay problemas de raza, o si el lector quiere, de colores. Bajo el ala amorosa de una legislación prudente y liberal se abrazan enternecidos, derramando lágrimas de felicidad, el negro y el blanco, igualados por fin en lo que ellos quieren de fundamental y común” (202).⁶⁰ Not only did Cuba's rhetoric of racial equality not necessarily translate into antiracist policy, it also did not translate into a lived reality for the majority of Cubans of color. In his article “La conquista del blanco,” authored in the same year, Guillén describes the disparities between the expectations and experiences of white, middle class citizens and black Cubans of the same class and education. The latter, he declares, “hallan diariamente innumerables dificultades para desenvolverse y tienen que luchar con obstáculos molestos que no reconocen más origen que el color de la piel” (199). Guillén was exceptional in his willingness to identify the instances of racial discrimination that he witnessed, and indeed, that he himself experienced; in general, the intellectual elite was more often characterized by its collective refusal to admit the existence of racial prejudice. Blinded to the reality of race

⁶⁰ These words are curiously reminiscent of the final lines of one of Guillén's most famous texts, “Balada de los dos abuelos,” which many have read as a racial allegory of Cuba. In this pseudo-autobiographical poem, Guillén describes the disparate experiences of two grandfathers—one Spanish, one black—whose histories are reconciled in the figure of their Cuban grandson. The closing stanza of the poem depicts the two grandfathers as embracing, dreaming, crying, and singing together. Those lines have been interpreted by countless critics as a celebratory affirmation of Cuba's *mestizaje*, though Guillén's tone in this essay begs a re-consideration of such a reading.

relations on the island, they would not be influenced by organizations that emphasized the rights of one racial group over another; instead, the rhetoric that would prove most influential in changing racial discourse in Cuba owed its success to an ability to deal indirectly with the subject of race.

Socialism's Subtle Subversion of Mestizaje

The movement that found the right language to challenge *mestizaje's* dominance was one that was not exclusively focused on the issue of race—it was socialism. In 1922, the Comintern solidified its position on racial issues with the authoring of its “Thesis on the Negro Question,” presented at the World Congress that year by Otto Huiswoud and Claude McKay. Its principal recommendation was that the Comintern incorporate the pursuit of racial justice into its revolutionary mission and lend its support to “every form of Negro movement which tends to undermine or weaken capitalism or imperialism, or to impede its further penetration” (7). Particular strategies would later be developed to fortify resistance movements in Africa and in communities of the African diaspora, including in the United States and in Cuba, where the Partido Comunista Cubano (PCC) was established in 1925. Two years later, the PCC was outlawed by the Machado regime, though it continued to operate clandestinely until 1939, pursuing explicitly racial initiatives under the guidance of the Comintern.⁶¹ It was not so much these initiatives, such as the Black Belt Thesis—which were considered by some black intellectuals to be misguided applications of Marxist “oppressed nations” theory—, but the introduction of socialist ideology into public discourse that would change the way that race was

⁶¹ See Manuel Caballero’s *Latin America and the Comintern* (1986) for a history of the Comintern’s activities in Cuba and elsewhere in Latin America. Despite opposition to its mission, the PCC had great success in organizing Cuban labor, to the extent that, by 1933, the Cuban labor force was the best organized and most radical in all of Latin America, according to Jules (83).

discussed in Cuba, by providing Cubans of color with the vocabulary that they needed to express their experiences of oppression and lobby for change without outright rejecting nationalist principles.⁶² Articulating the intersection between Marxist economics and antiracism, Urrutia argued in a 1936 essay that socialism provided Cuban blacks with a new form of consciousness that equipped them for political action. He was careful to identify this consciousness as explicitly non-racial, so as to avoid the accusation of racialism; instead, he called it a consciousness shared by “las masas trabajadoras,” which saw anti-racism and anti-imperialism as concurrent and complementary goals (“Racialismo y racismo en el negro cubano” 233).⁶³ Employing Marxist language about social class allowed Urrutia—and as explained in the following chapters, Guillén and Pedroso—to effectively address the subject of race in Cuba by approaching it obliquely. The connection between class and race was implicit, and therefore, any discussion of the former necessarily implied a commentary on the latter. By lobbying for workers’ rights, Marxists indirectly guaranteed better conditions for communities of color.

Socialism also encouraged anti-Americanism, justifying attacks against the United States for its neo-imperial policies towards Cuba and for its moral hypocrisy with regards to Jim Crow laws. Anti-American sentiment was not a new phenomenon in Cuba—the U.S.’s continued intervention into domestic affairs guaranteed a difficult relationship between the two countries—but in the 1920s and 30s, it became another way to indirectly broach the subject of race on the

⁶² In his 1942 article “Algunos aspectos del problema negro en Cuba,” Rómulo Lachetere, a black intellectual and historian of Afro-Cuban traditions, published a critique of the Comintern’s activities that expressed many of his contemporaries’ misgivings about the way that the PCC had approached the issue of race: “A pesar de que este Partido al principio trató erróneamente de aplicar en Cuba una teoría de minoría nacional negra, basada en condiciones por completo disímiles a las del área negra del Sur de Estados Unidos, tomó el problema negro con seriedad y surgieron medidas prácticas para solucionarlo” (339).

⁶³ Both this essay and Urrutia’s 1939 speech “Puntos de vista del nuevo negro” contain a revisionist interpretation of slavery that is disconcerting, but nevertheless consistent with both the teleological thrust of Marxism and Cuba’s racial discourse of integration. In the latter presentation, he describes Africans as a chosen people selected by “divine mandate,” who allowed themselves to be exploited as slaves in order to benefit Western civilization and propel its development forward. In modern times, the role of the “nuevo negro” is to continue this form of ethnic self-sacrifice, by cooperating with whites to advance *mestizaje* (even to the point of the extinction of the black “race”) (258).

island. Black Cubans had particular reason to oppose the United States' interference in domestic matters, as they were those who arguably suffered the most under the social and economic policies imposed by pro-American and annexationist politicians. There was also a fear that the United States would once again attempt to impose its racial ideology on Cubans—if not through legislation, as had happened following the war for independence, then through subtler means. In one of his most famous essays, “El camino de Harlem,” published in *El Diario de la Marina* in 1929, Guillén condemned the current state of race relations in Cuba by comparing it to segregation in the U.S. In this piece, he laments that already in Cuba, there exist places where “a semejanza de lo que acontece en ciertas regiones *yankees*, los blancos y los negros transitan en los pasos públicos los días de retreta por zonas perfectamente delimitadas, cuya violación por cualquiera de ellos y, más que nadie, por los negros, da origen a verdaderos conflictos” (195). Although Jim Crow was not law in Cuba, his presence cast a long shadow there. Guillén thus concludes his essay by warning his compatriots that if they do not improve the state of race relations in their country, Cuba will find itself as segregated as its northern neighbor, with blacks in every city confined to their particular “barrio negro,” like New York’s Harlem (197). With this argument, Guillén points to the failures of *mestizaje* to secure full racial equality and calls upon his countrymen to pursue this ideal with even more vigor.

Many other black intellectuals shared the fear that Jim Crow ideology would infiltrate Cuba, a fear that was periodically corroborated by public incidents of racial discrimination. The “caso Mitchell” of 1937 appeared to confirm the validity of such fears.⁶⁴ This incident involved the U.S. Congressman Arthur Mitchell, who, during a vacation to the island, was refused service at Havana’s Hotel Saratoga, purportedly because of the color of his skin. Mitchell was seen as a

⁶⁴ Frank Guridy provides a thorough analysis of this event and its significance to racial solidarity movements between Afro-Cuban and African-American communities in his article “From Solidarity to Cross-Fertilization.”

role model by many Cubans of color, due to his position as the first African-American member of Congress, and when the incident was leaked to press, general outrage ensued. The intensity of the public reaction spoke to the black community's concern that U.S. influence would lead to a calcification of the color line in Cuba. If a U.S. Congressman could be subject to blatant racial discrimination in Cuba, how much would the average black Cuban be expected to endure? As Guridy notes, the episode eventually led black activists to demand that the 1940 Cuban Constitutional Convention add a new clause to the country's constitution banning discrimination on the basis of race ("From Solidarity" 31). Although this policy was not approved as originally proposed, Alejandro De la Fuente notes that the 1940 Constitution does redefine labor practices in such a way as to minimize racial discrimination in the employment market (*A Nation for All*). This is an example of how socialism took advantage of the disconnect between Cuba's racial ideology and its practice by shifting the political conversation into the realm of the latter. By focusing on labor policy, socialists made real gains for black rights without resorting to what would have been considered racially polarizing rhetoric.

Afrocubanismo and the Cultural Reinforcement of Mestizaje Ideology

While socialism exercised its influence on politics in early twentieth century Cuba, an artistic movement was slowly building that would have a significant and simultaneous impact in the Cuban cultural realm. This vogue, begun in the late 20s, would come to be known as *afrocubanismo*—which, as mentioned in the first chapter, was a subset of Negrismo.

Afrocubanismo's vanguard was not populated by artists of color, but white Cubans interested in the African-derived elements of their own culture. Influenced by black cultural movements in other parts of the world, particularly the Harlem Renaissance, these artists used black Cuban

practices as inspiration for their literature, music, and visual arts. Miguel Arnedo-Gómez, whose monograph *Writing Rumba* represents the first comprehensive history of *afrocubanismo*, identifies the short story “La rumba,” published in 1927 by the white writer Roger Lauria, as the seminal text of this movement. Lauria’s subject matter— black Cuban performance—would prove enticing to many other artists associated with the movement, and became a defining theme of *afrocubanismo*, with many texts centered on cultural practices specific to black communities: various forms of dance, storytelling, and religious rituals⁶⁵. Along with such esteemed writers as Alejo Carpentier, Emilio Ballagas, Ramón Guirao, and José Tallet, Guillén and Pedroso were incorporated into this movement and Guillén would eventually be considered the *afrocubanista* par excellence. However, in important ways that are discussed later in this chapter, Guillén and Pedroso’s work departs ideologically from that of their white contemporaries. As a group, *afrocubanistas* brought to light subject matter that had been all but ignored in prior centuries, and in doing so, raised awareness of the cultural contributions that people of African descent had made to the entire nation. Intellectuals such as Fernando Ortiz and Lydia Cabrera accomplished the same on the academic front, transforming Afro-Cuban culture into a legitimate field of study through their pioneering scholarship. Yet even as it highlighted the richness of Cuba’s African heritage, *afrocubanismo* was not uniformly an antiracist movement, a fact that many critics have acknowledged. As Vera Kutzinski writes, much of *afrocubanista* poetry actually perpetuates racist attitudes, because it fails to question the ideology upon which it is predicated. She argues that, “Afro-Cubanism had all the makings of a folkloric spectacle whose political effect was to displace and obfuscate actual social problems and conflicts, especially racial ones” (*Sugar’s Secrets* 145). In many cases, the movement’s celebration of cultural practices proved to be

⁶⁵ Miguel Arnedo-Gómez’s 2001 article “‘Afrocubanista’ Poetry and Performance” provides a helpful overview of the dimensions of performance in *afrocubanista* art.

somewhat of a distraction, in that it deflected public attention and intellectual energy away from the more critical issue of ongoing racial discrimination. *Afrocubanismo*'s largely backwards-looking perspective kept it from being a politically transformative movement, even though it forever changed the course of Cuban cultural production.

In giving expression to African influences in Cuban art, *afrocubanismo* solidified *mestizaje* ideology on a cultural level. It also exemplified what would later be formalized as Cuba's racial paradigm of transculturation—a theory of *mestizaje* developed by Fernando Ortiz in his revolutionizing sociological study *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar* (1944).⁶⁶ A modification of Bronislaw Malinowski's theory of acculturation, Ortiz's model attempts to explain the evolution of Cuban society as a process of fusion, or *mestizaje*, between its Spanish and African elements, represented metaphorically by the tobacco and sugar referenced in the title of his work. As these two elements combine, they produce a new, autochthonous culture—one that is part of the social lineage of all Cubans, regardless of biological race. In simpler terms, because of the history of racial and cultural mixing in Cuba, all Cubans are black, and all Cubans are also white, irrespective of DNA. In the history of racial discourse in Cuba, transculturation represented an important innovation. Although it echoed Martí's ideology of racial equality, it shifted the emphasis from racelessness to the ideal of an inclusive Cuban race. However, the former discontinuity remained: even as Cuban intellectuals idealized their country's mixed culture, blacks continued to experience unfair treatment in society. *Mestizaje* did not mean political equality.

⁶⁶ Race scholars frequently refer to this discourse as that of *mestizaje*. In the Cuban context, this term generally refers to a fusion of Spanish and African cultures, while in Mexico, for example, it almost exclusively refers to the mixing of Spanish and indigenous ethnicities. For a more detailed history of this discourse than this chapter can allow, see the 1998 article by Martínez-Echazabal entitled "Mestizaje and the Discourse of National/Cultural Identity in Latin America, 1845-1959."

The history of racial discourse summarized above represents the ideological legacy that Guillén and Pedroso were forced to wrestle with in their work. As politically astute and involved men of the early twentieth century, the two poets were especially influenced by the ideologies of socialism and *mestizaje*, and elements of both appear in their work. However, these poets' thinking on race was not confined to either of these paradigms; as previously explained, their understandings of blackness crossed not only geographical, but also ideological, borders. The following two chapters explore the route that each of these writers took in developing a black transnationalist perspective to convey models of black subjectivity other than those available through the dominant racial paradigms of Cuba. This work of discovery will center around the following three questions: How do socialism and Cuba's ideology of *mestizaje* inform Guillén and Pedroso's understanding of blackness as a global subjectivity? How are the racial ideologies that they develop distinct from other forms of black transnationalism? And finally, how does their work change our understanding of both the history of black solidarity movements and the history of Cuban racial discourse?

Chapter Three: The Black Body as Site of Resistance in Nicolás Guillén's Poetry

Nicolás Guillén's Life and Oeuvre

Nicolás Guillén, the national poet of Cuba, was born in Camagüey in 1902, to the journalist Nicolás Guillén Urra, editor of *Las dos repúblicas*, and his wife, Argelia Batista Arrieta.⁶⁷ He began to compose poetry at age eighteen, and assembled his first unpublished volume, *Cerebro y corazón*, in 1922. At this same time, he undertook the study of law at the University of Havana, but quickly abandoned his education to pursue employment as a journalist. Later in his life, Guillén would confess that he always considered himself first and foremost a journalist, and that “el periodismo es un desahogo, y mediante su ejercicio me libero de muchas cosas que no puedo expresar mediante el verso” (“Conversación con Nicolás Guillén” 55). Returning to his home city, with the help of his brother Francisco, in 1923, he founded the newspaper *Lis*, marketed to the black middle class of Camagüey.⁶⁸ The publication survived only a few months, but its contents evidence Guillén's burgeoning social consciousness, largely shaped—at this point—by racial uplift ideology. Accordingly, *Lis* published essays on the importance of education in the black community along with republications of classic pieces of literature, intended to make such works widely accessible to *Lis*'s readers.⁶⁹ Following the shuttering of *Lis*, Guillén's resumed his literary interests with renewed vigor, though he continued to report for various news outlets. He would continue on this double track for the rest of his life, writing for such periodicals as *Mediodía* and *El Diario de la Marina*, while also managing a poetic career that brought him international acclaim and, following the success of the

⁶⁷ For a more in-depth introduction to Guillén's life, see Ángel Augier's *Nicolás Guillén: estudio biográfico-crítico* (1984), which continues to be the most reliable biography of the poet.

⁶⁸ *Lis* is sometimes referred to as *Lys*.

⁶⁹ For a history of the newspaper's brief publication record, see the 2002 article by Hernández Bardanca, “Una revista de Nicolás Guillén: apuntes sobre *Lis*.”

Cuban Revolution, an appointment as president of the Unión Nacional de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba (UNEAC).

The verse that Guillén authored over the course of his fifty-year career addressed such varied themes as anti-imperialism, labor injustices, and sexual desire, but no theme of this poet's work has received as much scholarly interest as the topic of race, and in particular, the expression of transculturation in Guillén's writing. Indeed, most scholarship on Guillén assumes that Guillén's acceptance of *mestizaje* ideology was total; however, as this chapter demonstrates, Guillén's adaptation of black transnationalist ideology actually challenges Cuba's national discourse of racial mixing. A number of factors have contributed to the previous, incomplete assessments of this poet's writing. First, Guillén himself acknowledged in his introduction to the collection *Sóngoro Cosongo* (1931) that his was a "poesía mulata" (1). It was in this same introduction that he shared his now much-cited vision for the future of Cuba, writing, "El espíritu de Cuba es mestizo. Y del espíritu hacia la piel nos vendrá el color definitivo. Algún día se dirá: color cubano" (2). The combination of these two statements has led scholars such as Nancy Morejón and Richard Jackson to claim that Guillén's poetry expresses a uniquely mulatto Cubanness, rather than an Afrocentric identity.⁷⁰ Additionally, another explanation for the tendency to explain Guillén's work as a model of transculturation is that the poet's oeuvre has been customarily divided into a "black period" and a "social period." Guillén's first two collections, *Motivos de Son* (1930) and *Sóngoro Cosongo*, are generally housed within this former category, with the remainder of his poetry categorized as the latter.⁷¹ This way of reading Guillén has had two unfortunate effects. First, it creates an artificial sense of separation between racial and social concerns when in reality, the subject of race continues throughout much of

⁷⁰ Kubayanda provided the study that would balance this perspective in his monograph, *The Poet's Africa*.

⁷¹ See Augier's article "Evolución estético-ideológica de Nicolás Guillén" and Davis-Lett for two different schemas of Guillén's oeuvre.

Guillén's later poetry, informing and refining his reflections on social concerns (and vice versa). The other lamentable consequence of employing this model for the organization of Guillén's work is that it has led his later poetry to be comparatively understudied—the work of Keith Ellis and Lorna Williams notwithstanding—, owing to a vague prejudice against its more “ideological” nature.⁷² The lack of scholarship on this later poetry means that the alternative racial discourses within this later writing have remained unexplored.

With that in mind, the close readings in this chapter are meant to offer both a challenge and a complement to traditional scholarship on Guillén. Focusing on a number of Guillén's key collections published after *Sóngoro Cosongo*, they make a study of the different ways in which the poet treats the concept of race—and specifically, blackness—in these works. In the three decades of his career spanning from the 1930s to the 1950s, Guillén's work appears to manifest two different racial ideologies other than transculturation. The first, present in his poetry from the 1930s, is heavily influenced by socialism and posits blackness itself as a characteristic of and catalyst for social—though not necessarily racial—revolution. The second, found in his later collections, is a transnational ideology that invokes solidarity among populations of the African diaspora, calling for a united front against specifically racial forms of oppression. Together, these comprise a unique black transnational consciousness in his work, a consciousness that recognizes, in the words of Fanon and West, the “interconnection and interlocution of black struggles across man-made and natural boundaries—including the boundaries of nations, empires, continents, oceans, and seas” (1). In my exploration of Guillén's œuvre, I identify *West Indies Ltd.* (1934) as the collection in which his transnational racial ideology germinates from the dialectical relationship between his racial and social consciousness. Following that, my close readings of selected texts from two of Guillén's later collections, *España, poema en cuatro*

⁷² Gustavo Pellón has also published research exclusively devoted to Guillén's social poetry.

angustias y una esperanza (1937) and *La paloma de vuelo popular* (1958), explore the dual strands of black transnationalist ideology present in his work. At each point, I consider how Guillén's thinking challenges existing paradigms of blackness in Cuban society and also points to a black transnational mindset distinct from that developed in the Anglophone or Francophone contexts.

West Indies, Ltd.: Connecting the Antilles Through a History of Labor

Before undertaking an analysis of *West Indies Ltd.*, it is necessary to first address Guillén's political ideology at the time of its publication. When this collection was released, Guillén was not yet an official member of the Communist Party, though his journalistic writings from the time indicate his ideological sympathies towards Marxism. According to Augier, it was shortly before the publication of *West Indies, Ltd.* in 1934 that Guillén adopted socialism as the political orientation that he would profess for the remainder of his life. Augier suggests that it was Machado's defeat in 1933 that expanded Guillén's awareness of class issues, as with the uprising of the Cuban people that led to abolition of the dictatorship, "se le revelaba la presencia vigorosa de la lucha social, por la redención plena del hombre y no de una parte de él" (166). As chapter one of this dissertation has already demonstrated, his attraction to socialism was not unique among Cubans of color—nor was it for blacks in other parts of the world. The early 1930s saw W.E.B. Du Bois publicly proclaiming his own indebtedness to Karl Marx's thinking, as in his 1933 essay "Marxism and the Negro Problem," where he declared *Das Kapital* "required reading" for all modern men. Black artists like Claude McKay, Richard Wright, and Guillén's friend Langston Hughes, also contributed to the socialist cause, although not without some reservations; as Michael Dawson notes, these figures "were skeptical about claims which

characterized white workers as a revolutionary group. They were more likely to search for allies among those waging anticolonial struggles outside of the United States and among the black petite bourgeoisie” (19).⁷³ This was not the case with Guillén, however, who in this sense, was distinct from his African American contemporaries. Although his interest in global anticolonial movements mirrors theirs, he does not discount white workers as potential comrades. In fact, the transnational perspective of *West Indies, Ltd.* is not exclusively black, although it is fundamentally informed by the issue of race. It points to the experience of blackness as the basis for the pursuit of cross-racial social solidarity. In this way, while the racial ideology of *West Indies Ltd.* does not necessarily contradict Cuba’s racial discourse of *mestizaje*, it does expose the injustices that made *mestizaje* possible and which threatened the fulfillment of its ideals in the period in which Guillén composed his poems.

Guillén’s transnational perspective is most obvious in the titular poem of this collection, “West Indies Ltd.,” where he constructs a parallel between the exploitation of black slaves under plantation slavery and the oppression of workers under capitalist systems of trade.⁷⁴ In this way, the poem anticipates a critique of the relationship between the economic modes of chattel slavery and globalized capitalism, a topic that historians only began to explore a decade after this text’s publication.⁷⁵ Because of its clear socialist sentiment, critical readings of “West Indies Ltd.” have generally assigned this work to Guillén’s “ideological period,” while ignoring the text’s commentary on race, with the exception of Jorge Ruffinelli’s analysis. These analyses also

⁷³ Robinson’s seminal study of black Marxism makes the important distinction between traditional Marxist ideology and black radical thought; it was the insufficiency of the former to address the issue of racial injustice that drove many of these same intellectuals to ultimately abandon their allegiance to the socialist cause.

⁷⁴ Citations of the poem “West Indies Ltd.” are taken from the open access version of this title available from the online database *Biblioteca Virtual Universal*. This edition preserves the punctuation of the poem reflected in scholarly editions of Guillén’s work, but also has the advantage of including line numbers.

⁷⁵ Perhaps unsurprisingly, it was a scholar of African descent who made the first historical connection between these forms of exploitations. In his 1944 book *Capitalism and Slavery*, the Trinidadian Eric Williams made the relationship between these two subjects explicit, paving the way for a rich field of scholarship that includes the recent monographs of Grandin, Baptist, and Beckert.

ignore the fact that, at this point in history, socialism had quite a good deal to say about race. With other critics, we are left wanting more. Not even Kubayanda, arguably Guillén's most Afrocentric critic, acknowledges racial elements in this piece. Linda Waldron's recent work on anti-imperialism in Guillén brushes up against a racially conscious reading of "West Indies Ltd.," but never fully realizes it. She comments that the poem, "brings to light certain deleterious commonalities associated with imperialism... [including] exploitation, racial division, poverty, political corruption, and moral decadence," but does not develop her analysis further (153). The challenge, therefore, is to dissect how "West Indies Ltd." portrays the relationship between racially- and economically-motivated forms of social injustice, as it is the recognition of this that will plant the seed of a new consciousness in Guillén's work.

The structure of "West Indies Ltd." is the principal element that Guillén employs in this text to compare racial discrimination with class oppression. The poem contains a total of eight numbered sections, alternating in subject matter and aesthetics; two speak specifically to Cuba's struggle against U.S. hegemony, while the remaining sections provide a critique of the general political and economic oppression endemic to the Antilles. Multiple speakers are present across the text, contributing to a cacophony of narrative voices. As each testifies to past and present injustices, their differing linguistic characteristics allow the reader to perceive both the common elements and the nuance of their suffering. In the sections of the poem that address Cuba's contemporary situation, Guillén's language embodies a tightly controlled lyricism; in the other sections, however, orality is the dominant aesthetic. This latter characteristic manifests chiefly in the sections narrated by "Juan el Barbero," whose *sones* comprise a uniquely Cuban critique of Caribbean politics both on and off the island. The first *son* offered by Juan el Barbero, found in "West Indies Ltd. 2," is epistrophic in nature; the phrase "¡Que siga el son!" concludes each of

the poem's four main stanzas (lines 70,74,77,82). Rather than as a celebratory cry, these words must be read ironically, since each repetition of this line serves as a condemnation against the apathy of Cuba's ineffective political leaders, who are characterized in the poem as spineless lackeys who can be easily swayed by North American interests. The first four stanzas focus on the present day, as they describe the contemptible actions of the "políticos de quita y pon," but in the final stanza, the poet reveals the deep historical foundations of this particular problem (68). Here, Guillén presents an image of the politicians situated on a balcony, isolated from the people that they supposedly represent and ignorant of the common man's misery. They are carefree and smiling, although their joy is eventually interrupted by the speaker's exclamation of "¡La zafra! ¡La zafra! ¡La zafra!," the penultimate line of "West Indies Ltd. 2" (81). This concluding reference to the sugarcane harvest reveals the politicians for who they really are—the overseers of the new Cuban slavery. Just as plantation masters hoarded the fruits of black slave labor for their own economic gain, so do these politicians hoard their country's resources. Given this reference, the repetition of "¡Que siga el son!" in the following (and final) line signifies more than just a condemnation; it is a call for a kind of historical memory that will spur action against the present-day injustices threatening to repeat the horrors of the past.

Not just in structure, but also in genre and form, Guillén emphasizes the connection between racial and economic oppression. The employment of the *son* in "West Indies Ltd." represents an innovative use of this form. Just as Guillén revolutionized Cuban letters by transposing this popular musical form into serious poetry in *Motivos de son*, here, he converts the *son* into a powerful political tool. Not simply in genre, but also in form, "West Indies Ltd. 2" echoes Guillén's earlier "black poetry." The parallelism of the poem is similar to that found in such poems as "Negro bembón," "Sóngoro Cosongo," and "Sensemayá," from his 1930 and

1931 collections. In this way, the aesthetics of “West Indies Ltd. 2” themselves indicate a connection between the themes of race and social exploitation. Another aesthetic strategy that Guillén uses to depict economic injustice as the legacy of slavery is his deliberately vague descriptions of sugar culture. For example, the poet structures “West Indies Ltd. 5” as a work song, with lyrics that could have been sung either by an enslaved field hand in the 1830s or by a “free” laborer in the 1930s. By collapsing the chronology of the sugar trade in this way, Guillén destroys any notion that the Antilles have “advanced” beyond the problems of the colonial era. Furthermore, in avoiding specific geographical references in “West Indies Ltd. 5,” Guillén indicates the expansive scope of this history; the experience is so typical that it need not be located in this way—it is as valid in Cuba as in Haiti or Guadeloupe. In other parts of the poem, he accomplishes the same through the use of comparison, as in the sixth section of *West Indies Ltd.*, where he compares the moral decadence of Havana to that of Port-Au-Prince and Kingston.

All of this has provocative implications for a reading of racial themes in Guillén’s poetry. To reiterate, in “West Indies Ltd.,” the poet suggests that the relationship between the islands of the West Indies rests on their shared history of slavery *and* their current situation as economically subjugated territories. More significant, however, is that this poem also implies that their collective liberation depends upon their acknowledgement of this correlation; in “West Indies Ltd. 3.,” Guillén depicts a voice rising from the plantation fields—a voice both “antigua y de hoy, / moderna y bárbara”—predicting the beheading of the Antilles’ oppressors, who can be identified as either the slaveholders and/or the neo-imperialists (93-94). In order to free themselves, then, the people of the Antilles must first develop racial consciousness—specifically, an understanding of the black experience in the Americas—and *then* class consciousness which will enable them to resist neo-imperialism. This idea is generally consistent with Marxist thought

of the 1930s, as evidenced in particular by Jean-Paul Sartre's essay "Orphée noir," which is studied in detail in the seventh chapter of this dissertation. Although Guillén recognizes that not all victims of modern-day capitalism are people of color—and addresses this fact explicitly in the sixth section of the poem—"West Indies Ltd." ascribes a unique power to blackness as a liberating quality, and one with the power to transcend oppression on an international scale. The result of black solidarity is social revolution, prophesied in the final section of "West Indies, Ltd.," where Guillén describes the protest of "una mano / cerrándose en puño vengativo" and the sounding of "un son de esperanza," as two signals of impending revolt (294-95).⁷⁶ The final lines of the poem declare this revolution victorious, as the territory of the Antilles is re-claimed linguistically: "El sol habla de bosques con las verdes semillas... / West Indies, en inglés. En castellano, / las Antillas" (298-300). Here, we see the foundations of Guillén's particular black transnationalism, an ideology that emphasizes solidarity among people of color not principally because of their shared skin tone or ancestry, but because of their shared experience of past and present oppression. Although the reality of racial discrimination informs this view, because the deciding factor is history, and not biology or color, it is a tool of resistance that can be employed by people of other races. This element, while subtly presented here, becomes more explicit in Guillén's later collections—in particular, the collection that he wrote as a meditation on the Spanish Civil War.

The Black Body as Locus of Socialist Resistance in Guillén's *España*

Guillén's consciousness matures as he explores the interconnectedness between movements for racial justice and social equality in his collection *España, un poema en cuatro*

⁷⁶ Though Guillén likely intended the symbol of the closed fist as a sign of Communist resistance, the later appropriation of this symbol by black power movements lends a special resonance to its use in "West Indies, Ltd.," particularly for twenty-first century readers.

angustias y una esperanza. Following the publication of *West Indies, Ltd.* Guillén traveled to Spain, where he covered the Spanish Civil War as a journalist. Deeply sympathetic to the Republican cause, Guillén was joined in his opposition to Spanish Fascism by many other important Latin American intellectuals, including Pablo Neruda and César Vallejo, who also reported on the conflict in Spain.⁷⁷ In his study of Guillén's journalism, J.A. George Irish remarks that the poet's writings on Spain must be considered alongside those of Neruda and Vallejo, given that all experienced: "a shared response and a common awakening that brought them to the crossroads in their conception of their role as artists.... [The Spanish Civil War] represented for them the discovery of a new commitment to the popular struggle for liberation through world communism" (71). Only Guillén, however, understood the Spanish conflict as a struggle parallel to the fight against racial discrimination in Latin America; in his journalism and his poetry, he frequently compares the oppression suffered by Cuban blacks to that endured by Spanish Republicans.⁷⁸ In the first talk that Guillén presented in Valencia at the 1937 *Segundo Congreso Internacional de Escritores para la Defensa de la Cultura*, the poet made this ideological position explicit when he explained that:

[P]uedo deciros que allá [in Cuba] vive el negro la tragedia de España republicana porque sabe que este momento que atrevesamos es sólo un episodio de la pugna que está planteada entre las fuerzas democráticas de las que él, negro, y por lo tanto, pueblo, forma parte, y las clases conservadoras que ya lo esclavizaron una vez y que han de esclavizarlo siempre. (qtd. in Fernández Retamar 25)⁷⁹

⁷⁷ It was Neruda, in fact, who invited Guillén to Spain, as the official Latin American ambassador to the *Segundo Congreso Internacional de Escritores para la Defensa de la Cultura*.

⁷⁸ The comparison, however, was not lost on black internationalists from the United States, some of whom fought Spanish Facism in the racially integrated Lincoln Brigade, which included a squadron of 80 African-American men. Robin Kellley provides a fascinating history of this subgroup of soldiers in the sixth chapter of his book, *Race Rebels*.

⁷⁹ Hughes also attended this conference, along with Juan Marianello and Jacques Roumain.

As in the poem “West Indies, Ltd.” Guillén’s words depict racial and economic slavery as equivalent manifestations of hegemony. In a subsequent speech presented at the same event, he argued, “Nadie como el negro, y pocos como el negro de Cuba, es antifacista, porque sabe que la raíz misma del fascismo parte de un terreno que está abonado por los odios de razas y la división de los hombres en seres inferiores y superiores, y que a él, negro, se le asigna el sitio inferior” (*Prosa de prisa I*: 85).

Guillén’s belief in this statement was so deeply felt that he composed his volume *España: Poema en cuatro angustias y una esperanza* before even setting foot in Spain; it was first released in Mexico in May of 1937, with a second edition appearing in Valencia three months later. It is the closing poem of this collection, “La voz esperanzada,” that most clearly exhibits the poet’s unique appropriation of black transnationalism, as he here elaborates the metaphors that will allow him to illustrate most clearly the power of blackness as a uniting force—not just among members of the African diaspora, but other populations as well. His use of symbolism represents a deepening of the ideology that he presented in *West Indies Ltd.*; it is the leap from consciousness to action. In “La voz esperanzada,” Guillén declares his sympathy for Spain while describing himself as follows: “Yo, / hijo de América, / hijo de ti y de África” (lines 156-58).⁸⁰ In the third stanza of the poem, Guillén constructs a poetic parallel between the oppression of Cuban blacks under slavery and the oppression of Cuban workers under modern-day capitalism. He writes, “esclavo ayer de mayorales blancos dueños de látigos sangrientos / hoy, esclavo de rojos yanquis despreciativos y voraces” (159-60).⁸¹ The chiasmic structure of these lines, with

⁸⁰ For all citations of “La voz esperanzada,” I have utilized the free access edition of *España* made available on the Biblioteca Virtual Cervantes, which preserves the original punctuation of Guillén’s work and helpfully includes line numbers.

⁸¹ In the *Catedra* edition of Guillén’s work, Madrigal notes that the Spanish edition of this text reads with slight differences: “esclavo ayer de mayorales blancos dueños de látigos coléricos; / hoy esclavo de rojos yanquis azucareros y voraces” (127).

their pairing of “esclavo ayer” and “hoy, esclavo,” emphasizes the historical continuity of oppression in the experience of blacks and members of the working class. This argument is similar to that which Guillén makes in “West Indies, Ltd.,” though it is made more complex by Guillén’s introduction of corporeal metaphors. The imagery of “La voz esperanzada” suggest that solidarity between blacks and Spaniards is a product of more than simple ideological filiation—it is the result of a knowledge earned through the physical suffering of a particular race.

To that end, descriptions of bodies dominate the poem. In the first stanza, Guillén creates a verbal collage of body parts to represent Spain’s shattered body politic. Irene Vegas García rightly observes that Guillén’s use of hyperbaton in these lines creates a fractured language that corresponds to the image he seeks to represent (175). In the first stanza, he identifies the Republicans as having bronze-colored skin that, like a coat of armor, resists the “balas matricidas” of the Falangists; their hands, also weaponized, bury their “largas uñas rojas encendidas” into the “ojos, boca, carne de traidores” (132-33). This imagery evokes popular depictions of Cuba’s famous revolutionary general Antonio Maceo, known as the “Titán de Bronce” for his mulatto skin color and formidable fighting power. On this level, then, Guillén develops another connection between Afro-Cuban history and the Spanish Civil War. More corporeal members appear in the second stanza, as the poet optimistically describes how a new, united Republic will emerge from these disparate parts. Even as its veins are bled dry, Spain will see itself replenished, Guillén proclaims in the third stanza. His development of this metaphor in the first three stanzas of this poem is critical for understanding the subsequent stanzas of “La voz esperanzada.” In and of itself, the metaphor of Spain as a fractured body is evocative, but not particularly original. The real substance of this image comes into view when it is read alongside

the other “bodies” that Guillén presents in this same text—bodies whose primary characteristic is their blackness.

The descriptions of Spain’s suffering body in the first parts of “La voz esperanzada” are complemented by two stanzas dedicated to detailed illustrations of the pain suffered by blacks who were subjected to the horrors of the plantation. As is frequently the case in Guillén’s poetry, in these lines, the poetic voice slides between individual and collective representation. The “yo” that punctuates this stanza, repeated by Guillén three times, must therefore be read as dualistic in this sense. He describes himself as “chapoteando en la oscura sangre en que se mojan mis Antillas,” creating a parallel between the blood spilt during the Spanish Civil War, already thematized in the beginning of the poem, and the blood shed by Antillean slaves. The enslaved body is “ahogado en el humo agriverde de los cañaverales; and then “sepultado en el fango de todas las cárceles,” under constant attack, and ultimately, “perdido en las florestas ululantes de las islas crucificadas en la cruz del Trópico” (162-65). The structure of these descriptions differs dramatically from those that portray the fractured body politic of Spain; in contrast to the first staccato stanzas of “La voz esperanzada,” these verses are notable for their fluidity. The physical attributes that Guillén lists are linked together through polysyndeton; the accumulation of the preposition “y” in these lines emphasizes the connectedness between the “corazón trepidante de tambores,” the “ojos perdidos en el horizonte,” and the “labios carnosos y ardorosos” of the black body, suggesting that even when subjected to torture, the black self remains whole—a powerful testimony to the strength of the diasporic community. In his article “Sugar and Guillén,” Antonio Benítez-Rojo laments that Guillén’s later collections lack the sensuality of *Motivos de son* and *Sóngoro Cosongo*. A reading of this stanza of “La voz esperanzada,” however, shows that Guillén’s sensuality endures in his later work, though its use has been

transformed. Rather than a vehicle for eroticism, the poet's focus on physical form now operates as a method of emphasizing human solidarity. The lyrical black body of these stanzas is transformed into a symbol of unity. In lines 47-50 of this poem, Guillén directly juxtaposes the body of the laborer with the body of the black plantation worker, describing the two as sharing “el mismo sudor salado...” (47). Sweat, product of human toil and suffering, connects the Cuban worker to the global proletariat and in this sense, though separated by geography and biology, as they are united on the most fundamental of levels: the corporeal.

The vocabulary that Guillén uses in his description of his body, also profiled in the poem, and the subsequent lines of the fourth stanza suggest that this sense of solidarity with the worker springs not from an abstract ideological commitment, but from the poet's own racial identity and sense of history. In *España*, the body is not only a signifier of identity; it is the place upon which black subjectivity is worked out. The enumerated qualities of his body subtly evoke diasporic images that Guillén has elaborated elsewhere: the “tambores” of his heart, for example, calling to mind the drums of his poem “La canción del bongó,” and his eyes “perdidos en el horizonte” eliciting a picture of slaves aboard a ship traveling the Middle Passage, as in “Balada de los dos abuelos.” There is a whole history of oppression contained within these images—what Paul Gilroy calls “vital memories of the slave past” —which Guillén leverages for his critique of the present (71). The novelty of this poem, of course, is that the blackness of “La voz esperanzada” extends itself across bloodlines, crossing racial and national barriers to unite with the Spanish Republicans, and with workers of the world more generally. In the final stanza of the poem, Guillén foresees the triumph of socialism, and with this, the transformation of the Spaniards' bodies into “brazos conquistadores / ayer, y hoy ímpetu para desbaratar fronteras” that will “unir en un mazo” the proletariat of the world (196-97, 200). Transfigured by their relationship with

the black body, the white Spaniards see their corporeal selves converted into tools of resistance, empowered, in this curious sense, by blackness itself.

What are we to make of the Black Bolshevik ideology expressed in “La voz esperanzada”—and what is its relationship to other discourses of race, both in Cuba and elsewhere? From a comparative perspective, the poem’s interpretation of blackness as a catalyst for political revolution appears to align it with ideologies of black nationalism such as Garveyism. But it is not an identical ideology, for Guillén’s schema transcends the “black” element of “black self-determination”—not eschewing it, but broadening its significance, making it into a quality that can be imputed to people of other races. This can be seen as generally consistent with the ideology of *mestizaje*, but it is still subversive. Had Guillén confined himself to blackness as viewed through the lens of transculturation, he might have instead suggested Cubanness as a tool for revolution, but he does not. Although earlier parts of the poem focus on Guillén’s Spanish ancestry, this receives only a superficial mention in “La voz esperanzada,” which focuses disproportionately on the phenological elements of Africanity that Guillén identifies in himself. For this reason too, his treatment of race in the poem is striking. “La voz esperanzada” thus brings Guillén closer to the kind of ideology that other black activists of his time had ascribed to, as he considers the power of blackness as a human quality in and of itself—not necessarily as one half of the racial equation imagined by *mestizaje*.

Physical Suffering and Diasporic Solidarity in Guillén’s *Elegías*

Guillén’s interest in the power of blackness as a catalyst for social change as demonstrated in “La voz esperanzada” is once again echoed in his collection *La paloma de vuelo popular*, published in the final days of 1958, moments before the triumph of the Cuban

Revolution. This collection also includes Guillén's *Elegías*, six poems written during Guillén's years of forced exile from Cuba. Together, this corpus of work indicates a new direction in Guillén's understanding of blackness: a diasporic consciousness that calls for solidarity among the descendants of African slaves. This global perspective was doubtless influenced by Guillén's lived experience of the years in which he composed *La paloma*. After being targeted by the Cuban government for his political activities, Guillén lived a peripatetic lifestyle from 1953 to 1958, visiting Moscow, Central America, and Paris—each, in their own way, a center of black transnationalism—as well as other locations. In *La paloma*, Guillén continues to develop the international themes that he first explored in *West Indies, Ltd.*, with poems dedicated to various Latin American nations: Guatemala, Panama, Mexico, and Brazil. He also includes a number of texts to be studied here that condemn segregation in the United States. Each of these is informed by the experience of personal re-discovery that Guillén documents in his poem “El apellido.” As this poem shows, a renewed interest in his own African heritage brings Guillén to an understanding of blackness that is more in tension with *mestizaje* ideology than that which we have seen before, as he explores his sense of solidarity with other individuals and communities of the African diaspora based on their common blackness.

Guillén's journey to an Afrocentric consciousness forms the narrative structure of “El apellido,” which is divided into two parts. In the first section, Guillén questions the ancestral narrative of his family, which emphasizes his Spanish stock. In the second section, he attempts to recuperate his hidden past of African ancestors and their progeny. Past scholarship by Kubayanda and Waldron has read “El apellido” differently, but with the structure I propose, the

text represents a bold affront to the ideology of *mestizaje*.⁸² The opening lines of this poem illustrate the poet's distrust of the surname that he has been given—a name that is exclusively marked as Spanish and therefore white. Evoking the earliest years of his life, he recalls the very first uses of his name, writing:

Y luego me entregaron
 esto que veis escrito en mi tarjeta,
 esto que pongo al pie de mis poemas:
 catorce letras
 que llevo a cuestras por la calle,
 que siempre va conmigo a todas partes.
 ¿Es mi nombre, estáis ciertos? (99)⁸³

The surname of Guillén is not something that the writer claims for himself, but something that has been foisted upon him and is therefore not representative of his true self. The question of the final line cited above is the first in a series of thirty-two inquiries that structure the first section of “El apellido,” and their accumulation reveals the deep sense of doubt that the poet experiences with regards to his racial lineage. In the following lines, this feeling intensifies: “¿Toda mi piel (debi decir), / Toda mi piel viene de aquella estatua / de mármol español?” (99). The poet's intuition that there is more in his ancestry than Spanish blood is confirmed in the second stanza, where he confronts his audience and asks them to corroborate his suspicions. He asks directly: “¿No tengo pues, / un abuelo mandinga, congo, dahomeyano?” (100). Imagining their affirmative response, he requests the name of his grandfather, but finds that it has been lost to

⁸² Kubayanda describes the two parts of the poem as dominated by the ex-lord and the ex-slave, respectively, and Waldron follows his reading (45, 148). This interpretation characterizes the poem not as an expression of a diasporic consciousness, but as an acquiescence to the continued domination of whites within the framework of *mestizaje*.

⁸³ Poems from *La paloma de vuelo popular* are from the *Losada* edition, which does not include line numbers.

history. This discovery is a bitter one, and leads the poet to accuse his interlocutors of participating in the destruction of his past:

¡Ah, no podéis recordarlo!
 Lo habéis disuelto en tinta inmemorial.
 Lo habéis robado a un pobre negro indefenso.
 Lo escondisteis, creyendo
 Que iba a bajar los ojos yo de la vergüenza.
 ¡Gracias!
 ¡Os lo agradezco!
 ¡Gentiles gentes, thank you!
 ¡Merci! (101)

Guillén's use of Spanish, French, and English in these lines is not simple wordplay; it makes the point that his is one among many experiences of ancestral alienation found throughout the former colonies of the nineteenth century's great empires.

As tragic as this conclusion may be, it is not devastating to the poet, as one might imagine, but curiously empowering—for it is in the lost history of others that he discovers his own history. This experience is documented in the second part of the poem, where Guillén explores his new selfhood in the context of the diaspora. Here, he describes himself as part of a broader African community, proclaiming:

De algún país ardiente, perforado
 por la gran flecha ecuatorial,
 sé que vendrán lejanos primos,
 remota angustia mía disparada en el viento;

.....
 Sin conocernos nos reconoceremos en el hambre,
 en la tuberculosis y en la sífilis,
 el sudor comprado en bolsa negra,
 en los fragmentos de cadenas
 adheridos todavía a la piel... (102-103)

The descriptions of suffering in these lines—infirmary, the sweat of hard labor, the physical and psychological marks left by shackles—remind readers of those found in Guillén’s previous work “West Indies, Ltd.” As in this earlier poem, the poet emphasizes shared suffering as a powerful identitarian element. However, unlike in “West Indies Ltd.,” this suffering is characterized by a distinctly racial nature, as indicated in the first segment of the aforementioned lines. It is this that allows Guillén to claim solidarity with the people that he calls his African “cousins,” and upon finding himself a member of this community, to cease his futile search for an individual identity. “El apellido” reveals an identification more powerful, more comprehensive than that of the individual. As Guillén exclaims jubilantly in the closing stanza of the poem:

¿Qué ha de importar entonces
 (¡qué ha de importar ahora!)
 ¡ay! mi pequeño nombre
 con sus catorce letras blancas? (103)

His individual name, he argues, no longer matters, because his is one of many names that share the same history. Belonging to this history-without-a-history has satisfied his desire to know his own roots. He concludes:

¡Oh sí, puros amigos,

venid a ver mi nombre!
 Mi nombre interminable,
 hecho de interminables nombres;
 el nombre mío, ajeno,
 libre y mío, ajeno y vuestro,
 ajeno y libre como el aire. (103)

These lines suggest that it is the history that the name “Guillén” conceals—rather than that which it directly implies—that is the source of selfhood for the poet. With these final verses of “El apellido,” therefore, Guillén boldly proclaims his membership in the African diaspora.

This identification with the communities of the African diaspora contributes to Guillén’s concern for racial injustice in the United States, and provides him with a righteous perspective for criticizing Jim Crow. Included among the poems of *La paloma* is the evocative “Elegía a Emmett Till,” written in 1955 upon the occasion of Till’s murder. “Elegía a Emmett Till” is one of many poems in which Guillén condemns the current state of race relations in the United States. Indeed, the vitriol with which he bitterly critiques U.S. foreign policy in poems such as “West Indies Ltd.” is matched by the vehemence with which he denounces racist violence in the United States in “Emmett Till.” But his criticism was not isolated to his poetry; race relations in the U.S. were a prominent theme of Guillén’s journalism as well, as previously seen in his 1929 article “El camino de Harlem.” Ten years after the publication of this piece, Guillén authored an article for *Hoy* entitled “Yanquis y mambises.” Ostensibly reporting on the cooperation of Cubans and North Americans in the fight against European Facism from Madrid, Guillén enjoyed the opportunity to (rightfully) sneer at the United States’ moral hypocrisy in matters of racial justice. He writes, “A la verdad, resulta imposible hablar de la democracia en los Estados

Unidos, así en bloque, como si fuera un todo único. No hay justicia verdadera en señalar y condenar los crímenes de Hitler con los judíos y ocultar los linchamientos de negros en Alabama o en Virginia” (161). To this declaration, he adds an anecdote about the disillusionment of a young labor activist who, because of his skin color, was refused service in a restaurant in Washington, D.C.—the supposed capital of American democracy. Indignant, the activist proclaims upon exiting the establishment, “¡El día en que yo tome un fúsil, no será para ir a Europa, sino para pelear aquí mismo, por la democracia verdadera!” (162). When the crime against Emmett Till shocked the world, Guillén took up his literary *fúsil* against the United States, penning this poem as a lament and a call to action on behalf of the black community and all those concerned with racial justice.

The hypocrisy of American race relations is on full display in “Elegía a Emmett Till,” which begins with an epigraph from *The Crisis*, the newspaper founded and edited by Du Bois, translated into Spanish. It is an excerpt from an article on the discovery of Till’s body, found abandoned in the Tallahatchie River in Mississippi following his abduction, torture, and murder.⁸⁴ From this departure point, Guillén’s elegy flows forth, with the repeated line “el Mississippi pasa” acting as a current to propel the text forward.⁸⁵ As “Elegía a Emmett Till” opens, the speaker of the poem calls upon the Mississippi – the “viejo río hermano de los negros” – to witness to the injustice committed against Till. In the personified river, Guillén identifies a repository of collective memory; the ghosts of murdered African-Americans haunt its banks, just as they haunt the poem itself. Using his preferred techniques of parallelism and enumeration, Guillén emphasizes Till’s place in the long line of blacks who have been murdered alongside this body of water. “El Mississippi pasa,” he writes in the first stanza, “y mira el Mississippi cuando

⁸⁴ Poems from *La paloma de vuelo popular* are cited from the Losada edition, which does not include line numbers.

⁸⁵ Guillén substitutes the Mississippi for the Tallahatchie throughout the poem, doubtless for its comparatively greater symbolism.

pasa / árboles silenciosos / de donde cuelgan gritos ya maduros” (104). Although this “strange fruit” has long since rotted away, the voices of the lynched still hang in the air, testifying to their suffering. In the following lines, Guillén evokes another gruesome image of a tortured body whose last moments were witnessed by the river, describing an assembly of whites who celebrate while “un eterno negro” is swallowed by flames, “envuelto en humo el vientre desprendido, / los intestinos húmedos, / el perseguido sexo” (105). This reference to the practice of “Negro Barbecues,” also sometimes called “lynching bees,” lays bare the perversion and extent of racial violence in the U.S. South, as Guillén’s gruesome imagery condemns those who would commit and celebrate dehumanizing violence against blacks.

“Emmett Till” shifts with the next stanza of the poem, as the poet moves from describing the injustices of the past to the barbarity of the present. The first word of the stanza – “ahora” – reorients the reader, calling him out of historical contemplation to consider the matter at hand. In this stanza, Guillén introduces Till as a victim, describing him as “un niño frágil, / pequeña flor de tus riberas / no raíz todavía de tus árboles, / no tronco de tus bosques....” (105). Murdered at age fourteen, Till is represented by the image of a bud, not a tree with established roots, nor a trunk striated with age. He is, as Guillén continues in the final lines of the stanza, “Un niño apenas / un niño muerto, asesinado y solo, / negro” (105). Guillén’s repetition of the words “un niño,” which will continue in the following stanza, emphasize Till’s innocence, as well as the enormity of the crime, while his strategic enjambment, which leaves the word “negro” dangling at the end of the stanza, brings into stark relief the cause of Till’s death.

The following stanza further serves to emphasize the tragedy of this death. To stress Till’s youthfulness, Guillén structures this stanza as a list of the everyday objects that would have occupied the boy’s life. He writes, “Un niño con su trompo, / ... / con su pomo de tinta, /

con su guante de beisból” (105-6). Each item is a snapshot of the teenager’s universe, which is precisely as limited as one would expect any adolescent world to be. School, friends, fun: these are the things that comprised Till’s life. Guillén’s anaphora, the repetition of “con” at the beginning of each line, also suggests that this is what Till’s life *should* be still. He should still be playing with his top and his baseball glove, but instead, he lies in a grave, futureless. Some of the objects enumerated in this stanza also have a double meaning. In particular, the final two objects that Guillén names are pregnant with significance; these are “un retrato de Lincoln” and “una bandera norteamericana” (106). These items point to America’s betrayal of Till, who, as his killers testified at their trial, insisted upon the equality of whites and blacks, up until the very moment of his death. While Till believed in the American dream, America did not believe in him, and the single word “negro,” again used to close the stanza, serves to explain why.

Guillén detains his readers in the next section of “Emmett Till” in order to contemplate the figure of the deceased child. In the sixth and final stanza, he commands the Mississippi to regard:

este rostro de perfil ausente,
 deshecho a piedra y a piedra,
 a plomo y a piedra,
 a insulto y a piedra.... (106)

These lines situate Till within the history of lynchings recounted earlier in the poem, while also personalizing this history. His focus on Till’s disfigured face is significant, not only because this is the first instance in the poem in which a lynching victim is represented by his face—rather than isolated body parts—but also because it signals Guillén’s participation in a tradition that has used Till’s image as a tool of racial resistance. This began with the decision of Mamie Till

Bradley to display Till's body in an open casket at his funeral: a deliberate attempt to create a visual denunciation of the brutality he suffered. Pictures of Till's swollen face, disfigured from beatings and absent an eye that had been gouged out by his attackers, were widely circulated following the funeral; according to Sylvie Kandé, these would have likely been seen by Guillén in the media coverage of the event published in Du Bois's *Crisis*, available in Paris where Guillén was living in exile at the time of the murder (145). In their article on the significance of Till's funeral portrait in the black community, Harold and DeLuca consider the Till photograph a skillful subversion of Southern lynching photography, a practice wherein whites took pictures of the lynching victims whose deaths they witnessed, sometimes even making postcards of the event to send to loved ones. They write:

Whereas the black body in pain had traditionally served as a symbol of unmitigated white power, the corpse of Emmett Till became a visual trope illustrating the ugliness of racial violence and the aggregate power of the black community. We suggest that this reconfiguration was, in part, an effect of the black community's embracing and foregrounding Till's abject body rather than allowing it to be safely exiled from communal life. (266)

The detailed descriptions of black bodies in "Elegía a Emmett Till" suggest that Guillén also desired to reinterpret the image of the lynched victim. Similar to the way in which the poet renovated corporeal metaphors in "Una voz esperanzada" in order to show the black body as a symbol of resistance and source of strength, in this poem, he endeavors once again to imbue the corpse of Till with political significance. His insistence upon the importance of visual witness, as he urges the Mississippi once and again to *look* at the broken bodies of Till and the other corpses

upon its banks, can also be seen in this light, as he refuses to allow these injustices to be ignored. They must be experienced, and viscerally.

The ending of “Emmett Till,” however, shows Guillén’s uncertainty regarding the effectiveness of his poem as an act of resistance. The final stanza is characterized by desperate lamentations, as the despairing poet demands the impossible of his witness, the Mississippi: “detén aquí tu procesión de espumas, / tu azul carroza de tracción oceánica: / mira este cuerpo leve” (61-63). His request is futile; the river cannot stop its raging course, and its “ojos de agua ciega” and “brazos de titán indiferente” will never share in Guillén’s righteous anger at seeing the fractured face of Till (80-81). Again and again, Guillén commands the river to testify to this crime; his repeated orders of “mira,” “ven,” and “dime” structure the stanza, yet are unsuccessful attempts to wrench a response out of the depths of the water. Ultimately, “Elegía to Emmett Till” closes with a final, exhausted request: “ven y en la noche iluminada, / dime tú, Mississippi...” (91-92). Guillén’s insertion of an ellipsis in this last verse deprives the “Elegía” of a sense of resolution; it leaves the reader waiting for a response that will never come. The end of “Elegía a Emmett Till” is profoundly unsatisfying and in this way, parallels the outcome of the Till case itself, as the murderers of the young boy were ultimately left unpunished.

Especially compared to the other elegies published by Guillén in *La paloma*, the ending of “Elegía a Emmett Till” is striking for the pessimism it expresses. In these last lines, the poet seems to have lost hope for the prospect of racial justice in the United States, crushed as he is by the reality of Jim Crow. Nevertheless, the very existence of the poem itself testifies to the survival of hope in Guillén. Though the Mississippi may never reveal the secrets of its depths, “Emmett Till” calls the black community, and those united with it in struggle, to demand that truth and justice be sought for Till and the others who have suffered fates similar to his. A

complementary poem from *La paloma* offers a foreboding vision of what the future might entail if Guillén's audience does not heed this call. In this text entitled "Little Rock," Guillén exhorts his readers to imagine the nightmare of a world in which segregation is the *status quo*:

ahora indios, mulatos, negros, zambos,
 ahora pensad lo que sería
 el mundo todo Sur,
 el mundo todo sangre y todo látigo,
 el mundo todo escuela de blancos para blancos,
 el mundo todo Rock y todo Little,
 el mundo todo yanqui, todo Faubus... (33)

The ominous ending of this piece, concluding with a tense ellipsis, underscores the need to take action against the United States' racial policy. Guillén's appeal to racial minorities across the world, and especially blacks, is a desperate plea to fight this chilling future.

The elements of black transnationalism present in *La paloma* differ from the version of blackness present in Guillén's previous works, "West Indies Ltd." and "La voz esperanzada." His earlier works suggest that black power is a mutable quality capable of being transferred from one population to another—a radical ideology, in one sense, though not in the way in which the term "radical" has traditionally been understood by race activists to mean "separatist." In fact, this ideology appears to mirror *mestizaje* in its promotion of cross-racial alliances—though, of course, Guillén writes about cross-racial alliances made in the service of socialist ideals. In this, the influence of Black Bolshevism on his writing is made evident. In his later poetry, however, as in *La paloma*, Guillén's ideology appears to be more obviously aligned with "race-first" movements of black transnationalism, given its diasporic perspective and explicitly racial

concerns. Together, these characteristics inform new readings of race in Guillén's corpus, ones that go beyond the assertion that Guillén uncritically promoted *mestizaje* ideology. As we will see in the coming chapters, this model of black transnationalism proved a compelling innovation to other writers in Latin America who were also grappling with how to pursue racial justice within cultural frameworks that deemphasized race. Among the many writers influenced by Guillén's alternative transnationalism was Regino Pedroso, his compatriot and friend, who is the subject of the ensuing chapter.

Chapter Four: Regino Pedroso's Quest for a Black Humanity

The Life of Regino Pedroso, Cuba's First "Social Poet"

Born in Matanzas in 1896 to a Cantonese father and black Cuban mother, Regino Pedroso y Aldama was orphaned as a young child. At age 12, he left school in order to support his siblings as a manual laborer, holding a series of jobs—cane cutter, carpenter, and ironworker—that developed within him a deep sympathy for the working class and later informed both his poetry and his political commitments. He began his writing career in his adolescence, and the poems that he composed between the years 1918 and 1923 would later be collected in the volume *La ruta de Bagdad y otros poemas*, published as part of Pedroso's 1939 *Antología poética*. In this short volume, Pedroso displays his indebtedness to *modernismo*, as *Bagdad's* thirteen sonnets overflow with exotic, orientalist imagery that evoke the grandeur of imperial Japan and the Middle Eastern caliphates. The works are technically skillful, but derivative; as Nicolás Guillén wrote in his introduction to Pedroso's later anthology, *Poemas*, they can be considered the product of a "Regino artificial y enjoyado"—not the poet's true self (7). Pedroso himself acknowledged the "preciosista" tone of these poems in a later interview (Bianchi Ross 52). Nevertheless, some critics saw potential in the neophyte writer; Lizaso and Fernández de Castro, for example, deemed his work worthy enough to include him in their 1926 anthology *La poesía moderna en Cuba (1888-1925)*.

As Pedroso moved away from his *modernista* influences, he began to produce poetry that drew from his own life experience and perspective, resulting in works that were more original. A decade of work led to the publication of his first collection, *Nosotros*, which was released in 1933 to immediate critical acclaim. It won the attention of many Cuban intellectuals, including

Jorge Mañach, who published two articles commenting on *Nosotros* in the national newspaper *El País*. Pedroso was hailed as the inventor of a completely new form of poetry—social poetry.

Eugenio Florit thought this genre so significant that he compared Pedroso's invention of social poetry to Guillén's invention of "poesía mulata" (238). Years later, reflecting on the significance of this volume in the context of Cuban letters, Raimundo Lazo wrote, "En el marco de nuestras letras fue entonces la suya poesía nueva porque era poesía sincera y valientemente social, hecha de vivencias, extraída de las entrañas de la vida de nuestro pueblo, que era y seguiría siendo la vida de todos los pueblos de mundo" (qtd. in Pita Rodríguez 7).

Pedroso's interest in the common man reflected what was by that time a mature political ideology and commitment to the rights of the proletariat. In the same year that he published *Nosotros*, the poet joined the Defensa Obrera Internacional and the Liga Antimperialista. He also began editing *Masas*, the newspaper of the latter organization, and *La palabra*, the official publication of the Cuban Communist Party. In 1935, he would be imprisoned, alongside the other editors of *Masas*—including Juan Marianello—for these political activities.

Pedroso remained steadfastly committed to the socialist cause throughout his life, both in his poetry and in his political activities. The strong proletariat themes of *Nosotros* carry through the next three decades of his poetry, even as Pedroso expanded his repertoire with poems about his racial identity, the history of Latin America, and even more obscure subjects like Chinese philosophy. The identification of Pedroso as Cuba's social poet has meant that until recently scholarship on Pedroso focused almost exclusively on his representation of the worker. Breaking that pattern, however, are Debbie Lee, whose research analyzes racial themes in Pedroso's poetry, and Hwei Lan Yen, who includes Pedroso in her study of Hispanic writers of Asian descent. Both of these scholars are primarily interested in Pedroso's representation of his

Chinese ancestry, which he wrote about extensively—especially in his later collections *El ciruelo de Yuan Pei Fu: poemas chinos* (1955) and *China, recuerdos* (1964). However, Pedroso also authored a number of poems in which Africa features prominently. Like Guillén, Pedroso wrestled with the idea of what it meant to be of mixed race in early twentieth-century Cuba and conceived of his own identity within a diasporic context, one that included, in addition to the African diaspora, that of Asia. Also like Guillén, Pedroso's racial identity was deeply related to his sense of class consciousness. It is clear from his writings that he understood race within the broader context of a history of social oppression that included colonialism, slavery, and neo-imperialism. However, despite these similarities, there is a fundamental difference between the writing of Guillén and Pedroso, which is that Pedroso went beyond Guillén's treatment of race as primarily a social issue. For Pedroso, race was one element of a larger philosophical problem—the question of what it means to be human.

This chapter explains Pedroso's existential approach to black identity by studying three collections written during the middle years of his career: *Nosotros* (1933), *Los días tumultuosos* (completed in 1936), and *Más allá canta el mar* (1938). In *Nosotros*, Pedroso begins to explore the significance of racial identity, focusing at this early juncture exclusively on his Asian heritage. As the poet matures in his racial consciousness, he also expands its scope, and his next collection, *Los días tumultuosos*, takes up his African heritage as a poetic theme and begins to conceptualize the relationship between blackness and humanity. Finally, in *Más allá*, Pedroso elaborates more on the concept of the human, negotiating the relationship between the particular and universal elements of subjectivity. It is in this final collection that Pedroso's contribution to black transnationalist thought crystallizes: decades before the advent of what we might term

“black existentialism,” Pedroso was already considering the question of race through an existential lens.

***Nosotros* and the Beginning of Racial Consciousness in Pedroso’s Work**

To see how Pedroso progresses through these stages of his work, we begin with an analysis of his prologue to *Nosotros*, playfully entitled, “Auto-bio-prólogo.” Pedroso structures this as a fact sheet, with categories such as those that one might find on a government census form, as a way of introducing himself and his *ars poetica* to readers. He lists the category of race, for example, and writes, “Raza: Humana; pigmentación: negro-amarilla. (Sin otra mezcla)” (9). For profession, Pedroso simply puts “explotado” (9). In a space allotted to “Ideología,” he reveals how this race and class status, along with his nationality, have shaped his political perspective:

Nacido en un país económica y políticamente esclavizado al imperialismo yanqui; clasificado por tradicionales conceptos de religión, filosofía y ciencia burguesa, como individuo de raza inferior—etiópico-asiático—perteneciente—proletario—a la clase más oprimida y explotada; ¿cuál puede ser mi ideología...? La que viene de Marx, se sintetiza en Lenin y hoy emerge al mundo con la Internacional de la Justicia.” (9)

These words evidence what Lee calls Pedroso’s “triple consciousness”—the subjectivity informed by his identification as a Afro-Chinese Cuban worker (“Creation of a Triple Consciousness” 225).

This is also the subject of his poem “Salutación a un camarada culí,” which examines race as an instrument of social revolution, much like Guillén’s “La voz esperanzada.” The

strength of Pedroso's socialist convictions is evident in "Salutación," as the work describes anti-imperialism as a characteristic of the Asian race. "Salutación" is dedicated to Cuba's population of "coolie" workers, of whom Pedroso's father was one, and it is clearly a very autobiographical poem.⁸⁶ Although Pedroso had written about his ancestry in earlier, as-yet unpublished poems, none of these achieve the depth of expression or authenticity as "Salutación."⁸⁷ It is therefore one of the most important works that Pedroso authors on race, not only because it illustrates how the poet's racial consciousness springs from his socialist ideology, but also because it sets the stage for his future writings on the subject. The poem in its entirety reads as follows:

Del fondo de los siglos, tumultuosos y salvaje
 surge mi exaltación,
 por ti, en cuyas pupilas oblicuas he leído
 —páginas de una Iliada de libertad—
 un Himalaya de epopeya.

Surge de largos años de humillación:
 soy de tu misma raza hombre amarillo: acaso
 tuvimos por abuelo los mismos mandarines
 venales, corrompidos,
 aletargados bajo el nirvana del opio
 en negra noche del pasado;
 o quizá, más felices,

⁸⁶ See Lisa Yun's book for a history of coolie labor in Cuba and the parallels between African slavery and coolie servitude.

⁸⁷ I am specifically referencing the early poems "Prometeo" and "Ancestralismo," written by Pedroso between 1924 and 1926, which are included in his anthology *Poemas*.

fueron agricultores, sembradores de arroz,
allá en los valles del Yang-tsé.

Aunque hasta mí llegaste vestido a la europea,
tu tez era mongólica,
exótica tu lengua monosilábica;
tu expresión evocaba, bajo la sonrisa,
a la de los guerreros de Gengis Kan:
máscara que hoy teme Europa y el Norte yanqui acecha.

Fue necesario que llegaras
con tu angustia de ayer, tu grito del presente,
con tu esperanza del futuro,
con el impulso bélico del que rompe cadenas
de hermanos oprimidos,
para que yo, saliendo de un sueño de opio, entrara
contigo al alba nueva;
y mirara tu espada
—no espada de conquista, espada que liberta—
rasgar los cielos negros de cien pueblos esclavos
con un fulgor de rojos incendios libertarios.

Mas, sangre de tu sangre, yo vivo en fiebre ahora

tu fuerte gesto y tu tragedia;
nos ligan doblemente los vínculos
de la estirpe y la nueva inquietud ideológica.

Tú has despertado en mí lo que hay de Asia,
pues yo vengo de allá en connubio con África:
dos grandes continentes destrozados, vencidos...

Mi destino es más triste que el tuyo;
que hasta la tierra india a cuyo sol me he abierto
y la brisa primera he bebido,
desde el Río Grande a la Tierra del Fuego
—patria continental—,
también es destrozada por el imperialismo.

Con tu ancestral instinto y oculta fuerza primitiva
liberta, liberta;
aunque el poder de Europa y la amenaza del nipón
lleguen a ti, liberta.

La virtud de tu raza surja viril y recia;
y del ensueño fútil del paisaje de laca,
y del embotamiento del opio aniquilante,
y del quietismo inútil de tu filosofía

brote el clamor de guerra.

Lucha contra los buitres
que te devoran las entrañas;
vampiros extranjeros que sorben tus derechos
bajo una fementida noche civilizada.

Del hangar del pasado
suelta la amarra tradicional;
y en el vuelo rebelde por la justicia humana,
lleva sobre los libres océanos sidéreos
con nuevos ritmos tu doctrina.

Oiré en tu ideología
más humana, más cósmica
—dirigible de intensas verdades colectivas—,
más fuerte el trepidante motor de nuestra época.
Hasta que llegue el alba que en gesto comprensivo,
del mástil de los Andes sus cables rompa al viento
de nuevos postulados,
la nave de la nueva Revolución de América! (34-36)

In “Salutación,” Pedroso approaches global history from a personal angle, by identifying with the coolie worker and thus making Chinese history a part of his own past. This results in a

tone that is significantly more intimate and authentic than that of the majority of works included in *Nosotros*, whose common characteristic is their ideological stridency. In “Salutación,” the poet also surpasses the orientalist symbolism that characterized his early poetry. Eschewing the silk caravans and Oriental jewels of *Bagdad*’s sumptuous *modernismo*, Pedroso explores another side of his Asian identity. Although his perspective in “Salutación” might be criticized as essentialist for the way in which it equates one particular characteristic—“el impulso bélico que rompe cadenas”—with the Asian race, a generous interpretation of the poem understands it as Pedroso’s first real attempt to grapple with the subject of ethnicity. The poet himself recognizes that the writing of this poem is merely an initial effort to understand the significance of his ethnic heritage; he describes himself as one emerging from “un sueño de opio” who has only just recognized “lo que en mí hay de Asia, / pues yo vengo de allá en connubio con Africa.”

In light of the literary trends of the time, Pedroso’s choice to focus first on his Chinese heritage—rather than his connection to Africa—is significant. *Afrocubanismo* was at its height during the decade in which Pedroso composed *Nosotros*, and given the poet’s personal relationship with Guillén, readers might have expected that his black identity would be a dominant theme of the collection. Though he recognizes his African heritage in the aforementioned lines of “Salutación,” he does not yet incorporate it as a theme of his work. Pedroso’s orientation towards the Asian elements of his subjectivity were likely shaped by his political involvement with the Communist Party, whose activities he had supported since his late adolescence. In his book *In the Cause of Freedom*, Minkah Makalani describes how Asia’s anti-colonial struggles of the 1920s served as a model for later anti-imperialist movements, including black transnationalist movements in the Western hemisphere. He writes that the collaboration of Asian and black radicals in this decade “introduced race and nation into international communism at its

inception” (73). As an active Party member, Pedroso would have doubtless understood the connection between Asian liberation and the struggle for racial justice for blacks. Such knowledge would allow him to compare Asia with Africa as “dos grandes continentes destrozados, vencidos” and then, to go a step further in comparing the history of these places to the oppression of Latin America, as seen in the seventh stanza of “Salutación,” where the poet laments the current situation of his continent. Pedroso clearly identifies Asian revolutionary fervor as the solution to the desperate situation of Latin America, as he depicts the arrival of revolution in Latin America as the arrival of a ship from the East, her sails blown out by the enthusiasm of the “nuevos postulados” of socialism.

The paradigm of racial revolution presented in “Salutación” is similar to the ideology expressed by Guillén in “La voz esperanzada,” wherein blackness served as a revolutionary inspiration for a broader population. Pedroso’s paradigm, however, represents an additional challenge to the discourse of *mestizaje*, since he recognizes the contributions of Asian culture to Cuba’s history. “Salutación” goes beyond the African-Spanish model for Cuban identity and in doing so, tests the extent to which racial ideologies in Latin America were influenced by earlier movements of racial solidarity elsewhere in the world. At the time of this writing, the connection between Asia and Latin America is a subject that scholars are only just beginning to explore, and Pedroso’s poem provides reason to believe that this line of investigation will prove fruitful. “Salutación” is also significant for what it suggests about the history of diasporic consciousness—namely, that other models of diaspora may have influenced the development of cultural pan-Africanism. While Makalani has established the political connections between Asian radicalism and black solidarity movements, there has been little investigation into how

such cross-cultural exchanges influenced artists. Pedroso's poem is evidence of the opportunity available to Hispanists to expand this kind of research.

Collective Black Identity and Social Action in *Los días tumultuosos*

In his later poetry, Pedroso devotes more attention to the “negro” side of his “negro-amarilla” pigmentation. Following the publication of *Nosotros*, Pedroso authored the collection *Los días tumultuosos*, written between 1934 and 1936, which includes the poem “Hermano negro.” As the title of this volume indicates, the years in which the poet developed this collection were some of the most politically tumultuous in Cuba's history, and included the overthrow of President Gerardo Machado and the installation of Fulgencio Batista as dictator. This was also the period in which Pedroso was imprisoned for his political activity, spending six months in jail for his involvement with *Masas*. Reflecting later on his imprisonment, Pedroso testified that the experience caused him to awaken to man's spiritual suffering: “Vi el rostro informe de la angustia y llegué a pensar que en la vida hay cosas más dolorosas que el hambre y más desesperantes que el miedo a la muerte” (qtd. in Bianchi Ross 53). This realization imbued Pedroso's poetry with new themes, as he pondered man's existential anguish and attempts to define his own personal worth as a human. Both of these would be relevant to the poet's exploration the relationship between blackness and humanity in *Los días tumultuosos*.

“Hermano negro” is the first poem by Pedroso to address his blackness in long form, and is similar to Guillén's “El apellido” as an exploration of the poet's African heritage. Beyond the level of the personal, however, “Hermano negro,” also serves as an enjoiner to blacks to recognize their common history and direct their collective energies towards racial liberation. Like “Salutación a un camarada culí,” Pedroso uses this poem to identify racial consciousness as

a catalyst for social change; however, whereas in “Salutación” Pedroso depicts Asian ethnicity in an unquestioningly positive light, in “Hermano negro” he criticizes the way in which blackness has been used as an element of collective identity. Following the text of the poem, I will further explore the tension that Pedroso develops between his racial and social ideologies:

Negro, hermano negro,
tú estás en mí, ¡habla!
Negro, hermano negro,
yo estoy en ti: ¡canta!
Tu voz está en mi voz,
tu angustia está en mi voz,
tu sangre está en mi voz. . . ¡También yo soy de tu raza!

¡Negro, hermano negro,
el más fuerte, el más triste,
el más lleno de cantos y lágrimas!

Tú tienes el canto,
porque la selva te dio en sus noches sus ritmos bárbaros;
tu tienes el llanto,
porque te dieron los grandes ríos raudal de lágrimas.

Negro, hermano negro,
más negro por dolor que por la raza.
Tú fuiste libre sobre la tierra,

como las bestias, como los árboles,
como tus ríos, como tus soles. . .
Fue carcajada bajo los cielos tu cara ancha.

Y luego, esclavo,
sentiste el látigo
encender tu carne de humana cólera,
y ardiendo en llanto
cantabas.

¡Negro, hermano negro!
¡Tan fuerte en el dolor que al llorar calmas!

Para sus goces
el rico hace de ti un juguete.
Y en Paris, y en New York, y en Madrid, y en La Habana,
igual que bibelots,
se fabrican negros de paja para la exportación;
hay hombres que te pagan con hambre la risa:
trafican con tu sudor,
comercian con tu dolor,
y tú ríes, te entregas y danzas.

¿Tú amaste alguna vez?

Ah, si tú amas, tu carne es bárbara.

¿Gritaste alguna vez?

Ah, si tú gritas, tu voz es bárbara.

¿Viviste alguna vez?

Ah, si tú vives, tu raza es bárbara.

¿Y es sólo por tu piel?, ¿es sólo por color?

No es sólo por color; es porque eres,

bajo el prejuicio de la raza,

hombre explotado.

Negro, hermano negro,

silencia un poco tus maracas.

Y aprende aquí,

y mira allí.

y escucha allá en Scottsboro, en Scottsboro,

entre un clamor de angustia esclava

ansias de hombre,

iras de hombre,

dolor y anhelo humanos de hombre sin raza.

Negro, hermano negro,

enluta un poco tu bongó.

¿No somos más que negro?

¿No somos más que jácara?
 ¿No somos más que rumba, lujurias negras y comparsas?
 ¿No somos más que mueca y color, mueca y color?
 Aprende aquí, y escucha allí,
 y mira allá en Scottsboro, en Scottsboro,
 bajo vestidos de piel negra
 hombres que sangran.

Negro, hermano negro;
 más hermano en el ansia que en la raza.
 Negro en Haití, negro en Jamaica, negro en New York,
 negro en La Habana –dolor que en
 vitrinas negras vende la explotación–,
 escucha allá en Scottsboro, en Scottsboro, en Scottsboro. . .
 Da al mundo con tu angustia rebelde
 tu humana voz. . .
 ¡y apaga un poco tus maracas! (98-101)

Pedroso's first ideological objective in "Hermano negro" is to enlighten his black brother regarding the history that has led to his oppression. To that end, Pedroso characterizes blackness not as a mere biological characteristic, but as an experience, as he writes, "Negro, hermano negro; / más negro por dolor que por raza." According to Pedroso, the black experience includes not only the historic suffering of chattel slavery, as he details in the sixth stanza of the poem, but modern-day forms of exploitation as well, as he shows in the verses that read:

el rico hace de ti un juguete,
 y en París, y en New York, y en Madrid, y en la Habana,

.....
 trafican con tu sudor,
 comercian con tu dolor....

Pedroso's enumeration of cities around the globe makes evident that the exploitation of blacks is not something unique to Cuba. Nor, however, is it a form of discrimination that applies solely to blacks, as he specifies in the following verses of the poem. In an apostrophic address, he asks the reader if the only cause for his inferior status is the color of his skin—"Y es sólo tu piel? ¿es sólo por color?"—and then answers his own question by declaring, "No es sólo por color; es porque eres, / bajo el prejuicio de la raza, / hombre explotado." The enjambment of these lines indicates the complexity of the black man's predicament; he is hated not only for his skin, but also for two other reasons: his very existence—"porque eres"—and his exploited status. Pedroso's phrasing at the end of this line evokes his "Auto-bio-prólogo" to *Nosotros*, wherein he identified his profession as simply that of an "explotado." In both cases, the socialist sentiment behind the poet's assertions is clear, and in "Hermano negro," this verse effectively constructs a parallel between racial discrimination and other forms of oppression, just as Guillén's *West Indies, Ltd.* sought to do.

Having established this unfortunate truth, Pedroso changes his tone in the following stanza of the poem, as he implores his reader: "Negro, hermano negro, / silencia un poco tus maracas."⁸⁸ Even the punctuation of the poem alters: the exclamation points that characterized the first half of the poem now vanish as the poet dedicates himself to a sober lecture of his "hermano negro." With a scolding tone, he urges his audience to "aprende aquí, / y mira allí, / y

⁸⁸ Pedroso references here the case of the Scottsboro Boys, a group of nine black teenagers falsely accused of raping two white women aboard a train in 1931. Eight of the boys were tried for the crime in Scottsboro, Alabama, and convicted by an all-white jury, despite overwhelming evidence of their innocence. The American Communist Party successfully won an appeal for the case, but ultimately, all but two of the young defendants were sentenced to jail. Frances Peace Sullivan covers Cuban involvement in the case in the article "For the liberty."

escucha allá en Scottsboro, en Scottsboro.” These verses indicate a significant shift in “Hermano negro,” as they are a direct contrast to the commands given by Pedroso in the poem’s first stanza, where he encouraged his brother to speak and to sing, assuring him, “Tu voz está en mi voz.” Now, he orders silence, as he probes his projected audience with a stanza of accusatory rhetorical questions:

¿No somos más que negro?

¿No somos más que jácara?

¿No somos más que rumba, lujurias negras, y comparsas?

¿No somos más que mueca y color, mueca y color?

This interrogation shames his readers into reconsidering the basis for their sense of self. Is their identity based primarily on cultural performances—such as the rhumba or the *comparsa*—or is it based on a deeper sense of their own humanity? In the following stanza, Pedroso insists that blacks must value their human worth above all else:

Aprende aquí,

y escucha allí,

y mira allá en Scottsboro, en Scottsboro,

bajo vestidos de piel negra,

hombres que sangran.

His reference to the Scottsboro Boys, described as men “bajo vestidos de piel negra,” humanizes the wrongly accused defendants in the Scottsboro case. It insists upon their basic humanity, which, for the all-white jury that condemned them, was far too easy to overlook. This idea is reinforced by Pedroso’s repetition of the word “hombre” throughout this poem, as well as the ending, in which the poet commands his “hermano negro” to share his humanity with the world:

“Da al mundo con tu angustia rebelde / tu humana voz... / ¡y apaga un poco tus maracas!” In the poet’s vision, for blacks to achieve social parity, they must insist upon the recognition of their essential personhood—not their blackness—as that which qualifies them for equal treatment under the law and in society at large.

Stylistically speaking, “Hermano negro” has much in common with *afrocubanista* poetry. The themes of “Hermano negro,” including the effects of slavery and the significance of black cultural performance, are common in the work of the most recognized *afrocubanista* writers, and any reader well acquainted with Guillén’s work, in particular, can detect echoes of *Motivos de son* and *Sóngoro Cosongo* in this poem. The aesthetic qualities of “Hermano negro” are also *afrocubanista*, especially Pedroso’s use of repetition and parallelism, which convey a sense of orality to the poem. For this reason, it is tempting to read “Hermano negro” as an example of this poetic tradition when in reality it functions more like a critique of it. Pedroso directly derides *afrocubanismo*’s emphasis on performance, which, as Arnedo-Gómez has documented, was critical to the majority of *afrocubanista* work.⁸⁹ He treats black cultural traditions scornfully in the poem, not only exhorting his “hermano negro” to quiet his maracas, but also, to “enluta un poco [su] bongó.” He even criticizes blacks who have allowed their traditions to become entertainment for others, accusing this group of acting in complicity with their oppressors, as he writes in the eighth stanza, “comercian con tu dolor, / y tú ríes, te entregas, y danzas.”

The tone of these lines contributes to the temptation to read “Hermano negro” as denigrating towards blacks, or even as racist, but such an interpretation would be inconsistent with the overall thrust of the text. It is preferable instead to understand Pedroso’s work as an act of poetic subversion: the appropriation of *afrocubanista* techniques for the critique of this

⁸⁹ See primarily *Writing Rumba*, as well as Arnedo-Gómez’s article “Afro-Cuban Literature and the *Afrocubanista* Poetry of Nicolás Guillén.”

movement. It appears that what Pedroso takes issue with is certain *afrocubanistas*' superficial approach to racial solidarity. In "Hermano negro," Pedroso does not recognize blackness as a quality that, independent from all others, is in itself worthy of celebration—rather, he shows that the pursuit of racial equality matters only if accompanied by a broader commitment to *human* equality. This idea, of course, runs lockstep with the ideology promoted in Black Bolshevism. In both "Hermano negro" and the thematically similar "Salutación," the poet's working out of his racial identity is cast within the light of a broader philosophical and ideological commitment, consistent with socialist ideology.

In "Hermano negro," some of the differences between Guillén and Pedroso's depictions of blackness are clarified. Guillén's use of the black body and African cultural symbols as metaphors for resistance clashes abruptly with Pedroso's commands to deemphasize these very things in favor of more abstract ideas. Furthermore, although both emphasize solidarity among members of the African diaspora, Pedroso's perspective extends the notion of a racial diaspora to one that is united by the common element of humanity. His vision of human solidarity thus transcends phenological identities, a point which he elaborates further in his next collection, *Más allá canta el mar*.

Maritime Metaphors for Liberation in *Más allá canta el mar*

Más allá canta el mar, which was awarded the 1939 Premio Nacional de Poesía, is comprised of fifteen different sections whose aesthetics manifest an eclectic assortment of classical models, *vanguardista* influences, and Pedroso's own social poetry. In *Más allá*, four different modes of expression tumble together, one on top of the other: historical interpretation, autobiographical reflection, existential contemplation, and prophetic vision. The scope and

skillfulness of *Más allá* qualify it as Pedroso's *magnum opus*, yet it appears that there is not a single work of criticism on the text. This reading consequently provides an initial interpretation of *Más allá* as a text that illustrates Pedroso's theorization of humanity. With regards to this study of black transnationalism, *Más allá* is significant because it reveals one way in which black transnational thought is paradoxically capable of transcending purely racial concerns and operating on a universal philosophical level. This reading focuses in particular on Pedroso's use of two powerful symbols: the sea and the sailor. In examining how these metaphors modify each other across the extension of the text, we discover the significance of the ocean as a place of both crisis and optimism, as well as how Pedroso envisions the sailor as the representation of an ultimate humanity. Anticipating Gilroy's *Black Atlantic* by decades, Pedroso's maritime metaphors allow the poet to transcend identitarian ideologies defined by landlocked ethnicities or nationalities—including discourses of *mestizaje*—and in doing so, map a new route for the human experience.

The epigraph of *Más allá canta el mar* is taken from the tenth book of the *Odyssey* and summarizes the spiritual ideal of Pedroso's epic, providing insight into the work's seemingly eccentric structure. Pedroso cites: “Y habiendo despertado, consulté a mi corazón irreprochable si debía sucumbir, arrojándome de la nave al mar, o si, permanecido entre los vivos, padecería en silencio. Y entre los vivos quedé y soporté mis trabajos” (109). Odysseus delivers these words just after he discovers that his crew has loosed—and in doing so, wasted—the winds that Aeolus had given the hero to speed his voyage to Ithaca. His decision to remain among the living, rather than take his own life following this tragedy, epitomizes a dogged resistance to hopelessness. Pedroso elevates this quality throughout *Más allá*, as he seeks to emulate the steely optimism of

the Greek hero by refusing, despite significant obstacles, to forfeit the pursuit of a socialist utopia during his own odyssey.

Homer's verses also illuminate the logic underlying the apparent disorganization of *Más allá*, which does not follow an easily discernible outline. In the Greek text, these lines are found in book ten, when Odysseus loses control over his own trajectory. His sailors' loss of the winds causes his ship to slam back into the Aeolian isle, where he finds not refuge, but a harsh banishment. The theme of exile that occupies the *Odyssey* is also present in *Más allá*, in which Pedroso finds himself alienated from his own society because of his racial identity. The organization of the Afro-Chinese Cuban poet's work also mirrors the meandering course that Odysseus follows in the subsequent books of the *Odyssey*, as Pedroso moves through the landscape of his text, stopping briefly in sections three and seven to contemplate the history of Latin America, sharing flashbacks from his childhood in section five, and facing off with the United States—symbolized as a Cyclops—in the eighth section. The reader is tossed about by these constantly shifting targets—sometimes in the past, sometimes the present, sometimes the future—and this disorienting experience mimics the poet's existential state. In structuring *Más allá* in this way, Pedroso invites his audience to do more than simply observe his tumultuous journey towards consciousness—he asks his readers to accompany him as he probes the source and significance of his humanity.

The destination that Pedroso seeks throughout *Más allá* is human solidarity, which is symbolized in the vision of the dawn that appears in the very first section of the poem, entitled “El alba.” In this shortest part of his epic, Pedroso introduces a basic version of the imagery that he will elaborate in its subsequent sections. The first stanza evokes an aquascape with the exclamatory verses: “¡Y era el mar! ¡Y era el mar! / ¡Y era el mar de la vida, / azul, risueño,

inmenso!” (111). Next, Pedroso shifts from the ocean to its travelers, picturing a ship that carries sailors towards the dawn of revolution:

Bajo cielos de siglos voces liberadoras
 velámenes de púrpura desplegaron al viento:
 cada mástil fue un vuelo hacia más altos rumbos;
 cada estandarte un sueño;
 cada proa un relámpago de luz que fuera abriendo
 camino hacia el mañana;
 cada brazo una antorcha;
 cada grito un incendio;
 cada golpe del remo un himno de victoria;
 cada vela una aurora de sol que empavesara
 las naves de oro y cielo. (111)

The poet imagines himself as the lookout of this crew, describing his role in these closing lines of the poem: “Y en el palo mayor, en lo más alto, / vigía de horizontes / el filo de mi voz iba cortando el viento: / ¡El alba, marineros; todo el futuro vemos!” (111-12). He anoints himself the prophet of a new day, and his victorious declaration— “¡El alba, marineros; todo el futuro vemos!”—recurs with great frequency in the following sections of *Más allá*, as the poet seeks to animate his comrades, and himself, with the clarity of this vision. It is this future that Pedroso holds out to those who share in his revolutionary fervor, and to which he returns over the course of *Más allá*, punctuating his moments of deepest existential anguish with hope for the dawn.

The sea described in “El alba” is a categorically positive space—“azul, risueño, inmenso”—yet this characterization does not hold through the remaining sections of *Más allá*.

What Pedroso initially terms “el mar de la vida” also hides death within its depths. The fourth section of the poem, entitled “Elegía en el mar,” complicates the metaphor developed in the first section, revealing that although the ocean is a place for dreams, it is also home to despair. In its fourth stanza, Pedroso writes:

Cabalgando en el lomo de tus corceles ciegos,
 por años vi la negra deidad de tus oleajes
 la voz cortarme, y oscura, apagarme el aliento,
 hacerme prisionero en cavernas de odios,
 nublar mis ojos en noches de soledades;
 y naufragar, muriendo, cada día muriendo,
 viste a mi fe en tus olas inmensas sepultarse. (117)

The arresting language of the first line of this stanza impresses upon the reader a sense of the poet’s confidence in, and control over, the sea. Pedroso’s choice of the verb “cabalgando,” combined with the alliteration of “corceles” and “ciegos,” creates a sense of movement within the line that mirrors his seafaring travel. Yet the rest of these verses reveal that Pedroso is not the conqueror of the sea, but neither is he subject to it. With his faith in the future relegated to a watery grave, the sea now manifests itself as a place of anguish—a fact confirmed by the sixth stanza, where Pedroso characterizes himself as a “juguete del destino, del oleaje y los vientos” (118). Cast about thus, the poet turns inward upon himself to confront his own mortality. When he measures himself against the majesty of the sea, he realizes the utter insignificance of his individual self:

Ante tus grandes furias
 y tu enorme potencia,

vi lo débil del músculo,
 lo inútil de mi canto,
 lo vano del orgullo...(118)

The simple, bare language of these lines mirrors the poet's sense of his own smallness, and the lyricism of "Elegía" is suspended in this moment, as the poet descends deeper into contemplation. The sound of these verses also parallels Pedroso's sinking spirit, as the final "o" of the last three lines requires the reader to exhale, as if she too were diving deeper into Pedroso's existential abyss.

"Elegía," however, does not end with the poet's drowning. In the eleventh line of this same stanza, there is an abrupt change, as Pedroso begins to fight his way out from under the water that surrounds him. The remainder of the seventh stanza is characterized by descriptions of upward movement, as Pedroso sees "astros nuevos surgir del fondo de tus aguas; / volar por tus llanuras crepúsculos gigantes" and finally, another dawn, viewed as if with "púpilas cósmicas" (118). Here, the poet mixes terrestrial and celestial metaphors, demonstrating that the very plane of his existence has changed. Finally, he bursts through the surface of his mental void to declare once again in the first line of the next stanza, "¡Mar de la vida! ¡Mar de la vida!" (119). These words, first proclaimed in the celebratory "El alba," take on new significance at the end of "Elegía," as they are imbued with a novel perspective. In "Elegía," Pedroso passes through the chasm of a spiritual death and is strengthened by this journey; his experience of suffering, in fact, allows him to resist being overwhelmed in the face of opposition. He perseveres in his quest for the dawn armed, according to this stanza, with nothing more than "un gran dolor de hombre" (119). Later in *Más allá*, this same kind of suffering will be the inspiration for the sailor's song,

as he gives voice to that anguish—both his own and others’—he has accumulated in his transoceanic voyaging.

The trope of sailor-as-seer that Pedroso introduced in the first section of *Más allá* is extended and nuanced in subsequent sections of the epic poem. With these, the poet develops the sailor as one who is capable of seeing across space and time; he is global historian, witness, and prophet simultaneously. In the thirteenth section of the poem, which shares its title with the overall work, Pedroso devotes himself to an extended analysis of this particular vocation, its privileges, and its burdens. This section, “Más allá canta el mar,” is constructed as fifteen stanzas of free verse that document a dialogue between the poet and his soul, represented by the seaman. In the first four lines, Pedroso apostrophizes, “Canta tú, marinero, / canto mío desnudo / inmenso, desolado / como un desierto de áridas soledades de angustias” (148). The use of “tú,” along with the form of the following two stanzas—both of which are an interrogation of the sailor—initially suggest that this figure exists outside of Pedroso’s own self, but the poet soon clarifies, calling him a “prisionero en mi carne,” and showing in the third stanza that it is the sailor who inspires his poetic work:

¿Con qué palabras nuevas hoy vienes a mi nave,
y me quemas los ojos,
y me bañas las manos,
y haces mi oído nuevo y mi boca más ágil? (148)

The sailor is Pedroso’s poetic conscience, that which compels him to give voice to his visions. The sailor is also what has allowed the poet to triumph over the existential anguish that he experienced on the sea. In the remainder of “Más allá,” the poet urges his conscience to testify to the suffering that he has seen, reminding him that “descendiendo al abismo profundo de ti

mismo, / junto al clamor humano y en todas partes viste / bajo palabras nuevas siempre el mismo dolor” (152). This underscores the connection between the sailor’s personal experience of anguish—described in the sections of *Más allá* devoted to the ocean—and the suffering of humanity.

Included in this universal suffering is the pain caused by racial and social inequality. This is documented in detail in other sections of *Más allá*, but also referred to in the closing stanzas in this portion of Pedroso’s poem, whose parallel structure indicates the relationship between racial and class discrimination and existential suffering—what Pedroso calls “el gran dolor del hombre.” It is here that Pedroso’s expression of black transnationalism is most clear. The antepenultimate stanza closes with this line: “¿Cómo ovillar de nuevo el hilo de la vida?” This rhetorical question, a reference to Penelope’s infinite weaving, indicates the poet’s desire to create something new from the narrative of anguish that he has already recounted.

How can he find a pattern distinct from the history that he has already woven? The answer is found in the next stanza: “¡Bogar, bogar, bogar!” Coxswain of his own destiny, the poetic voice envisions himself rowing ahead to “dejar más allá todo el pasado, todo el presente, todo el futuro” (152). The new world that he approaches exists within its own time. It may not be void of suffering, as the poet imagines that in it will exist:

sobre un dolor de razas,
sobre un dolor de clases,
sobre un dolor de tierra que sangra en las entrañas,
acaso eternamente,
el gran dolor del hombre! (153).

Yet even so, a revolutionary fervor, described by Pedroso as “un grito, una esperanza, un canto,” will also be there to answer this pain, and it will, in fact, triumph (153). The closing line of this poem foresees the victory of the ocean, the realm of the sailor, as the poet declares, “¡Mas sobre el grito humano canta el mar su canción!” (153). This leads into the following section of *Más allá*, by far its most optimistic, entitled “Un día la alegría.” This ending to “Más allá,” complemented by the section that follows, depicts the sailor as the person who inaugurates the social revolution, uniting other humans across the boundaries of race and class. In this final section, Pedroso reaches the shore of his Ithaca.

In the figure of the sailor, Pedroso forges a representation of the quintessentially human—a figure with the kind of “humana voz” that he urged his black brother in “Hermano negro” to exhibit. There are many reasons why the figure of the sailor might have been so attractive to the Cuban poet. For one, he may have found it politically relevant, seeing revolutionary potential in this figure of self-determination. In this way, the poet’s use of the sailor aligns with observations regarding the political significance of this figure, such as Marcus Rediker’s study of seventeenth-century seamen, *The Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, wherein the historian argues that early Atlantic sailors prefigure the proletarian labor force in the way in which they organized against what they perceived as capitalist exploitation (7). Secondly, Pedroso’s ethnic heritage may also explain the appeal of this metaphor. Both Chinese coolies and African slaves endured horrific maritime voyages to Cuba, and as a descendant of these two groups, Pedroso may have chosen the figure of the sailor as a way to redeem the experience of his predecessors.⁹⁰ Finally, the figure of the sailor corresponds to Pedroso’s transnational

⁹⁰ Rediker provides a graphic description of the torment of the Middle Passage in his monograph *The Slave Ship*, while Juan Pedro Pérez de la Riva details the suffering of coolies traveling to Cuba in his *Contribución a la historia de la gente sin historia*. Pérez de la Riva estimates that between five and ten percent of coolie workers died en route to Cuba (145).

perspective, which we have already seen evidenced in part in the poems analyzed above. The sailor's travels provide him with a unique awareness of man's common suffering, a concern shared by the writer. With an exceptionally well-developed racial and social consciousness, the sailor, like the poet, transcends national identities and serves as a symbol of global unity. In him lies the potential for human revolution.

Pedroso's interest in the human, and his striving towards human solidarity, represents one of the more interesting products of black transnationalist thought in Latin America: the development of a racial ideology that does not necessarily privilege race itself. Though such an idea may appear to contradict the very foundations of black transnationalism, this is not necessarily the case. As the editors of the volume *From Toussaint to Tupac* write: "at the core of black internationalism is the ideal of universal emancipation, unbounded by national, imperial, continental, or oceanic boundaries—or even by racial ones" (xi). As featured in chapter seven of this dissertation, this is also the perspective of certain adherents of Negritude philosophy, including Jean-Paul Sartre. In his poetry, Pedroso illustrates how blacks' struggle for racial equality can serve as an inspiration for other communities' quests for justice. This too, was one of the key features of Guillén's transnationalist ideology. The universalist perspective shared by these two writers illustrates how the expression of black transnationalism was influenced by its cultural context. In a society that promoted *mestizaje* ideology, Guillén and Pedroso's characterizations of blackness are couched in terms of universal racial harmony. Additionally, because of their socialist commitments, they are keen to embed the fight for racial justice within broader struggles for liberation, as did other Black Bolsheviks.

And yet, neither Guillén nor Pedroso deny the specificity of the black experience, as one might expect them to do given their social and cultural context. Both poets dedicate themselves

to recuperating the lost and ignored history of African peoples in their home nation, and both are cognizant of how this history continues to manifest in the form of modern-day racial oppression. Their socialist language and ideals allowed them to do so, and to criticize *mestizaje* for overlooking these injustices while ultimately reinforcing the national ideal of racial harmony. The following section of this dissertation explores how one Brazilian writer—Solano Trindade—continues this legacy of Guillén and Pedroso’s black transnationalism in his own writing and how another—Abdias do Nascimento—upends it in his own work.

Chapter Five: A History of Black Subjectivities within Brazil's "Racial Democracy"

While writers such as Guillén and Pedroso were employing the language of socialism to explore alternative black subjectivities in light of *mestizaje* in Cuba, in early twentieth-century Brazil, many writers of African descent were grappling with their own racial identities and how to reconcile the black experience with the national paradigm of *mestiçagem*. As in Cuba, in Brazil, black transnationalist ideologies influenced the construction of racial identities, particularly in the 1930s and 40s, as diasporic paradigms of blackness flowed through political, social, and cultural channels, challenging national discourses that celebrated racial mixing but also ignored the reality of racial discrimination. In this chapter and the two that follow, I explore the influence of black transnationalist thought on Brazilian racial discourse of this era.

Constructed in two interrelated sections, the following lays the historical groundwork for the two subsequent chapters, which focus on the creative work of Solano Trindade and Abdias do Nascimento, respectively. The first section traces the theme of blackness as dealt with in the writings of three Afro-Brazilian writers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—key members of what Conceição Evaristo has termed the *quilombo* tradition of black Brazilian literature.⁹¹ As Evaristo writes, Afro-Brazilian literature exists as “um espaço de vivência marcado pelo enfrentamento, pela audácia de contradizer, pelo risco de *contraviver* o sistema” (7; emphasis original). By studying the ways in which these pioneering figures challenged the racial paradigms of their own eras, one can gain a better sense of how Trindade and Nascimento imitated their example in their own later revolutionary works. The second section of this chapter deals with the period immediately prefacing Trindade and Nascimento's careers—the period of the 1920s through the 1940s—and describes how black transnationalism was introduced to

⁹¹ First established in the sixteenth century by free blacks and escaped African slaves, *quilombos* operated as independent communities with their own sets of laws, defense mechanisms, and cultural norms .

Brazil and slowly infiltrated Brazilian academic debates, Brazilian politics, and finally, Brazilian literature. With the insertion of black transnationalism into these spheres of influence, Brazilian racial discourse and cultural practice shifted in ways that fostered a uniquely receptive environment for the blackness-affirming art of Trindade and Nascimento. While black transnationalism's incursion into Brazilian racial discourse did not negate the dominance of *mestiçagem* ideology in this era, it did introduce a parallel rhetorical space where alternative constructions of racial identity could be explored, particularly through poetry and performance.

Racial Resistance and Brazil's *Quilombo* Tradition in Literature

Key to establishing the literary genealogy of Trindade and Nascimento is the work of Luís Gama, João de Cruz e Souza, and Lima Barreto. To the extent that each of these writers dared to contradict, and in doing so, to “live against” the racial systems that defined their eras, Trindade and Nascimento directly benefited from their example, deriving inspiration from both their texts and the revolutionary practice of writing itself. The great differences between these authors reflect what Octavio Ianni calls the “sistema aberto, em movimento” of black literature; they illustrate that no particular style or vocabulary is necessary to express black subjectivity, except a commitment to the reality of blackness itself (92).

Luís Gama, or Getulino: Defender of Black Humanity

Though he was not the first author of African descent to contribute to Brazilian letters, Luís Gonzaga Pinto da Gama, who wrote under the pen name of Getulino, qualifies as the principal forefather of the *quilombo* tradition because of the way in which his work directly

engaged the chief racial issue of his day—slavery.⁹² Born to a Portuguese father and a free Ghanaian mother in 1830, Gama was sold into slavery by his father at the age of ten in order to pay off debts incurred from his father’s love of “as súcias e os divertimentos” (qtd. in Schwarz 139). As a young adult, Gama brokered a friendship with the law student Antônio Rodrigues de Araújo, who taught him to read and write and also determined the illegality of his enslavement, leading Gama to flee his master’s house and establish himself as a free black. Gama’s personal experience converted him into an advocate for others. During his adult life, while working as a *rábula*—an attorney licensed to practice without a formal law degree—he often defended the rights of enslaved people, and in his now commonly cited 1880 letter to his friend and political collaborator Lúcio de Mendonça, Gama testified to having personally liberated 500 slaves from their masters. In that same text, Gama also described how his experience as a slave radicalized him, writing, “até os 10 anos fui criança; dos 10 aos 18, fui soldado” (qtd. in Schwarz 141). The eight years that Gama spent as an enslaved man proved formative for the author, emboldening him to become one of the earliest advocates for the black race in Brazil.⁹³ Redeeming his personal misfortune for the good of others, he dedicated his subsequent professional life to fighting on behalf of those he referred to as “his people”—among whom he includes “todos os pobres, todos os infelizes” and “os míseros ecravos” (qtd. in Schwarz 141).

David Brookshaw has called Gama the first Afro-Brazilian author “to militate on behalf of his race” (192). The deep commitment to blacks’ social advancement that informed Gama’s advocacy work is also evident in his poetry. Writing during the period of Brazilian Romanticism

⁹² The first published author of Afro-Brazilian descent was Domingo Caldos Barbosa (1739-1800), a mulatto who was born in Brazil, but spent the majority of his life in Portugal. In 1798, he published a book of *trovas* entitled *Viola de Lerenó*, the title of which references his pen name, Lerenó.

⁹³ Another well-known advocate of black rights in this era was the white abolitionist poet Castro Alves, widely honored as “O poeta dos escravos.” His popular epic poem “O Navio Negreiro” (1869) was one of the first to depict the horrors of the Middle Passage and slavery in the Americas and, like Gama, he was an active participant in the abolitionist movement.

and through a traditionally Romantic aesthetic, Gama's single publication, the extensive collection entitled *Primeiras Trovas Burlescas* (1859), provides a critique of Brazilian race relations that is revolutionary in its employment of an Afrocentric perspective and themes. At the beginning of his poem "Lá vai verso!," one of the opening texts of the collection, Gama attributes his poetic inspiration not to the alabaster muses of antiquity, but to the "Musa de Guiné," who is distinguished by her ebony skin (17).⁹⁴ Invoking her creative energy at the outset of the poem, he pleads:

Empresta-me o cabaço d'*urucungo*,
 Ensina-me a brander tua o
 Inspira-me a sciencia da *candimba*,
 A's vias me conduz d'alta grandeza. (17)

While the basic structure of these verses will be familiar to any reader of epic and classical poetry, their content is what makes them truly remarkable. Gama's references to the African musical instruments of the *urucungo* (also known as the berimbau) and the *marimba*, along with his Afrocentric allusion to the *candimba*—a hare that is a symbol of wisdom—signal a reorientation of poetic tradition. With these lines, Gama shows his mastery of classical poetic conventions while simultaneously deconstructing the assumed cultural and aesthetic supremacy of those same conventions. By invoking the Muse of Guinea, the poet heralds the genesis of a new poetic tradition.

The remainder of "Lá vai verso!" details Gama's specific qualifications as the founder of this new Afro-Brazilian tradition, as well as the themes that this tradition will elaborate. In the fifth stanza of the work, the poet refers to himself as the "Orpheu de carapinha / que a Lira despresando, por mesquinha, / Ao som decanta de Marimba augusta" (17). Gama's ironic

⁹⁴ All citations of Gama's *Trovas* maintain the author's original spelling and punctuation.

reference to the texture of his hair as *carapinha*, or “nappy,” in this first line foregrounds the poet’s self-association with Africa, while the subsequent two lines reveal his deliberate privileging of African traditions over European ones, with the *marimba* declared superior to the lute. Both the poet’s blackness and his self-conscious embrace of it afford him a unique observational clarity, and he puts this to use in the following stanza, where he launches his tirade against the powerful and corrupt government leaders of Brazil. Composing a litany of insults against these individuals in which he calls them “caducas tartarugas,” as well as “irriosórios fidalgotes” and “refinados agiotas,” Gama introduces the “carnavalização do branco” that scholars like Ianni identify as characteristic of later black literature (95).⁹⁵ And in the final stanza of the poem, Gama imagines himself celebrated for his African-influenced critique. The poet constructs an image of himself dancing “ao rufo do tambor e dos zabumbas, / Ao som de mil aplausos retumbantes” for an audience of relatives who he calls “netos da Ginga,” referring to the Central African queen who visited Brazil along with the King of Congo in the seventeenth century. To Afro-Brazilians, Queen Ginga’s presence in their country—and especially her participation in Afro-Brazilian cultural celebrations—“represented the triumph of African traditions in the face of almost overwhelming attempts at European cultural domination” (Heywood 175). Numbering himself among Ginga’s grandchildren in an early expression of pan-African solidarity, Gama thus again reinforces the connection between his own work and that of earlier African traditions and demonstrates how his writing extends an already well-established culture of resistance.

With “Lá vai verso!” Gama declares his right to contribute to the white, aristocratic domain of Brazilian letters and previews both the novelty of his perspective and the subversive

⁹⁵ Ianni defines this further as “a visão paródica do mundo burguês” which develops “a partir da perspectiva dos setores subalternos; a partir da perspectiva crítica mais profunda do negro, escravo ou livre” (95).

intent of his poetry. Had Gama published no other works, “Lá vai verso!” could have provided future generations of Afro-Brazilian writers with a generous source of poetic inspiration, but fortunately, it is one among many works in Gama’s *Trovas* that set a new precedent for African themes in Brazilian poetry. In “Minha mãe,” Gama revises the Romantic ideal of the fair-haired maiden by extolling the beauty of a black mother figure, who he praises as “a mais linda pretinha” (145). His insistence upon the total compatibility of this woman’s blackness and her attractiveness predates “black is beautiful” rhetoric by a full century. Yet the beauty of the maternal figure in this poem has a tragic side, for the physical beauty of Gama’s mother figure is marred by the torture of her enslaved existence. The final stanza of the poem is particularly powerful as a critique of slavery with its depiction of the female subject praying desperately “aos pés de seu Criador” (147). As she prostrates herself before her God, the mother weeps bitterly, while, as the poetic voice describes:

As lagrimas que brotavam
 Eram perolas sentidas,
 Dos lindos olhos vertidas
 Na terra do captiveiro. (147)

Gama’s imaginative use of pearls in this stanza turns a standard trope of beauty on its head, converting the whiteness of the precious gem into a symbol of suffering. Once a symbol of purity and wealth, the pearl now stands as evidence of exploitation and greed, as opalescent tears flow from the eyes of the enslaved mother. Gama’s exaltation of black female beauty, as noted by both Pereira and Brookshaw, was uncommonly (but perhaps not surprisingly) enlightened for an age in which standards of beauty corresponded directly to gradients of whiteness, and his condemnation of slavery in “Minha mãe” is more than bold (877, 192). Yet perhaps the greatest

accomplishment of “Minha mãe” is its humanization of the black mother. With this, Gama disrupts the standard trope of blacks in Romantic literature, in which people of African descent were confined to three roles: heroic slave, suffering slave, or beautiful mulatta (Skidmore, *Black into White* 7). Gama’s mother figure, by contrast, is multi-dimensional: though she suffers, she is also remembered for her warmth and tender care for her children, as well as for her strong personality and her intellect. She therefore stands as a new paradigm for black womanhood in Brazil, admired for her physical beauty as well as for the character that she maintains despite her circumstances as a slave.

Alongside his clear denouncement of slavery in such poems as “Minha mãe,” Gama also condemned more subtle forms of racial discrimination present in Brazilian society, such as color prejudice. In this, he was among the first intellectuals to confront directly the topic of race in his writings. As Skidmore notes, even slavery’s most vociferous critics usually sidestepped the issue of race itself, preferring instead to base their arguments on more practical considerations, such as the need to maintain Brazil’s reputation among other “civilized” nations (“Racial Ideas and Social Policy in Brazil” 8). In poems such as “Sortimento de Gorras,” Gama ridicules the “masked” figures of Brazilian society, including charlatan doctors and idiotic academics, as well as mulattos who deny their black roots. “Sortimento” contains an entire stanza devoted to the latter group, which is comprised of these cutting lines:

Se mulatos de cor esbranquiçada,
 Já se julgam de origem refinada,
 E curvos à mania que domina,
 Desprezam a vovó que é preta-mina: –
 Não te espantes, ó Leitor, da novidade,

Pois tudo no Brasil é raridade! (23)

With this biting judgment, Gama quickly corrects those who would attempt to “pass” as whiter than their genealogy allows so as to reap the benefits enjoyed by those on the lighter end of Brazil’s color spectrum.⁹⁶ The idea that mulattos should instead embrace their blackness (or at least, recognize it) seems almost impossibly modern—too modern to attribute to Gama—although that is precisely the sentiment that the poet appears to promote here. Perhaps it is because Gama considered his own family lineage so important to his own identity that he admonished other African-descended people to do the same. In his letter to Mendonça, for example, Gama describes his mother as a leader of slave revolts, noting that “mais de uma vez, na Bahia, foi presa como suspeita de envolver-se em planos de insurreições de escravos” (qtd. in Schwarz 140).⁹⁷ His morally corrupt father is deliberately left out of the text. Later on, Gama’s emphasis on ancestry would be echoed by many other Afro-Brazilian writers; the literary tradition that arose with Trindade and Nascimento and reached its apex in the Quilombhoje movement of the 1970s and 80s carries this theme throughout nearly all of its key texts.

Gama’s bold celebration of blackness in the *Trovas* was an audacious protest against the racist ideologies of his day. Considering his cultural context and personal history, the poet ought

⁹⁶ Although the term “passing” has typically been reserved for discussions of race within the context of the United States, it appears to have been a *de facto* practice even in Latin American countries without a legislated color line. In both the poetry of Guillén—particularly in the poem “Mulata”—as well as in Gama’s lines here, we see phenologically white individuals of African descent attempting to deny their biological roots in order to integrate more seamlessly into white society. Abdias do Nascimento writes about this as a widespread phenomenon in his essay “Memories from Exile,” noting that “In the United States, whoever has a drop of African blood is considered African, even if his skin is light, hair straight, nose and lips fine like a European’s. In Brazil, the opposite is true. Many of those who have a drop of European blood want to be classed as *clarinho* and pass as whites” (64).

⁹⁷ Ferreira offers a helpful analysis of the tension between autobiography and performance in Gama’s letter to Mendonça in her 2008 article “Luiz Gama por Luiz Gama,” which studies the function of this communiqué as a public text. Since the publication of this letter Gama’s mother has become an almost mythical subject in Afro-Brazilian history, having inspired several creative works, including the poem “Mahin amanhã” by the Afro-Brazilian activist Miriam Alves, published in an edition of *Cadernos Negros* commemorating the centenary of abolition, as well as Ana Maria Gonçalves’s 2006 novel *Um defeito de cor*. Gama’s mother has also been the subject of some academic studies, including Aline Da Silva Gonçalves’s 2011 *Luiza Mahin: Uma rainha africana no Brasil* and Mouzar Benedito’s *Luis Gama: O libertador de escravos e sua mãe libertarian, Luiza Mahin*.

to be admired for his courageous ideological stance. When Gama was composing the *Trovas*, the abolitionist movement was practically nonexistent in Brazil; in fact, it would not be formalized until twenty years after the publication of Gama's works, when Joaquim Nabuco and other abolitionist leaders collectively began to organize for the legal prohibition of slavery.⁹⁸ For this reason, the first major biography of Gama written in the twentieth century honored him as “o precursor do abolicionismo” with its title: *O Precursor do abolicionismo no Brasil: Luiz Gama*.⁹⁹ Moreover, Gama's valorization of blackness wholly contradicts the biological determinism that was characteristic of his era. To argue for blacks' rights on the basis of their humanity, and to celebrate blackness itself, was revolutionary even within the nascent abolitionist movement. As Skidmore has explained, most who advocated the prohibition of slavery did so primarily on political and economic grounds, arguing that abolition would bolster Brazil's reputation among Enlightened European nations and modernize the country's economy. When they did argue the matter in moral terms, they employed raceless conceptual frameworks, premised upon Enlightenment definitions of liberty (Skidmore, *Black into White* 17). That Gama should discuss race so openly, and blackness so positively, then, testifies to the true revolutionary spirit of his work. His poetry insists upon the recognition of African elements within the concept of the Brazilian “nation”—still an idea very much in flux; as Martins writes:

num momento em que se defendia a idéia de buscar os elementos formadores da identidade nacional...é ele o único de nossos intelectuais a tomar uma atitude de equilíbrio, ao afirmar a participação negra, pelo uso de uma estética que privilegia

⁹⁸ Although the slave trade had been abolished in 1850 under pressure from Britain and other foreign powers, it was not until 1879 that a national politician first called for total and immediate abolition of slavery. That year proved to be a turning point in the fight against slavery; it was the year that Nabuco entered Parliament and Emancipation societies began convening in major cities (Skidmore, *Black into White* 16).

⁹⁹ Menucci's 1938 biography of Gama rescued the Romantic poet from obscurity precisely at a moment in time—in fact, the period studied in this dissertation—in which race relations were becoming increasingly polarized along white/black lines in Brazilian society. He was also the scholar responsible for unearthing Gama's famous letter to Lúcio de Mendonça in which the poet discusses his ancestry.

o elemento negro, e pela inserção em sua poesia de um significante acervo do léxico afro-brasileiro. (88)

Although the nationalist literary and cultural movements of the mid-nineteenth century did not elaborate his emphasis on the black contribution to Brazilianness—instead focusing on the figure of the Indian as the origin of Brazilian nationhood—Gama’s counterhegemonic poetry exercised significant cultural influence long after the author’s death in 1882. The work of later poets such as Trindade and Nascimento, informed both by Gama’s example and the ideologies of black transnationalism, revived this literary forefather’s militant spirit to advocate compellingly for the rights and recognition of their race.

Cruz e Souza’s Aesthetic of Double Consciousness

In affirming the humanity of the black subject, Luís Gama took a bold stance against the racist ideologies that facilitated the practice of slavery in Brazil until its final abolition in 1888. In the decades that followed mass manumission, Brazilian society experienced great structural changes, as well as a subtle shift in racial ideology. While all blacks now enjoyed basic liberties, they were still not considered “equal” in social status to whites. As the new century dawned, the racial prejudice that had been used to sanction slavery for centuries took on a new, more subtle form, which was expressed in the institution of “whitening” policies and attitudes.¹⁰⁰ George Reid Andrews describes how in Brazil, as in other countries in Latin America:

Scientific racism was immediately embraced by turn-of-the-century elites confronting the challenge of how to transform their ‘backward,’ underdeveloped nations into modern, ‘civilized’ republics. Such a transformation . . . would have

¹⁰⁰ This set of attitudes and practices is referred to as *embranquecimento* or *branqueamento* in Portuguese.

to be more than just political or economic; it would have to be racial as well.

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In 1922, a law prohibiting the immigration of blacks to Brazil was ratified by the national legislature, largely as a reaction to the perceived threat of African American immigration to the country. Two years later, a law limiting Asian immigration to no greater than five percent of the total population was passed. Meanwhile, both the Brazilian government and its foreign partners incentivized European immigration. As a result, sizable communities of Italians, Poles, and Germans—who had begun immigrating to Brazil in the mid-nineteenth century—flourished throughout the country. Brazil was not alone in its adoption of such policies—as already discussed with regard to Cuba in chapter two—and at the time, “whitening,” or *branqueamento*, was praised as a way forward for the nation.¹⁰¹

Many Afro-Brazilians suffered under the destructive influence of “whitening” ideologies, and nowhere is this more evident than in the tortured black psyche of the prominent turn-of-the-century writer Jõao da Cruz e Souza, the founder of the Symbolist movement in Brazil. Known as the “Black Swan,” Cruz e Souza was born to two freed slaves in 1861. Prior to his death in 1898 at a mere thirty-seven years of age, he authored three books of poetry.¹⁰² Histories of Brazilian literature have often painted him as a tragic figure, and for good reason. During his lifetime, Cruz e Souza’s poetry was almost universally reviled by critics, for, as David Haberly writes, Brazil’s literary elite could not accept a black man as a serious artist (105). Furthermore, Cruz e Souza’s Symbolist aesthetic contrasted sharply with the Parnassian vogue that dominated

¹⁰¹ Not all accepted this view, of course, and there were a number of prominent Brazilian intellectuals who voiced their opposition to policies of *branqueamento*, including Manoel Bonfim and Edgar Roquette-Pinto. See Molina’s article for an analysis of their critiques.

¹⁰² Four additional volumes of Cruz e Souza’s poems were published after his death. See Prandini’s 2011 biography of the Afro-Brazilian writer for a full bibliography of Cruz e Souza’s publications, including his poems and newspaper articles.

Brazil's literary scene at the turn of the century. As Prandini documents in her biography of the poet, Cruz e Souza's employment of the themes and techniques of French Symbolists such as Baudelaire, Verlaine, Mallarmé, and Rimbaud—though above all, Baudelaire—proved too forward thinking to enjoy popularity during his era. At every turn, the “Black Swan” found himself on the defensive, fighting for recognition from a social and intellectual environment that consistently rejected him and his work. His personal tribulations produced a literary œuvre that wrestles with the issue of race not only thematically, but also aesthetically, as Bastide writes that the poet “metamorfoseou seu protesto racial em revolta estética, seu isolamento étnico em isolamento do poeta, a barreira dos filisteus contra os artistas puros” (qtd. in Bosi 247). Cruz e Souza's pursuit of technical innovation set an important precedent for successive generations of Afro-Brazilian poets, including Trindade, who would also seek ways to address the subject of race through new forms of poetry.

The psychic crisis that Cruz e Souza suffered as a black man in a society that idealized whiteness can be studied in great detail in his poem “Emparedado,” featured in the collection *Evocações*, which was published shortly after his death in 1898. The title of the poem refers to the poet's social dilemma and evokes the English idiom “between a rock and a hard place,” an apt, if inelegant, way of expressing its sentiment. The theme of Cruz e Souza's “Emparedado” is the hopeless state of being trapped between desiring social acceptance (symbolized by whiteness) and remaining authentic to his “true” self (expressed in his African genes). Written in prose, “Emparedado” is a crystallization of many of the technical elements that characterize Cruz e Souza's poetry, such as accumulation and synesthesia, as well as the themes that span his work, including Christological and Satanic metaphors, themes of darkness and light, and

representations of sight versus blindness.¹⁰³ Above all, however, it is an *ars poética*, a meditation on the poet's relationship to his work and how this shapes the form of his writing. In "Emparedado," Cruz e Souza engages directly with the "whitening" discourses of his day, weighing their implications for both his own art and black art more generally. The defining characteristic of the work is its internal inconsistency; it vacillates between soaring optimism and abject pessimism regarding the creative potential of black artists, including Cruz e Souza himself. Critics have attempted to explain this cognitive dissonance—which is consistent with Cruz e Souza's broader textual corpus—in a number of ways, with most attributing it to the racial trauma that the poet experienced.¹⁰⁴ However, this is not the only way to understand the difficult text that is "Emparedado." Indeed, it may also be read complementarily—and productively—as a brilliant exploration of double consciousness, the phenomenon articulated by W.E.B. Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk*.¹⁰⁵ In reading "Emparedado" through this framework, one gains a deeper appreciation of Cruz e Souza's struggle to negotiate his membership within two separate communities: the Afro-Brazilian community and the almost exclusively white community of the Brazilian intellectual elite.

¹⁰³ A more complete analysis of the themes of "Emparedado," as well as a review of the scholarship already published on this poem, may be found in Cesco's 2011 article "Cruz e Souza: Emparedado em seu poema."

¹⁰⁴ The apparent self-contradictions of Cruz e Souza's work have generated decades of scholarly debate on whether or not the artist possessed an "assimilationist" view of race. Not only his direct statements on race (as in "Emparedado"), but also his symbolism, which exploits a black/white color dichotomy, are key elements of consideration in this debate. See Haberly, Pereira, Fonseca, and Bosi's article "Poesia versus racismo" for different perspectives on the issue.

¹⁰⁵ I reproduce here Du Bois's definition of "double consciousness" as written in *Souls*, joining with the thousands of other scholars who have found his ideas useful in their own work. Du Bois writes that "the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, —a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, —an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (2-3). Though Du Bois, of course, wrote as an African American subjected to a strict color line, Mark Sawyer has argued convincingly that the framework of double consciousness is equally applicable in Latin America, even when considering the region's comparatively more fluid racial structures. See his 2005 article "Du Bois's Double Consciousness versus Latin American Exceptionalism."

In the first part of “Emparedado,” Cruz e Souza deconstructs biological determinism’s proposed connection between biology and temperament, refuting the idea that blacks were constitutionally unqualified to create art. He suggests that centuries of cultural domination have, in fact, uniquely equipped the darker races to become cultural innovators. Like a piece of carbon compacted into a diamond (another image evoked in the title of “Emparedado,” with its emphasis on social pressure), these peoples have been made purer by their struggle, becoming:

temperamentos [. . .] limpos de mancha, de mácula, puramente lavados para as extremas perfectibilidades, virgens, são e impetuosos para as extremas fecundações, com a virtude eloqüente de trazerem, ainda sangradas, frescas, úmidas das terras germinais do Idealismo, as raízes vivas e profundas, os germens?? check legítimos, ingênitos, do Sentimento. (5)

Despite the repetition of stereotypical images of Africa in these lines—Africa the fertile paradise, Africa the land of hot-blooded warriors—Cruz e Souza’s basic argument here is one that roundly protests cultural and intellectual prejudice against blacks. It suggests that African-descended people are not—as racist theories alleged—mentally and physically inferior to whites, but that they are, in fact, superior, and not despite, but precisely *because* of the long history of injustices enacted against them. *This* is the truth that the (white) elite has overlooked, Cruz e Souza claims: “a lei secreta, que escapara à percepção de filósofos e doutos” (6). Following his logic, blacks’ purification through suffering has made them distinctly open to the spirit of Art, which operates only in such a temperament as that which “se desprendesse de tudo, abrisse vãos, não ficasse nem continuativo nem restrito, dentro de vários moldes consagrados que tomaram já a significação representativa de *clichés* oficiais e antiquados” (7). Cruz e Souza creates a contrast between this open temperament and the closed mentality of his Parnassian contemporaries,

whom he criticizes in “Emparedado” as “mediócras” trapped in bourgeois frameworks, who are capable only of reproducing conformist ideals in their work (7).

Previewed in these lines is the argument that Cruz e Souza advances more systematically, if obliquely, in the second half of “Emparedado”—the idea that blacks’ suffering is itself a creative force that can achieve the redemption of the race.¹⁰⁶ In this part of the prose poem, Cruz e Souza proposes a theory of the artist as the “supercivilizado dos sentidos,” applying a vocabulary of Social Darwinism to his analysis of art (9). He employs this lexicon, however, with the goal of disproving its presuppositions; he condemns artists who have contributed to the “hegemonia das raças” and instead exalts those whom he calls “os Reveladores da Dor infinita” (10). The value of these creative types, he argues, lies in their inimitable ability to “transcendentalizar a Dor, tirar da Dor a grande Significação eloqüente e não amesquinhá-la e desvirginá-la” (10). As the remaining lines of the poem reveal, Cruz e Souza is well-acquainted with such “Dor;” the autobiographical references of this portion of “Emparedado” reveal the extent to which he himself has suffered from racial prejudice and the rejection of his poetry. Addressing his personal detractors in the form of an apostrophe, he accuses them of being incapable of appreciating his genius:

O que tu podes só, é agarrar com frenesi ou com ódio a minha Obra dolorosa e solitária e lê-la e detestá-la e revirar-lhe as folhas, truncar-lhe as páginas, enodoar-lhe a castidade branca dos períodos, profanar-lhe o tabernáculo da linguagem...

(12)

¹⁰⁶ The internal contradictions of the poem are once again evidenced when one considers that these assertions follow two paragraphs in which Cruz e Souza has just insisted upon the irrelevance of race as a topic of study and has argued that the evaluation of his artistic endeavors should be completely divorced from considerations of his race (8).

Cruz e Souza's transition from using the direct object "a" in the first lines of this section—referring to his "Obra dolorosa"—to the indirect object "lhe" achieves the personification of the poet's work, demonstrating the intimate connection between the writer and his material. It is not simply his poetry, but Cruz e Souza's very self that has been violated, torn apart, and profaned as these lines describe.

In another section of "Emparedado" that follows closely after the above cited, the poet reverses his point of view, now imagining himself as one of his own critics. This excerpt reveals the depth of Cruz e Souza's double consciousness, as he parrots the racist rhetoric used against him, arguing:

Tu és dos de Cam, maldito, réprobo, anatematizado! Falas em Abstrações, em Formas, em Espiritualidades, em Requisites, em Sonhos! Como se tu fosses das raças de ouro e da aurora, se viesses dos arianos, depurado por todas as civilizações, célula por célula, tecido por tecido, cristalizado o teu ser num verdadeiro cadinho de idéias, de sentimentos — direito, perfeito, das perfeições oficiais dos meios convencionalmente ilustres! (13)

In these lines, the poet employs his own "second-sight" to delineate the arguments that have been previously used to denigrate him; he adopts the ideology of his detractors in emphasizing the cultural and artistic supremacy of the (white) European tradition and in referencing the curse of Ham as a justification for his own subaltern status as an artist and a human being.¹⁰⁷ These lines reveal the extent to which the ideal of "whitening" and its foundational racial prejudice have deformed the poet's own self-image.

¹⁰⁷ Du Bois himself recognized the unique predicament of the black artist, writing in *Souls* that "The innate love of harmony and beauty that set the ruder souls of his people a-dancing and a-singing raised but confusion and doubt in the soul of the black artist; for the beauty revealed to him was the soul-beauty of a race which his larger audience despised, and he could not articulate the message of another people" (4).

However damaged, Cruz e Souza does not admit absolute defeat at this point in “Emparedado.” Once again shifting his perspective, in the following lines, he imagines an alternate reality, one in which he is accepted racially and as an artist. The subsequent five paragraphs of “Emparedado” proclaim Africa as the source of the poet’s creative energy, dignifying it, and by extension, the members of the African diaspora, as legitimate artists, just as Cruz e Souza had suggested in the earlier sections of this extensive poem. This is the Africa of Cruz e Souza’s soul, the “África virgem...com argilas funestas para fundir a Epopéia suprema da Dor do Futuro, para fecundar talvez os grandes tercetos tremendos de algum novo e majestoso Dante negro!” (13). These lines foresee the ultimate triumph of black art as a tradition forged *through* oppression, not cowed by it—a perspective that Cruz e Souza shares with his literary predecessor, Luís Gama. This idea is also extended in the work of later writers, who sought to dignify their own work as art refined by their ancestors’ experiences of slavery and racial oppression. Although “Emparedado” concludes pessimistically, with Cruz e Souza doubting that any such tradition could actually triumph under the racial conditions of turn-of-the-century Brazil, his attempts to distinguish Africa as a legitimate source of cultural inspiration should be recognized. Additionally, instead of reading the poet’s double perspective in “Emparedado” as detrimental to the work’s overall coherency and argument, his deliberate self-contradiction can be understood as part of an aesthetic of double consciousness. Adopting this perspective shifts the focus of “Emparedado” from racial trauma to the potentially revelatory effects of such trauma. It also introduces the idea of aesthetic innovation as a mechanism for expressing—and overcoming—racial discrimination, as well as a way of positively asserting one’s blackness.

Lima Barreto's Intersectional Texts in the First Republic

If Luís Gama's writing emphasized the human complexity of the black subject, and Cruz e Souza's writing, the complexity of the black subject's position within a hostile society, then Lima Barreto's work must be appreciated for the way in which it demonstrates another level of complexity related to black subjectivity in Brazil: the intersectionality of race with class and gender. Writing in the first decades of the twentieth century, Afonso Henriques de Lima Barreto lived in an era in which the promises of abolition had been proven unfulfilled, and his unique life circumstances made him aware of the other societal forces that were affecting the status of blacks in Brazil.

Born twenty years after Cruz e Souza, in 1881, Lima Barreto lived in an era Talia Guzmán-González describes as a “watershed” moment of transition for blacks in Brazil (204). The writer's parents experienced this great upheaval as eyewitnesses to abolition and the transition to a fully free society. Born himself into slavery, Barreto's mixed-race father worked as a typographer following his emancipation. Although she died when Barreto was very young, the writer's mother, a free black woman, was a schoolteacher. As a young man, Barreto was forced to leave his studies to support his family following his father's mental breakdown, which left the elder Barreto in an institution. He thus began his career as a journalist, honing his powers of observation in the newspaper industry before applying them to his future career as a novelist. During his lifetime, Barreto produced five novels and many short stories and *crônicas*. Unlike Cruz e Souza, he was relatively popular with the public, though not with Brazil's literary elite, some of whom found themselves ridiculed in his satires.¹⁰⁸ His bestselling literary debut, the

¹⁰⁸ Like Barreto, Luís Gama also enjoyed the broad circulation of his work, at least initially. His book of poetry earned the publication of a second edition in 1861, two years after its first publication. Soon after, however, Getulino's book found itself “colocado à margem do canone literário brasileiro” and it received little critical

novel *Recordações do Escrivão Isaías Caminha* (1909), alienated his former colleagues at the prominent newspaper *Correio de Manhã*, due to its extremely critical view of the Brazilian publishing market. Following its publication, Barreto was forced to work as a freelancer because of the bridges he had burned (Oliveira-Monte, “A Brazilian Pan-Africanist” 86).

Though his work was relegated to obscurity immediately following his death in 1922, by the 1940s, Barreto’s perspicacious representations of marginalized communities in Brazilian society had newly piqued scholars’ interest, and as Aidoo notes, his writing has recently enjoyed a wave of renewed attention from academics (Introduction 1). While early scholarship on Barreto focused primarily on the treatment of race and class in his novels, more contemporary studies have analyzed his works’ commentary on the issue of gender as well. Some, particularly Barreto’s earliest critics, understood these themes as mutually exclusive, though I argue that it is ultimately more useful to examine them together. By reading the ways in which Barreto represents various systems of dominance and their intersections in Brazilian society, there emerges a more informed sense of his contribution to Afro-Brazilian literature and in particular, the ways in which his work prefigures the socially conscious writing of Trindade and Nascimento.

One text in which Barreto’s prescient—and perhaps unconscious—understanding of intersectionality is on display in his novel *Clara dos Anjos*, which the author finished shortly before dying in 1922, though it was not published until 1948. One of Rio de Janeiro’s squalid suburbs is the setting for the story, which chronicles the downfall of a poor and naïve young *mulata*, Clara dos Anjos. The narrative revolves around the white, economically mobile Cassi Jones, who seduces the title character. After impregnating Clara, Cassi abandons her, forcing her

attention for the next 100 years, until the 1970s, when the artists and critics of the Quilombhoje movement resurrected it as a foundational text of Afro-Brazilian literature (Regino Paulino 18).

to seek recompense with Cassi's family, who also rejects her. Critics of Barreto's work have unanimously identified the themes of race and class as central to *Clara dos Anjos*, though they differ on which of these is the novel's primary focus.¹⁰⁹ One scholar who helped to establish a class-conscious reading of the work—subsequently influencing decades of scholarship on Barreto—is Vera Regina Teixeira. In her 1980 article on *Clara dos Anjos*, Teixeira contrasts the early drafts of Barreto's work, to which she attributes “uma determinante fatalidade de cor,” to the author's later revisions, which she reads as less focused on the issue of race and more on the constraints of the class system (49). Suggesting that Barreto's personal experiences in the time between the novel's first and final drafts—particularly his 1914 stay in a mental institution—broadened his understanding of social discrimination, she writes that the published draft “presente com lucidez que a condição social e a consciência de classes são mais insuperáveis e aniquiladoras [than race]” (46). Teixeira's conclusions are generally consistent with earlier scholarship on Barreto, which tended to stress the author's attention to the subject of class.¹¹⁰ Other scholars, however, opposed this perspective, and instead focused on discourses of race in Barreto's novel, with David Brookshaw singling it out as the first modern text of Brazilian literature to recognize racial discrimination and address it openly (195). As Marc Hertzman has helpfully indicated in his recent scholarship on Barreto's work, however, these themes need not be treated as mutually exclusive. Instead, Hertzman surmises that, “The title character of *Clara*

¹⁰⁹ Traditionally, criticism of Barreto has not dealt with the author's problematization of gender in his novels, although a new generation of scholars is calling attention to this issue. Chapters by Renata Wasserman and Earl Fitz in Aidoo and Silva's 2014 anthology on Barreto read the author's treatment of race and sex in comparison with literature from the United States, while Luciana Borges's work from 2011, “Personagens femininas mulatas no universo ficcional de Lima Barreto,” studies Barreto's portrayal of mulattas in the novels *Um especialista* (1904) and *Clara dos Anjos*.

¹¹⁰ According to Hertzman, a number of the author's contemporaries, namely the Marxist critic-activists Octavio Brandão and Astrojildo Pereira, both early leaders of the Partido Comunista Brasileira, read Barreto's work as a revolutionary commentary on economic structures of Brazil. Gilberto Freyre's introduction to Barreto's posthumously published memoirs, *Diário Íntimo* (1954), also encouraged such readings of Barreto's novels (191, 187).

dos Anjos is marginalized and abused because of her race *and* her social class, the same combination that Freyrean and Marxist scholars went to such lengths to dismiss” (194).¹¹¹ This argument points to the value of intersectionality as a tool for appreciating the deep complexity of Barreto’s work, as well as its unique prefiguring of later interpretations of social inequality.

Readings of *Clara dos Anjos* that are attentive to both race *and* class help to ward against interpretations of the novel that would—unconsciously or not—perpetuate false notions of Brazil’s racial democracy—the very paradigm of race relations that was coming into vogue in the decade in which Barreto composed his final draft of this novel. Though the term racial democracy is often associated with Gilberto Freyre’s paradigm-establishing work *Casa-grande e senzala*, published in 1933, however, Freyre was not the first to articulate this idea, and in fact, the term never appears in that study.¹¹² As the scientific racism that had characterized race relations in turn-of-the-century Brazil was gradually discredited, a new understanding of Brazilian society crystallized. Proponents of racial democracy glorified Brazil as a nation where opportunity was equally available to all, regardless of race or color. They pointed to the achievements of exceptional mulattos—mulattos like Lima Barreto himself, as well as his contemporary, the great Brazilian writer Machado de Assis—whose inclusion within the Brazilian elite, no matter how hard-won or tenuous, supposedly signaled the lack of a color line

¹¹¹ To be fair, these critics could not have used the vocabulary of intersectionality in their analyses of Barreto’s work, as this framework was not articulated until the legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw began publishing her work in the late 1980s. Her 1989 article cited in the bibliography of this dissertation is considered the seminal theorization of intersectionality.

¹¹² Antonio Sérgio Alfredo Guimarães provides a sorely needed history of this term in his chapter entitled “Racial Democracy,” included in the anthology *Imagining Brazil*. He dates the first usage of “racial democracy” to a seminar given by Arthur Ramos in 1941, and his study of the intellectual production of the era shows that it was primarily Ramos, along with Roger Bastide and Charles Wagley, who popularized the phrase (119). Although Freyre did write in the 1930s of Brazil’s *social* democracy, he did not use the term racial democracy until 1962, in a speech intended to criticize Abdias do Nascimento and other black activists who had aligned themselves with the Negritude movement (124).

to obstruct the economic and social success of racial minorities.¹¹³ The myth of racial democracy prolonged the fantasy of Brazil's racial paradise, the view that had been especially popular in the first decades of the twentieth century and—as already discussed in chapter one—that seduced even some leading figures of black transnationalism. Both the idea of a racial paradise and that of racial democracy essentially erase race as a category of marginalization by insisting upon its social irrelevance. It is for this reason that it is so essential to recognize the dual criticisms of race *and* class in Barreto's work, for to discuss *Clara dos Anjos* in economic terms only is to perpetuate the idea that race is an irrelevant factor in Brazilian society, which is precisely the false ideology that racial democracy relies upon. By featuring a main character that is triply marginalized, Barreto reveals his understanding of a phenomenon to which most of his contemporaries were blind.

This unique element of Barreto's work is significant in two ways. First, it previews the mentality that would be further developed by black transnationalist movements in Brazil in the decades following his death in 1922. As will be made clear in the subsequent section of this chapter, the forms of black transnationalism that were most well received in Brazil in the first half of the twentieth century were not those that sought to unite blacks around the element of race and race alone—those would only prove effective in later decades. Instead, both conservative and liberal activists capitalized on intersectionality, seeking to unite Afro-Brazilians on the basis of not just their racial identities, but other values as well. Second, Barreto's class

¹¹³ Brazilian elites often argued for Brazil's "racial democracy" by contrasting their country's more fluid social system with the strict segregationist approach of the United States. The absence of Jim Crow-type laws, it was thought, indicated Brazil's acceptance of blacks—despite glaring and consistent evidence of racial discrimination in Brazilian society. With the publication of Freyre's *Casa-grande*, the argument for Brazilian racial exceptionalism was further advanced through the sociologist's promotion of Lusotropicalism, which explained Brazil's relative social fluidity as the result of the unique cultural practices and history of its Portuguese colonizers. Skidmore notes that while Freyre's book *could* have been used to promote a more racially inclusive society, in reality, "it served to reinforce the whitening ideal by showing graphically that the (primarily white) elite had gained valuable traits from its intimate contact with the African (and Indigenous to a lesser extent) component" ("Racial Ideas and Social Policy in Brazil" 22).

consciousness directly prefigures elements of Trindade's work, with regards to in the way in which these authors sought to deconstruct the myth of racial democracy through a critique that accounted for Brazilian blacks' double marginalization. Lima Barreto's work, especially *Clara dos Anjos*, thus represents an essential ideological precursor to the writing of this influential Afro-Brazilian author in particular.

From Outliers to Brothers: The Creation of a Generation of Black-Conscious Writers

The black authors who established the *quilombo* tradition of literature in Brazil were truly exceptional figures, successful in spite of their social circumstances and pioneering in their critiques of racist discourse in Brazil. The contributions that Gama, Cruz e Souza, and Barreto made to Afro-Brazilian literature were honored and extended by future generations of black writers, including Solano Trindade and Abdias do Nascimento. Some of the elements of their writing were continued directly in Trindade's poetry. For example, like Gama, Trindade devotes significant attention to the theme of ancestry in his writing, using it as a foundational aspect of black subjectivity. Additionally, like Cruz e Souza, Trindade experimented with different forms for his work, ultimately choosing to express himself through a popular aesthetic that reflected his ideological commitments. Finally, like Barreto, Trindade's writing analyzes the relationship between race and class. In fact, Trindade, who called himself "o poeta do povo," took seriously his role as a representative of both the Afro-Brazilian community and the working class. Abdias do Nascimento too, contributed to the *quilombo* tradition, particularly in the way in which he used his creative work to combat the contemporary struggles of Afro-Brazilian communities. In his work as the director of the TEN, as well as in his academic writing and his authorship of

plays, Nascimento acted as a twentieth-century reincarnation of Luís Gama, combining advocacy work with literary creation on behalf of black Brazilians.

Beginning their careers in the 1940s, unlike their Afro-Brazilian literary predecessors, Trindade and Nascimento enjoyed a social and cultural milieu that was notably receptive to their ideas, as the following section of this chapter will demonstrate. Writing in an environment that was distinct even from that of Lima Barreto—despite the relatively short chronological distance between them—Trindade and Nascimento’s understanding of Afro-Brazilian subjectivity was informed by black transnationalist ideologies that were circulating throughout North and South America, as well as Europe. These ideologies were processed through two major movements in Brazilian society: the first Brazilian Black Rights Movement and the cultural movement of *modernismo*. With this in mind, the following section of this chapter explores black transnationalism’s incursions into Brazilian consciousness through these two movements, as a way of contextualizing Trindade and Nascimento’s work within their unique cultural milieu. Understanding better the ways in which black transnationalism influenced Brazilian paradigms of racial identity allows for a broader appreciation of how it was that Trindade and Nascimento could use their own writing to explore transnational black subjectivities as models of blackness that were distinct from the national—and nationalistic—paradigm of *mestiçagem*.

“O Negro Revoltado”: Brazil’s First Black Rights Movement

The First Wave: Cultural and Intellectual Movements for Black Rights

The 1920s and 30s saw the advent of the first Brazilian Black Rights Movement, which brought with it an increased emphasis on Afro-Brazilian racial consciousness and a critique of *mestiçagem*’s idealized race blindness. This movement was connected with—and adopted many

of the same strategies of—black transnationalist movements in other countries. At its start, it was largely characterized by “racial uplift” ideology—more Booker T. Washington than W.E.B. Du Bois—although it became increasingly radical in later years, as the decades stretched on from the 1930s into the 50s. Like black transnationalism on the whole, however, it was also characterized by internal heterogeneity, following Edwards’s paradigm of “difference within unity.” These differences were captured in the diverse political campaigns and cultural initiatives that emerged during the Brazilian Black Rights Movement. The movement also laid the groundwork for future racial mobilization in the nation and broadened the practice and reception of African-influenced art beyond the small handful of individuals previously discussed. Collectively, participants in the Brazilian Black Rights Movement accomplished three major objectives: the establishment of an autonomous black press; the creation of black civic and cultural organizations; and the foundation of black political organizations within Brazil. These race-conscious institutions served to inspire black pride and introduce a discourse of racial identity that was distinct from that of *mestiçagem*, and which later activists capitalized upon in their own work, particularly in the 1970s and 80s.

As in other countries, such as the United States and England, one of the first major achievements of the black consciousness movement in Brazil was the development of a vibrant black press, which was particularly active in São Paulo. In the pages of the magazines, newspapers, and cultural reviews published by Afro-Brazilian intellectuals, readers encountered the debate about blackness worked out in both national and diasporic contexts, as these publications reported on race relations at home and abroad.¹¹⁴ Although the black press had its

¹¹⁴ To be sure, the black intellectual elite of Brazil was disproportionately represented in the readership of these publications, as the literacy rate among Afro-Brazilians was too low in this era to sustain wide circulation. According to data from the Brazilian National Census collected by George Reid Andrews, in 1940, 29.3% of

start in the 1910s in Brazil, it did not have a significant presence in Brazilian intellectual life until the 1920s.¹¹⁵ By 1930, there were at least 31 black publications circulating in São Paulo alone (Domingues, “Movimento Negro Brasileiro” 104). One of these that best seems to embody black transnationalist ideals was the monthly magazine *O Clarim: o jornal da mocidade negra*.¹¹⁶ The editorial staff of *O Clarim* declared the mission of this publication as:

Refletir o embrionismo do espírito [negro] e preparal-lo [sic] para a conquista soberba e sublime de nm [sic] ideal, iluminando essa mocidade esplendida e viçosa na educação do intelecto, impenindo-o [sic] para o bem tendo á [sic] frente Juvenal: ‘Mens sana in corpore sano’, praticando a sã política da Concórdia, da Tranquilidade, da Paz. (1)

Further reinforced by *O Clarim*’s content, this stated objective of the intellectual education of Brazil’s black youth clearly included the development of their racial consciousness. The editorial choices of this magazine appear to be aligned with the ideology of black transnationalism, covering many of the same issues and questions that other black newspapers across the globe confronted in this time period. The second issue of *O Clarim*, for example, from March of 1935, features a front-page article entitled “O Caso da Abyssinia e o mundo negro,” which applauds the efforts of African Americans fighting for the preservation of the Ethiopian empire. It locates the center of the new black consciousness in North America where, according to the author, African Americans had developed a unique racial consciousness that was forged in the “luctas

“pardos” and 20.9% of “pretos” were literate. By 1950, these rates had increased to 31.1 and 26.7% respectively—a definite improvement, but still woefully low (Andrews, “Racial Inequality in Brazil and the United States” 244).

¹¹⁵ Anamaria Fagundes and Flavio Gomes provide a history of these earliest black publications in their 2007 article “Por uma ‘Antologia dos negros modernos.’”

¹¹⁶ Kim Butler writes that the most influential Afro-Brazilian periodicals of the 1920s were *O Clarim d’Alvorada* and *Progresso*; in the 1930s, the journal *A Voz da Raça*, published by the organization known as the Frente Negra Brasileira, occupied the chief post of influence (96). Two theses have been written by historians of Brazil regarding the construction of an Afro-Brazilian communitarian identity in the pages of *O Clarim d’Alvorada*: the first is a Master’s Thesis by Flávio Thales Ribeiro Francisco, which focuses on *O Clarim d’Alvorada*’s reporting on racial activism in the United States and Africa, and the second text is a Master’s Thesis by Marcos Cerdeira entitled “Black Honor: Belonging and the Construction of Identity among the Writers of *O Clarim d’Alvorada*.”

[sic] de toda a sorte de segregações” and which, as a result, “toma vanguarda das inspirações e defesa [sic] da raça, tema a sua orbita de centralização [sic] na América do Norte” (1). The same issue of the magazine includes an untitled front-page editorial by an anonymous female writer who laments racial discrimination in Brazil and calls upon her fellow black women to rectify it by acting “como uma heroína [sic] do passado, uma Luiza Malin [Mahin] e outras mulheres que se evidenciaram na história” (1). Such articles suggest the importance of blacks not only within Brazilian society, but also as members of a widespread community of black peoples.

The editorial choices of other Afro-Brazilian newspapers, too, fostered a sense of Brazil’s belonging within the African diaspora. Chapter one, for example, discusses in detail the magazine *Quilombo*’s strong support of Negritude politics and its connections with black Francophone publishing networks. However, there were also other Afro-Brazilian periodicals whose contents purposefully inscribed Brazil within the diaspora. An examination of some of the newspapers preserved in the São Paulo Municipal Archives reveals precisely how this was achieved. The first issue of the Paulista magazine *Tribuna Negra* (1935), for example, featured a column of African American literature published in translation, including poems by Countee Cullen, with promises to include poems by Langston Hughes and Claude McKay in future editions (Almeida 3). A January 1946 issue of the magazine *Senzala* included a column entitled “É bom notar,” which provided readers with demographic facts on the Afro-Latin population of Spanish America, as well as an article about the state songs of the United States, which emphasized the black authorship of the state songs of Kentucky, Florida, and Virginia (9, 25). In 1954, the Protestant-run journal *Cruzada Cultural* published an article comparing the racial resistance movements of the U.S. and Brazil and criticizing Brazilian blacks for not demanding a higher status in their own country, the way that African Americans did (Silva Oliveira 4).

Collectively, these examples reveal the way in which Afro-Brazilian publications acted as, in the words of Edwards, “the ‘spindles and joints’ of a print culture that aims to construct the ‘fact’ of blackness, that attempts to intervene in conditions of great suffering and social upheaval, that strains to be ‘actively equal’ to the exigencies of crisis and advocacy” (“The Practice of Diaspora” 36). In their editorial choices focused on the situations of blacks in other countries, Afro-Brazilian newspapers and magazines served as a conduit for both the theorizing of black transnationalism and its practice. As they broadened their readers’ perspectives beyond the confines of Brazil and the experience of blackness there, these publications also laid the groundwork for cultural and political mobilizations that would advance the black transnationalist agenda.

While Afro-Brazilian newspapers and magazines worked to foster racial consciousness via the written word, civic and cultural organizations within Brazil sought to promote black pride through other mechanisms. The most significant of these was the Centro Cívico Palmares, founded in São Paulo in 1926 and named for the famous *quilombo* located in the state of Alagoas. Although black social societies—whose membership was typically reserved for the Afro-Brazilian elite—had been in existence since the turn of the century, the Centro distinguished itself from these in both its mission and its work. As Lucindo writes, “O Centro nasceu já preocupado em não ter o mesmo destino de outras instituições,” and it consistently advanced a more intellectual and more politicized agenda than many other black organizations of its era (217). Its membership of approximately 100 individuals included some of the most intellectually and politically influential Afro-Brazilians of the early twentieth century: Arlindo and Isaltino Veiga dos Santos, the future leaders of the militant nationalist group the Frente Negra Brasileira; José Correia Leite and Jayme de Aguiar, the editors and publishers of *O Clarim*

d'Alvorada; and the conservative writer and activist Lino Guedes (Butler 103). Together, the members of the Centro Cívico Palmares extended their influence in many directions: they organized secondary school courses for Afro-Brazilian students, established a theater group and medical clinic, and built relationships with politicians (Butler 103). Other civic and cultural organizations would imitate this model elsewhere in Brazil; Trindade himself established the Centro de Cultura Afro-Brasileira in Recife in 1934, for example, and once transplanted to São Paulo, worked alongside Nascimento to create the theater group known as the Teatro Experimental do Negro (TEN), which presented its first public performance in 1944. Later on, Trindade would work with his wife Margarida and the sociologist Edison Carneiro to establish the socially conscious Teatro Popular Brasileiro, which toured Europe in the 1950s.

During these same decades, Brazilian activists and scholars also organized independent conferences on race. Trindade himself was involved in the establishment of two important cultural conferences convened in the Brazilian Northeast in the mid-1930s—the first and second Congresso Afro-Brasileiro. The I Congresso Afro-Brasileiro, hosted in Recife in 1934, was spearheaded by Gilberto Freyre, and the second was organized in Salvador in 1937. In a review prefacing the published proceedings of the first Congresso, African American activist Nancy Cunard called the event “a wonderful affair, something quite unimaginable, from its complex interracial angles, in either Europe or America.” The proceedings of the congress reveal the diverse academic interests of its attendees and presenters, as well as the extent to which these interests were connected with black transnationalist movements outside of Brazil. The modernist writer Mário de Andrade’s talk, for example, a sociolinguistic study of the word *calunga* in Afro-Brazilian folklore, cited *Los negros brujos*, by the Cuban sociologist Fernando Ortiz, as a source in its bibliography. A presentation given by the American anthropologist Melville J.

Herkovitz—who is largely credited with establishing the academic disciplines of African and African American Studies in the United States—was entitled “A arte do [sic] bronza e do panno em Dahomé.” Finally, Edison Carneiro’s presentation entitled “Situação do negro no Brasil” applied a Black Bolshevik framework to the problem of racial discrimination in Brazil, claiming that an entire superstructure was built on the backs of black Brazilian workers and that this economic system is what has produced the clash between blacks and whites in Brazil. Carneiro excluded the white worker entirely from his analysis, which concludes with the following statement in support of instituting the Black Belt Thesis in Brazil: “Sómente a sociedade comunista, que reconhece ás [sic] raças oprimidas [sic] até meso [sic] o direito de se organizarem em Estado independente, conseguirá realizal-a [sic], abolindo a propriedade privada e acabando, de uma vez por todas, com a exploração do homem pelo homem” (241). Reviewed collectively, the presentations given at the I Congresso reveal the widespread intellectual interchange that was occurring between Brazilian scholars and their foreign contemporaries, as well as the extent to which Brazilian scholars reproduced the rhetoric and practices of black transnationalism in their work.¹¹⁷ Future conferences, such as the Congresso do Negro Brasileiro, organized by Nascimento in 1950, built upon these initial efforts to elevate racial consciousness within Brazil’s academic community.

Right, Left, and Black: Political Mobilizations for Racial Rights from 1930 to 1950

As in other nations where black transnationalism flourished, the social and intellectual movements that served as key elements of Brazil’s first Black Rights Movement were followed

¹¹⁷ Nascimento would later criticize the first and second Congresses as events that were led primarily by whites; in his autobiographical essay “Memories from Exile” he declares that at these conferences, “it was the pomp and circumstance of white scholars and scientists that prevailed. They organized and directed everything, while African Brazilians were displayed merely as ‘ethnographic material,’ the object of research” (37).

by explicitly political campaigns to advance the civil rights of African-descended people. In Brazil, the two most prominent of these campaigns were: one, the nationalist campaign launched by the Frente Negra Brasileira (FNB) and its political party, and two, the socialist campaign for racial rights led by the Partido Comunista Brasileiro. The contrasting right- and left-wing agendas of these organizations typified Brazilian politics of this time period, which, as Skidmore writes, became polarized under the leadership of the Brazilian dictator-cum-president, Getúlio Vargas (*Politics in Brazil* 21). The FNB, established in 1931, was transnationalist in design, but purely nationalist in its agenda. It operated in ways similar to Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), and was founded on the "dual objectives of continuing social improvement and using social protest to advance the cause of the Afro-Brazilian community" (Mitchell 130). The FNB was essentially conservative in ideology, promoting ideas of racial uplift, and many of its tactics were variations on the activities of earlier black nationalist groups such as the UNIA.¹¹⁸ Education was a critical component of the group's agenda, including both basic academic instruction and moral education (Domingues, "Um 'templo de luz,'" 523). Such instruction was meted out during the FNB's Sunday meetings, known as the *dominguera*. As Mitchell testifies, the *dominguera* was critical to the success of the organization, as it provided a chance for members of the group to gather specifically to discuss racial issues, and at length, as the meetings generally lasted an entire day (132). The UNIA had used similar Sunday meetings to unite members within its own chapters, and the structure of the FNB's *dominguera* was loosely modeled after these. The FNB's newspaper, *A Voz da Raça*, also became the leading black periodical of its era, and proved an effective mouthpiece for the promotion of the FNB's

¹¹⁸ Black transnationalists took note of the activities of the FNB, partially thanks to Robert Abbott's reporting on the organization in his *Chicago Defender*. Petrônio Domingues's article "'Como se fosse bumerangue'" evaluates Abbott's portrayal of the FNB in his articles for the *Defender*, implying that Abbott's exaggeration of the FNB's success in Brazil derived at least in part from a misunderstanding (encouraged by Abbott himself) that the newspaper publisher had assisted with the founding of the organization.

ideology and activities (Butler 96). The effectiveness of the FNB's tactics was evidenced by its membership rolls: by the mid-1930s, it had expanded from its original base in São Paulo to become the largest black membership association in Brazil, boasting twenty chapters (Mitchell 135). Official membership numbers remain difficult to quantify due to the dispersal of the group's many chapters and its fairly informal membership practices, but a number of scholars believe that the FNB counted up to 20,000 Afro-Brazilians within its ranks.¹¹⁹

As the FNB grew its membership, it also sought to exercise its influence on political campaigns. Additionally, it distinguished itself among earlier black transnationalist organizations—both within Brazil and elsewhere—as one of the few black activist groups to incorporate as a formal political party.¹²⁰ In 1936, the FNB nominated its first candidate for office: the organization's president, Arlindo Vega dos Santos, who ran for a position on the municipal council of São Paulo. The political platform he promoted had much in common with the fascist political philosophy of the Integralists, another popular political party of the time that was an explicit imitation of European Fascism. In a side-by-side comparison of the two parties' official doctrines, the only difference appears to be the FNB's explicit focus on race; otherwise, it supported the principal values of Integralism: Christian faith, the nation, and family (Domingues, "Movimento Negro Brasileiro" 107). Though Vega dos Santos lost the election, the FNB had some minor political successes in securing the abolition of the color line that had

¹¹⁹ Márcio Barbosa and Petrônio Domingues affirm this number; see Barbosa's interviews of FNB activists entitled *Frente Negra Brasileira: depoimentos* and Domingues's article "Movimento Negro Brasileiro," which cites the former. Mitchell's work counts 8,000 members between the São Paulo and Santos chapters of the FNB, but makes no attempt to quantify the membership of the organization's eighteen other chapters. Chadarevian claims 70,000 members, but provides no sources for this seemingly wild assertion (263). For contextualization purposes, the population of "pardos" and "pretos" in Brazil at this time numbered approximately fifteen million, according to the Brazilian National Census ("Demographics of Brazil").

¹²⁰ The Partido Independiente de Color, of course, is the parallel example in Cuba. In his analysis of the FNB's activities, Mitchell notes that the FNB's political party was modeled after the socialist "branch parties" of Europe—that is to say, it derived its strength from its "ability to marshal resources and actual votes for electoral campaigns entirely from within the mass membership of the party" (134). This explains the importance of robust membership rolls to the success of the FNB, as without a large membership, its political agenda was doomed to fail.

divided skating rinks in São Paulo and achieving the induction of blacks into the Civil Guard (Domingues, “Como se fosse bumerangue” 162). The FNB’s existence as a political party was short-lived, however, when in the following year, Vargas abolished all political parties in Brazil. Nonetheless, the organization’s example lived on, even inspiring the creation in 1937 of the Partido Autóctono Negro, a black political party in Uruguay (Andrews, *Afro-Latin America* 128). Later on in the 1940s, former leaders resurrected the FNB’s politics when they established groups such as the Associação de José do Patrocínio and the Associação dos Negros Brasileiros. This latter group, led in part by ex-FNB militant and influential publisher José Correia Leite, united under the “Manifesto em defesa da democracia,” which accused Vargas of undermining black advancement and called for Afro-Paulistas to pursue racial uplift (Mitchell 143). Although they represented a continuation of the FNB’s ideology, these groups were small and politically powerless by comparison, and did not accomplish much in the way of actual legal gains for Afro-Brazilians. However, they did contribute to the overall development of racial consciousness in the nation—a contribution that would prove critical in the decades to come.

On the other side of the political spectrum, the Partido Comunista Brasileiro (PCB), established in 1922, also began to pursue a racially conscious political agenda in the 1930s.¹²¹ A Brazilian contingent had participated in the Primera Conferencia Comunista Latinoamericana in 1928, but generally sided with José Mariátegui and others who claimed that the problem of blacks in Latin America was not one of race, but of class (Chadarevian 260). Brazilian Communists joined Cubans and African Americans in rejecting the Comintern’s proposed Black Belt Thesis as a potential solution to racial inequalities in their nation. It was not until the Comintern expressed its distinct displeasure at the PCB’s lack of racial consciousness that the

¹²¹ In general, there are few existing histories of Communism in Brazil. However, John W.F. Dulles provides a reliable overview of the origins of the Communist movement in Brazil in his volume *Anarchists and Communists in Brazil, 1900-1935*.

party began to change its official agenda. In his article on the history of the PCB—to my knowledge, the only historical analysis of Brazilian Marxists’ racial doctrine—, Pedro E. Chadarevian reproduces a communiqué that was issued from Moscow in 1930 to chastise the PCB for its inattention to racial issues. One excerpt of this document authored by the Secretariat of the Comintern reads as follows:

O PC do Brasil não será capaz de liderar as massas de trabalhadores e camponeses nas futuras lutas revolucionárias a menos que combata continuamente toda forma de tendência liquidacionista que ameaça destruir completamente ou deteriorar seu papel revolucionário. *Um trabalho sistemático e sério entre os imigrantes e igualmente entre as raças oprimidas* (Negros e Indígenas) também dará uma oportunidade ao Partido de aumentar e estender sua influência entre as massas.
(qtd. in Chadarevian 262; emphasis original)

The message of this note is clear: the PCB was to align itself with the Comintern’s official ideology—which promoted race-sensitive strategies of mobilization—or be made irrelevant. Chadarevian marks the ensuing period as a turning point in the history of Communism in Brazil, as the PCB adjusted both its ideology and its praxis to conform more closely to the agenda of the Comintern (262).

The year 1934 was particularly important to the transformation of the PCB’s racial agenda, as it was in this year that the PCB launched its most racially conscious agenda to date. By this point, socialists inspired by the Comintern’s mobilization of African Americans were making a case for a Marxist interpretation of Brazilian race relations. The first theorization of Brazilian economic injustice as a specifically racial problem was outlined in “Situação do negro no Brasil,” Carneiro’s aforementioned speech to the I Congresso Afro-Brasileiro in Recife.

Proposing a socialist revolution as the only effective solution to this problem, Carneiro recognizes the intersectionality of race and class as interdependent social variables in Brazil. The following year, the PCB created the Aliança Nacional Libertadora, an arm of the national Communist Party that was dedicated in part to developing strategies against racism.¹²² The Marxist approach to race relations was later adopted by a number of prominent Afro-Brazilians, Trindade being one of them, along with the sociologist Clóvis Moura and the celebrated actor and writer Aguinaldo Camargo. There are also indications that Nascimento was sympathetic to this view, although he never officially joined the Party.¹²³ So it was that black Brazilians came to adopt the ideologies and tactics that black socialists had already embraced in the United States and Europe, joining with them in this particular manifestation of black transnationalism.¹²⁴

Modernismo and the Cultural Excavation of Brazil's African Past

The influence of black transnationalist ideologies in Brazil was not restricted to the social and political realms; black transnationalism also influenced Brazilian culture—first, in its aesthetics, and later, in its ideological commitments. The artistic movements germinating in

¹²² The ANL can be viewed as a last-ditch attempt by Brazilian Communists to maintain their political relevance after a decade of marginalization. To this point in history, Brazilian Marxism had been led by white elites; the ANL tried to revive the movement by returning it to the hands of the laboring masses—many of who were Brazilian blacks. See the 1985 volume *Aliança Nacional Libertadora: ideologia e ação* by Leila M.G. Hernández for one of the few scholarly studies of the ANL and its initiatives.

¹²³ See the article by Guimarães and Macedo regarding Nascimento's contributions to and editing of the column "Problemas e Aspirações do Negro Brasileiro," published in the *Diário Trabalhista* between 1946 and 1960. In his writing for this column, Nascimento appears to espouse a Marxist critique of race relations in Brazil (148).

¹²⁴ As the PCB was heavily persecuted from 1937-1945, information on its activities during this time is scarce, although publications from the period immediately following these years suggest that the question of Marxism's utility to the Afro-Brazilian community remained a subject of lively debate. See the article by Guimarães and Macedo entitled "Diário Trabalhista e democracia racial negra" for their analysis of Marxist discourse in the black newspaper *O Diário Trabalhista*, published during the 1940s. Though the PCB was not a major political contender in its era—Poppino notes that at its height in 1945-46, the Party secured only ten percent of the vote in national elections—its activities set an important precedent for later thinking about race in Brazil (269). The Movimento Negro Unificado, founded in 1978 and recognized as the principal catalyst of Brazil's more recent racial rights revolution, was originally founded as a Marxist organization sharing many of the ideological fundamentals of Black Bolshevism (Domingues, "Movimento Negro Brasileiro" 112).

Paris, Harlem, and Havana were welcomed in São Paulo and Northeast Brazil by practitioners of Brazil's original cultural vogue: *modernismo*. In their pursuit of an authentic Brazilian cultural expression that was liberated from European expectations, some *modernistas* embraced the use of African elements in their literature, music, and visual art. Formalized in 1922 with the *Semana de Arte Moderna* hosted in São Paulo, *modernismo* is best understood as a collection of loosely united aesthetic movements that spanned from the 1920s to the period after WWII.¹²⁵ Although these movements differed in their ideology and aesthetic principles—as is detailed in their many published manifestos, such as the *Manifesto Antropófago* (1928) and the *Manifesto do Verde-Amarelismo ou da Escola da Anta* (1929)—*modernismo* was generally defined by its pursuit of three core objectives, enumerated best by Mário de Andrade as the following: “o direito à pesquisa estética . . . a atualização da inteligência artística brasileira. . . [e] a estabilização de uma consciência criadora nacional” (qtd. in Bosi, “O Movimento Modernista” 301). All three of these influenced *modernistas*' use of African themes and aesthetics in their writing, as Brazil's Africanity was considered part of the nation's unique character *and* a unique source of aesthetic inspiration.¹²⁶ Whereas, during the Romantic period, Brazil's indigenous element had been considered essential to national identity, in the early twentieth century, cultural consciousness shifted to the contributions of African-descended people. This was in large part due to two concurrent factors: the revalorization of Brazil's African roots that was a part of *mestiçagem* ideology and the post-WWI proliferation of black consciousness movements and artistic

¹²⁵ The periodization of *modernismo* is vehemently debated, but it is generally accepted that the apex of the movement was the period from 1922 to 1930, with many of the artists of that time producing visual art and poetry. The latter years of *modernismo* were characterized by the pursuit of new forms of the novel; however, the greatest innovator in that genre, Graciliano Ramos, did not even consider himself part of the *modernista* movement. For a comprehensive history of *modernismo*, see Silvio Castro's *Teoria e política do modernismo brasileiro*.

¹²⁶ Of course, not all strands of *modernismo* were interested in black themes; Damasceno writes that Anthropophagy, as a group, “nem sequer cogit[ou] da existência do negro” and that the members of the *Verde Amarelismo* and *Anta* movements were also unconcerned with exploring Brazil's African elements (54).

movements that sought to incorporate African elements into Western cultural production.¹²⁷

Among these groups, Brazilians felt a particular claim on black subject matter, given that, as Oswald de Andrade (problematically) proclaimed at a 1923 conference hosted by the Sorbonne, “se para o europeu o negro não passa de um elemento exótico, para os brasileiros, o negro é um elemento realista” (qtd. in Schwartz 580). Additionally, although, as Randal Johnson notes, *modernismo*'s adoption of African themes was accelerated by the primitivist vogue in Europe (194), it was also at least somewhat related to the popularity of *negrista* poetry within the Spanish Caribbean, as I detailed in chapter one. Brazilian modernists were some of the first translators and promoters of Nicolás Guillén's work, and were familiar with Regino Pedroso's writing as well. Thus, in this way, the modernists who promoted Afro-Brazilian themes and elements in their writings were themselves inscribed within global movements of black transnationalism, though by and large, they themselves were not of African heritage.

The question that remains regarding *modernismo*'s relationship to black transnationalism is this: to what extent did pan-African artistic movements truly influence Brazilian cultural production? Put another way: was *modernismo*'s adoption of African themes a purely superficial move—a cultural “blackface”—or did it actually reflect changing attitudes towards race in Brazil? The answer to this question depends upon the *modernista* considered. A study of the “poesia negra” of the modernist movement reveals the presence of competing ideologies within *modernismo*: while some *modernista* poetry promotes *mestiçagem*'s foundational myth of a Brazilian racial democracy, at least one work pushes back against this. Two *modernista* texts that are of particular use for a contrasting study of African themes within the movement are Raul Bopp's collection of poems entitled *Urucungo*, from 1932, and Jorge de Lima's *Poemas negros*,

¹²⁷ As was also the case in Cuba, at this point in history, Brazil's indigenous population was depleted to the point of near extinction. Abolition was also a much more recent cultural memory, as slavery was ended only in 1888—a mere thirty-four years before the Semana de Arte Moderna.

a collection of poems written between 1928 and 1944, which was finally published in 1944. Although neither of these collections represents a major work of *modernismo*—and in fact, Lima and Bopp were themselves minor figures in the movement—*Urucungo* and *Poemas negros* are relevant as texts that manifest the different understandings of race and race relations that operated in Brazil during the 1930s and 40s. The difference in their use of black themes also suggests the deepening influence of black transnationalist ideologies in Brazil over the course of these two decades; what Bopp exploits as an aesthetic vogue in the early 30s, matures, in Lima's later poetry, into an ideological commitment with echoes of Black Marxism. A comparison of the two, therefore, provides some clues as to how the Brazilian Black Rights movement may have affected broader conceptions of race relations in this era, especially among the Brazilian intellectual elite.¹²⁸ It also allows us to see how modernism's introduction of black themes into Brazilian literature—however initially inauthentic—may have helped cultivate the cultural ground essential to the later flourishing of the Afro-Brazilian *quilombo* tradition in the work of Trindade and Nascimento.

In 1931 Bopp published *Cobra Norato*, which is considered a paradigmatic text of Anthropophagy and remains his most studied collection of poetry. One year later, the poet released *Urucungo*. The two are complementary projects: in *Cobra Norato*, Bopp attempts to trace Brazilian identity through the nation's indigenous element, whereas in *Urucungo*, he considers Brazilianess through the lens of Africanity. In a letter to Jorge Amado and Carlos Echenique that serves as the preface to the first volume of the work, Bopp writes that his intention with *Urucungo* was to write a collection of poetry “só de gemido negro” (197). As compared with *Cobra Norato*, however, critics largely ignored *Urucungo* until the past few

¹²⁸ Like most early Brazilian modernists, Bopp and Lima were white members of the upper middle class, and so it is perhaps even more interesting to consider the ways in which black transnationalism shaped their work.

years, during which scholars have worked to resurrect the study of this text and its significance to *modernismo* and Brazilian literature more generally.¹²⁹ Within this wave of recent scholarship, a number of Brazilian academics have attempted to establish a relationship between *Urucungo* and the literary movements of Negrismo and Negritude, though their findings have been relatively subjective and thus, unsatisfying.¹³⁰ However, the existence of such studies indicates the need to approach *Urucungo* as a text informed by movements of black transnationalism in both its themes and its aesthetic, if not in its politics.

The pan-Africanist perspective that inspired Harlem Renaissance and Afro-Antillean writers to contextualize their national histories within the broader experience of the African diaspora is also at work in Bopp's *Urucungo*, particularly in poems such as "Mãe preta" and the collection's titular work, "Urucungo." Both of these poems elaborate on themes common to other literatures of the diaspora, including the history-erasing trauma of the Middle Passage and the centrality of cultural performance (particularly storytelling) as a mechanism for recuperating the black experience in the Americas. The chief narrator of "Mãe preta," is the *mãe preta* herself, that black matron figure so famous (and so fraught) in the Brazilian cultural imaginary.¹³¹ In the

¹²⁹ Bopp himself questioned the value of the text, confessing to Amado and Echinique that "Eu mesmo não levo muito a sério esse troço [de poesia]" and that he considered it aesthetically inferior to his masterpiece—*Cobra Norato*—because of the relative ease with which he composed it (197).

¹³⁰ Zélia Bora and Maria Neni de Freitas characterize Bopp's work as an example of "Brazilian Negrismo," noting the overlap between the aesthetic tenets of Negrismo and Anthropophagy. However, their analysis equates Negrismo with Primitivism, despite the clear differences between these two movements, particularly as regards the racial paradigms from which they emerged and the openly political aims of the second stage of Negrismo. André Fábio De Souza also employs Negrismo as a point of contrast for his interpretation of *Urucungo*, juxtaposing Bopp's text with selected poems by Nicolás Guillén. His reading of Bopp rejects *Urucungo* as a work of Negrismo however, because, in his determination, the text lacks the comprehensive "alma negra" expressed in the vocabulary, verbal structures, and stylistic techniques of Guillén (155). By this narrowly determined standard, however, hardly any texts would qualify as *negrista*, so the premise of De Souza's argument must be questioned.

¹³¹ Paulina Alberto examines the multivalent significance of the *mãe preta* within Brazilian society and how this image has used to distinct ends by white and black Brazilians in the second chapter of her book *Terms of Inclusion*. She provides a fascinating history of the "Mãe Preta" campaign of the 1920s, first led by white activists in Rio de Janeiro who sought to erect a monument to this important symbol of Brazil's history of *mestiçagem*. Over time, as black activists—mostly from São Paulo—become involved in the initiative, they changed the meaning of the monument itself, converting it from an image of "racial fusion" to one that signified "the pain of slavery and the grievances of the black race" (101).

first half of “Mãe preta,” her voice recreates what Da Silva calls “um espaço africano atemporal” as she tells her son the story of her life prior to enslavement (4). The Africa of “Mãe preta” is an untamed landscape of brutal sunlight, charging elephants, and a Congo River that “[b]rigava com as árvores. / Carregava com tudo, águas abaixo, / até chegar na boca do mar” (207). The second half of the poem turns sharply from this idyllic imagery when the female narrator is suddenly reminded of another memory: “Era uma praia vazia / com riscos brancos de areia / e batelões carregando escravos” (207). This image of slave ships is her first memory of what would become “uma noite muito comprida” and “um mar que não acabava mais”—her two metaphors for the Middle Passage (208). Upon this recollection, the *mãe preta* is rendered speechless, unable to complete her narrative. The poem closes with her son asking, “Ué mãezinha, / por que você não conta o resto da história?” (208). The narrator’s response to this question is silence—a silence that indicates the enormity of her trauma and its inexpressibility. The poem therefore represents a historical paradox: while preserving the cultural memory of a significant historical trauma, it also suggests that the full extent of this trauma is actually unknowable.

“Urucungo” also addresses the subject of racial trauma, as a lament of slavery sung by an ex-slave—a “preto velho”— whose performance with a berimbau (called an *urucungo* here) is an attempt to rescue “coisas que ficaram do outro lado do mar” (198). His music recreates the “cordas vozes que ele escutou pelas florestas africanas,” voices that were lost in the journey from one continent to another (198). Though he strives to recall his African past, the speaker is reminded constantly of the cruelty of his Brazilian master, as the poem’s narrator recognizes: “Dói-lhe ainda no sangue as bofetadas de nhô-branco” (198). Such memories silence his voice, as they did the narrator of “Mãe preta.” Towards the end of “Urucungo,” as the elderly man struggles to reconstruct the narrative of his life, the poem shifts perspective, as if zooming out

with a camera lens. His voice is replaced by that of a group of other blacks, “a toada dos negros,” who together intone the final stanza of the poem in Yoruba, singing:

Mamá Cumandá

Eh Bumba.

Acababá Cubebé

Eh Bumba. (198)

Without explanation or additional contextualization of these lines, it is difficult to determine the intended effect of the final stanza of “Urucungo.” One impression that it does produce, however, is the exoticization of the Afro-Brazilian ritual portrayed; Bopp’s strategic use of Yoruba at the end of the poem—and only at the end of the poem—distances both Bopp and his readers from the performance described. Is this ritual a protest against slavery? Is it an African spiritual? Once again, as in “Mãe preta,” the reader is confronted with a communication problem; in their untranslated state, the final lines of the “Urucungo” point to the essential non-transferability of historical memory—this time, from one culture to another.

Unpacking these poems requires that the reader delve deeper than their surface-level representations of Afro-Brazilian themes. Although an initial reading of “Mãe preta” and “Urucungo” might tempt one to celebrate Bopp’s acknowledgement of black trauma, a deeper examination of these works reveals a troubling divide between the poet’s depiction of the black experience and his grasp of its socio-historical significance. The spotlighting of a black female narrator and the inclusion of a few words of Yoruba does not, in the case of this Brazilian modernist, correspond to a racially informed historical consciousness. While it is true, for example, that Bopp’s inclusion of Yoruba imitates the kind of “black aesthetic” that authors of the Harlem Renaissance and key figures of Negrismo and Negritude sought to develop, it is also

true that the poet's aesthetic does not align with the ideological beliefs of such writers. In both "Mãe preta" and "Urucungo," Bopp's characterizations of Afro-Brazilians consistently relegate them to the status of victim; his thematic focus on trauma reinforces this and denies Afro-Brazilians historical agency. The endings of these two poems cement this perspective even further, as they suggest that not only are blacks incapable of being historical agents, but they are also incapable of interpreting history for themselves—including their own personal experiences. The silent ending of "Mãe preta" and the untranslated verses that conclude "Urucungo" deny their Afro-Brazilian narrators the opportunity to share their interpretations of their own lives, and in doing so, demonstrate a lack of consciousness understanding of Africa's relevance to Brazil in the present day. For all of their honesty about the trauma of slavery, these poems treat blackness as a historical artifact, not a condition to be dealt with in actuality. Not even the poems that focus on the marginalization of the modern-day Afro-Brazilian community—the texts "Favela" and "Favela n.2"—addresses the subject of race. As Bora and Freitas write, these closing poems of *Urucungo* instead present a society in which "o tema da africanidade encontra-se o serviço de um projeto maior, o projeto da brasilidade, ou a síntese do Brasil, como pretendiam formular os brasileiros" (12). Race is subordinated to nationality in the calculus of identity politics and thus rendered insignificant. Therefore, although the ideas of black transnationalism may have influenced Bopp in the aesthetics of *Urucungo*, they did not necessarily penetrate the poet's mentality sufficiently to produce a text that would be ideologically aligned with black transnationalism and as such, dare to challenge the racial power dynamics of Brazil.

Read alongside *Urucungo*, Lima's modernist poetry appears to exhibit a much greater sensitivity to the idea of Afro-Brazilians as individual and historical agents, and in this, his work more closely embodies the values of black transnationalism. *Poemas negros*, published a decade

and a half after Bopp's work, elaborates many of the same themes as the earlier collection of poetry and, notably, contains at least one poem that condemns the marginalization of blacks in modern-day Brazil. This volume, although it is Lima's most comprehensive treatment of black themes, was not the poet's first attempt at writing about the Afro-Brazilian experience; two of his most well-known black poems, "Zumbi" and "Essa negra Fulô," date to the late 1920s—the heyday of black transnationalism in the South Atlantic. In "Zumbi," Lima eulogizes the Afro-Brazilian hero Zumbi, the last king of the famous Palmares *quilombo*, which was located in Lima's home state of Alagoas in the Northeast of Brazil. With the very first stanza of the poem, Lima claims Zumbi as part of his own cultural heritage, as he writes:

Em meu *torrão* natal—Imperatriz—,

 um homem negro, muito negro, quis
 mostrar ao mundo que tinha alma clara. (184)¹³²

Lima celebrates Zumbi's valiant resistance against the Portuguese military commanders who sought to destroy Palmares; as Anderson writes in his history of Palmares, Zumbi's defense of the *quilombo* held for more than two years, and he managed to escape capture for over a year, until he was finally apprehended and beheaded by the Portuguese in 1695 ("The Quilombo of Palmares" 564). Exercising some poetic license, Lima depicts this death differently in his work, with a final stanza that characterizes Zumbi's death as an act of resistance. He writes, "E o negro herói que não se curva e inlete, / faz-se em pedaços para que não fique / com os homens brancos, o seu negro rastro..." (184). Such a suicide, as Lima writes it, deprives the Portuguese of any real victory, since they are left without a body to prove their ultimate domination of the

¹³² Unlike the other poems by Jorge de Lima cited in this dissertation, this poem is cited from the anthology *Jorge de Lima: poesia completa*.

quilombo leader. Lima's choice to end these verses with the deliberately open-ended technique of an ellipse also suggests a parallel to popular mythology about Zumbi, which sustains that he never truly died, but was converted into an undead being (Anderson, "The Quilombo of Palmares" 545). This emphasis on resistance that prevails throughout "Zumbi" is elaborated to a much higher degree of sophistication in *Poemas negros*.

Much of the scholarly conversation around *Poemas negros* has debated to what extent the text's theme of resistance indicates a legitimate solidarity with Afro-Brazilians on the part of the author.¹³³ By and large, critics have accepted Lima as an advocate for Brazil's marginalized people, including the Afro-Brazilian subjects of *Poemas negros*. One of the first scholars to advocate for Lima's qualifications in this regard was Gilberto Freyre himself. Freyre provided the introduction to *Poemas negros* and vehemently rejected the argument that Lima's social status and his race barred him from writing "authentically" about black themes. In his preface to the collection, he writes, "Jorge de Lima não nos fala dos seus irmãos, descendentes de escravos, com resguardos profiláticos de poeta arrogantemente branco, erudito, acadêmico, a explorar o pitoresco do assunto com olhos distantes de turista ou de curioso. De modo nenhum. Seu verbo se faz carne: carne mestiça" (qtd. in Camilo 301). The similarity between the phrase "carne mestiça," used by Freyre to describe Lima's poetry, and the phrase "poesía mulata," used by Guillén to describe his own writing, should not be overlooked.¹³⁴ Just as Guillén's critics later cited Guillén's "poesía mulata" as evidence of Cuba's racial and cultural harmony, so have Brazilianists (including Freyre himself) used the idea of Lima's "poesia mestiça" to argue for the

¹³³ A complete study of the reception of *Poemas negros* and Jorge de Lima's other "black" poetry may be found in Almir Aquino Corrêa's 2013 article.

¹³⁴ As noted in chapter one, Brazilian *modernistas* were some of the most enthusiastic supporters of Guillén's poetry and Jorge de Lima himself reported on Guillén's 1947 visit to Brazil—a visit that coincided conveniently with the publication of *Poemas negros*.

existence of racial democracy.¹³⁵ Within this model, Jorge de Lima is a completely appropriate representative of the Afro-Brazilian experience, since by virtue of his Brazilianness, he is privy to the entire history of his nation, including that of minority groups (to which he did not belong). The echoing of biblical language in Freyre's statement—"seu verbo se faz carne"—only further reinforces this idea of Jorge de Lima as cultural prophet of *mestiçagem*.¹³⁶

Such esteemed scholars as Roger Bastide, Sérgio Millet, Maria Luísa Nunas, and Carlos Povina Cavalcanti, Lima's biographer, and most recently, Alfredo Bosi, have sustained Freyre's views in their own critiques of Lima.¹³⁷ However, there have also been a number of scholars who have questioned Lima's claims of solidarity with the Afro-Brazilians he depicts in *Poemas negros*. These include Richard Preto-Rodas and Antônio Rangel Bandeira, both of whom challenge the authenticity of Lima's concern for Afro-Brazilians, as well as Vagner Camilo and David Brookshaw, each of whom have raised concerns about the class distance between Lima and the subaltern populations that he claims solidarity with. Preto-Rodas, for example, observes in Lima's poetry a "curious emotional distance" between the writer and his black subjects, much like that which has been observed in Bopp's writing (84). Both Camilo and Brookshaw question Lima's ideological commitment to the working class, with the latter scholar writing that Lima's sympathy for the proletariat as portrayed in *Poemas negros* likely owes more to the influence of Northeastern regionalists like Jorge Amado than to his own convictions. While each side of this debate has its merits, overall, the conversation strikes one as unsatisfying, premised as it is on

¹³⁵ Camilo recognizes that the idea of "carne mestiça" lacks the full political force of *mestizaje* in the Caribbean, writing that "embora essa concepção não caminhe em direção à radicalidade assumida no contexto afro-cubano e na poesia afro-antilhana, com todas as suas implicações histórico-políticas, como forma de afirmação identitária e resistência contra a dominação ianque" (303). Nevertheless, such an idea proved entirely sufficient for promoting racial democracy within the paradigm of *mestiçagem*.

¹³⁶ This is a re-working of one of the first verses of the Gospel of John: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14 RSV).

¹³⁷ Vagner Camilo's article "Jorge de Lima no contexto da poesia negra norteamericana" provides an excellent review of the reception of Lima's work among these scholars.

vague biographical suppositions. Rather than attempt to divine the sincerity of the poet's ideological statements, a more fruitful path would consider what Lima's poetry has in common with other writings about race and class from this era. Such an endeavor provides a better understanding of what influences might have shaped his social critique and how, in turn, his poetry challenges the racial and social paradigms of his immediate environment. Specifically, comparing Lima's poetry to that of Bopp reveals that the former poet comes closer to a radical critique of Brazilian race relations, particularly in the way in which he stresses the self-determination of Afro-Brazilians with his theme of resistance.

The poem "Olá Negro!," which is the concluding poem of *Poemas negros*, is ideal for such a study. It draws a clear parallel between the historical suffering of enslaved people and the oppression of blacks in modern-day Brazil, alternating representations of each over its five stanzas, which are separated and punctuated by the refrain "Olá Negro!." Throughout the piece, however, one coherent theme emerges—that of the power (and limitations) of black cultural performance—specifically music and dance—as a mode of resistance to such injustice. This is a theme that Lima's text shares with Regino Pedroso's "Hermano Negro," the poem in which, as we recall, the Afro-Cuban writer urged his fellow blacks to "Da al mundo con tu angustia rebelde / tu humana voz... / y apaga un poco tus maracas!" (101).¹³⁸ Lima's "Olá Negro!" adopts a similarly urgent tone to Pedroso's work; it begins by warning blacks of their precarious future: "Os netos de teus mulatos e de teus cafuzos / e a quarta e quinta gerações de teu sangue sofredor / tentarão apagar a tua cor!" (125). In defiance of the previous generation's endorsement of "whitening" in Brazil, Lima strongly critiques this demographic trend, clearly characterizing it as

¹³⁸ In all likelihood, Jorge de Lima was familiar with Pedroso's poem. Éle Semog's biography of Nascimento affirms that Pedroso's poetry was known in Brazil; in fact, in 1944, Nascimento arranged a poetry reading at which "Hermano negro" was presented to the public (135). Given Nascimento's connections with *modernismo*, and in particular his relationship with Mário de Andrade, it is possible that he circulated Pedroso's poetry throughout *modernista* circles in São Paulo.

negative (if inevitable). In the next lines of the stanza, however, he insists that however successful future generations' attempts to rid themselves of the "tatuagem execranda" of blackness, "não apagarão de suas almas, a tua alma, negro!" (125). Professing his hope in the continuation of the black "soul"—if not black skin—Lima constructs the remainder of the poem as a call to action for Afro-Brazilians.¹³⁹ He reminds his audience of past examples of resistance against white oppression, including cultural acts of resistance:

A raça que te enforca, enforca-se de tédio, negro!
 E és tu que a alegras ainda com os teus *jazzes*,
 Com os teus *songs*, com os teus *lundus*!

 E o teu riso, e a tua virginidade e os teus medos e a tua bondade
 mudariam a alma branca cansada de todas as ferocidades! (125).

In these lines, as well as in later sections of the poem, Lima presents black art as a form of catharsis for blacks and also as a bridge between the races. *Jazzes*, *songs*, and *lundus* all have the power to move the hearts of whites—perhaps to even soothe them in their bitter, self-destructive prejudice.

Yet the poet clearly does not consider art a final solution to racial inequality. As the final stanzas of "Olá Negro!" suggests, cultural resistance is not enough—blacks' uprisings must include political and social mobilization. In the fourth stanza of the poem, Lima calls his audience to an elevated awareness of their current situation:

Negro que foste para o algodão de U.S.A.

¹³⁹ There is an interesting parallel here between Lima's lines and those of Nicolás Guillén's celebrated poem from 1931 "La canción del bongó," in which he describes black and white Cubans as those who are characterized by their shared interior blackness: "cueripardos y almiprietos / más de sangre que de sol / pues quien no fuera es de noche, / por dentro ya se oscureció" (77).

ou que foste para os canaviais do Brasil,
 quantas vezes as carapinhas hão de embranquecer
 para que os canaviais possam dar mais doçura à alma humana? (126)

The racial consciousness that he calls for also has an economic element, as in the next lines, he calls upon blacks as the “antigo proletariado sem perdão” and the “proletariado bom” (126). Though he wrote nearly twenty years after the Comintern’s proposal of the Black Belt Thesis, Lima’s chosen vocabulary reflects the same ideology that undergirded the original socialist solution to the oppression of blacks. In “Olá Negro!,” Afro-Brazilians are enjoined to not only consider how they have been oppressed as blacks, under slavery, but also how they have been oppressed as workers. The appropriate response, as the final stanza of the poem suggests, is for blacks to rise up against these injustices, not with indirect modes of resistance, as in the past, but with a fierce and engaged strategy. As the poet warns, “Não basta iluminares hoje as noites dos brancos com teus *jazzes*, / com tuas danças, com tuas gargalhadas!” (127). Like Bopp’s poems in *Urucungo*, “Olá Negro!” recognizes the special power of African-derived performances, but insists that Afro-Brazilians must pursue their rights more directly. And so it is thus that Lima closes his poem with one final rhetorical question to convict the conscience of his audience: “O dia está nascendo ou será a tua gargalhada que vem vindo?” (127). With this, he places the responsibility for self-determination squarely in the hands of his black countrymen.

Like Bopp’s poems in *Urucungo*, Lima’s “Olá negro!” recognizes the centrality of cultural production and performance to Afro-Brazilian identity. However, in this poem, the poet also suggests that blacks move beyond the role of entertainers in order to effect systemic change. It is admittedly difficult to tolerate the pedantic tone of Lima’s call to action, which owes largely to his race and class status; whereas Pedroso could urge his “hermano negro” to “apaga un poco

tus maracas,” a similar command sounds quite different—patronizing, to say the least—when delivered from the pen of a member of the white Brazilian elite. If this off-key element does not disqualify the poet’s message, however, “Olá negro!” can be read as uniquely sensitive to the discrimination facing Afro-Brazilians in the 1940s—a reality that many of Jorge de Lima’s contemporaries would have denied—and revolutionary in its call for black mobilization. The race-conscious activism that Lima calls for in this text echoes that of black transnationalist movements, as he connects blacks’ historical triumph against slavery to their position in present-day struggles.

Furthermore, “Olá negro!” exhibits a supremely interesting characterization of race relations in Brazil—one that subverts the dominance of race-less *mestiçagem* ideology, even as it is developed out of this paradigm.¹⁴⁰ “Olá negro!” challenges the idea that race, in the Brazilian context, has always been understood as a fluid color spectrum, without a “color line” between white and black, as in the United States. Although in the first stanza of the poem, Lima acknowledges the reality of racial fusion, the remainder of the text depicts race as an adversarial dichotomy of black victims and white oppressors, not merely in the historical context of slavery, but within Lima’s discussion of modern-day discrimination as well. This is not the typical Brazilian characterization of race; indeed, it is more akin to the attitude expressed in African American writing, and is therefore especially notable in a collection of poetry prefaced by Gilberto Freyre himself.¹⁴¹ Lima also appears to emphasize the distinctiveness of the races—and the black experience—in his insistence upon the “alma negra” of the Afro-Brazilian community,

¹⁴⁰ This is merely to say, of course, that it is *mestiçagem* that emboldens Lima to write “on behalf of” Afro-Brazilians.

¹⁴¹ To be fair, Lima’s poems do not uniformly employ this model to describe Brazilian race relations. A more complete study of *Poemas negros* reveals that this volume alone entertains three different paradigms of race relations—black transnationalism, *mestiçagem*, and biological determinism—demonstrating the coexistence of these different models in Brazilian society. Past readings of Jorge de Lima’s *Poemas negros* may have floundered on the question of his “authenticity” because they understood these paradigms as mutually exclusive, but as we see here, they can, in fact, be upheld simultaneously (if not without some cognitive dissonance).

as well as in his enumeration of black cultural traditions. In his mention of the latter—jazzes, songs, and lundus—it is worth noting too that he chooses forms of performance with recognizably African roots, and that the juxtaposition of these stresses the interconnectedness of the diasporic community. The influence of black transnationalism on Lima's poetry thus appears to have been more profound than in the case of Bopp. Although neither poet can be called a black transnationalist, it appears from "Olá negro!" that some of the thinking and values of black transnationalism did penetrate Lima's writing at a level that enabled him to transcend the superficial use of African themes that characterizes Bopp's *Urucungo*.

The influence of black transnationalism on the poetry of these *modernistas*—in the case of Bopp, with regards to his aesthetics, and in the case of Lima, with regards to his racial ideology—compels a reconsideration of the relationship between these *modernista* poets and later Afro-Brazilian poets of the *quilombo* tradition. Although Bopp and Lima's elaboration of African themes was surely problematic, their work may still be recognized as some of the earliest positive representations of blackness in Brazilian culture. For this reason, they cannot be totally discarded as potential influences on later generations of writers—which, to date, has been the tendency among scholars of black Brazilian literature. While writers such as Luis Gama and Cruz e Souza surely qualify as the forefathers of later Afro-Brazilian artists, certain *modernista* writers may also be grafted onto this family tree, with significant qualifications. In its elevation of African themes to the status of high art, Brazilian modernism represented black themes seriously—if imperfectly—and popularized these themes, preparing the cultural ground in a way that was necessary for a more extended treatment of them in future literature. This is similar to the process that occurred in Cuba a decade earlier, when the first wave of *negrista* poets—largely members of the white elite—introduced audiences to Afro-Cuban traditions through their poetry.

Although this initial group of writers did not challenge the paradigm of *mestizaje* in Cuba—and in fact, their work did much to promulgate an uncritical *mestizaje* mentality—they did prepare the way for more radical thinkers, including Guillén and Pedroso, to build upon their work in a way that would eventually challenge the racial *status quo* of their nation. Bopp and Lima's work may have played a similar role in Brazilian literature. At a time when black transnationalist movements in Brazil were beginning to push for racial rights in the social and political spheres, these modernist writers leveraged black transnationalist traditions in a way that created space for Trindade and Nascimento's later revolutionary poetry and drama. While we must not give too much credit to these minor authors, their contributions are not to be wholly ignored. Given that fact, the subsequent chapters will explore how Trindade and Nascimento's literary innovations built upon a growing awareness of Brazil's African elements, and how it engaged with socialist ideology to question the dominant paradigm of *mestiçagem*.

Chapter Six: Solano Trindade and *Quilombo* Resistance

Three principal cultural factors primed the landscape for Trindade and Nascimento's revolutionary incursions into Brazilian literature: a *quilombo* tradition of Afro-Brazilian literature, which established a cultural precedent for counterhegemonic art; the Brazilian Black Rights Movement, which, despite its heterogeneous factions, catalyzed the development of black consciousness in Vargas-era Brazil; and finally, a small, but real segment of literary culture interested in Afro-Brazilian themes, as demonstrated by the work of the *modernista* writers discussed in the previous chapter. Together, these elements yielded a uniquely fruitful environment for writers like Trindade and Nascimento to challenge the *status quo* and redevelop notions of what blackness signified in the Brazil of their day. What is more, in this environment influenced by black transnationalism, these authors pioneered new symbologies representative of their racial consciousness—and in the case of Trindade, the *quilombo* became a powerful symbol of blackness in Brazil. This chapter provides a detailed reading of this symbol in Trindade's poetry, analyzing how the *quilombo* functions as a symbolic space of not only racial resistance, but also broader forms of social resistance. Like Nicolás Guillén and Regino Pedroso before him, Trindade's socialist commitment led him to seek out metaphors that would signify not only black liberation, but universal liberation as well; in Trindade's symbolic universe, the *quilombo* is thus doubly rooted: it stands as both an Afrocentric space and one that embodies socialist ideals. Trindade's doubly coded use of the *quilombo* reveals the extent to which black transnationalist ideologies—in particular, Black Bolshevism—influenced Afro-Brazilian culture in the mid-twentieth century and inspired later movements for racial rights in Brazil.

“O poeta do povo”: The Life of Francisco Solano Trindade

Francisco Solano Trindade, the Afro-Brazilian polygraph, visual artist, and political activist, was born in 1908 in the Northeast city of Recife, the former capital of Brazil’s sugarcane industry. The son of working-class blacks, the man known as Solano left formal schooling after completing his elementary education in order to work as a manual laborer—work that would prove crucial to his later formation as a committed Marxist. In the 1930s, Trindade became involved in both socialist and Afro-Brazilian movements in northeastern Brazil. Though little is known about his formal participation in Marxist initiatives, his involvement in the production and dissemination of Afro-Brazilian culture is well documented.¹⁴² For example, Trindade was an organizer of and participant in both the first and second iterations of the Congresso Afro-Brasileiro, in 1934 and 1937.¹⁴³ In 1934, he founded the Centro de Cultura Afro-Brasileiro in Recife, and also established a *Pernambucano* chapter of the black rights organization known as the Frente Negra Brasileira. Two years later, in 1936, he published his first collection of poetry, entitled *Poemas negros*, which was received with little fanfare, particularly in comparison to his following volume, *Poemas de uma vida simples* (1944), which garnered significant acclaim, leading the journalist Vicente Lima to refer to Trindade as “o chefe do movimento modernista na poesia afro-brasileira” (qtd. in Trindade 26). Similarly, the chief poet of Brazilian modernism, Carlos Drummond de Andrade, commented that Trindade’s poems expressed “uma força natural e uma voz individual, rica e ardente, que se confunde com a voz coletiva” (qtd. in Trindade 26, 33). It is for this collection that Trindade is most well known, although the poet also published

¹⁴² As mentioned in chapter five, the lack of information regarding Trindade’s participation in socialist activities owes in large part to the fact that Marxism was repressed during the period from 1937 to 1945, when all political parties were outlawed by the Vargas regime. Marxists were especially persecuted by the Vargas government, in the ways detailed by John W.F. Dulles’s book *Brazilian Communism, 1935-1945: Repression During World Upheaval*.

¹⁴³ The first Congresso Afro-Brasileiro was organized by Gilberto Freyre, whose paradigm-shattering book on Brazilian race relations, *Casa-grande e senzala* (1933), had debuted only one year prior; the second Congresso was led by Edison Carneiro, an Afro-Brazilian ethnologist and Marxist activist known for his work on the preservation of African religious traditions in Afro-Brazilian communities.

Seis tempos de poesia (1958) and *Cantares ao meu povo* (1961), both of which recycled and republished his earlier work in a form of self-anthology.

While he was chiefly identified as a poet, Trindade was also active in the development of a black theater scene in Brazil. He collaborated with the Afro-Brazilian activist Abdias do Nascimento to found the Teatro Experimental do Negro in São Paulo in 1944, and worked alongside the black Marxist Edison Carneiro to establish the Teatro Popular Brasileiro in 1950.¹⁴⁴ With the Teatro Popular Brasileiro, Trindade traveled to Czechoslovakia and Poland where he encountered ideologically sympathetic and enthusiastic audiences, which sometimes totaled over 12,000 attendees (Moore 234). In his later life, Trindade joined the artist community of Embu das Artes, in the state of São Paulo, where he pursued the plastic arts and composed a number of as yet unpublished works for the stage. Following his death in 1974, Trindade left behind a cohort of family members who have preserved his artistic creations and extended them with their own contributions to Brazilian culture. His daughter, Raquel Trindade, nearly 80 years of age at the time of this writing, is a recognized poet and the principal steward of her father's legacy; she frequently gives readings of her father's work alongside her own, and has also participated in a number of documentaries about Solano and his contributions to Afro-Brazilian art.¹⁴⁵ Vitor da Trindade, Solano's grandson, is a composer and musician who has adapted a

¹⁴⁴ Nearly every account of Trindade's life mentions his involvement with Nascimento's TEN; Nascimento's accounts, however, generally eschew any mention of Trindade's involvement. This is likely due to the tumultuous relationship between the two men, whose early collaboration was eventually destroyed by ideological differences, leading them to renounce their friendship in the 1950s. In her Master's thesis on Trindade's work, Maria do Carmo Gregório cites a debate between the two Brazilian writers that encapsulates their differing philosophies; according to the account provided by Newton Menzes [Menezes?], during this debate, Trindade accused Nascimento of a bourgeois mentality, declaring, "Abdias, você é negro senhor, só quer mudar o pólo de dominação, eu quero acabar com ela" (60). While Nascimento dabbled in Marxism in the early 40s, Trindade was by far the more committed socialist, and this led to numerous disagreements between the two on how best to mobilize the Afro-Brazilian community in the fight for racial rights.

¹⁴⁵ See Trindade's interview with *Série +70*, developed by Itaú Cultural, as well as her interview with the series *Empoderadas*, which highlights the accomplishments of Afro-Brazilian women ("Raquel Trindade," "Empoderadas: Raquel Trindade").

number of Solano's poems to music.¹⁴⁶ The poet's great-grandson, Zinho Trindade, who is the son of Vitor, is the youngest Trindade to participate in this family legacy. Zinho is a poet and spoken word artist whose work often addresses contemporary issues of race relations in Brazil.¹⁴⁷ A number of cultural organizations have also dedicated themselves to preserving Solano's legacy; these include the Teatro Popular Brasileiro, which was renamed the Teatro Popular Solano Trindade following the poet's death and recently celebrated four decades of performances, as well as the Biblioteca Comunitária Solano Trindade. The latter organization is situated in Duque de Caixas, the suburb of Rio de Janeiro in which Trindade resided during his middle years and which he immortalized in the famous poem "Tem gente com fome," later adapted to music and performed by Ney Matogrosso's glam rock group *Secos & Molhados*. Through all of these means, Trindade's poetry has remained an enduring presence in Brazilian culture, particularly within the Afro-Brazilian community to which he himself was so committed.

Special Themes in The Reception of Trindade's Social Poetry

From the beginning of his career, critics of Trindade's work recognized the ideological commitment of his creative production, understanding his poetry as one manifestation of a deep personal devotion to racial and social justice. Writing from Rio de Janeiro in 1944, Abdias do Nascimento professed his personal admiration for the writer, who, as he described:

não se encerrou na torre de marfim da arte pura e tampouco escreveu poesia negra com linguagem de 'negro-branco'.... Ele é Negro, sente como Negro, e como tal cantou as dores, as alegrias e as aspirações libertárias do afro-brasileiro. Para mim

¹⁴⁶ Vitor da Trindade performs Solano's poems "Zumbi" and "Rio" as musical pieces on his album *Airá Otá*, composed with Carlos Caçapava.

¹⁴⁷ Zinho maintains an active social media presence to promote his work, both on Facebook and on his personal blog, *Zinho Trindade: Resgatando as Raízes*.

Solano Trindade é o brado da raça, o maior poeta Negro do Brasil contemporâneo. (qtd. in Trindade 25)

Osório Cezar, the Brazilian psychiatrist and prominent Marxist, named Trindade as a spokesperson not only for his fellow Afro-Brazilians, but also for blacks oppressed in other countries. Reviewing Trindade's work from São Paulo, Cezar wrote in 1944 that, "Solano fala pelo sentimento de todos os Negros, não só do Brasil como dos países em que o preconceito de cor abafa os ideais desse grande povo que serviu de base para a criação da cultura e do desenvolvimento econômico do Novo Mundo" (qtd. in Trindade 25). Arthur Ramos, the Brazilian anthropologist and pioneer of the study of Afro-Brazilian culture, also recognized the poet's contributions to the development of a global black culture, when, in 1945, he gave a favorable review of Trindade's poetry. Similarly, the influential French critic Roger Bastide, who pioneered the study of Afro-Brazilian literature as an independent literary genre, worked to expose Trindade's poetry to a broader audience by featuring it in a special pan-African issue of the magazine *Parallelos*, which focused on the work of black authors from Africa and the Americas (qtd. in Trindade 31, 27). In 1949, Trindade was profiled in the major Afro-Brazilian magazine *Quilombo*; the article on his work reproduced the poem "Quem tá gemendo?," which has strong diasporic themes (48). From just these few examples, it is evident that Trindade's work was considered an essential contribution not only to the Brazilian literary tradition—including the subset *quilombo* tradition of literature—but that Brazilian critics identified him as a participant in the larger currents of black transnational art.

In the 1970s, the Quilombhoje movement—the literary arm of Brazil's second Black Rights Movement—revived interest in Trindade's poetry.¹⁴⁸ The magazine *Cadernos Negros*,

¹⁴⁸ Christian Sales names the founding members of the Quilombhoje

founded in 1978 by the Quilombhoje group, featured Trindade's work in a number of its early issues, and many of the most prominent members of Quilombhoje have professed their artistic indebtedness to the poet.¹⁴⁹ Esmeralda Ribeiro, for example, one of the most commercially successful writers of Quilombhoje, named Trindade alongside Luis Gama, Cruz e Souza, Léopold Senghor, Aimé Césaire, Langston Hughes, and Maya Angelou, as one of the intellectual forefathers of the group (qtd. in Sales 3). Establishing a literary genealogy such as this was essential to the mission of the Quilombhoje group, whose continuing mission is to create a space for black expression—and black criticism—within Brazilian culture. Accordingly, the group's name, a compound noun combining the words “quilombo” and “hoje,” meaning “today,” translates roughly to “the quilombo of today.” As Lizbeth Souza-Fuertes writes, the principal objective of Quilombhoje writers is to “dar voz a aquellos escritores negros profundamente críticos hacia las valoraciones dominantes en la sociedad brasileña en relación con la problemática racial... Al mismo tiempo que cuestionan el mito de la democracia racial, testimonian una realidad de discriminación” (153). By tracing their literary lineage back to authors from Brazil's past, like Trindade, the authors of the Quilombhoje group legitimized their work and inscribed it within a broader tradition of black resistance in Brazilian culture.

It was also during the 1970s that Brazilian and American literary scholars began to take note of Trindade's work, doubtless owing in part to the popularization of Trindade's poetry through *Cadernos negros* and other publications.¹⁵⁰ Richard Preto-Rodas recognized Trindade as the leader of what he called “Brazilian Negritude” in his 1970 volume *Negritude as a Theme in*

group as the writers Luis Silva (Cuti), Oswaldo de Camargo, Paulo Colina, and Abelardo Rodrigues; the second generation of Quilombhoje, according to Sales, includes the female writers Miriam Alves (editrix of *Cadernos Negros*) and Esmeralda Ribeiro, as well as Márcio Barbosa, Jamu Minka, Oubí Inaê Kibuko (1).

¹⁴⁹ See also Isabel Guillén's article on black movements in Pernambuco, “Ancestralidade e oralidade nos movimentos negros do Pernambuco” for the testimonies of a number of black activists who acknowledge their indebtedness to Trindade.

¹⁵⁰ These scholarly evaluations written during the 1970s build upon the earliest study of Trindade's work, found in Roger Bastide's *A poesia afro-brasileira* (1943).

the Poetry of the Portuguese-speaking World. Upon the death of the poet in 1976, the *Luso-Brazilian Review* published an extended tribute to Trindade, in which Zelbert L. Moore calls Trindade “one of Brazil’s major Afro-Brazilian poets,” and praises him as unique in his concern for “the poor and downtrodden in Brazil and the rest of the world” (233, 237). David Brookshaw featured Trindade’s work in his influential 1986 monograph entitled *Race and Color in Brazilian Literature*, highlighting the poet’s revolutionary ideology and his postcolonial perspective on race. Comparing Trindade to his Afro-Brazilian contemporaries—in particular, the conservative Lino Guedes—Brookshaw noted that Trindade’s work, “calls into question more openly the rules of the compartment line and the culture of the colonizer” (12). Also in 1986, Benedita Gouveia Damasceno also wrote about Trindade as a black *modernista*, although her interpretation of his work is unique in this regard. Finally, Zilá Bernd included Trindade in her influential 1988 anthology *Introdução à literatura negra*, as well as in a number of scholarly monographs that she subsequently published on black literature from the Americas.¹⁵¹

Following a three-decade lull in the study of Trindade’s poetry, new scholarship on his work has reflected literary historians’ recent interest in positioning Brazil within black transnational networks; building off of Bernd’s initial research on Trindade’s *americanidade*, scholars such as Liliam Ramos da Silva and Maria do Carmo Gregório have studied Trindade’s work comparatively with that of other black American poets. To date, however, their analyses of Trindade’s work have isolated his commentaries on race relations from his socialist commitment, without providing any sense of interaction between the two. In fact, generally speaking, very little work has studied how Trindade’s Marxist beliefs influence in his poetry, beyond vague observations that identify the poet’s simple lexicon and revolutionary themes as manifestations

¹⁵¹ See Bernd’s *Negritude e literatura na América Latina* (1987) as well as her more recent volume *Americanité et mobilités (trans)culturelles* (2009), which encompasses her current scholarly focus on literature published by Québécois of African descent.

of his socialist commitment. Given that fact, this chapter seeks to fill this gap in the scholarship by reading Trindade's work in a more holistic manner. A measured study of the multiple significances of the *quilombo* in Trindade's work points to the influence of black transnationalism—particularly as manifested in Black Bolshevism—on Brazilian society and culture in the mid-twentieth century. Identifying the dual ideological commitments of black pride and socialism in Trindade's work contextualizes this poet's creative oeuvre as a contribution to the larger global conversation on race that was compelled by the rise of black transnationalism during the early decades of the century—thus signaling its import not only within the Brazilian tradition, but within diasporic literature as well.

The *Quilombo* in Brazilian History and Culture

Trindade's chosen symbol of black identity derives from a national tradition of racial resistance that developed concurrently with the practice of African slavery in Brazil. Ever since the first Africans were brought to the Portuguese territory in the mid-sixteenth century, enslaved individuals began escaping their masters and eventually, establishing the independent communities known as *quilombos*. These were structured, according to Munanga, as “uma cópia do quilombo africano reconstruído pelos escravizados para se opor a uma estrutura escravocrata, pela implantação de uma outra estrutura política na qual se encontraram todos os oprimidos” (63).¹⁵² The population size, system of governance, and economic structures of each *quilombo* were unique, although the general purpose that they served—that of providing an alternative

¹⁵² For a consideration of the similarities and differences between the Bantu and Kongo models of the *quilombo* and their Afro-Brazilian parallels, see Munanga's article “Origem e histórico do quilombo na África.”

community—was the same.¹⁵³ Not surprisingly, *quilombos* flourished during the centuries in which slavery in Brazil was most prevalent. George Reid Andrews traces the rise of *quilombo* communities principally to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the geographical regions in which slavery was most widely practiced (*Afro-Latin America* 38-39). Amantino estimates that in the state of Minas Gerais alone, at least 166 *quilombos* operated between 1711 and 1795.

The study of the *quilombo* as a unique element of Afro-Brazilian heritage was initiated by the generation of scholars who lived through the first Brazilian Black Rights movement. Brazilian intellectuals such as Arthur Ramos, Clóvis Moura, and Abdias do Nascimento, along with his wife, Elisa Larkin Nascimento, wrote some of the first historical studies of these communities, establishing a field of research that would prove fertile for later scholars.¹⁵⁴ Partially as a result of their work—and the creative depictions of *quilombos* undertaken by artists like Trindade—the *quilombo* was transformed into a significant cultural symbol of Afro-Brazilian resistance, particularly for the generations of Brazilians who were coming of age in the increasingly racially conscious era of the mid-twentieth century. Florentina Souza describes the metaphorical power of the *quilombo* as follows:

Marco da memória dos afrodescendentes no Brasil, a glória das lutas dos quilombos viabiliza a reconfiguração de suas histórias e de seu passado, de modo não só a construir uma identidade que se contrapõe às representações nas quais eles eram retratados como meros objetos, mas também servirá de mote para um

¹⁵³ Now twenty years old, the anthology edited by João José Reis and Flávio dos Santos Gomes, *Liberdade por um fio*, was one of the first pieces of scholarship to appreciate the diversity of political and economic structures within the *quilombo* system.

¹⁵⁴ Each of these authors composed more than one monograph on the subject of the *quilombo*; the most popular of these include: *O negro na civilização brasileira* (1956) by Arthur Ramos, Clóvis Moura's *Os quilombos e a rebelião negra* (1981), and Abdias do Nascimento's *O quilombismo* (1980).

projeto político de participação e intervenção nas diversas áreas políticas do saber.
(289-90)

As her words suggest, *quilombos* have since been considered an essential space for the working out of Afro-Brazilian citizenship, as they ascribe historical and political agency to a population previously considered powerless. This symbol was appropriated for its broadest political use by Abdias do Nascimento, who developed the radical Afrocentric political philosophy of *quilombismo*.¹⁵⁵ In his seminal text on the subject, *O quilombismo* (1980), Nascimento theorizes *quilombismo* as a political system that is inherently transnational, historical, and liberating. Situating *quilombismo* within the American history of *palenques*, *marronage*, and *cumbes*, he writes that this system represents “an international alternative for popular Black political organization. *Quilombismo* articulates the diverse levels of collective life whose dialectic interaction proposes complete fulfillment and realization of the creative capacities of the human being” (151-52). Thus, the *quilombo* is both a particular and universal solution; although it emerges from the Brazilian context, its model is applicable elsewhere as well.

The symbolic potential of the *quilombo* has also been elaborated in literature by Afro-Brazilian authors. Although it is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide a full overview of the *quilombo* as a theme in Brazilian letters, I note that its earliest appearances are attributed to the *modernista* writers whose careers immediately preceded that of Solano Trindade. In fact, Jorge de Lima’s *Poemas negros* is one of the first texts of Brazilian literature to feature *quilombos*; these Afro-Brazilian communities appear in his poem “Serra da Barriga” and the previously cited “Zumbi.” Trindade, however, was the artist who would elaborate this theme most extensively, setting the stage for its later use in the Quilombhoje movement, whose very

¹⁵⁵ The political significance of the *quilombo* remains relevant to the debate on race relations in Brazil today. See Carril’s article “Quilombo, território, e geografia” regarding the use of *quilombos* by contemporary Afro-Brazilian rappers as a tool for collective racial identity.

name employs this symbol as a touchstone of Afro-Brazilian identity and pride. Examining Trindade's symbolic use of the *quilombo* in his poetry reveals the ways in which this metaphor incubates the creation and perpetuation of Afro-Brazilian subjectivity. Trindade's use of the *quilombo* overcomes the superficial representations of Afro-Brazilian traditions that characterized earlier Brazilian literature—such as Bopp's *Urucungo*—and explores blackness from within, as a way of being.

Trindade's Afro-Socialist Utopia in “Canto dos Palmares”

Trindade's most sophisticated treatment of the *quilombo* theme is found in his epic poem “Canto dos Palmares,” which retells the history of Afro-Brazilian resistance through its twenty-six stanzas of free verse. The unadorned vocabulary and straightforward syntax that Trindade uses in this poem are characteristic of his general style, which was heavily influenced by African oral traditions and reflects the poet's commitment to writing for the masses (including an Afro-Brazilian population that was still, at this point in history, largely illiterate). The poetic value of “Canto dos Palmares,” therefore, lies in the way in which these aesthetics intensify its political message, as Trindade's characterization of the *quilombo* and its relationship to the surrounding civilization demonstrate the influence of black transnationalist thought in his writing. In “Canto dos Palmares,” the *quilombo* is represented as an Afrocentric political system that is ethically superior to Brazil's dominant (white) “civilization.” The *quilombo* in “Canto dos Palmares” challenges Brazil's dominant racial paradigms by presenting a space that is created, sustained, and controlled by Afrocentric values, existing outside the confines of both European tradition and European history. The *quilombo* thus provides a sovereign territory for the lived experience and celebration of blackness outside of the paradigm of *mestiçagem*, which was conceived under

and perpetuated a Eurocentric capitalist worldview. Blackness is not absorbed by a greater national identity in Trindade's portrayal of Palmares. Instead, the African community depicted in "Canto dos Palmares" actively resists conforming to the value system promoted by the society that surrounds it, referred to as "o opressor." With this in mind, the remainder of this chapter explores in depth Trindade's characterization of the *quilombo* as an Afro-Socialist paradise, in order to establish how "Canto dos Palmares" posits this distinct form of community as an alternative to the *status quo*.

"Canto dos Palmares" begins with a declaration by the poet himself that evokes the opening stanza of the poem "Lá vai verso!," by Luís Gama. In the first lines of his own work, Trindade declares, "Eu canto aos Palmares / sem inveja de Virgílio de Homero / e de Camões" (37). Just as Gama, Trindade's poetic predecessor, declared his break with European literary tradition in "Lá vai verso!," so does Trindade in these lines establish his role as the *griot* of a new form of epic, in the mold of the West African storytellers who preserved their tribes' history and culture through centuries of oral narrative.¹⁵⁶ The lines that follow provide insight into his self-appointed mission, as he writes, "o meu canto / é o grito de uma raça / em plena luta pela liberdade" (37). His ideological position is thus clarified, and expanded in the third stanza of the poem, in which Trindade asserts that he represents "todos os povos / de todas as raças," joining them with a "mão fechada / contra todas as tiranias!" (37). As in Guillén and Pedroso's poetry, blackness here is an entry point to a more diverse revolutionary tradition. Although the remainder of this poem clearly centers on the Afro-Brazilian subject, these lines of the third stanza remind the reader that from Trindade's perspective, the struggle for blacks' racial rights has many global parallels. Doubtless influenced by the Comintern's agenda—according to

¹⁵⁶ A number of Trindade's *modernista* predecessors were also interested in renovating this literary genre, including the *verdeamarelista* Cassiano Ricardo, whose *Martim Cererê* (1928) re-imagined the founding of the Brazilian nation as the amalgamation of the three sad races.

Lazaroni, Trindade was known for his careful study of Soviet publications—, the Afro-Brazilian poet shared this view with many of his radical contemporaries, including the Afro-Cuban writers studied here (93).

To recount the revolutionary history that is the subject of his poem, Trindade centers on Palmares, the famous Afro-Brazilian community in the Brazilian state of Alagoas, although his descriptions of this site are generally vague enough to be applicable to many other *quilombo* communities.¹⁵⁷ Over the course of “Canto dos Palmares,” Trindade highlights three of the *quilombo*’s distinguishing traits: its fecundity, its self-sufficiency, and its productivity. Each of these qualities is one that Trindade also associates with black subjectivity. To understand the relationship between the *quilombo*’s character and Trindade’s characterization of blackness, this analysis will begin by addressing Palmares’s fertility—the key to its survival. Trindade introduces the fecundity of the *quilombo*’s territory in the fifth stanza of the poem and builds upon this characterization in subsequent stanzas. In the fifth stanza, the men of the *quilombo* are described in terms of their ability to farm the land and defend it—“todos sabem plantar / e manejar arcos”—while the women of Palmares are lauded for their fertility, with Trindade declaring that they are “dispostas para amar / seus ventres crescem / e nascem novos seres” (37). The description here is complemented by that contained in the eighth stanza, which also addresses this same characteristic of the *quilombo*. This entire stanza reads:

Nossa plantações

estão floridas,

¹⁵⁷ The study of Brazil’s *quilombos* has always been politically fraught, and the impulse to provide a singular, comprehensive description of *quilombola* communities has hindered historians’ ability to adequately convey the economic and social diversity displayed among these settlements. While Thomas Flory identified this tendency in his 1979 article “Fugitive Slaves and Free Society,” it has been confirmed as recently as 2012, by the Brazilian historians Manolo Florentino and Marcia Amantino, who have used their article “Fugas, quilombos e fogões nas Américas” to address the many variant elements of *quilombo* societies, from the reasons that compelled the establishment of *quilombos* to the distinct economic systems that operated in different communities.

nossas crianças
 brincam à luz da lua,
 nossos homens
 batem tambores,
 canções pacíficas,
 e as mulheres dançam
 essa música...(37)

The repetition of the plural possessive in this stanza reveals the deeper significance of the *locus amoenus* described by Trindade; this idyllic environment of flourishing agriculture and cooperative community is enhanced by the fact that it is a space completely owned by its occupants.

The characterization of Palmares as an Edenic space is a prerequisite for the contrast that Trindade inserts in the following stanzas, as he describes the conflict between the *quilombo* and the society that surrounds it. Though he never officially codes the *quilombo*'s enemy as racially white, it is clear that the sixth stanza of the poem, which is devoted to an extended description of "o opressor," is meant to demonize mainstream Brazilian society. Whereas the *quilombo* is defined by its fecundity, white civilization is described as fundamentally destructive. Staging the encounter between the *quilombo* and the culture of the oppressor, Trindade writes that:

As palmeiras
 ficam cheias de flechas,
 os rios cheios de sangue,
 matam meus irmãos

devastam os meus campos,
roubam as nossas reservas. (37)

The precious resources of the *quilombo*, its abundance of palm trees and water, are heartlessly destroyed by those who wish to dominate the community. Yet these are not motivated purely by greed; they believe that they possess a greater mission, as the closing lines of this stanza demonstrate. The last four lines of this sixth stanza explains the oppressors' behavior as compelled by the desire to “salvar / a civilização / e a fé...” (37). Here is a subtle echo of the words that Pêro Vaz de Caminha, secretary to the expedition of Pedro Álvares Cabral, wrote to the Portuguese monarch in 1500, when he assured him that the greatest fruit of Portuguese exploration would be the salvation of Brazil's indigenous people: “o melhor fruto . . . me parece que será salvar esta gente” (“Carta”). The irony with which Trindade imbues his lines, however, reveals how misguided he believes the colonizers' objectives to be. In the juxtaposition that Trindade creates of the *quilombo* and Brazil's Eurocentric society, he mounts a critique of Brazilian history that dispels the myth of Lusotropicalism. Not only does he highlight the conflict inherent in the encounter between Afro- and Eurocentric civilizations, but he also underscores the ethical disjunction between these societies.

Trindade's juxtaposition of the *quilombo*'s idyllic space with the so-called “civilization” of white society serves to condemn the latter. While admittedly simplistic, his critique is consistent with Trindade's general perspective on black-white race relations, as demonstrated in another poem—“Civilização branca”—that questions the supposed “advancement” of Western societies in light of their common practice of racial discrimination. That poem is sufficiently concise to be reproduced here in its entirety:

Lincharam um homem

Entre os arranha-céus,
 (Li no jornal)
 Procurei o crime do homem
 O crime não estava no homem
 Estava na cor de sua epiderme. (62)

Not unlike the critique made by Guillén in his poem “Elegía a Emmett Till,” in both the previously cited section of “Canto dos Palmares” and in “Civilização branca,” Trindade ridicules the so-called gains of modernity. In his purview, the true barbarians are those who resort to bloodshed in order to establish their racial superiority and impose their institutions and prejudices on an otherwise peaceful society.

The second quality of the *quilombo* that “Canto dos Palmares” emphasizes is this system’s self-sufficiency. This characteristic is particularly poignant following the poem’s earlier stanzas describing the oppressor’s greed and desire for domination; in the seventeenth stanza of “Canto dos Palmares,” Trindade lauds the *quilombo* for its essentially non-exploitative nature, which again, stands in stark contrast to that of its surrounding society. In the *quilombo* that Trindade describes, the workers enjoy total control of the means of production, as well as the fruits of their labors. In the ten lines of the stanza, the poet traces the chain of production from beginning to end, noting how at each stage, the resources of the *quilombo* directly benefit its inhabitants. Of the plantation’s sugar, for example, he writes, “meus irmãos fazem mel, / minhas amadas fazem doce” for the children of Palmares to delight in (38). The remainder of the stanza describes the clothing of the *quilombo*’s children as made “dos algodoads / que nós plantamos” (38). The mention of these particular products—sugar and cotton—is significant as it provides a rhetorical reversal of the economy of slavery. These verses reappropriate some of the key

products of Brazil's slavocracy and redistribute them to those to whom they truly belong—the individuals who produced them in the first place. This view of the *quilombo* aligns with early historical studies of this type of community, such as those authored by Arthur Ramos and Clóvis Moura, which generally assumed that communities like Palmares operated as economically self-contained units. However, the image of the *quilombo* as a self-sufficient community is also, importantly, aligned with socialist ideology of Trindade's era, even faintly echoing the original proposal of the Black Belt Thesis.¹⁵⁸

The final quality of the *quilombo* that Trindade emphasizes in “Canto dos Palmares” is its productivity. This can be understood as resulting from the first two factors, as the *quilombo*'s natural fecundity, combined with its residents' commitment to self-sufficiency, creates a society that is characterized by its regenerative power. Three kinds of productivity are highlighted in “Canto dos Palmares:” cultural, material, and human. With regards to the first, Trindade continually emphasizes the African cultural traditions that are sustained within the Palmares community. Of course, there is the tradition of storytelling—of which he is the chief *griot*, as he insists in the first stanza of the poem—but there are also the traditions of music and dance, which serve an important role in the *quilombo*'s fight against its oppressors. In the eighteenth through twenty-sixth stanzas, Trindade dramatizes an attack on the *quilombo* in order to show how cultural performance serves as an act of resistance for the residents of Palmares. The eighteenth stanza, the first of this group, sets the stage for this conflict, with a description of the oppressors arming themselves for battle. The following stanzas within this set alternate between descriptions of the white aggressors and the *quilombo*'s response to them. In the nineteenth stanza, for example, the oppressors launch their offensive, proclaiming, as Trindade narrates, “-É preciso

¹⁵⁸ More recent research on *quilombo* suggests that not all of these settlements operated in a communitarian fashion—and, in fact, suggests that many adopted capitalist models of trade with surrounding communities. Florentino and Amantino's article explains this.

salvar a civilização” (38). Next, Trindade describes Palmares’s response as a rejection of the ideals pursued so violently by the colonizer. In this stanza, Trindade corrects the colonizer’s false understanding of civilization by promoting his own form of culture, writing “Eu ainda sou poeta / e canto nas selvas / a grandeza da civilização – a Liberdade” (38). Poetry defeats the sword in the subsequent lines, wherein the poet describes a choral response to his declaration, as the entire community of Palmares joins in “acompanhando o ritmo / da minha voz...” (38). When the oppressor threatens the *quilombo* once more, in the twenty-first stanza, the poet issues the same response, replicating the response delivered in the twentieth stanza, with slight changes. Instead of singing freedom as the chief value of civilization, however, he declares it to be the chief value of religious faith: “Eu ainda sou poeta / e canto nas matas / a grandeza da fé—a Liberdade...” (38). The performance that he gives—and which inspires his compatriots to issue their own song of resistance—shows the significance of cultural performance to this community. This is a form of culture that is Afrocentric, created by and intended for African audiences. It is not performed for white entertainment—as in the type of performance that Regino Pedroso and Jorge de Lima criticized in their respective poems on that same subject, both of which are discussed in greater detail in chapters three and five—but for the animation and motivation of a distinct community, which identifies with and upholds the values that underlie the performance itself.

The second form of productivity that the *quilombo* embodies is material productivity. An outward manifestation of the community’s self-sufficiency, the material productivity of Palmares is celebrated in the twenty-third stanza of the poem. In this stanza, centuries of slavery in which Afro-Brazilians’ labor was exploited for the economic benefit of others are overcome by the subject’s reclaiming of his physical work. The poet now toils alongside his fellow Afro-Brazilians to build a new kind of society. He emphasizes their productivity with the lines:

Agora sou poeta,
 meus irmãos vêm ter comigo,
 eu trabalho,
 eu planto,
 eu construo,
 meus irmãos vêm ter comigo... (39)

The staccato effect of the middle three lines of this stanza rings as a deliberate affirmation of his work and its communal importance. As these lines reveal, the *quilombo*'s productivity is an important element of its function as a space of resistance, for as Trindade shows here, it is not merely a place of defensive resistance, but of productive resistance. This view actually revises traditional interpretations of the *quilombo*, demonstrating that this community was not merely, as in the words of Edison Carneiro “uma reação negativa, de fuga, de defesa...a reação mais simples,” but that it replaced the violence of outside society with a peaceful, positive force (*O quilombo dos Palmares* 3).

Even violence and the decay of death are themselves redeemed as the bodies of the dead are incorporated into Palmares's productive mission. In the sixteenth stanza, Trindade describes how the women of Palmares cultivate beauty within their community by repurposing the funeral arrangements of the dead. He writes:

nascem flores
 nas covas dos meus mortos
 e as mulheres
 se enfeitam com elas
 e fazem perfume

com sua essência. (38)

In these lines, the finality of death is reversed. In another demonstration of the self-sufficiency of the *quilombo*, grave flowers are made into objects of olfactory pleasure for the new generation of the Palmares community.

This idea is developed further in the next stanza of the poem, the twenty-fourth of “Canto dos Palmares,” which expands the idea of the *quilombo*’s material productivity to that of human productivity. In this stanza of thirteen lines—one of the longer ones of the poem—Trindade describes the quasi-religious sexual practice that manifests Palmares’s spirit of equality in the male-female conjugal act. He declares, “Minhas amadas me cercam, / sinto o cheiro do seu corpo, / e cantos místicos / sublime meu espírito!” (39). In these lines, the many women of Palmares—the plural “amadas”—are collapsed into the singular figure of the lover, whose attentions produce a state of transcendence for the poet. This image is one that is common in Trindade’s extensive corpus of erotic poetry, which celebrates black female sexuality. In fact, in the 2008 anthology of Trindade’s work *O Poeta do povo*, one of four sections is exclusively dedicated to Trindade’s “Poemas de amor,” many of which are explicitly sexual in nature. There is often a spiritual element in these poems as well, as is the case in the pieces “Uma negra me levou a Deus” and “Outra negra me levou a Macumba,” a set of complementary poems that describe the sexual experience as a form of communion with the Christian God, on the one hand, and African Orishas, on the other. These two religious traditions correspond to Trindade’s own spiritual affiliations; early in his life, he was a devout Protestant and even served as a Presbyterian deacon, but, after experiencing a bout of mysticism, the poet abandoned Christianity and took up the practice of Afro-Brazilian religion instead. In his poem “Deformação,” he rejects Christian beliefs as part of the ideology of the oppressor, much as he

does in “Canto dos Palmares.”¹⁵⁹ “Deformação” specifically critiques the integration of Christian and Afro-Brazilian traditions, and describes a confrontation between the poem’s narrator and an Afro-Brazilian religious leader who has exchanged his African idols for images of Catholic saints. When the narrator of the poem inquires about the missing African idols, the syncretic priest responds:

Meus pretinhos se acabaram,
Agora,
Oxum, Yemanjá, Ogum,
É São Jorge,
São João
E Nossa Senhora da Conceição. (44)

Upon hearing this confession, the poem’s narrator can barely contain his disgusted reply, and so “Deformação” ends with a two-line stanza that roundly condemns the priest: “Basta Negro! / Basta de deformação!” (44). Whereas religious syncretism has often been celebrated in Brazilian culture as evidence of the nation’s transculturated history, in “Deformação,” Trindade laments the replacement of Afrocentric practices with Christian traditions. This evidences the poet’s resistance to the myth of harmonious miscegenation—the foundational belief underlying *mestiçagem* ideology—which is also a broader theme in “Canto dos Palmares.”

In his scholarly work on Trindade, Bruce Dean Willis classifies the poet’s erotic writings as part of his larger ideological project to redeem the black body. Analyzing corporeality in Trindade’s work, Willis states that the poet’s “conceptualization of the erotic as an integral part

¹⁵⁹ It is significant that in his post-Christian autobiographical poems, Trindade traces his own ancestry to the leaders of the Malê revolt, an explicitly anti-Christian rebellion led by Muslim slaves that took place in Salvador de Bahia in 1835. As Carneiro writes in *O quilombo dos Palmares*, “As revoltas malês... tiveram caráter principalmente religioso e foram desfechadas com o fim de matar os brancos, tomar o Poder e banir a religião cristã, em nome de Allah” (3).

of self-affirmation forms a pioneering part of the legacy he bequeathed to today's poets" (74). In "Canto dos Palmares," erotic expressions of love embody Trindade's ideal of total freedom; the twenty-fourth stanza includes the following lines, which make this evident:

Minhas amadas dançam,
 despertando o desejo em meus irmãos,
 somos todos libertos,
 podemos amar!
 Entre as palmeiras nascem
 os frutos de amor
 dos meus irmãos,
 nos alimentamos de fruto da terra,
 nenhum homem explora outro homem... (39)

This erotic manifestation of liberty is unique to Trindade in the context of the writers studied in this dissertation. Despite the ideological similarities between Guillén, Pedroso, and Trindade in particular, it was only this latter author who explored the sexual body as a site of social liberation.¹⁶⁰ As discussed in greater detail in chapter four, Guillén's exploration of the black body as a symbol of resistance, undertaken in his collection *España: cuatro esperanzas y una canción angustiada*, approximates Trindade's work in this respect, but assiduously avoids any discussion of sexuality as a liberatory tool. For his part, Pedroso also eschews any representation of sexually embodied freedom; his poetry, as demonstrated in chapter four, adopts a more metaphysical perspective. Though Trindade's depictions of sexuality in "Canto dos Palmares"—

¹⁶⁰ Trindade famously referred to Guillén as "meu irmão de Cuba" in his poem dedicated to the Afro-Cuban poet. In this text, he invokes the name of Guillén as a rallying cry against the exploitative acts of what Trindade calls "os defensores / ... / da vida da escravidão," whose unjust economic practices engendered the deplorable living conditions of many Afro-Brazilian communities in the 1940s (80).

and in his other erotic poetry—exercise the male gaze, there at least exists the recognition that women ought to be as free in their sexual choices as men. The closing line of this stanza, which emphasizes the just treatment of all of the *quilombo*'s residents, clarifies the connection between bodily freedom and economic and social freedom, tying the three together.

“Canto dos Palmares” ends with a reassertion of the poet’s initial *cri de coeur*. The closing lines of the poem reiterate his resistance to the oppressor’s “civilização sanguinária,” as he writes:

O opressor não pode fechar minha boca,
 nem maltratar meu corpo,
 meu poema
 é cantado através dos séculos,

 Zumbi foi redimido... (39)

The theme of the eternal is once again addressed in these lines, as Trindade characterizes himself as the fulfillment of Zumbi’s eternal campaign against oppression. In these final lines, Trindade reveals his belief in the power of poetry to present a new form of history—a “foundational fiction” for the Afro-Brazilian community. From the poet’s perspective, this mythologized history possesses a formidable power, as it is capable of liberating the Afro-Brazilian community with the truth that it expresses.

In “Canto dos Palmares,” Trindade presents a compelling alternative to what he characterizes as the inherently exploitative and discriminatory social structures of mid-twentieth century Brazil. By emphasizing Palmares’s natural fecundity, its autonomy, and its productivity, he advocates for the use of this distinctively Afrocentric community as a model for the

restructuring of the entire nation. His positive characterization of the Palmares community is meant to inspire racial pride in his readers, as they join him in celebrating the unique history of blackness in Brazil and its survival in the face of great oppression. Yet Trindade's *quilombo*, which embodies both Afrocentric and socialist values, is also a potentially potent symbol beyond the borders of Brazil. As Trindade converts the history of Palmares into a vision of a future Afro-Socialist utopia, the poet calls attention to this form of community as a universal solution to injustice. "Canto dos Palmares" thus reflects the patterns of thinking that defined mid-century black transnationalist movements, particularly Black Bolshevism. Even in a country where such an ideology was a relatively minor political influence, Trindade's work signals the utility of racially conscious socialism as a mechanism for inspiring racial pride and economic revolution.

Trindade and Afro-Brazil in the Diasporic Conversation

With his use of the *quilombo* as a symbol of black pride in "Canto dos Palmares," Trindade demonstrates Brazil's unique contribution to racial resistance movements, proving his nation's place within the transnational networks that agitated for black rights in the mid-twentieth century. Other poems by the author also engage more directly with the topic of the African diaspora, arguing for Brazil's inclusion within this global community. Two of Trindade's American poems, "Canto da América" and "Também sou amigo da América!," do just this. In these two texts, Trindade presents *americanidade* as a solution to the barbaric "ilusão ariana" promoted by Europe's fascist states during the Second World War ("Canto da América" 71). In "Canto da América," published in 1944, Trindade cites black American traditions as a particularly effective form of protest against such supremacist ideologies. He writes:

É a América que canta...

Esta rumba é um manifesto,
 contra os preconceitos raciais,
 Esta conga é um grito de revolta,
 contra as injustiças sociais,
 Este frevo é um exemplo de aproximação
 e de igualdade... (71)

In citing the rumba, the conga, and the Brazilian frevo—all three recognizably black forms of dance—in these lines, Trindade exalts America’s mixed cultural history, affirming it as the basis for his continent’s unique status as the foil to Europe. As he claims in subsequent lines of the poem, these forms of cultural resistance also represent “o canto da liberdade dos povos, / e do direito do trabalhador” (71). Thus, America’s history of racial resistance becomes the foundation for its current social resistance, as Trindade predicts in the final lines of the poem the triumph of an America “Que se fará um coro de vozes / por todo o Universo...” (71). The same message is reiterated in Trindade’s “Também sou amigo da América!,” the title of which echoes Langston Hughes’s famous “I, Too.” Compared to Hughes’s work, however, Trindade’s poem is decidedly less critical of race relations in the Americas; this text instead celebrates blacks’ contributions to American history and envisions a future for both Americas where the worker “Terá recompensa de labor / Na igualdade da vida!” (73). In these two poems, then, as in “Canto dos Palmares,” the poet describes racial liberation as a precursor to social liberation, revealing the extent to which his work was influenced by his Marxist commitment and the racial rhetoric of the Comintern.

It must be said, however, that Trindade’s vision of black-white solidarity does not necessarily imply acceptance of the *mestiçagem* model of social relations—the two should not be confused. “Canto dos Palmares” argues for the distinctiveness of Afro-Brazilian identity, as

manifested in the *quilombo*, against a dominant society that threatens to homogenize blackness and whiteness into a single identity through a discourse of racial democracy. Like other Afro-Socialist poets of his era who understood blackness as revolutionary, Trindade was careful to warn of the cheapening of black traditions rooted in racial resistance, especially within the context of racially mixed societies like Brazil. In the poem “Abolição número dois,” for example, Trindade issues the same warning as Regino Pedroso in his “Hermano negro” (discussed in chapter three), with the Afro-Brazilian poet calling for his fellow blacks to exercise care in their practice of Afrocentric traditions, and not allowing their revolutionary art forms to be reduced to simple sources of entertainment for a white audience. Pleading for an increased consciousness among his African-descended compatriots, he admonishes them to “Parem com estes batuques, / Bombos e caracaxás, / Parem com estes ritmos tristes e sensuais” in order to hear the “grito” announcing a second abolition—that of capitalism (62). These lines do not contradict the message of “Canto da América,” but serve to remind Trindade’s readers to exercise a historically conscious practice of Afrocentric traditions. As Pedroso did before him, Trindade stresses the political value of the African traditions that survived the Middle Passage and flourished in the Americas, and in “Abolição número dois,” calls for their application in a new battle against injustice.

The intertextuality between Trindade’s work and that of writers such as Regino Pedroso, Langston Hughes, and Nicolás Guillén makes clear the extent to which the Afro-Brazilian poet was conscious of the international racial debates of his time. With his use of the *quilombo* as a symbol of black pride, Trindade demonstrates Brazil’s unique contribution to racial resistance movements. His poetic representation of Brazil’s history of *quilombos* proves his nation’s place within the transnational networks that were agitating for black rights in the mid-twentieth

century by recuperating Brazil's centuries-long tradition of resistance to racial oppression. At a time when the conversation about race in Brazil was heavily geared toward discussions of *mestiçagem*, which assumed the subordination of racial identity to a greater scheme of national identity, Trindade's writings on black subjectivity carve out another path. His thematic use of the *quilombo* is meant to generate racial pride as the black subject recognizes not only his/her own history in this symbol, but also, one might argue, his/her very own self. While other Brazilian intellectuals of his era sought to downplay race as a central element of subjectivity, Trindade instead elevated it to the highest level of significance. Decades later, Abdias do Nascimento would take Trindade's ideology even further, when he and other Afro-Brazilian leaders launched the second wave of the Brazilian Black Rights movement. It was during this period that the full weight of Trindade's *quilombo* metaphor would be realized, with Nascimento extending this symbol to broader artistic and political ends, as we will see in the subsequent chapter.

Chapter Seven: Abdias do Nascimento's Radical Response to *Mestiçagem*

Nascimento's *Quilombismo*: Formalization and Extension of Trindade's Poetic Vision

In "Canto dos Palmares," Trindade offers the *quilombo* as a space for the working out of black identity. Palmares, like the other settlements of its kind, represents for the poet a racial utopia that is characterized by its natural flourishing, self-sufficiency, and its productivity. The most significant resource of Trindade's Palmares, however, is its people. The poet represents the Afro-Brazilian members of this community as thriving in the face of great adversity, including threats to their personhood, economic sovereignty, and cultural traditions. Trindade's poem therefore presents a positive perspective on blackness that is notable for its valorization of a community whose distinctiveness, under the reign of *mestiçagem* ideology, had been historically downplayed or in rare moments, celebrated as folklore.

Trindade's friend and sometime collaborator, Abdias do Nascimento, carried the symbol of the *quilombo* even further in his work as an activist, dramaturge, and political theorist. Arguably the most famous of Brazil's civil rights leaders, Nascimento promoted his self-designed political system of Quilombismo as an alternative to Brazil's particular form of capitalism, which was structured around extractive exports and nationalized industries. A comprehensive political and cultural philosophy, Alicia M. Sanabria defines Quilombismo as an ideology that is:

[c]entered on the principles of resistance, self-definition, and self-rule for Africans born on the continent of Africa and in the Diaspora as evident in the quilombo settlements of Brazil. The *Quilombismo* principles include the maintenance and enrichment of African cultural values grounded in their universal significance and not simply in 'curiosity,' 'folklore,' 'primitivity,' or

‘ethnographical’ material. *Quilombismo* also ascribes to sustaining the humanity of all Africans in their specific ethno-spiritual identity, transforming them from *object to subject-protagonists* of their own history. (21)

These principles manifest themselves in an economic system that “incorporates the African socio-economic and political tradition of the *quilombos*” in upholding the following basic principles: land is a national asset of collective use; factories and industrial installations are collective property; laborers are the owners and managers of cattle raising institutions; and industrial workers own and manage their respective units of production (Nascimento, *Pan-Africanism and South America* 117). While these four principles do parallel some of the ideals of Marxism, as discussed with regards to Black Bolshevism in chapter one, the orientation of Quilombismo is distinct. It is concerned with the welfare of the Afro-Brazilian community first and foremost as a black community, rather than a community of workers who happen to be black. Moreover, it is an ideology that prioritizes the liberation of the individual over the destruction of an oppressive socio-economic system, considering this the key to eventual systemic change.

In this respect, Quilombismo embodies an example of a black radical ideology within the Brazilian context. According to the definition of black radicalism offered by Robinson in *Black Marxism*, his seminal study of the subject, black radicalism is not simply radicalism whose proponents happen to be black, but “a specifically African response” to oppression (73). Quilombismo qualifies as such, given that it is a specifically Afro-Brazilian response to oppression. It is modeled after African collectivism and, as Elisa Larkin Nascimento writes, “the history of the *palenques*, *cumbes*, *cimarrones*, and maroon societies of all the Americas.” According to this writer, the combination of these systems yields an “integrated whole [that]

represents an important and exciting New World contribution to contemporary Pan-African philosophy” (*Pan-Africanism and South America* 127).¹⁶¹ Moreover, Quilombismo emphasizes the individual, which is the second defining characteristic of Robinson’s black radicalism. In *Black Marxism*, Robinson writes that this tradition has always asserted black subjectivity above all else arguing, “When [black radicalism] was realized, it could become the Palmares, the Bush Negro settlements, and, at its heights, Haiti. But always, its focus was on the structures of the mind. Its epistemology granted supremacy to metaphysics not the material” (4689). If we carry this argument through, the difference between Black Bolshevism and the kind of black radicalism embodied by Quilombismo becomes evident. Quilombismo, unlike the methods of racial resistance adopted by black Marxists, was not interested in systemic overhaul, but in asserting the personhood of Afro-Brazilians within a society that dehumanized them. It was from this starting point that Quilombismo—Brazil’s unique form of black transnationalism—pursued racial justice.

Nascimento’s rejection of socialist ideals is what makes him unique among the authors studied in this dissertation. Though surrounded by black Marxists in his personal and professional life, Nascimento ultimately spurned socialism in order to pursue a different path of resistance. Unlike Trindade, Nicolás Guillén, and Regino Pedroso, Nascimento’s ideological commitments did not inspire him to a vision of universal solidarity. Instead, he employed a radical racial essentialism as his chief weapon in the fight for the rights of Afro-Brazilians. Alongside this, he insisted upon black—not universal—liberation as his ultimate political objective. The remainder of this chapter will explore Nascimento’s most famous creative work,

¹⁶¹ Elisa Larkin Nascimento, Abdias’s fourth wife, contributed significantly to advancing black rights in Brazil not only through her collaborations with her husband (including her many translations of his work in English), but also through her own writing and activism. Her most well-recognized book is *O sortilégio da cor*, published in English as *The Sorcery of Color* (2007) and her 2012 interview with the African Studies scholar Femi Ojo-Ade provides helpful insight into her role in the Brazilian Black Rights Movement.

Sortilégio II: Mistério negro do Zumbi redivivo (1979) and the ways in which it manifests the author's essentialist vision of black subjectivity and how, within Quilombismo, this serves as a tool for black liberation.¹⁶² More specifically, I argue that Nascimento's Quilombismo exists as a response to Marxist paradigms of racial resistance—in particular, the version of Negritude defined by Jean-Paul Sartre in his 1948 essay “Orphée noir.” Whereas in this text, Sartre defined Negritude as a moment of progression within an overarching Marxist teleology and thus, a movement that would ultimately negate its own existence, Nascimento's *Sortilégio II* promotes Quilombismo as distinctly Afrocentric form of resistance and as one that, unlike Sartre's ephemeral Negritude, must assert itself eternally. Studying the intertextuality of “Orphée noir” and *Sortilégio II* provides insight into how Nascimento's drama critiques Negritude from a specifically Afro-Brazilian perspective, thus making a unique contribution voice to twentieth-century debates within black transnationalism. What is more, this unique comparative approach contributes to the existing scholarship on *Sortilégio II* by contextualizing the play's treatment of black subjectivity both within the political ideology that Nascimento himself espoused and within global discussions on the nature of black consciousness.

The Life of Abdias do Nascimento: Activist, Dramaturge, and Political Theorist

Abdias do Nascimento's autobiographical accounts identify a number of turning points in the life of the Afro-Brazilian activist that led to the development of his own racial consciousness and inspired him to fight on behalf of his black countrymen. He was born in 1914 in the city of Franca, then a small outpost in the far northeast corner of São Paulo State, approximately four

¹⁶² Nascimento wrote an earlier version of this play, entitled *Sortilégio: mistério negro*, in 1951. The two versions of the play are nearly identical; the latter version, however, contains two scenes—one at the very beginning and one at the very end—that help to connect the protagonist's experience of self-discovery to the practice of Quilombismo. Due to the presence of these clarifying scenes, this chapter's analysis focuses on the second version of the play.

hours north of São Paulo. In his youth, Franca was transformed by the influx of Spanish and Italian immigrants who participated in Brazil's *branqueamento* campaigns, and who established a robust shoemaking industry in the city, which continues to today.¹⁶³ Born to a mulatto father and a black mother, Abdias was one of seven siblings. His father, a musician and shoemaker, was primarily responsible for raising the children following their mother's unexpected death in 1930, when Abdias was just sixteen years old. According to his personal history, Nascimento's first experience of racial discrimination occurred at about that same time. Seeking a way to support himself, he decided to pursue religious life as a postulant in the Roman Catholic Church, but when he was told by Franciscan and Augustinian brothers that he could only achieve the appointment of lay brother—on account of his race—he became disillusioned with the Church and left the Christian faith entirely (“Memories from Exile” 8). Later on in his life, Nascimento experienced a spiritual reawakening when he discovered the practice of Candomblé, but his bitter first experience with Roman Catholicism followed him for decades, and eventually became an important theme in his creative work, including in *Sortilégio II*.

Nascimento's second experience of overt racism occurred during his career in the Brazilian Army, which began in 1930—the same year in which the Brazilian government was overthrown by the coup d'état that led to the installation of Getúlio Vargas as the leader of the country. Two years into his military service, Nascimento was dishonorably discharged for supposedly engaging in disorderly conduct. According to his testimony, however, what the Army perceived as “disorderly conduct” was in fact an exercise of self-defense against racial discrimination. On the night of his alleged misconduct, Nascimento and his friend and fellow serviceman Sebastião Rodrigues Alves—who later became known as a prominent black

¹⁶³ Vanessa Martin Dias's Master's thesis, “Inserção às avessas,” describes the assimilation of Spanish immigrants into Franca society during this time period and their enduring influence on the industry of that city.

Marxist—were denied admission to a nightclub on the basis of their race (“Memories from Exile” 13). Their protest of this decision resulted in a physical altercation between the two soldiers and the club’s security guards—the “disorderly conduct” for which Nascimento faced military discipline. Nascimento later served two years in prison as punishment for this crime, where he started his first theater troupe, in 1942, known as the “Teatro do Sentenciado,” or the Convict’s Theater. (“Memories from Exile” 24).

These two experiences of racial discrimination, enacted within two of Brazil’s most powerful institutions—the church and the military—, awakened Nascimento to the need for racial justice in Brazil. Indeed, shortly after his discharge from the army, he became involved in the budding Black Rights Movement in Brazil. In 1938, he helped to organize the first of many conferences that he would later participate in—the Afro-Campineiro Conference, held in Campinas, São Paulo. His political activism soon developed a creative element, however, following his 1940 trans-continental journey with a group of artists who called themselves the “Santa Hermandad da Orquídea.” After returning to Brazil, he served the two-year prison sentence for his military infraction, during which he founded the Convicts’ Theater, and upon his release, began a new theater troupe—the Teatro Experimental do Negro (TEN), established in 1944. The troupe was formalized with the goal “not only to produce plays,” as Nascimento recounted, “but also to use the theater as a weapon to fight for the improvement of the quality of life for African-Brazilians” (“Memories from Exile” 24). The inaugural performance of the TEN had a distinctly transnational flair: it was a poetry reading of works by Langston Hughes, Regino Pedroso, and the Brazilian Aladir Custódio.¹⁶⁴ Of this event, Nascimento later wrote, “our very first public presentation had a radically leftist tone, unmistakably supportive of progressive

¹⁶⁴ The Pedroso poem that was read at the event was “Hermano negro.” The poem is studied in depth in the fourth chapter of this dissertation.

world politics” (“Memories from Exile” 28). The following year, with the cooperation of Custódio and also Solano Trindade, Nascimento founded the Comit  Afro-Democr tico as the political arm of the TEN. As M ria do Carmo documents, this action qualified the three men to be registered by the Rio de Janeiro police force as “subjects of interest,” which led to the arrest and questioning of Trindade for his involvement in the project (“Solano Trindade” 58). Despite his apparent sympathies with leftist politics, however, Nascimento never declared allegiance to socialism or the Communist Party. Even as the editor of a newspaper column published in a workers’ newspaper, he never professed a belief in Marxist politics.¹⁶⁵ In his later life, he was openly critical of Brazilian Marxists’ approach to the question of race, writing that socialism’s tendency to identify blacks principally by their membership in “the working classes” served only to prevent the recognition of “black people’s specific problems ... as a serious social question” (*Brazil: Mixture or Massacre?* vii).

Operating until 1968, the TEN was, from the start, a racially conscious project informed by contemporary currents of black transnationalism.¹⁶⁶ In his prologue to the first version of *Sortil gio*, published in 1961, Nascimento cited African American theater, Francophone Caribbean productions, and Afro-Cuban traditions as the inspiration for both his writing and his theater troupe (25).¹⁶⁷ Following its inaugural presentation of black poetry in 1944, the TEN mounted its first dramatic performance, a production of the play *Emperor Jones* by the American

¹⁶⁵ Chapter five discusses at length Nascimento’s role as editor of the column “Problemas e Aspira es do Negro Brasileiro” in the newspaper *Di rio Trabalhista*.

¹⁶⁶ The TEN was not the first black Brazilian theater troupe, but it was the first one to promote black pride as part of its agenda. Up until the 1920s, non-black actors portrayed black characters in dramatic works using blackface. That changed with the establishment of the first all-black Brazilian theater troupe in Brazil in 1926, called the Companhia Negra de Revistas. Operating in the mode of the French revues popularized after World War I, the troupe found commercial success by exploiting certain stereotypes of blackness. Despite this fact and ironically, however, the mere presence of black actors advanced the position of blacks on the stage, relatively speaking. The Companhia Negra, Domingues writes, “abriu espa o para que os negros fossem elevados de pap is secund rios ao estrelato nos palcos brasileiros, permitindo, assim, que eles tivessem oportunidade de demonstrar seu talento” (“Tudo preto” 117).

¹⁶⁷ The Afro-Cuban traditions that Nascimento cites include Afro-Cuban music and traditional performances by * aigos*. He cites Nicol s Guill n as the “popularizer” of these traditions—a brief mention that points to Guill n’s extensive influence throughout Afro-Latin America.

dramatist Eugene O'Neill. The majority of the plays that the TEN subsequently presented was by Afro-Brazilian writers and focused on the theme of Afro-Brazilian spirituality, as did Nascimento's *Sortilégio* when it finally debuted in 1958 ("Tudo preto" 117).¹⁶⁸ In addition to its dramatic performances, however, the TEN organized a series of events designed to elevate racial consciousness within the Afro-Brazilian community. These included: acting courses, artistic competitions, seminars, debates, and conferences (Martins, "A Ritual Choreography" 864). In 1950, the TEN sponsored the I Congresso do Negro Brasileiro. In the words of Siqueira, the event was quite different from I and II Congresso Afro-Brasileiro held in 1934 and 1937. He writes, "Considerava-se que os Congressos anteriores tinham sido demasiadamente acadêmicos e descritivos, onde o negro foi, sobretudo, 'objeto de estudo'" (48). The conference organized by the TEN, was, by contrast, highly political and focused on the current challenges facing the Afro-Brazilian community. Activities such as this were, in the words of Nascimento, designed to "restaurar, valorizar e exaltar a contribuição dos africanos à formação brasileira," and scholars generally concur that the TEN fulfilled this mission ("Prólogo da edição de 1961" 27). As Leda Martins writes:

[The] TEN was one of the most important achievements in the construction of alternative images and codes that sought to displace the black persona from the situation of object to that of subject, while simultaneously showing the relations of power and discriminatory social practices that marked the possible "places" for blacks in Brazilian society. (863-64)

For the more than two decades that the TEN was in operation, this group served the essential role of providing a space for representing black subjectivity and challenging the norms of racist

¹⁶⁸ These plays included *Filhos do Santo* (1949) by José de Moraes Pinho and *O castigo de Oxalá* (1961) by Romeu Crusoé; see Domingues's comprehensive history of black theater in Brazil, found in his article entitled "Tudo preto," for more information (120).

society. It endured until 1968, the year in which Nascimento chose to exile himself from Brazil, seeking refuge in the United States in order to avoid persecution by the military regime then in power. That same year, the military regime had enacted the Institutional Act Number Five, which, among its many restrictions, allowed for the censorship of theater performances and prohibited all non-approved political meetings. Sensing the vulnerability of his organization, Nascimento disbanded the TEN and left his home country.

Although it is the accomplishment for which he is most recognized, Nascimento's contributions to the black rights movement in Brazil were not restricted to his founding of the TEN. While the Afro-Brazilian activist focused the majority of his revolutionary energies on the stage in the 1940s and 50s, in the following decades, he redirected much of his work to academic and political channels. In 1968, after leaving Brazil, he took a series of faculty posts at American universities, eventually founding and directing the African Studies program at the State University of New York at Buffalo. He continued to write, teach, and participate in Pan-Africanist conferences during this time, making the decades of the 70s and 80s his most prolific in terms of production of political theory. In these years, he authored multiple books on the subject of race relations in Brazil, many of which were translated into English by his wife and republished in the United States.¹⁶⁹ It is in these volumes that Nascimento articulates most clearly the tenets of Quilombismo. The clarity of vision that he presents in these books was afforded to him by his experience as a visiting professor at the University of Ile-Ife in Nigeria, where he taught from 1977 to 1978. During this time, he refined his political philosophy by immersing himself in Afrocentric philosophy and African history, as he recounts in "Memories

¹⁶⁹ These volumes include: *O negro revoltado* (1968); *Genocídio do negro brasileiro: processo de um racismo mascarado* (1978), which included a preface written by Florestan Fernandes, Brazil's leading sociologist of the mid-twentieth century, who also served as the director of the ground-breaking UNESCO study on race in Brazil; and *O quilombismo: documento de uma militância pan-africanista* (1980).

from Exile.” Returning to Brazil in 1978, four years after the military dictatorship began its process of liberalization, he served as a representative in the Brazilian government from 1983 to 1987, and was elected to the Senate in 1997, where he served a term of two years filling the seat vacated by the famed anthropologist and public intellectual, Darcy Ribeiro.¹⁷⁰ During this time, he worked closely with the Movimento Negro Unificado (MNU), the most significant black rights group in Brazilian history.¹⁷¹ Following decades of defending the Afro-Brazilian community, Nascimento passed away in 2011, and was remembered with tributes in each of the major newspapers of Brazil, including one authored by the then-president of Brazil, Dilma Rousseff.¹⁷² The enduring influence of Abdias do Nascimento is evidenced in the recent volume edited by African Studies scholar Femi Ojo-Ade entitled *Home and Exile*, which documents Nascimento’s success in raising awareness of the Afro-Brazilian struggle throughout the African diaspora.

Nascimento’s Engagement with Sartrean Negritude in *Sortilégio II*

Negritude According to Sartre: A Problematic Dialectic

In order to understand how Nascimento’s Quilombismo dialogues with the version of Negritude described in Sartre’s “Orphée noir,” it is first essential to grasp how Sartre describes the development of black consciousness in this essay. Originally written as the preface to Senghor’s *Anthologie de la Nouvelle Poesie Nègre* (1948), “Orphée noir” has been considered the seminal critical text of the Negritude movement, as it systematically defines the ideology and

¹⁷⁰ Ojo-Ade details the legislative agenda of Nascimento’s time in office in his biographical article on the activist, which is entitled “Abdias Nascimento: Afro-Brazil at the Crossroads of Race, Culture and Revolution” (2014).

¹⁷¹ This group is the subject of Michael Hanchard’s now-iconic study of racial rights movements in Brazil entitled *Orpheus and Power: The Movimento Negro of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, Brazil, 1945-1988*, published in 1998.

¹⁷² See “Morre no Rio Abdias Nascimento” in *O Globo*, “Governo lamenta a morte do ativista Abdias do Nascimento” in the *Folha de São Paulo*, and the “Nota de pesar” issued by Rousseff and published on the website of the Palácio do Planalto.

function of Negritude in its earliest iterations. It is also an essay that Nascimento was deeply familiar with, as he published the first Portuguese language translation of “Orphée noir” in his journal *Quilombo* in 1950. In this essay, Sartre explains the development of black consciousness—“cette inlassable descente du nègre en soi-même”—as a process that mirrors the journey of Orpheus to the underworld (XVI). There are two ways for the poet to access the essential black self, he argues. The first way to access the self is “objectively,” by invoking African traditions, languages, arts, etc. The second is “subjectively,” by backtracking into the self through the use of the surrealist method—a method that he sees utilized *par excellence* in Césaire’s poetry (XXVIII). Once obtained, such knowledge of the black self may be exercised as “Negritude,” or what Sartre controversially termed “un racisme antiraciste” (XL).¹⁷³ He identifies this form of racial pride in Hegelian terms as the antithesis of white supremacy, and describes the dialectical relationship of white supremacy and Negritude as follows:

En fait, la Négritude apparaît comme le temps faible d’une progression dialectique: l’affirmation théorique et pratique de la suprématie du blanc est la thèse ; la position de la Négritude comme valeur antithétique est le moment de la négritude. Mais ce moment négatif n’a pas de suffisance par lui-même et les noirs qui en usent le savent fort bien ; ils savent qu’il vise à préparer la synthèse ou réalisation de l’humain dans une société *sans races*. Ainsi la Négritude est pour se

¹⁷³ This term has provoked extensive controversy. While some of the founders of Negritude were charged with enacting “reverse racism,” Nascimento never accepted this criticism of the movement. Indeed, when a number of prominent attendees of the 1950 Congresso do Negro Brasileiro gathered to author an edict against Negritude, Nascimento—the organizer of the event—did not participate. When the resulting document, the “Declaração dos Cientistas” was formalized, it included a section that rejected Negritude as a viable political strategy for Brazilian blacks, on the grounds that it was too racially divisive (Santana Barbosa 176). Nascimento would later have to defend his own racial ideology from the accusation of reverse racism, although in reality, the polarizing nature of Nascimento’s Quilombismo—which mirrored the “belligerence” of Negritude—proved politically useful, as it forced the issue of race in a social environment prone to ignoring any discussion of that very subject (Badiane 1).

détruire, elle est passage et non aboutissement, moyen et non fin dernière. (XLI, emphasis mine)

Négritude, then, as the philosophical negative of white supremacy, exists to eradicate itself. In simpler terms, Sartre's dialectic foretells a world in which racial differences will eventually be irrelevant, as the natural synthesis of white supremacy and Négritude is a society "sans race" (XLI). Sartre contextualizes this within a broader reality—a Marxist teleology of universal liberation. As Jules-Rosette writes, "For Sartre, this deracialized society is also an ideal society without class and economic distinctions" (271). Therefore, his understanding of Négritude is best understood as one that is grounded within a socialist worldview.¹⁷⁴

Sartre's definition of Négritude as a moment of progression within a Marxist teleology, however, was not a perspective shared by all proponents of Négritude. In fact, the leaders of this movement, such as Léon Damas and Léopold Sédar Senghor, did not wholly embrace Sartre's synthesis, despite the fact that, as the French philosopher wrote, "ce n'est pas par hasard que les chantres les plus ardents de la Négritude [these men] sont en même temps des militants marxistes" (XL). In 1965, W.A. Jeanpierre summarized the objections to Sartre's paradigm in a letter written to the editor of the *Massachusetts Review*—the journal that had published an English language translation of "Orphée noir" that same year. He wrote:

The founders of the Négritude movement did not finally come to rejoin that part of themselves which had been systematically insulted, scoffed at and distorted, in order to surrender it after a Hegelian synthesis had been operated. They were not seeking a world without races, but one without racism. Their principal concern was to force a recognition of their humanity as black men in a world that would

¹⁷⁴ It is generally acknowledged that Sartre, though sympathetic to socialism and the Left, had a somewhat eccentric interpretation of Marxist ideology. Henri Lefebvre's 1961 article "Critique de la critique non-critique" remains the chief analysis of Sartre's existentialist interpretation of Marx.

be that much richer because it is culturally pluralistic. (871)

The error of Sartre's logic, Jeanpierre explained, was to conclude that the synthesis of Negritude was a raceless society when, in fact, the synthesis should have been a race-affirming humanism (871). The dialectical problem, it seems, was that Sartre had blithely substituted the ideals of a race-blind socialism for the actual ideals of Negritude, and in conflating these, had made a serious error. The "paradox" of "Orphée noir," then, as Souleymane Diagne describes it, is that "in many respects the Négritude movement had, after *Black Orpheus*, to define itself against Sartre's positioning of its philosophical meaning" ("Negritude"). While Franz Fanon's *Peau noire, masques blanc* is the most well-known long form response to Sartre's model, as the next section of this chapter will demonstrate, Nascimento's *Sortilégio II* may also be counted among these critiques, and as one that is uniquely informed by the way in which it informed its author's lived experience within a society that was supposedly "sans race"—Brazil's so-called "racial democracy."

Sartre in Nascimento's Writing

In his autobiographical writings, including in his book *Africans in Brazil*, Nascimento acknowledged his admiration for the work of Negritude writers and the extent to which he was influenced by their movement. Accordingly, the influence of Negritude on Nascimento has also been the subject of some scholarly interest. Dawn Duke identifies an interesting parallel between Negritude's creative and activist components and the same elements of Quilombismo. She writes that "the construction of Quilombismo as a contemporary philosophy of identity and nationhood mirrors the establishment of Negritude in the way poetics (the Arts) and politics (the ideological struggle) combine their strengths to force society toward those positive cultural transformations that erode injustice and inequality" ("Beyond the Quilombo?" 40). As discussed in the first

chapter of this dissertation, these two ideologies, Negritude and Quilombismo, frequently intersected in Nascimento's work, particularly in the literary journal *Quilombo*, which he edited. Aside from publishing the first Portuguese language translation of "Orphée noir," each issue of *Quilombo* included advertisements for *Présence Africaine*, the premiere Francophone journal of Negritude—a marketing strategy that commercialized black transnationalism. According to Elisa Larkin Nascimento, Abdias do Nascimento was also at one point approached to serve as a contributing writer to *Présence Africaine*, though he did not actually write anything for the review (*The Sorcery of Color* 171). The influence of Negritude on the publication *Quilombo* has proven a fruitful subject of investigation for Muryatan Santana Barbosa, whose research is summarized in the article "O TEN e a negritude francófona no Brasil."

If one considers Sartre a part of the Negritude movement—a classification which has itself been debated—then one can identify the many ways in which this existentialist thinker influenced the work of Nascimento.¹⁷⁵ In this regard, it is especially helpful that Nascimento cites Sartre explicitly and frequently over the decades of his philosophical and creative work, including in *Sortilégio* and *Sortilégio II*. His prologue to the 1961 published edition of *Sortilégio* credits Sartre with correctly identifying the social dilemma of Afro-Brazilians (22).¹⁷⁶ In that prologue, Nascimento cites extensively from the Portuguese translation of Sartre's 1948 *Réflexions sur la question juive—Reflexões sobre o racismo* in Portuguese—to explain the mission of the TEN. The theater troupe, in Nascimento's description, is a project that occupies a liminal historical space, one described by Sartre as "entre um Passado nostálgico em que o negro não mais penetra e um Porvir em que cederá lugar a novos valores" (qtd. in "Prólogo" 27). In this context, Nascimento envisions the TEN as having a revolutionary mission; citing Sartre

¹⁷⁵ See Jules-Rosette's 2007 article "Jean-Paul Sartre and the Philosophy of Négritude" for an overview of Sartre's relationship to Negritude, which Jules-Rosette interprets as a "strategic collaboration."

¹⁷⁶ This prologue is also reproduced in the subsequent publication of *Sortilégio II*.

again, he argues that his theater troupe will redeem Afro-Brazilians from their own exile within a culture dominated by “frios *buildings* da cultura e da técnica branca” (qtd. in “Prólogo” 27). In doing so, the TEN will reverse the reality that Sartre acknowledged when he wrote that in racist society, “Desde que abre a boca, ele—o negro—se acusa, a menos que se encarnice em derrubar a hierarquia,” and *this* will be its revolutionary contribution to Brazilian society (qtd. in “Prólogo” 28). In addition, the epigraph to *Sortilégio II* is a (translated) quote from “Orphée noir” itself: “o primeiro revolucionário será o anunciador da alma negra” (qtd. in *Sortilégio* 18). All of these citations of Sartre are pointedly relevant to the themes of *Sortilégio* and *Sortilégio II*, as the plays deal comprehensively with both the theme of revolution and that of incarnation. Despite the clear influence of Sartre on Nascimento’s work, however, no scholar has yet analyzed the relationship between these two thinkers.¹⁷⁷

In *Sortilégio II*, Nascimento presents a version of black subjectivity that challenges two of the assertions made by Sartre in his “Orphée noir.” The first relates to the process by which black consciousness is developed—a process referred to in Portuguese as *conscientização*. Whereas Sartre privileges what he calls “the Orphic journey” into the self—the subjective approach typified in Césaire’s poetry—Nascimento elaborates a version of black consciousness that relies upon objective, external elements as the principal sources of selfhood. This is a critique of Negritude ideology that Nascimento later made explicit in his essay “Pan-Africanism, Negritude, and the African Experience in Brazil,” in which he rejects what he calls Césaire’s notion of a “wholly internal” identity (106). The second element of Sartrean Negritude that Nascimento critiques in his *Sortilégio II* is the idea of a raceless society as the ultimate objective of Negritude (or black resistance in general). This was, again, a criticism that Nascimento later

¹⁷⁷ Antônio Sérgio Alfredo Guimarães has written about Nascimento’s relationship to another French existentialist—Albert Camus—in his article “Resistência e revolta,” published in 2006. He notes the similarity in titles and themes between Nascimento’s *O negro revoltado* (1968) and Camus’s *L’homme révolté* (1949).

made explicit in his essay, thoroughly rejecting the ideal of a “universalist civilization” promoted by some factions of Negritude (108). The latter idea, according to Nascimento, too closely mirrored *mestiçagem* ideology to be acceptable—an important point to which this chapter will later return (108). As the next section of this chapter undertakes a thorough analysis of Nascimento’s interaction with Sartre in *Sortilégio II*, special attention will be given to these two criticisms of Negritude, as they are the strongest arguments present in Nascimento’s dramatic work.

Sortilégio II: Against Racelessness

Sortilégio II approaches the theme of black subjectivity through its portrayal of Emanuel, Nascimento’s main character, who undergoes a process of racial *conscientização* and personal transformation over the course of this one act play. Within an overarching structure that follows the rules of classical drama, the steps of a Macumba ritual provide an additional sub-structure for the action of the play.¹⁷⁸ This structuring device reflects one of the chief arguments of the play: that Afro-Brazilian identity is derived from African forms of spirituality. The connection between the plays structure and its religious themes are the subject of Leda Martins’s insightful article “A Ritual Choreography,” in which she observes that the employment of religious liturgy as the architecture of *Sortilégio II* affords the play “a complete symbolic system.” She writes:

The sacred ‘pontos’, the choral voices and the musical language of the spectacle repeat the call and response pattern of the ritual code; the suggested lighting produces an intimate oracle atmosphere that propels the introspection and

¹⁷⁸ While more recently, the religious practices of “Macumba” tend to be viewed as a subset of the practice of Candomblé, during the time period in which *Sortilégio* was written, they were generally considered a separate practice. Marcos Paulo Amorim offers a helpful overview of the many changing definitions of “Macumba” in his article “Macumba no imaginário brasileiro.”

metamorphoses of the characters; the dance and the rhythmic movement translate a ritualistic choreography; the metaphoric and literal use of masks and totems celebrate the linking of the human with the divine. All of these signs establish a code of meaning that translates the theatrical conception that is iconographic and synthetic *par excellence*, suggesting a totalizing space. (868)¹⁷⁹

This “totalizing space” is exemplary of Nascimento’s Afrocentric theory of dramaturgy, articulated in the 1961 prologue to *Sortilégio*. In this essay, he identifies the defining and interdependent elements of Afrocentric theatre as “a religião, os ritos, a mitologia, a sociologia” (19). The use of the Macumba ritual involves all three of these in *Sortilégio II*, supplying a structure that reflects Nascimento’s African-influenced ideology as much as the content of the drama itself.

Moreover, Nascimento’s choice to portray a Macumba ritual on the stage is doubly significant because, as Roger Bastide concluded in *As religiões africanas no Brasil*, in relation to other Afro-Brazilian religions, Macumba is generally considered a more authentically African form of spirituality, as it was subject to less hybridization than other Afro-Brazilian religious systems, such as Candomblé (195). Given Nascimento’s vociferous criticism of religious syncretism, his choice of Macumba appears consistent with the rest of his *quilombista* ideology. In writing about Afro-Brazilian spirituality, Nascimento defined syncretism as “the violent *imposition or superimposition* of white Western cultural norms and values in a systematic attempt to undermine the African spiritual and philosophical modes” (“Genocide: The Social Lynching of Africans” 61). This is a sentiment that we have already seen expressed in Solano Trindade’s poem “Deformação” and even in “Canto dos Palmares,” though Nascimento is more explicit with his criticism. Like Trindade, Nascimento seeks an Afrocentric spirituality that has

¹⁷⁹ Pontos are songs performed to invoke a particular orisha, or African god.

not been distorted by Roman Catholic influences—for this, in his view, is the spiritual dimension from which essential blackness may be derived. As Martins writes, in *Sortilégio II*, Macumba and Catholicism function as “synecdoches” of the cultures that practice these faiths (867), and therefore, the tension between the two religions actually represents the tension between African and European cultures in Brazil.¹⁸⁰ Even the name of Nascimento’s protagonist reflects this tension. The symbolic potentialities of Emanuel’s name—which, in the original Hebrew, means “God with us”—become evident as the play transpires, as the name shifts from connoting an association with Roman Catholicism to referencing an association with Afrocentric religion.

Sortilégio II begins, like a Greek drama, with a scene of exposition. The stage is situated as a forest on top of a hill. Its geography has a double cultural significance: first, it evokes the *favela* communities where many disadvantaged individuals (who are disproportionately black) make their homes. In Rio de Janeiro, where Nascimento spent most of his life and where the TEN performed, these communities are concentrated in the elevated spaces of the city, as the lower classes were pushed to these areas with the development of the urban zone in the early to mid-twentieth century.¹⁸¹ Second, the wooded environment and the elevation of the scene also reproduce the topography that is common to many of Brazil’s *quilombos*, including the famous *quilombo* of Palmares. Given the references to Palmares that Nascimento inserts at the end of the play (as well as the subtitle of *Sortilégio II*, which refers to Zumbi, the leader of Palmares), the symbolic intent of his set design cannot be ignored. In the left foreground of the stage, the audience sees a *terreiro*, the sacred space in which Macumba rituals are performed, where an

¹⁸⁰ The strong anti-Catholic sentiment in the first version of *Sortilégio*—which likely reflects, at least in part, Nascimento’s personally negative experiences with the Church, is what De Souza cites as the reason for the long delay between the play’s authoring (in 1951) and its debut on the stage (in 1958). He writes that the play was censored by the Vargas administration over concerns about its spiritual message (2419).

¹⁸¹ For an accessible work in English on *favela* communities, see Janice Perlman’s 1976 study of Brazil’s lower classes, *The Myth of Marginality*, and her follow-up text *Favela: Four Decades of Living on the Edge in Rio* (2010).

altar is arranged with ritual instruments.—A ravine stretching into the background of the space divides the right side of the stage. The *mise-en-scène* is characterized, according to Nascimento's notes, by an “atmosfera de magia e irrealidade” (39). Four characters are present on the stage: a male or female priest and three female practitioners of Macumba, who are referred to in the text of the play as Filha I, Filha II, and Filha III.¹⁸² Functioning like a Greek chorus the Filhas explain the scene at-hand as they converse with the priest about the ritual that is to be performed and its purpose. Then, through a conversation among the three, the Filhas introduce the audience to each of the main characters of the play. One-by-by, the Filhas discuss each character's relationship to Emanuel and his/her major foibles. First, they present Emanuel's former lover, Ifegênia, a young black woman whom they criticize for wanting to be “branca por dentro” (50). Next, the Filhas discuss Margarida, Emanuel's white wife, who is described as having a lascivious fascination with blackness. According to the Filhas, she first developed this fetish through her relationship with her black wet nurse, the stereotypical *mãe preta* mythologized in Brazilian culture. As an adult, however, she later indulged her obsession in her practice of Afro-Brazilian religion and in her marriage to Emanuel, which, the Filhas claim, was motivated principally by lust (52). Finally, the Filhas introduce Emanuel's character. Gossiping about him, they denounce him for turning his back on the African gods—the orishas whom they serve—and foreshadow the punishment that he is set to receive in the impending ritual. Filha II proclaims that his punishment will serve as “uma purificação” and will result in Emanuel's return to “Aruanda,” the Macumba paradise (55). This mention of Aruanda has a dual meaning, also alluding to a return to Africa, since its name is borrowed from the chief seaport of Angola. In foreshadowing

¹⁸² In *Sortilégio II*, Nascimento provides the director of his play with the option of casting either an actress or an actor to play the role of spiritual leader. The role and lines of the character are the same throughout the play regardless of the director's choice. In the first version of the play, this role is written as “Orixá” and is not a human priest, but the spirit of an African god who leads the ritual.

his protagonist's return to Aruanda, therefore, Nascimento hints at a pan-Africanist eschatology, which will reconcile Emanuel to the African gods in the cosmic realm and also in the terrestrial realm, as he returns—in spirit form—to his home continent.

This initial scene of exposition, which is not included in the first version of the play, is a welcome addition to *Sortilégio II*, as it serves to orient the audience within Nascimento's African cosmology and prepare them for the significance of the ritual that they are about to witness. It also introduces the principal theme of the play: the development of racial consciousness. From the very beginning of *Sortilégio II*, race is presented as a fraught subject, and each of the play's characters suffers from a particular neurosis about his/her racial identity. The full dimensions of their racial selves will be explored later in the play, but this first scene effectively introduces the perspective that Afolabi terms "o fatalismo da cor" ("A visão mítico-trágica na dramaturgia abdiasiana" 522). This is summarized by the argument that Filha III makes during this initial discussion of the three main characters when she insists, "Ninguém escolhe a cor que tem. Cor da pele não é camisa que se troca quando quer ... Raça é fado...é destino!" (50). Her essentialist view of race as an immutable characteristic—and indeed, one which shapes the entire human experience—is consistent with the perspective that Nascimento will explore throughout his drama. As the conversation between the Filhas has already indicated, all three main characters have attempted to deny their essential racial selves in some way, but as the course of the drama unfolds, all will discover the futility of such efforts and eventually reconcile (or be forcibly reconciled) with their true racial identities.

In the following scene, the rising action of *Sortilégio II* commences with the entrance of Emanuel on the stage. His outfit is a dapper suit and tie, which conveys his status as an educated professional (56). From the first lines that he delivers, the audience learns that he is running from

the police, who are pursuing him following the murder of his wife, Margarida. Although Emanuel confesses to having committed the crime, he appears to have no clear motive, and is clearly grappling with the consequences of his actions. In this first soliloquy, he attempts to justify his actions and explain why the police should not detain him, declaring, “Primeiro: eu não queria matar. Minha consciência não me acusa de nenhum crime. Não assassinei... Apesar dela ter morrido aqui nestas minhas mãos...” (58). Stumbling about in a clearly disoriented state, he encounters the *terreiro* that is prepared for the invocation of Exú, which his character immediately dismisses as a site of superstition. He declares, “É por isso que essa negrada não vai para a frente... Tantos séculos no meio da civilização e o que adiantou?” (58). From these lines, Emmanuel’s disassociation from those of his own race is apparent. He uses the pejorative term “negrada” to describe his racial group, contrasting it with the “civilização” represented by white, European culture. His final rhetorical question also betrays his cynicism regarding Afro-Brazilians’ social status, as he blames his fellow blacks for their own subordinate position within Brazilian society and rejects the possibility of improving that status. His self-identification with whites, as depicted in this scene, typifies a phenomenon that Nascimento described elsewhere as endemic among Afro-Brazilians. In his essay “Memories from Exile,” he writes:

We [Afro-Brazilians] must break with the mulatto myth of Africans passing for whites, success through ‘integration,’ the race mixture that always ends up white. In the United States, whoever has a drop of African blood is considered African, even if his skin is light, hair straight, nose and lips fine like a European’s. In Brazil, the opposite is true. Many of those who have a drop of European blood want to be classed as *clarinho* and pass as whites. (64)

Even without a “drop of European blood”—the stage directions of *Sortilégio II* identify him as “negro”—Emanuel still desires to pass as white (56). It is meaningful that Nascimento characterizes his protagonist as “negro” and eschews the more common Brazilian euphemisms for blackness—*preto, pardo, moreno, amarello*, etc.—as his use of the more direct adjective reinforces the play’s message of “*raça é fado*.” Nascimento portrays Emanuel’s blackness as inescapable, and therefore, the protagonist’s attempts to deny his own race appear only more tragic and ridiculous.

Immediately following Emanuel’s criticism of his fellow Afro-Brazilians, he hears the *ponto*, or invocation, of Obatalá—the first step of the Macumba ritual. He is initially tempted to listen to the song, but quickly resists, reminding himself of his Catholic beliefs. Laughing at his own initial interest in the ritual, he exclaims wryly, “Imaginem...eu falando como se também acreditasse nessas bobagens...Eu, o doutor Emanuel, negro formado...que aprendeu o catecismo...e em criança fez até a primeira comunhão!” (61). Here, he lists the Catholic practices that have shaped his religious identity—his study of the catechism and his participation in the sacrament of First Communion—and the way in which he uses the word “*formado*” to describe himself takes on a double meaning. Superficially, the word refers to his status as an attorney; Emanuel is “*formado*” in the sense that he has graduated from university. He clearly equates education with whiteness, and thus, uses his educational status to reject the Macumba ritual as mere superstition—further evidence of his disassociation with his own blackness. In this scene, however, the word “*formado*” also hints at the process of being “*formed*” in the Augustinian sense—that of being shaped by a particular set of practices and liturgies. Emanuel’s naming of Catholic practices in this scene indicates the extent to which his selfhood has been formed by his participation in these practices, yet as the audience knows, in short order, he will

be newly “formed” by the Macumba ritual. Nascimento’s choice of words, therefore, alludes to another of the overarching arguments of *Sortilégio II*—the argument that one’s subjectivity is formed largely through what Sartre termed “objective” elements, including religious traditions.

After attempting to reinforce his own perceived whiteness by professing his Catholic faith, Emanuel harkens back to his childhood and the memories that he has of his mother praying with him before bedtime. He relives this experience on the stage, praying the Ave Maria as an invocation against the Afro-Brazilian gods whose presence hovers in the *terreiro* (61-62). Just as the protagonist is attempting to buttress his “whitened” self-image, however, other forces are at work to reconcile him to what Nascimento hints is his true self—a black soul connected to the African gods. While Emanuel prays the Ave Maria in this scene, a voice from off-stage sings lullabies and religious incantations in Yoruba, further emphasizing the contrast between religious systems that characterizes this part of *Sortilégio II* (62). Next, Emanuel attempts to leave the *terreiro*, but is prevented from doing so by the invisible force of the orishas. Realizing that he cannot escape, he resigns himself to staying, and seats himself in the sacred space, exclaiming: “Que situação, Deus meu! Não posso atravessar esta macumba. Não que eu tema os Orixás...Más é loucura provocar a ira desses negros possessos...” (63). This act initiates his unconscious participation in the Macumba ritual that will eventually lead to his “purification” as Filha II described earlier. Shortly after this scene, Emanuel fulfills the three steps that begin the ritual— still unconsciously—by drinking the *cachaça* that has been offered to Exú, smoking the cigar-like *charuto* of Exú, and taking up the sword of the African orisha.¹⁸³ Completing these acts invokes the spirit of Exú, the Yoruba messenger god and trickster, who mediates between the human world and the divine.

¹⁸³ This symbolic meaning of each of these steps is detailed in Doris Turner’s article “Symbols in Two Afro-Brazilian Literary Works.”

Emanuel's invocation of Exú is not simply a practical necessity within the ritual, given that in many African traditions, Exú must be called upon before any other god may be summoned, but it is also closely tied to the theme of *Sortilégio II*, for it is Exú's spirit that facilitates Emanuel's knowledge of himself as related to the Macumba cosmology. In his seminal work of African-American literary theory, *The Signifying Monkey*, Henry Louis Gates Jr. writes that Exú "serves as a figure for the nature and function of interpretation and double-voiced utterance" (xxi).¹⁸⁴ With the help of Exú's presence during the remainder of the ritual, Emanuel will learn to interpret correctly the message of the gods and its implications for his spiritual self. Given Emmanuel's deep disassociation from his true self, Exú's work is a critical part of the development of his racial consciousness. First, as the usher to the gods, Exú makes possible the spiritual transformation that Emanuel is about to experience. As Nascimento's play suggests, black subjectivity is closely tied to black spirituality, and therefore, in order to discover his black soul, Emanuel must have access to the divine. It is Exú who makes this connection to the cosmic world possible. Second, as the interpreter of signs, Exú makes possible Emanuel's conscious participation in the Macumba ritual. Up until this point in the play, Emanuel's enactment of the Macumba rite has been wholly involuntary; he has drunk the *cachaça*, smoked the *charuto*, and taken upon the sword of Exú under the mistaken assumption that his actions were void of meaning. Exú's presence, however, allows him to see otherwise. Whereas at the beginning of the play, his character had dismissed the symbols of Afro-Brazilian religion as "bobagens," now, he will take them upon himself as meaningful signs of his own identity.

¹⁸⁴ Gates also writes astutely of the survival of the figure of Exú in "New World belief systems," including Afro-Brazilian spiritism. Exú can himself be interpreted as a figure representative of black transnationalism, for as Gates writes, "this topos functions as a sign of the disrupted wholeness of an African system of meaning and belief that black slaves recreated from memory, preserved by oral narration, improvised upon in ritual—especially in the rituals of the repeated oral narrative—and willed to their own subsequent generations" (5).

Once Exú is present, the climax of *Sortilégio II* can take place. This begins as a flashback to the scene of Margarida's murder. Emanuel enacts the strangulation of his wife and finally reveals his reason for killing her: vengeance for her abortion of their unborn child. The circumstances of Margarida's death—she is strangled in her nightgown—as well as two explicit references within the text construct a relationship of intertextuality between *Sortilégio II* and Shakespeare's *Othello*.¹⁸⁵ Twice in this scene, Nascimento's protagonist compares himself to Othello, first, as he considers the innocence of Desdemona as compared with Margarida's offense and second, as he compares Othello's motive for murder with his own. He laments her killing of their offspring by declaring, “teu corpo se transformou num túmulo. Teu ventre é o ataúde do nosso filho que você matou Você tinha horror de que ele nacesse preto” (115). While Margarida's actions exhibit the “revulsion at miscegenation” that the white characters of *Othello* manifest, this perspective is reversed in *Sortilégio II* by Emanuel's declaration that he desired the child that he and Margarida had produced (Fredrickson). In the following scene, he will affirm his child's black identity even more strongly and in doing so, demonstrate his rejection of *mestiçagem* ideology that manifests in what Nascimento describes as “marrying white,” or “a social compulsion in which one seeks to better one's children's status by ensuing their lighter skin color” (*Africans in Brazil* 86).

The falling action of the play follows this shocking climax with the final steps of the Macumba ritual, which will transform Emmanuel into the African warrior god Ogun. To begin these, the Filhas invoke the ancestors and a “presságio da morte” appears on the stage, foreshadowing the protagonist's ultimate fate. When Emanuel senses this “presságio,” he experiences a powerful moment of insight, as he suddenly understands his place within the

¹⁸⁵ Nascimento was himself intimately familiar with this character, having interpreted the role of Othello for the TEN's production of Shakespeare's play in 1946, and once again for the audiences of Rio's Teatro Fénix in 1949 (“Abdias do Nascimento: Uma vida dedicada a um ideal”).

history of the African diaspora, as the specter of death offers him a new perspective on his life. The presence of the ancestors on the stage intensifies this moment in Emanuel's process of *conscientização*. He sees himself, along with his fellow blacks, as exiles within a world that cannot accept their humanity. Delivering a soliloquy on the historical oppression of African-descended people, he exclaims:

Somente sei que naquele mundo não houve lugar para mim. Um canto onde pudesse viver sem humilhações. Um país que não fosse hostil. Em todas as partes é o mesmo: eles, os brancos, de um lado. De um lado, não. Por cima. E o negro surrado ... roubado ... oprimido ... assassinado. Até mesmo na África! Mesmo nas terras de Lumumba ou Henri-Christophe ... não estamos seguros ... em nossa liberdade. (117)

In this scene, as evidenced by his references to the Congolese Independence Movement and the Haitian Revolution, Emanuel's character exhibits a transnational historical consciousness that was completely foreign to him in the previous scenes of *Sortilégio II*.¹⁸⁶ Whereas earlier, Emanuel had tried to distract himself from his own social alienation by striving toward whiteness, here, he realizes that he suffers in solidarity alongside the African and diasporic communities of the world. Notably, this is also the first time in the text that Emanuel identifies with the collective Afro-Brazilian community. Whereas earlier, he had spoken negatively about his fellow blacks as “essa negrada” and ridiculed their spiritual practices, here, his language makes a significant shift. He distances himself from white, the oppressors, referring to them as “eles,” while using the first person plural pronoun to align himself with the black community as he declares “não estamos seguros...em nossa liberdade” (117).

¹⁸⁶ Emanuel's mention of Lumumba is a reference to Patrice Lumumba, the leader of the Congolese Independence Movement, while the name “Henri-Christophe” refers to the Haitian revolutionary Henri Christophe.

Emanuel's new identification as a member of this community is made even more evident in the subsequent soliloquy that he delivers on stage: a tirade against white supremacy. This he articulates as he is stripping himself of his clothing, which he refers to as symbolic of white oppression, thereby providing a visual representation of the process of transformation that his character experiences. In this soliloquy, Emanuel declares himself "free" from the (white) social expectations that had previously constrained him. Apostrophizing white society while he disrobes, he declares, "Tomem seus troços! Com estas e outras malícias vocês abaixam a cabeça dos negros...Esmagam o orgulho deles. Lincham os coitados por dentro. E eles ficam domésticos...castrados...bonzinhos...de alma branca...Comigo se enganaram" (122). His next lines serve a complete reversal of his former mindset, for in these he demonstrates how he has fully embraced his blackness and rejected the whitening ideal that had shaped his earlier self-image. Redirecting his words, he now addresses Margarida with another apostrophe. Referring to their child, he asks her:

Você o matou para se desferrar da minha cor, não foi? Mas ele era também seu sangue. Isto você deixou de levar em conta. Que eu não poderia amar uma criatura que tinha a marca de tudo aquilo que me humilhou...me renegou. Desejei um filho de face bem negra. Escuridão de noite profunda...olhos parecendo um universo sem estrelas...Cabelos duros, indomáveis...Pernas talhadas em bronze...punhos de aço...para esmagar a hipocrisia do mundo branco.... (122)

Here, Emanuel's language adopts a lyrical tone as he imagines the physical beauty of his black son. His skin color, the darkness of his eyes, and the texture of his hair: all of these are qualities to which Emanuel assigns positive value. These words indicate a major turning point in the drama, for as he claims the blackness of his child, Emanuel also claims his own black

subjectivity. Redeeming blackness as an aesthetically pleasing quality was one of Nascimento's political objectives and according to Elisa Larking Nascimento, her husband was promoting "black is beautiful" rhetoric more than a decade before such mantras became commonplace in the United States (*Pan-Africanism and South America* 112). In the context of *Sortilégio II*, Emanuel's positive evaluation of his (imagined) son's blackness represents the embrace of black identity and a corresponding denunciation of "mulatto exceptionalism," with Emanuel forcefully rejecting the idea that his son's character and prospects would have benefitted from his wife's white genes.

Moreover, it is this same scene in which Emanuel makes the crucial connection between blackness and revolution. His character's soliloquy reveals that, like the other writers analyzed in this dissertation, Nascimento considers blackness an essentially revolutionary quality. Like Guillén, Pedroso, and Trindade, who saw blackness as a tool to be employed in the pursuit of universal liberation, Nascimento too recognizes the power of a collective subjectivity. His imagined use for such a revolutionary quality, however, is distinct. As the closing scenes of the play will demonstrate, in Nascimento's ideology, revolutionary blackness exists principally for the benefit of African-descended peoples themselves. Afro-Brazilians conscious of their own blackness are not, as Sartre imagines, universal martyrs; in Quilombismo, it is not true that "le noir conscient de soi se représente à ses propres yeux comme l'homme que a pris sur soi toute la douleur humaine et que souffre pour tous, même pour le blanc" (XXXIV). Therefore, those who ascribe to Nascimento's Quilombismo do not fulfill the Marxist call to liberate oppressed peoples of all classes—a call that deemphasizes the significance of race—but instead prioritize the liberation of those with whom they share a specific racial identity.

Following this speech, Emanuel leaves the stage briefly only to return sartorially transformed—an outward manifestation of the inward change that he has experienced. In his final scene in *Sortilégio II*, Emanuel appears dressed as the warrior god Ogun. Nascimento's stage directions are very specific regarding his protagonist's new costume, as he writes, "*Emanuel sai do pegi [sic] vestindo pele de animal, na cabeça a coroa de Ogun—o Akoro—no pescoço o colar de contas de ferro de Ogun*" (129). Having stripped himself of the suit and tie that previously marked him as "white"—or at the very least, aspiring to be white—Emanuel displays his newly embraced black identity through the wearing of this ritual costume of Ogun. In outfitting himself in this way, he also demonstrates his newly active role in the Macumba ritual to which he had been previously subjected; now, he is a willing and conscious participant in this rite. After this, his character delivers the "Ponto de Ogun," invoking the god whose image he now embodies and, indeed, whose identity he has taken on. When one of the Filhas addresses him by his Christian name, he refuses to respond, denying that he should be called "Emanuel:" "Não dividi o pão nem multipliquei o peixe. Não separei o meteoro e a rosa... Como poderia eu tornar o homem estranho à sua pele? Inimigo do espírito que sustenta seu próprio corpo" (133). Emanuel's rejection of the Christian associations of his given name signifies the final step in his personal transformation, although paradoxically, the name "Emanuel" is still relevant to the protagonist's situation, simply in a different sense. Whereas earlier in the play, this name served to emphasize his character's connection to the Christian faith, now, Emanuel's character fulfills the literal translation of this Hebrew name—"God with us." As Ogun is incarnated in the body of Emanuel, it is this god—and not Jesus Christ—who is made manifest among his people. Embodying this new self, Emanuel steps to the center of the stage and makes one last confession,

in a voice that Nascimento describes as “*firme, calma e pausada*” (135). In his final line in *Sortilégio II*, he declares, “Eu matei Margarida. Sou um negro livre!” (135).

The scenes analyzed in this chapter documenting Emanuel’s metamorphosis manifest Nascimento’s argument against the process of black self-discovery as defined by Sartre in “Orphée noir.” In his essay, Sartre describes the poetry of Negritude as “Orphic”—in French, “orphique”—because, as he argues, “cette inlassable descente du nègre en soi-même me fait songer à Orphée allant réclamer Eurydice à Pluton” (XVII). Sartre’s imagery privileges a process of self-discovery that is characterized by the excavation of what he calls “subjective” elements, which he sees typified in the poetry of Césaire; this, however, contrasts quite significantly with the process that Emanuel undergoes in *Sortilégio II*. Emanuel’s self-knowledge is revealed to him only through his participation—which was at first involuntary and only later voluntary—in the Macumba ritual that connects him to the African gods. It is through the performance of this rite that he finds his true, essential “self,” which is represented by Ogun, and it is only once he has adopted this new persona that he can declare with confidence his final line: “Eu matei Margarida. Sou um negro livre!” (135). According to Sartre’s paradigm, then, Emanuel comes to discover his blackness “objectively,” as it is imputed to him through his interaction with African traditions. This is opposed to what Césaire demonstrates as a journey to the inner self, for Emanuel is defined principally through a system of symbols and traditions that are external to himself.

The dénouement of *Sortilégio II* unfolds in the play’s final scene, in which Emanuel is sacrificed and the reason for his sacrifice made evident to the play’s audience. Like the opening scene of the play, this final act is present only in *Sortilégio II*, and not in Nascimento’s original version of the play. Also like the opening scene, it is helpful in providing the context necessary

for a more complete interpretation of Nascimento's work. The scene commences with an abrupt change in the play's backdrop, which is announced sensorially by special effects of thunder and lightning that "*cortam a cena com seu clarão cegante*" (136). Following these phenomena, the *terreiro* is replaced by scenery that resembles the famous *quilombo* of Palmares, transforming the set into its second referent. Likewise, all of the on-stage characters are transformed, as the stage directions indicate that they should take on the appearance of *quilombolas*, or residents of Palmares. The entire cast is directed to line up on one side of the ravine that divides the stage, with some of the cast members armed with lances (136). Their weapons are pointed towards the side of the gully from which Emanuel had been previously pursued by the police, symbolizing their collective resistance to white oppression.

Sortilégio II's final scene begins with a call-and-response performance between the orisha presiding over the ritual and the *quilombolas* now on stage:

IYALORIXA. Africanos alevantados...

CORO. Saravá!

IYALORIXA. Quilombolas imortais, de pé!

CORO. De pé estamos! Axé!

IYALORIXA. Liberdade do povo negro...

CORO. Axé, Xangô!

IYALORIXA. Dignidade de raça...

CORO. Axé, Oxosse!

IYALORIXA. Poder da nação...

CORO. Axé, Zumbi!

IYALORIXA. Axé, Ogun! Oxemogun!

CORO. Okemogun, axé!

IYALORIXA. Axé, Zumbi! Okezumbi!

CORO. Okezumbi, axé! (137-38)¹⁸⁷

This dialogue contextualizes Emanuel's death for what it is—a martyrdom. As this exchange indicates, the sacrifice of the protagonist of *Sortilégio II* serves to unite the Afro-Brazilian community and prepare it for battle. It is for this reason that at the moment preceding his sacrifice, the orisha calls the *quilombolas* of *Sortilégio II* to participate in the ritual—the group must accept Emanuel as their sacrificial lamb in order to receive the atonement offered in his death. The orisha's initial exhortation of “Quilombolas imortais, axé!” characterizes the *quilombolas* of *Sortilégio II* as members of a timeless black resistance movement, providing these characters with a collective identity. This sense of solidarity is reinforced by the subsequent exclamations of the orisha, as she articulates their group objectives: liberty, dignity, and power for their community. Their enthusiastic response to the orisha's call—“De pé estamos!”—and their cries of assent, which invoke the names of African orishas, indicate their willing participation in this ritual sacrifice.

Following the last line of the exchange between Iyalorixa and the play's chorus, the stage directions indicate that the orisha must now kill Emanuel: “*Emanuel abre os braços como se fosse levantar vôo, o Orixá rápido desce a espada que atravessa seu pescoço*” (139). The main character of *Sortilégio II* is martyred in this way, as the ritual concludes with the repetition of the same words with which it began, the Filhas closing the cosmic circle with the chant:

FILHA I. Azeite de dendê... farofa...

¹⁸⁷ “Saravá” and “Axé” are both exclamations of assent used in Afro-Brazilian rituals. “Saravá” translates to a salutation meaning “welcome,” and “axé” is derived from the Yoruba term meaning “energy” or “power,” referring to the life force of the orishas. The proper nouns in the excerpted dialogue refer to Yoruba orishas and the Afro-Brazilian hero Zumbi.

FILHA II. ...marafo...charuto...

FILHA III. ...galo preto... (139)

At the moment of Emanuel's final breath, the Filhas declare, "Pronto: obrigação cumprida!" (139). The repeated use of these ritual phrases, which were also delivered in the play's opening scene, provides a circular structure to the play. When paired with the theme of incarnation, as developed in Emanuel's incarnation of Ogun, this structure reflects what Wole Soyinka identifies as a particularly Yoruba sense of continuity, defined by both "the cyclic concept of time and the animist interfusion of all matter and consciousness" (143).

Nascimento's belief in the continuity of black resistance is also reinforced in the final lines of *Sortilégio II*, in which the *quilombolas* are portrayed as mobilizing against white oppression.¹⁸⁸ Following Emanuel's death, Ifegênia, his black lover, takes up the mantle of Ogun. The on-stage cast displays their reverence to her as their new leader and the embodied version of the god Ogun by bowing before her. Then, the actress playing this part "*levanta a espada num gesto enfático de comando gritando forte Ogunhiê!*" (140).¹⁸⁹ This cry ignites the spirit of resistance within the *quilombolas*, as in the final lines of *Sortilégio II*, they chant in response to the orisha Iyalorisha's battle cry:

IYLAORISHA. Dança negro... canta negro!

Folga negro... branco não vem cá!

CORO. E se vier... pau há de levar!

pau há de levar!

Dança negro... canta negro

Folga negro... a escravidão acabou!

¹⁸⁸ The subtitle of *Sortilégio II: mistério negro do Zumbi redivivo* also reinforces this interpretation as it references the supposedly immortal Afro-Brazilian hero Zumbi, warrior chief of Palmares.

¹⁸⁹ "Ogunhiê!" translates roughly to "Long live Ogun!"

a libertação chegou!

IYLAORISHA. Axé para todos: para os mortos...os vivos...e os não nascidos!

Axé a vitória de nossa luta!

CORO. Axé!... Axé!... Axé!... Axé!... Axé!... Axé!... (140)

The cry of “axé!” repeated by the *quilombolas* demonstrates their unity in the fight against white oppression. In this closing scene of the play, the characters of *Sortilégio II* envision the liberation of their community—a liberation does not entail the sort of racelessness promoted by *mestiçagem* ideology. Instead, this closing scene of *Sortilégio II* promotes a vision of black pride that is obviously hostile to white society. Iylaorisha’s command of “branco não vem cá!,” reinforced by the chorus’s threatening response that “se vier... pau há de levar!,” indicates that the revolution of these *quilombolas* is not one enacted to benefit white Brazilian society, but specifically—and only—Afro-Brazilians. In this way, the revolution imagined by Nascimento distinguishes itself from that idealized by Sartre—and by the other writers discussed in this dissertation—by rejecting a socialist vision of universal liberation and focusing instead on the freedom of only one particular group.

Moving Beyond *Mestiçagem* in Brazilian Race Relations

In Nascimento’s *Sortilégio II*, we see a critique of Sartre’s Negritude that operates on two fronts. First, it criticizes Sartre’s paradigm of racial consciousness. Whereas Sartre described this as a process that was principally subjective, Nascimento depicts it as primarily objective. Furthermore, whereas Sartre described black consciousness as a self-negating movement, Nascimento argues with *Sortilégio II* that race consciousness is a necessarily ongoing struggle. The significance of Nascimento’s critique, however, is reinforced by the uniqueness of his position. Nascimento, as an Afro-Brazilian, was uniquely conscious of the downsides of the kind

of “race-blind” ideology promoted by Sartre in “Orphée noir.” The similarities between Sartre’s ideal of a world “sans race” and the (supposedly) post-racial Brazil celebrated by proponents of *mestiçagem* are striking. In both scenarios, race is subordinated as an identitarian element, requiring the erasure of racial subjectivity from the individual. In his writing on black rights in Latin America, Nascimento astutely observes that the conflation of these two ideologies characterized the evolution of Latin American Marxism in the twentieth century. Although in the first half of the century—as I have argued in this dissertation—socialism recognized the significance of racial identity and attempted to employ it to achieve its own ideological ends, by the 1950s, Latin American Marxism had lost this vision. No longer an alternative to the ideologies of *mestizaje* and *mestiçagem*, the Latin American Left began to conflate its vision with these racially homogenizing forms of discourse. As Nascimento writes in his essay “Africans in Central and South America:”

Either we are to pursue the universal culture of ‘scientific socialism’ in revolutionary society, or we are to create, through progressive miscegenation, a new *café-au-lait* humanity whose monolithic ethnicity and cultural amalgamation would eradicate all forms of racism and racial distinctions. The Brazilian intellectual left traditionally marries both of these goals in one ideological utopia.

(135)

This was not a vision that Nascimento embraced, and he had strong words against *mestiçagem*, writing in that same essay that *mestiçagem* was simply racism in a new form: “Explicit racism having become less fashionable, we have lately been treated to a series of euphemisms like ‘*mestizaje*,’ ‘mulattization,’ ‘metarace,’ and the racist society (Freyre; 1976, 1977; Entralgo, n.d) to substitute the whitening ideal” (149). Unlike Brazilians who touted the myth of racial

democracy as evidence of their nation's supposed racial progressivism, Nascimento spurned this paradigm. Moreover, he blamed powerful *mestiçagem* ideology for politically hobbling the Afro-Brazilian community, writing that blacks' lack of participation in the political sphere owed to "the force and fury of the racial democracy or miscegenation ideology in South and Central America" ("Pan-Africanism" 86). Nascimento's disillusionment with *mestiçagem*—born both of lived experience and academic study—is what allowed him to craft the incisive critique of Negritude found in *Sortilégio II* and propose his alternative "philosophy of difference" epitomized in Quilombismo (Duke 42). Having experienced the reality of a "racial democracy," Nascimento rejected Sartre's Marxist teleology that predicted a shift from "le particularisme passé" to "l'universalisme futur" (XLII). Instead, he saw the future of Brazil as grounded within the recognition of Africans' particular contributions to national history and culture. This, and only this, in his view, would lead to the liberation of Brazil's black community.

In sustaining this belief, Nascimento presaged the direction of race activism in Brazil during the second half of the twentieth century. Over these decades, Brazilian black rights leaders moved away from universalist paradigms and towards more particular expressions of black pride, as evidenced by as the passage of racial discrimination laws, laws protecting *quilombo* residents, the establishment of the National Day of Black Consciousness (November 20), and the passage of affirmative action laws. Nascimento was himself involved in many of these efforts as a member of Brazil's legislature, and he was supported in his efforts by the activists of the Quilombhoje movement of the 70s and 80s, as well as members of the Movimento Negro Unificado (MNU). As these activists employed a rhetoric of black pride, their work slowly chipped away at the foundations of *mestiçagem*, unveiling the existence and effects of racial discrimination in Brazil and seeking pragmatic solutions for the challenges faced by the

Afro-Brazilian community. It is this generation of activists who appear to have made the most political gains on behalf of Afro-Brazilians, a fact that demonstrates the curious efficacy of Nascimento's essentialism. In its refusal to surrender black subjectivity to a universal political agenda, Nascimento's radical Quilombismo has become like the immortal Zumbi, inspiring decades of activism in the Afro-Brazilian community.

Conclusion: From the Black Belt Thesis to Black Lives Matter

Having analyzed the poetry and drama of these four writer-activists in depth, this dissertation concludes with a broad consideration of their significance as black transnationalist thinkers in Latin America. Two key questions guide this conclusion. The first is simply this: what were the contributions of these four Afro-Latin authors—Nicolás Guillén, Regino Pedroso, Solano Trindade, and Abdias do Nascimento—to black transnationalism? The second is framed as follows: what effect did their adoption (and adaptation) of black transnationalism have on racial discourse in Latin America?

To respond to this first question, it is helpful to return to the definitions of black transnationalism offered in the first chapter of “Our Black *América*.” The first of these which bears repeating is Davarian Baldwin’s definition of black transnationalism, which he describes as a “New Negro analytic” that “charts broadly the New Negro experience as an overlapping and contested architecture of race consciousness that moved around the United States, traveled along a range of expressive frequencies, and was translated (or not) into other languages and frames of local and global discourse” (Introduction). A few points of this definition are worth drawing out in our consideration of the works studied in this dissertation. As the writing of these four authors reveals, black transnationalism exercised considerable influence on Afro-Latin intellectuals in the first half of the twentieth century. Flowing outwards from its original epicenters in Europe and the Americas, it wove an intricate web of cultural influence, personal relationships, and political movements that helped to develop race consciousness in Latin America. This occurred in spite of—or perhaps more because of—the fact that in countries such as Cuba and Brazil, “local discourse” was dominated by paradigms that emphasized the supremacy of national identity over specifically racial forms of subjectivity. In Latin America, therefore, black

transnationalism served as an important counterdiscourse against the racial models of *mestizaje* and *mestiçagem*.

The “expressive frequency” of black transnationalism studied at length in “Our Black *América*” is Black Bolshevism. For Nicolás Guillén, Regino Pedroso, and Solano Trindade, Black Bolshevism provided an ideological entry point for the representation of black subjectivity in Latin America. By providing an explanation of and a vocabulary for the specific forms of oppression suffered by blacks, Black Bolshevism was an avenue through which these writers could demythologize *mestizaje* and *mestiçagem* and depict the true—and lamentable—state of race relations in Cuba and Brazil. In this way, socialism was first “translated” into the Luso-Hispanic context not as a raceless ideology, but as one that was actually highly race conscious. The poetry of all three of these writers indicates how their Marxist beliefs led them to conceive of blackness as a specific identity—and one with revolutionary potential, whether in terms of international conflict, as in Guillén’s writing, on an existential plane, as in Pedroso’s work, or with regards to social structure, as in Trindade’s poetry.

Later on, Black Bolshevism and its derivative Negritude served as a counterpoint to the more radical thinking of Abdias do Nascimento. Nascimento challenged the universalist aims of socialism, as well as its inherent materialism, theorizing his black transnational ideology of Quilombismo as an alternative to both Black Bolshevism and *mestiçagem*. Radical in the sense that Robinson articulates—as a “specifically African response to oppression”—Quilombismo corrected Black Bolshevism by providing a religious dimension to black subjectivity. It characterized blackness itself as a spiritual condition that was derived from the practice of African religions and which was an essential and undeniable element of selfhood—one that could not be “escaped” through attempts to “whiten” one’s self-image. Nascimento’s writings,

particularly *Sortilégio II*, thus reject the racial mixing model of *mestiçagem* by insisting upon the specifically African elements of Afro-Brazilian identity. His philosophy, as manifested in this work, prevents race from being subsumed by nationalist ideals and encourages transnational solidarity across the many communities of the African diaspora.

In comparing the interactions between these four authors and their respective ideologies, we also see the “overlapping and contested architecture of race consciousness” being worked out in the Latin American context. Even among the writers who shared a commitment to Marxism, black subjectivity was not construed in an identical fashion. Nicolás Guillén, for example, relied strongly upon bodily metaphors in his descriptions of blackness, in a way that at times appears to approach biological essentialism—except for the fact that he also described blackness as a potentially transferrable quality. Although this theme appears in Regino Pedroso’s poetry as well, his *Más allá canta el mar* also describes blackness from an existential perspective that Guillén’s early poetry simply does not include. Solano Trindade, in “Canto dos Palmares,” is largely concerned with blackness as a social tradition, and draws from the Brazilian history of *quilombo* communities to develop his metaphor of an Afro-Socialist utopia. In doing this, he establishes a uniquely Afro-Brazilian contextualization of socialist ideals. And Nascimento, finally, extends Trindade’s *quilombo* metaphor even further in his theorization of Quilombismo, whose tenets are manifested in his play *Sortilégio II*. The evolution of Emanuel’s black consciousness is predicated upon an externally focused process of identity formation, in which Emanuel is forced to confront African traditions and symbols, and ultimately, incorporate them into his own selfhood. The great variance between these authors demonstrates that within black transnationalism, there is no one model for the development of race consciousness, but instead, many routes to that singular goal.

I turn now to the second question guiding this conclusion: what effect did the adoption (and adaptation) of black transnationalism by these author-activists have on racial discourse in Latin America? “Our Black *América*” demonstrates the important intervention that black transnationalism made in prioritizing black rights as a critical issue in Latin American society. In an era in which Cuba and Brazil were busily constructing an image of the nation built on a façade of racial equality, the writers studied here boldly challenged that myth. Using socialist rhetoric, the poetry of Guillén, Pedrosa, and Trindade highlighted the injustices of racial discrimination while also projecting a positive view of blacks’ potential contributions to society. In doing so, they promoted a form of black subjectivity that united African-descended people around their shared history of suffering and their shared potential for resistance. In the early years of socialism in Latin America, this ideology helped develop race consciousness throughout the region. Nascimento’s Quilombismo, as a specifically racial ideology, did the same, although from a different ideological perspective. His ideology rejected socialism’s universal aims, and focused more narrowly on winning rights for Afro-Brazilian communities, as well as creating a spiritual solidarity between Brazilian blacks and other members of the African diaspora.

The status of African-descended people in Latin American countries remains a subject of significant debate today. In Cuba, for example, the events surrounding Roberto Zurbano’s 2013 *New York Times* editorial indicate that the debate over race and national identity in Cuba is far from over. In March of that year, Zurbano—an editor and publisher at Cuba’s prestigious Casa de las Américas—used this editorial to criticize the Castro regime’s lack of progress on racial rights issues. The strategic publication of his essay in one of the leading daily newspapers in the United States can itself be interpreted as an act of black transnationalism, a plea for recognition and solidarity between diasporic communities. Boldly entitled “For Blacks in Cuba, the

Revolution Hasn't Begun," Zurbano's editorial lamented the existence of two separate Cubas, which he depicted as contrasting versions of reality: "la primera, permite a la familia blanca recibir remesas del exterior, especialmente de Miami, base de un exilio cubano mayoritariamente blanco. La otra realidad muestra a la población cubana que no recibe remesas, esa mayoría negra que vio apagarse la utopía socialista desde el rincón más incomodo."¹⁹⁰ His accusations are hauntingly similar to the predictions made by Nicolás Guillén in his 1929 essay "El camino de Harlem," in which the Cuban poet warned Cuba of a future that resembled precisely what Zurbano describes here. For months, discussion of Zurbano's commentary—and his subsequent dismissal from his post at the Casa de las Américas—circulated heatedly around Internet sites and in newspaper articles published in Cuba and elsewhere. For his part, Zurbano responded to the scandal by insisting that his writing had been mistranslated and as a result, misunderstood; defending his piece, he posted the original text, in Spanish, on the blog *Negra cubana tenía qué ser*, a progressive site operated by Sandra Álvarez that is dedicated to the discussion of issues of racial and gender equality on the island. In this entry, the title of the editorial appears as the notably more conciliatory "El país que viene: ¿y mi Cuba negra?," though its criticism is still biting. The debate regarding the relationship of socialism and racial rights had been rekindled, and was once again a subject of intense interest on the island.

In Brazil, much recent discussion of black rights has centered around two subjects: affirmative action policies, which were first instituted on a federal level in 2001, and the Black Lives Matter movement, which, having arisen in 2015 in the United States, has now taken root in

¹⁹⁰ The tone of the *New York Times*'s translation is somewhat milder: "[T]he economic divergence created two contrasting realities that persist today. The first is that of white Cubans, who have leveraged their resources to enter the new market-driven economy and reap the benefits of a supposedly more open socialism. The other reality is that of the black plurality, which witnessed the demise of the socialist utopia from the island's least comfortable quarters. Most remittances from abroad — mainly the Miami area, the nerve center of the mostly white exile community — go to white Cubans."

Brazil under the name “As Vidas Negras Importam.” Regarding affirmative action, the initiation of racial quotas in higher education has forced Brazilians to confront the myth of “racial democracy” and admit the existence of race and class privilege within their society. There is an element of black transnationalism here, of course, as Brazil’s affirmative action programs are modeled after those instituted in the United States following the success of the Civil Rights Movement. According to Edward Telles and Marcelo Paixão, the use of quotas has not only stimulated philosophical discussions of race in Brazil, but has also “led to changes in racial identity in Brazilian society,” as college applicants are now more willing to identify as non-white in order to benefit from the advantages that the quota system provides (10). Interest in the Black Lives Matters movement has also been significant in Brazil—not surprising for the nation with the highest rate of police brutality against young black men in the world. Activists have built a network of Facebook groups for local protests connected to “As Vidas Negras Importam,” and as Will Carless reports, organizations like Amnesty International have also launched campaigns to raise awareness about the forms of violence—including police brutality—that disproportionately affect nonwhites in Brazil (“Brazil’s ‘Black Lives Matter’ Struggle—Even Deadlier”). Activists once again find themselves working to assert the validity and value of blackness in Brazil, and to reduce discrimination against Afro-Brazilian communities, thus continuing the work of the writers featured in “Our Black *América*.”

These recent developments demonstrate the relevance of the history contained within “Our Black *América*” to discussions of Latin American race relations today. The writer-activists featured in this dissertation shared the same challenge that face black rights activists currently working in Cuba and Brazil—that is, the challenge of developing a model of race that honors both universal and particular elements of identity, and in the proper measure. This has been the

central test facing most theories of race in Latin America, including *mestizaje* and *mestiçagem*, as well as black transnationalism. It remains one of the great challenges facing advocates for racial equality in Cuba and Brazil today, even as they labor in a world whose economic, technological, and social structures increasingly make transnationalism the rule rather than the exception. We must look backwards, therefore, to the advent of black transnational identities in Latin America, in order to form our interpretations of race in that region today. As the issue of race is constantly, cyclically negotiated in countries such as Cuba and Brazil, we have much to gain from the perspective of the authors featured in “Our Black *América*.”

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