

As good as so good: Afro-Brazilian speeches, racism, and nation-building in Bahia (1889–1937)¹

Tão bom como tão bom: discursos afro-brasileiros, racismo e projeto de nação na Bahia (1889–1937)

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Abstract

This article aims to discuss how Afro-Brazilians positioned themselves between 1889 and 1937, in the face of racist practices and discourses. At this time, the construction of a national project that was incompatible with the large contingent of non-whites that made up the Brazilian demographic picture was discussed. The first forty-eight years of the republican regime in Brazil was the period in which the ruling classes, as part of their project for the nation, put into practice racist ideas and a series of eugenicist measures, with the aim of leading the Brazilian population to a physical and behavioral type closer to those of Europeans. The choice of Bahia as the geographical landmark of this work was due to the fact that it was the unit of the federation with an Afro-Brazilian majority in the period, and because it had an important pole that irradiated racist ideologies in the country, the first Faculty of Medicine, in Salvador. From journalistic sources, literary texts, articles and academic productions of the period it was possible to discuss and analyze racial ideologies, as well as how Afro-Brazilians reacted to them from their discourses, social practices and strategies to confront racism.

Keywords: History. Race Relations. Culture and Society. Bahia. Brazil.

Resumo

Este artigo discute o posicionamento dos afro-brasileiros face às práticas e discursos racistas. O marco cronológico do artigo refere-se a um período de

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¹ This text is a modified excerpt from the master's dissertation: DOS SANTOS, Flávio Gonçalves. *Os discursos afro-brasileiros face às ideologias raciais na Bahia — 1889/1937*. Dissertação (Mestrado em História). Salvador: Universidade Federal da Bahia, 2001. The phrase As good as so good was very common among former slaves after the abolition of slavery, used to assert their equality with other sectors of Brazilian society, as if May 13th were the pure and simple marker of their freedom. “[...] As good as so good is the phrase continually on the lips of individuals of low condition’ — as an author wrote in 1894 [...]”. SILVA, Eduardo. *As Queixas do Povo*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1988, p. 78.

discussão de um projeto de nação que excluía a população afro-brasileira. O marco geográfico do artigo definiu-se pelo fato da Bahia abrigar um grande contingente de afro-brasileiros e ser, também, um polo de produção e difusão de ideologias raciais, a partir a Faculdade de Medicina e da atuação de intelectuais com Nina Rodrigues. O foco no posicionamento dos afro-brasileiros tem por finalidade evidenciar suas percepções do racismo científico e suas estratégias para invalidá-lo. Utilizou-se como fontes periódicos e trabalhos acadêmicos de afro-brasileiros e de ideólogos do racismo do período.

Palavras-Chave: História do Racismo. Relações Raciais. Cultura e Sociedade. Bahia. Brasil.

Introduction

In Brazil, between 1889 and 1937, the construction of a national project that was incompatible with the large contingent of non-whites that made up the Brazilian demographic picture was discussed. The initial forty-eight years of the Brazilian republican regime was the period in which the ruling classes, as part of their project for the nation, put into practice racist ideas and a series of eugenicist measures, with the aim of bringing the Brazilian population to a physical and behavioral type closer to those of Europeans.

How did Afro-Brazilians position themselves in the face of such racist ideas of the period?

This was the question that permeated the research. In the process of the investigation, two types of response were noted: one linked to popular culture — understood here as the interpenetrations, in Brazil, of cultures of African, indigenous and European matrices reread and manifested by the common sense of the population — and the other to bourgeois culture and science — understood here as the approximations and rereading's made in Brazil, by the dominant classes, of the Judeo-Christian, rationalist, scientific and capitalist models of Western societies, in particular the French, Germanic and Anglo-Saxon.

The choice of Bahia as the geographical landmark of this work was due to the fact that it was a unit of the federation with an Afro-Brazilian majority in the period, and because it had an important center for the dissemination of racist ideologies in the country, the first Faculty of Medicine, in Salvador. Figures such as Nina Rodrigues, Afrânio Peixoto and other ideologues of scientific racism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries passed through it.

The text will stick to the academic discourses of Afro-Brazilians and, with the reader's permission, will evoke the memory of three characters who helped in the journey in search of answers. The first is a fictional character of Jorge Amado, Pedro Arcanjo from Tenda dos Milagres, the other two are Manoel Raymundo Querino and Édison Carneiro. It is possible to discuss and categorize his actions from the Gramscian concept of organic intellectuals, but this is not the main objective of this article and this would imply exploring other conceptual categories that would make the text longer and perhaps denser, which is not the purpose for which it is intended at the moment.

Putting ideas in place

At the end of the nineteenth century until the first decades of the twentieth century, there was a discussion in Brazil of a national project and the disputes around the constitution of a hegemonic class, as a result of the end of slavery and the monarchy. For this reason, the term “ruling classes” is understood in this text as a group of people who, having access to the various instances of power — political, economic, ideological — monopolize the State and other institutions for their own benefit. According to Gramsci:

[...] that a class is dominant in two ways; it is both ‘leading’ and ‘dominant.’ It leads allied classes and dominates opposing classes. Therefore, a class, even before coming to power, can be ‘leading’ (and it must be), and once it attains power, it becomes dominant while also continuing to be ‘leading.’².

Cardoso also clarifies that a dominant class, that is, “the one that controls the State and imposes themselves on the other classes through the juridical-political apparatus” become a leader when, in addition to controlling the State, “it establishes organic relations with civil society”, and at the same time acquiring the capacity to be dominant and leading, hegemonic³.

And although capable of joining actions, this group is heterogeneous — in its formation, interests, and expectations — to the point of conflict with each other for to prevail of their political purpose. He finds his amalgam in opposition in most of the majority subordinate to him.

² GRAMSCI, Antonio. *Quaderni del carcere: edizione critica a cura di Valentino Gerratana*. Torino: Einaudi, Q 1, § 44, 1977, p. 41.

³ CARDOSO, Franci Gomes. “Classes sociais e construção da hegemonia das classes subalternas” In *Revista de Políticas Públicas*, v. 22, pp. 403-418, 2018, p. 408.

Thus, when one enunciates ruling classes accompanied by an adjective — such as republican, national, or regional — one wants to highlight the distinction of intellectual, social and cultural project of this group in relation to the others, in the dispute for hegemony in society.

However, it is necessary to state that most of the Nation projects discussed in the period did not include the significant contingent of Afro-Brazilians in the country. The reason for such negligence must be attributed to the hegemony of racist ideas and ideologies in the political thought of the national ruling classes.

the black race in Brazil, no matter how great its countless services to our civilization have been, will always form one of the factors of our inferiority as a people [...] we consider the immediate or mediate supremacy of the black race harmful to our nationality⁴.

The prevalence of racist ideologies can be understood based on the science and the mindset of those times as a strategy of the central colonialist countries (France and England) subordinating peripheral countries, located in Latin America, Asia and Africa⁵. These ideologies were used to justify the technological gap of these countries based on internal demographic issues, such as, the large population contingents of non-Europeans and the high rates of miscegenation. The central colonialist countries presented themselves as a model to be followed. On the other hand, so that this subordination of the peripheral countries to be effective, it was required the acceptance of these racist theses by national ruling classes.

In the specific case of Brazil, adherence to ideologies was almost immediate. The ruling classes differed in detail due to their heterogeneity of education, education and interests, but they always positioned themselves in accordance with these racial ideologies.

The motivations for such prompt adhesion are anchored in the issues raised with the enactment of the Eusébio de Queiroz Law, which determined the end of the slave trade in 1850. The end of the slave trade meant for Brazil not only a crisis in the system of production based on compulsory labour,

⁴ RODRIGUES, Raimundo Nina. *Os africanos no Brasil* [online]. Rio de Janeiro: Centro Edelstein de Pesquisas Sociais, 2010, pp. 14-15. [https://doi.org/10.7476/9788579820106]

⁵ QUIJANO Aníbal. “Colonialidad del poder, eurocentrismo y América Latina” In LANDER, Edgardo. (Org.). *La colonialidad del saber: eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales*. Buenos Aires: CLACSO/UNESCO, 2000.

but also a threat to the system of social hierarchies structured on the basis of social relations and slave production.

The Brazilian ruling classes rushed to create social hierarchies that would maintain the already established order. And, because they condemn the same contingent subordinated by slave relations, racial ideologies were used systematically and were perfectly suited to this purpose. The same obstacles imposed by slavery for the integration and social ascension of Afro-Brazilians in Brazilian society were replicated by racial ideologies. They endorsed social and institutional practices that depreciated Afro-Brazilians, based on their presumed biological and cultural inferiority in relation to whites. In fact, racial ideologies have not only maintained the status quo, but have increased the mechanisms and excuses to prevent not only the ascension, but also the social inclusion of non-whites.

However, with the same attributes and stereotypes with which Afro-Brazilians were classified within the country, Brazil was classified by the central colonialist countries — England, France, Germany — on a global scale. This fact provoked a deep malaise in the Brazilian ruling classes. Hence, the adoption of eugenicist policies, which, between 1870 and 1930, had as their main instrument the immigration of European labour subsidized by the Union and state governments.

To justify the exclusion of Afro-Brazilians from social activities, including work, numerous studies were produced during this period, trying to demonstrate the corrupt and degenerate character of Afro-Brazilians. Marco Aurélio Luz reminds us that:

To the extent that blacks are considered citizens, and not semovents, the inequality circumscribed in the legal sphere gains a formidable ideological reinforcement to give a 'scientific' basis to racism⁶.

Lilia Schwarcz argues that originality of Brazilian intellectuals was manifested by the ability to accommodate the two current models in force at that time and opposites in essence, liberalism, that proposed respect for the individuality of men, and racial theories, which proposed the difference between men based on physical and biological features. Joining them with their gaps, to give shape to a national project, these intellectuals created an

⁶ LUZ, Marco Aurélio. *Agadá: a dinâmica de uma civilização africano-brasileira*. Salvador: Conselho Editorial e Didático da UFBA/SECENEB, 1995, p. 259.

effective mechanism of control and subordination portion on the population who was under the rule of slavery and other forms of domain⁷.

Another point that was widely discussed at the time was public health and sanitation in cities. Racial theories and hygienist ideas were consensual at the beginning. Afro-Brazilians were, by definition, the sick who compromised the health of cities and the progress of the country. Sanitizing has removed them from urban areas.

Thomas Skidmore gave an example of the thinking of part of the Brazilian ruling classes when he reported the position of Monteiro Lobato in relation to the figure of a “caboclo” (a Brazilian indigenous representation, of coppery skin and physical features of the European white man), in his work *Preto no Branco: raça e nacionalidade no pensamento brasileiro* [Black on white: race and nationality in Brazilian thought].

Monteiro Lobato idealized his Jeca Tatu as a metaphor for the Brazilian who gained national notoriety in a 1919 presidential campaign, Rui Barbosa used it to denounce the country’s socioeconomic crisis. Lobato’s character functioned as a herald of those who defended the adoption of eugenicist measures, believing that they would solve the public health problems for themselves.

However, the advancement of scientific research in the sanitation area made Lobato promote the raising of his Jeca Tatu, who, after the visit of some doctors, was healed of his diseases, turning himself into a hard-working and intelligent man. According to Skidmore, the principle that led to Monteiro Lobato’s conversion was that “Jeca Tatu was not like that, he was like that. Science had come to rescue the country”⁸.

This was an idea manifested since the first half of the 19th century, as shown in the work *A morte é uma festa* [Death is a party] by João Reis⁹. In this work, the author identifies the commitment given by doctors in urban sanitation in the belief of a redemptive science and guardian of civilization.

These doctors, [...] believed themselves able to carry out the ‘progress of the homeland’ because they had the knowledge

⁷ SCHWARCZ, Lília Moritz. *O Espetáculo das raças: cientistas, instituições e questão racial no Brasil, 1870-1930*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1993, p. 17.

⁸ SKIDMORE, Thomas E. *Preto no branco: raça e nacionalidade no pensamento brasileiro*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1976, pp. 193-204.

⁹ REIS, João José. *A morte é uma festa: ritos fúnebres e revolta popular no Brasil do século XIX*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1991.

to do so. The political highlight they had evidences a group in the struggle for the imposition of an ideology that included the country's urban sanitation, although it is not confined to this¹⁰.

Iraneidson Santos Costa analysed in more detail the relationship of Bahian doctors regarding the population of colour of Salvador city, at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. His study is about the formation of a school of Forensic Medicine in Bahia and its relationship with the theses of Criminal Anthropology in Europe. In this work, the use of deterministic racial theories related to Criminal Anthropology in Bahia is discussed and analysed the actions of nationally and internationally renowned intellectuals, such as Nina Rodrigues, Oscar Freire and Estácio de Lima. These characters were committed to establish the criminal potential of Afro-Brazilians and preached eugenicist measures intended to rid society from the imminent danger of racial degeneration, represented in the figure of the mestizos¹¹.

However, it was well evident the unfeasibility of these eugenicist measures. Firstly, they were very long-term investments, making the financial cost extremely heavy for the state coffers. Secondly, these investments were not having the expected effect, since they were based on false premises, such as the infertility of mestizos or the biological inferiority of the non-whites.

Realizing the little effect of these eugenicist policies, the ruling classes converted the discourse in a prejudiced and conservative way, exalting the melting pot of the three races (indigenous, white and black) for the formation of the Brazilian people, thus creating the myth of racial democracy, associated with the idea that from miscegenation the Brazilian would be converting in the long term into a new race. The conditions for this change in position on the issue of race were also closely linked to a change in the course of the international policies of the central colonialist countries.

With the rise of Nazi-fascism in Germany and Italy, ideologically constructed from the notion of biological superiority and inferiority of the races, as well as in the establishment of racial hierarchies that had the Aryan race as their ideal model, there is a dispute between these “new central countries” and the “old” ones. These disputes resulted in the World War II (1939-1945).

¹⁰ Idem, p. 252.

¹¹ Idem, p. 182.

The former central countries, France and England, promoted the softening of the racial ideological discourse, choosing the strand that privileged cultural racism, thus emptying the idea of a supposed biological superiority indifferently on the race. The notion of superiority or inferiority came to be focused in cultural terms, measured from technological development. This way, the Nazi-fascist discourse was also emptied.

In Brazil, from the 1930s onwards, the tropicalist theses of Gilberto Freyre began to be adopted by the ruling classes. It was during the government of Getúlio Vargas that they were widely disseminated to the entire body of the society. From then on, miscegenation was assumed and ideologically reconstructed in scientific, literary and artistic areas, being considered a mechanism for the cultural elevation mechanism of populations of African and indigenous origin to reach the level of Europeans. This new view, although intolerant of the African demographic and cultural presence, was not compatible with previous racial postulates that saw miscegenation as a sign of backwardness and incivility¹². However, it did not favour non-whites or modify their insertion in Brazilian society. On the contrary, there was intolerance towards their costumes and practices. The national ruling classes intended that mestizos or those with fair skin to their similarity, that is, a European behaviour is adopted. The hierarchization of races and the internal colonization of whites over non-whites perpetuated in Brazil the same principles of the colonial and slave hierarchical structure.

Science at the service of racism

Concerned by the glaring Africanization of Brazilian customs, the ruling classes used racism, sometimes disguised as an aura of search for civilization, as an expedient to contain the imminent “immediate or mediate supremacy of the black race”, considered “harmful to the [...] nationality”¹³.

The term race, an European creation par excellence, in Brazil, was used not to compromise the current social hierarchies. Although in some strongholds of society, such as the academia or the Parliament, the concept of race has been used explicitly, most of the time it has been associated,

¹² SCHWARCZ, op. cit., pp. 235-250.

¹³ RODRIGUES, op. cit., p. 7. Regarding the apprehension of Bahian elites regarding the Africanization of customs, see: VIEIRA FILHO, Rafael. *A africanização do carnaval de Salvador, BA – a recriação do espaço carnavalescos (1876 - 1930)*. Dissertação (Mestrado em História). Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo, 1995 e FERREIRA FILHO, Alberto Heráclito. “Desafricanizar as ruas’: elites letradas, mulheres pobres e cultura popular em Salvador” In *Afro-Ásia*, n. 21-22, 1998.

confused or even replaced by another term also in vogue in the same period: the concept of civilization. Generally, racist attitudes manifested by the press, spokesmen pretended the extinction of primitive habits for the interests of the ruling classes, associated with those who had left captivity.

The national ruling classes proposed, in the name of civilization and progress, the cultural and demographic elimination of the Afro-Brazilian elements from the country. Their presence was considered a great shame for the nation. In his point of view, Brazil was doomed to backwardness as long as it did not go through a process of racial cleansing.

If the term (civilization) “expresses the consciousness that the West has of itself”, the Brazilian ruling classes did not like the consciousness they had in their country and unconsciousness of themselves¹⁴. From their point of view, there was nothing to be proud of. Brazil was considered by Europeans as a primitive country and equated to African continent. This was an unbearable prospect for a group that held itself in high regard and was ashamed of the indigenous and African blood which flowed in the veins of their members, but not of having made a fortune by indulging in the compulsory labour of Africans and their descendants.

Thus, the frustration of the Brazilian ruling classes when compared to the populations of European nations was fed and, at the same time, fed racist considerations. From such ideas, widely disseminated among the educated sectors of that time, Brazilian intellectuals began to reflect on the country. To solve specific problems of Brazilian society or to propose some kind of public policy to improve the country’s demographic profile, scientists, linked to the interests of the ruling classes, adapted to the Brazilian reality considerations made by social Darwinism or by the geographical determinism of Ratzel and Buckle, thus contributing with racist theoretical formulations and concepts¹⁵.

The notion of race has influence all considerations about Brazil, its society, its population and especially its development. These reflections began within the Medical Universities, Law, Geographical and Historical Institutes, in short, in the institutions in which intellectuals gathered to reflect on Brazilian society. The issue of races in Brazil was seen, above all, as a public health issue, which urgently needed to be taken from epidemics to criminal acts, according

¹⁴ ELIAS, Norberto. *O processo civilizador* (volume 1). Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar, 1994, p. 23.

¹⁵ Friedrich Ratzel (1844–1904) was a German ethnologist and geographer, now regarded as one of the leading figures of Modern Geography and recognized as the founder of Geographical Determinism. Henry Thomas Buckle (1821–1862) was a British positivist historian whose work *History of Civilization in England* had a significant influence on Brazilian intellectuals in the 19th century.

to the current thought of that time, the racial issue was at the centre of the discussion: diagnosis and dosage¹⁶.

Science, personified in the figure of doctors, showed its deep uneasiness in relation to the Brazilian demographic composition – already with a high degree of miscegenation. Doctors did not shy away from interfering in the various sectors of society to supported their theses¹⁷.

It is in no other way that Nina Rodrigues criticized the jurists and legislators who drafted the Penal Code of 1890. She even stated that the focus of attention of the Penal Code was wrong because it should not be focused on the crime itself, but on the criminal. He wrote a book in which he argued that punishments should be differentiated for each race and, perhaps, for each region, according to its position on the evolutionary scale.

In such a country (Brazil), the germ of criminality – fertilized by the degenerative tendency of miscegenation, by the dominant impulsiveness of inferior races, still marked by the infamous stigma of slavery recently extinguished, by the general consciousness, about to be formed, of the inconsistency of the penese doctrines founded on free will – sown in such fertile and carefully tilled soil, will force to produce crime in luxuriant vegetation, truly tropical.

III. I may delude myself, but I am profoundly convinced that the adoption of a single code for the whole republic was a serious mistake that greatly undermined the most elementary principles of human physiology.

Due to the marked difference in its climatology, the conformation and physical aspect of the country, its diverse ethnic population, which is already so pronounced and threatens to become even more pronounced. Brazil must be divided, for the purposes of criminal legislation, at least into its four great regional divisions, which, as I demonstrated in chapter 4, are so natural and profoundly distinct¹⁸.

It is clear that Nina Rodrigues used an argument based on both evolutionary doctrines and climate determinism. Her criticism of the Brazilian legislators who drafted the Penal Code of 1890 focuses on two aspects: I – The non-observance of the principles of human physiology; II – The adoption of

¹⁶ SCHWARCZ, op. cit., p. 191.

¹⁷ Idem, p. 182.

¹⁸ RODRIGUES, Raimundo Nina. *As raças humanas e a responsabilidade penal no Brasil* [online]. Rio de Janeiro: Centro Edelstein de Pesquisa Social, 2011, p 76.

penal principles based on ideals of free will. A mistake in Nina Rodrigues' opinion, as these are principles that admit that all men have the same ability to evaluate their actions. According to his ideals, this would be the same as comparing an adults' judgment capacity as a child. In other words, he believed that blacks, indigenous people, and mestizos were evolutionarily like children, just as the Aryan races were like adults. Hence, his struggle for the variation of the degree of criminal imputability, taking into account the racial origin of the individual¹⁹.

Nina Rodrigues was one of the first Brazilian intellectuals to be interested in the influence of former slaves and their descendants in the formation of Brazilian society. So he founded what can be known as the first Criminal Anthropology School in the country. This school proposed the framing of individuals in scales of marginality and dangerousness based on their physical features. The further away from the European type – Aryan – the more “intense” to civilization and the more socially dangerous²⁰.

The selection of races in an electoral context

One of the confrontations between the oligarchies of Bahia and those of São Paulo and Minas Gerais, in an attempt to put Bahia back in a more evident position in the national political scenario and perhaps get out of the abandonment to which it was relegated by the coffee and milk policy, took place at the same time as the presidential election in 1919.

Epitácio Pessoa and Ruy Barbosa would compete the election. In the Bahian newspapers, there was a whole climate of antagonism. Ruy Barbosa is acclaimed “The national candidate”, while preaching the ineligibility of Epitácio Pessoa. In this electoral dispute, what drew the most attention, and which is of particular interest to this work, is the emphasis given to the racial issue.

The ineligibility of Epitácio Pessoa is publicized because of his participation in the Peace Conference that took place in Versailles, where he defended, together with the President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, the inequalities of the human races. In Brazil, the reactions to this attitude were of widespread dissatisfaction. It is always said: [...] we cannot deny the juridical equality of races, simply to please our American friends,

¹⁹ Idem, p. 49.

²⁰ COSTA, op. cit., pp. 41-49.

who voted against it [...] ²¹. Although this reveals an apparent paradox, since Epitácio Pessoa's vote could be considered consistent with the belief, and even with the public policies adopted by the elites of that period, some sectors of the elites led by Ruy Barbosa, Miguel Calmon and some other politicians and intellectuals, transformed Epitácio Pessoa's vote into one of their banners of struggle and electoral campaign. Protest rallies proliferated across the country. From blacks and workers, to sectors of the high intelligentsia demonstrated in newspapers and in the public square against the vote given by Epitácio Pessoa.

Ruy Barbosa knew that, if he wanted to be elected, it was necessary to position himself in relation to the constructed image of Bahia as a land of degenerate mestizos. To do so, he used Jeca Tatu, the character of Monteiro Lobato, as a way of denouncing the country's crisis and, at the same time, criticizing the governing political group for its incompetence in dealing with the issue ²². The character extracted from the pages of *Urupês* was a metaphor for the Brazilian people, mestizo, lazy and degenerate. Their few qualities were attributed to their European heritage and what was understood as vicious behaviours, was attributed to their indigenous matrix. The African was definitely not part of his anatomical-cultural constitution. Jeca Tatu will thus serve, both to demarcate Ruy Barbosa's position in the field of "public health" issues, to denounce the country's crisis and, mainly, to remind the people of Minas Gerais and São Paulo that they were as mestizo as the Bahians.

The strategy was not successful and the candidate of the hardline defence of Brazil's whitening won the victory. Despite all the movement against the vote of Epitácio Pessoa at the Congress of Versailles, the coffee and cattle raising oligarchies of the South managed to impose their candidate.

Far from being homogeneous, the national ruling classes did not have only one project for the nation. They gave another demonstration of their divergences on the racial issue, on the occasion of the vote of the Brazilian representation at the Congress of Versailles. In fact, they feared that Brazil would suffer a colonization process similar to those in developing countries, on the African and Asian continents, but they could not reach an agreement.

[...] But the evil vote to which he refers is precisely the inequality of races and peoples, one before another; from which it must be inferred, since if the Japanese, strong, armed, numerous

²¹ O IMPARCIAL. "Sem título", Salvador, 22 de abril 1919, p. 1.

²² SKIDMORE, op. cit., pp. 193-204.

and efficient people, are inferior to the people of the United States, the mass of the Brazilian population, a virile and hopeful offspring, but recent and not yet armed and prepared, of various races, whose fusion only presumed ignorance and scolding would not know here, cannot claim a better qualification when confronted [...]”²³.

The way to avoid this daunting possibility was to try to civilize the country—read: whiten the country, or rather, to intensify the process that had already been underway since the mid-19th century. With the figure of Emperor Dom Pedro II no longer present—the scholar, the man of science, who projected a favourable image of Brazil in Europe and, in their eyes, represented a son bringing enlightenment to the wilderness—there was a fear that the country might lose its sovereignty²⁴. It was urgent to civilize the nation, to get rid of the remnants of the colonial past, whether in architecture, traditions, hygiene habits, in short, in everyday uses and customs considered backward and uncivilized, attributed to blacks and mestizos.

In Bahia, this concern was even more pronounced. In every street, in every corner, in every building in the city, you could see the remnants of a past that you would like to forget. The streets were still a space of Afro-Brazilians experiences and survival, who were already beginning to dispute this space with families who wanted to adopt French style. And the newspapers were already shouting:

[...] The streets and squares of the city, without exception, besides the grass, are daily, and to our shame they are full of all the debris, all the dirt, everything that speaks to uncleanness [...] the residents of Bahia get used to the electric tram, the garden without railings, the up-to-date fashions, everything good and bad, that comes to us from abroad, and takes time to subject to the good practices of good hygiene. Compared to certain capitals of Brazil, large and small, Bahia looks like a backyard. And a Bahian house backyard [...] The backyard here, a kind of so-called kitchen leftover of primitive men, is like the sewers of Paris to receive everything [...]”²⁵.

²³ O IMPARCIAL. “Sem título”, Salvador, 18 de maio 1919, p. 1.

²⁴ SCHWARCZ, op. cit., p. 31.

²⁵ DIÁRIO DE NOTÍCIAS. “Sem título”, Salvador, 25 de outubro 1912, p. 5.

While other capitals were modernizing, “[...] Salvador remained inert, paralysed in time, preserving memories of colonial times [...], both habits of population and materially [...]”²⁶. The waves of civilized Europeans did not arrive in their territory. At the same time, the action of São Paulo agents within their hinterlands was witnessed, seducing the sertanejos to go to São Paulo, to get job careers in regions where Europeans refused to go, further aggravating their labour crisis. In 1933, Antônio Vieira de Mello criticized the secundarization of the national workers in the north of the country in favour of the European settlers, in his words²⁷:

[...] several foreign owners, were all unanimous in sustaining the superiority of the Brazilian by resistance, fidelity to commitments, agility of learning and the spirit of order [...]²⁸.

Meanwhile:

[...] it is universal knowledge — that Brazilians always have the heaviest work of felling, and that foreigners find flattened ground in their roughest lines. The farmers, after using the northerner for the heavy, dismiss him to make room for the European settler [...]²⁹.

This article by Antônio Vieira de Mello could well be an aside in the defenses made about a project of agrarian policy for Brazil. He adopted, in this debate, conservative positions favorable to the current landowner model, differing, however, in the definition of who would serve as labor in the country’s productive activity. Alberto Torres³⁰, for instance, proposed the use of the “national element”, thus approaching the new racial paradigm, which did not see the need of promoting whitening of the population, as he believed in the adaptability of Afro-Brazilians to the tropics³¹. Oliveira Viana, in turn, considered it not only necessary to maintain the landowner model, but also remained faithful to the previous racial postulates, considering the

²⁶ Idem, p. 51.

²⁷ A lawyer and journalist, promoter of the work of Alberto Torres and a member of the Society of Friends of Alberto Torres, he took part in the expedition that would lead to Armando Magalhães Correia’s book *Os Sertões Cariocas*, published in Rio de Janeiro by the National Press in 1936.

²⁸ O IMPARCIAL. “Sem título”, Salvador, 17 de novembro 1933, p. 4.

²⁹ Idem.

³⁰ Alberto de Seixas Martins Torres was Governor of Rio de Janeiro from 1897 to 1900, a journalist, and one of the few intellectuals of the late 19th and early 20th centuries who did not criticize Brazil’s racial composition and identity.

³¹ TORRES, Alberto. *A organização nacional*. São Paulo: Ed. Nacional, 1978, pp. 114-147.

use of European labour necessary³². Thus, although the divergence regarding the definition of the labour to be used in Brazil was not new, it dated back to at least 1870, the year the Law of Free Womb was signed, resisting until the 1930s. It placed the northeastern and southern landowners in opposite camps³³.

In the acceleration of the urbanization process, this problem was not restricted only to rural workers, but also transcended to the sphere of urban work with the beginning of the country's industrialization process³⁴.

Although the sharp clash, the Brazilian ruling classes was accentuated with the increase in the importance of the cities, with the emergence of the workers' movement, the shock of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia and with the white European socialist and anarchist contingent, until the 1930s the main attention was devoted to the maintenance of an agro-export model of development and, therefore, to the problems faced by rural landowners.

Issues of Brazil labour and racial profile were closely linked, the arrival of European workers was expected so that they could improve the racial composition of Brazil. In the dispute for arms for their crops, Bahian rural landowners were doubly excluded from the process. First, they had to move to their labour force to the southeast region and, second, because they knew that the scarce resources of the State would not be able to face without the support of the Union's resources, their lands colonized.

Nina Rodrigues had stated that "[...] the existing blacks will soon be diluted in the white population and everything will be finished [...]". Afrânio Peixoto predicted that:

These passing sub-races tend to disappear, reintegrating the white race into an exclusive possession of the land. There was also a Portuguese advantage: the interbreeding with the black, exterminating them in the successive dilutions of white blood in which they would drown, with the African slave trade ceasing once and for all. In more than three hundred years, we will all be white³⁵.

³² OLIVEIRA VIANNA, Francisco J. *Evolução do povo Brasileiro*. São Paulo: 1930, pp. 185-186.

³³ ANDRADE, Manoel Correia de. *Abolição e Reforma Agrária*. São Paulo: Ática, 1987, p. 26.

³⁴ HASENBALG, Carlos Alfredo. *Discriminação e desigualdade racial no Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Graal, 1979, pp. 166-167.

³⁵ PEIXOTO, Afrânio Júlio. *A esfinge*. Rio de Janeiro: Livraria Francisco Alves, 1919, p. 400.

Miscegenation was one of the ways pointed out to solve the racial issue in Brazil. However, the Bahian ruling classes were facing with another problem: how to civilize the State of Bahia without the introduction of European settlers? There was a risk that would resemble even more to the Coast of Africa.

And what about blacks and mestizos, Afro-Brazilians, so often disliked and marginalized because of their descent and the inheritance of a slave past? How did they get involved with public policies that directly affected them? How were their habits and social interactions shaped in the name of an idea of “civilization”?

Fresh out of slavery, they had a very bold proposal. They sought to imprint their forms of relationship, their work relations, in short, their features on Brazilian society. In this situation of cultural contact, they were seduced by their customs and were seduced, partially or entirely, by the same ideals and practices that aimed at their social exclusion, but not necessarily with the same perspective as the ruling classes.

Their practices and their discourses were interspersed with vagueness, contradictions and reformulations. The advances and setbacks were evidenced by the fact that they were cultural manifestations and, as such, suffered the effects of a cultural circularity and underwent new elaborations³⁶.

In my opinion, the intellectuals presented below have a lot in common. They were Afro-Brazilians who dedicated themselves to the study of preservation of the Afro-Brazilian culture; all of them had a militancy on the side of the working class and placed them as intellectuals at the service of the people³⁷.

Pedro Arcanjo, as a character of Jorge Amado, is a literary amalgam of many individuals' experiences such as Luís Anselmo da Fonseca, Manoel Querino and Édison Carneiro. Afro-Brazilian intellectuals who opposed slavery and racism. He, as a character, responds to Jorge Amado's desire to position himself in relation to the discussions of the 60s about a “dialectical critique of popular culture”. In this moment of criticism, there is an appreciation of the concept of alienation, and popular beliefs were seen as obstacles to the humanization of the masses because they were alienating factors. They would

³⁶ The concept of cultural circularity is used here with the same connotation given by Mello e Souza, Laura de. *O diabo e a Terra de Santa Cruz: feitiçaria e religiosidade popular no Brasil colonial*. São Paulo: Companhia da Letras, 1986.

³⁷ See: GRAMSCI. Antonio. *Os intelectuais e a organização da cultura*. Trad. de Carlos Nelson Coutinho. 7ª ed. – Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1989.

be wrapped in a fatalistic and passive mysticism, which would subject the masses to economic yoke and bourgeois domination.

Thus, in the logic of these intellectuals of the 60s, in order to defend themselves, the people had to distance themselves from their irrational beliefs and traditions. “Reason” imposed this distance. However, in Tenda dos Milagres [Tent of Miracles], what stands out are precisely those elements that its authors consciously criticized that task as an amalgam of popular solidarities.

When Arcanjo became a leader leading his people and exercising this role, it went through a process of estrangement or at least distancing himself from the beliefs of the people he claimed to represent and/or defend. However, without being able to break the bond he had with these beliefs, it was through this bond that he was recognized and respected.

In the same way as Pedro Arcanjo, some Afro-Brazilian intellectuals were also part of a great variety of social media, involved in various social struggles, throughout their lives. Some of these, today “illustrious Bahians”, also committed themselves to the defense of the culture and values of “their people”, sometimes as selflessly as the character of Jorge Amado. Manoel Querino and Edison Carneiro are two good examples, each in their own time tried to demonstrate African civilization contribution and sought to understand its role in the Brazilian formation process. They, as Arcanjo, dialogued with the two cultural universes of Bahian society, the popular and the academic; with the knowledge of the Houses of Saints and the circles of literates.

Manoel Querino was linked to the Bahian labour movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and his trajectory as a militant of the working class still needs a more in-depth study. Édison Carneiro was a militant of the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) persecuted by the Vargas Government and lived in hiding several times. Jorge Amado’s character was involved in the Circular Strike, which earned him the role of leader of the movement and a resignation that threw him into indigence and oblivion³⁸.

³⁸ A movement that took place in the city of Salvador, beginning with a strike by workers of the Circular de Bondes tram company, which later evolved into a widespread protest movement against rising costs of living. It is also known as the “Quebra-bonde” [Tram Break] and is related to the 1930 Revolution and the 15 years of federal intervention in the State of Bahia. See: Negro, Antônio Luigi; Brito, Jonas. “Insurgentes incendiavam a cidade da Bahia. O Quebra Bondes e a Revolução de 30” In *Estudos Históricos (Rio de Janeiro)*, 33(71), pp.579-599, 2020. [<https://doi.org/10.1590/S2178-14942020000300008>].

However, before addressing the contribution of these Afro-Brazilians, it is necessary to point out what this process of estrangement in relation to the culture of origin represents, which is not just a literary resource used by Jorge Amado. He was also present outside of fiction and affected Manoel Querino and Édison Carneiro.

The life trajectory of the historical and fictional characters is marked by being on the borderline, where the dialogue with bourgeois culture and sciences leave marks on their beliefs and ways of acting. For this reason, they cease to be “believers and convinced” to become intellectuals at the service of the poor people.

The appropriation of bourgeois culture and science worked and still works as a form of resistance. Knowing the language and diacritics of the other is a manifestation of power. It is to have a strategy that allows you to use that same language and signs for your own benefit; to construct discourses of oneself, about oneself and about one’s own, having discursive control over one’s own identity. In short, it allows Afro-Brazilians to cease to be the object of the discourse of others, to become producers of discourses about themselves and about the world, based on the formalities and conventions of bourgeois culture and sciences.

Objectively, the fact is not ignored, as already indicated, that this appropriation opened loopholes for co-optation. In the specific case of Querino and Carneiro, the negotiated values were incorporated and began to influence reading these Afro-Brazilian intellectuals about their way of life and customs and popular classes. However, this co-optation is punctual and not exclusive, not least because bourgeois culture and sciences also merge with popular and Afro-Brazilian culture, blending, in the agreements they establish among themselves, what is conventionally called common sense.

The speech of Afro-Brazilian intellectuals

The approaching of Afro-Brazilian intellectuals to the pattern of bourgeois culture and science was one of the ways of insertion in society and the development of strategies to deconstruct stereotypes around themselves. However, the use of these diacritics was not without criticism and ridicule. The most immediate reaction was to disavow and mock the Afro-Brazilian who dared to issue an opinion that was not at least consensual.

This was the purpose of the newspaper *O Tempo* [The Time] when it published a note of repudiation of the article *A Bahia Caloteira!* [Bahia the deadbeat], published by the newspaper *A Tarde* [The Afternoon]. The article protested against the non-payment of salaries to primary school teachers and said, among other things:

The principle of tyranny has always been cruelty, the sacrifice of freedom, the elevation of servility, the love of darkness, and hatred of the teacher of childhood. Sad misfortune that forces me to despair of life to scream: I am condemned to starvation because I am not paid long months from 1918 to 1919!³⁹.

The newspaper *O Tempo* launches itself into fury to refute the article *A Bahia Caloteira!* without, however, rebutting with arguments the accusations of delay in teachers' salaries. He chose to deal with the issue by pointing the finger at Professor Cincinnato da Franca, personifying the dispute, and then disavowing and demoralizing him. This behaviour exemplifies an intolerant attitude from Brazilian society towards criticism. Illustrative of this posture is the way in which the newspaper *O Tempo* begins the text of the repudiation note:

Any idiot, really pernestic and, like all of them, with no composure, with no grammar, devoid of sense, devoid of criteria, got a tremendous discomposure in Bahia yesterday afternoon. The anagosado style, however, flagrantly betrays the author of the mystify, a black girl, taken from the know-it-all, who wants to take revenge in Bahia on the boos with which the cheerful kids mark their passage through the streets, pointing, harassing, harassing the – Fessô⁴⁰.

To disqualify Professor Cincinnato da Franca, the newspaper *O Tempo* used some words that function as stigmas, insignia launched that will disqualify any relatively educated Afro-Brazilian. In this strategy of disqualification it is recognized some mastery of the diacritical signs of bourgeois culture and science but in a clumsy way. Expressions such as pernestic and “taken from the know-it-all” are used, suggesting a diminished dominance that the Afro-Brazilian makes a point of exaggerating and trumpeting to the winds.

³⁹ Idem.

⁴⁰ O TEMPO. *A fama do Cincinnato*, Salvador, 15 de outubro 1919, p. 2.

What could be more annoying to a republican and post-slavery ruling classes than a “Slash” Afro-Brazilian, that is, who possesses and competently uses the diacritical marks and information of bourgeois culture and science?

It is in this full of conventions environment and expectations regarding the conduct of Afro-Brazilians that Édison Carneiro and Manoel Querino develop their research and write their works. In their own way, each of them tried to demonstrate the importance of Afro-Brazilians in the Brazilian sociocultural formation.

Édison Carneiro (1912–1972)

An intellectual with a degree in Law and ever-diligent to include a more scientific character to his studies, Édison Carneiro was led from an early age to attend the Santo festivities in Salvador. Here he found in his own father the example and the guide for his incursions into the world of Afro-Brazilian culture and traditions⁴¹.

Édison Carneiro, Couto Ferraz and Reginaldo Guimarães organized, in Salvador, the II Afro-Brazilian Congress in 1937. Unlike the First Afro-Brazilian Congress in Recife, the Bahian edition congress, the depositories of Afro-Brazilian culture were on the same level as national and foreign scholars on the subject, with a speech of authority, using the diacritical signs of the dominant culture, ceasing to be just an object of others speech and becoming a producer of speeches about themselves⁴². This, perhaps, was the greatest contribution for the young Édison Carneiro and Afro-Brazilians did not figure in this event only as an object of science.

In a particular way and which concerns too different from those of Manoel Querino, Édison Carneiro sometimes did not spare him criticism. He was more sympathetic to Nina Rodrigues⁴³. What was Édison Carneiro looking for with his studies?

Before trying to answer this question, it would be better to try to understand what are their concerns and considerations in relation to Afro-Brazilians. In other words, what did Édison Carneiro believe?

⁴¹ OLIVEIRA, Waldir Freitas; LIMA, Vivaldo da Costa. *Cartas de Édison Carneiro a Artur Ramos: de 4 de janeiro de 1936 a 6 de dezembro de 1938*. São Paulo: Corrupio, 1987, pp. 25-26.

⁴² Here, diacritical marks are understood as elements that serve to distinguish and define space and forms of coexistence between two groups.

⁴³ Édison Carneiro was, alongside Arthur Ramos, one of the most active members of the so-called Nina Rodrigues School, meaning he was a perpetuator of the ethnographic studies left by Nina Rodrigues.

Like every ethnologist of his time, Édison Carneiro believed that the phenomena and manifestations he dedicated himself to his studies were about to disappear; therefore, it was urgent to record and analyse them in order to have a future reminder. He did not believe that reason imposed distancing himself from popular culture. Before that, with a keen eye, he sought to see the resistance and class struggle in the cultural manifestations he studied and. When he did not find them, he did not measure criticism. For example, in an article on samba published in 1936, when analysing the lyrics of some “sambas de roda” [Dancing the samba in a circle], Édison Carneiro seems to be impatient:

The singing, I said, is monotonous. In general, there is only one verse for the solo, one verse for the choir, always in the same sound. Sometimes, but only sometimes, the soil is richer, but samba remains poor in terms of music⁴⁴.

Moments later, he “rejoices” when he finds elements that can be analysed by class conflicts. The tone of his statements reveals what he was looking for:

In addition to the fact that this samba gives us the satisfaction of the Negro for the misfortune of the master, the Negro wants to see the fire working in the sugarcane field and rejoices at the loss of the burning of molasses, — class struggle, exactly!⁴⁵

The samba to which Édison Carneiro refers is the following, and according to himself, it is the “most interesting that he can record due to the reminiscences of slavery, of work in the sugarcane fields and in the mills of the Recôncavo”⁴⁶:

Set fire to the sugarcane ...
- In Canaviá!
I want to see work ...
- In Canaviá!
Look at the ripe cane ...
- In Canaviá!
Ella is green, she is ripe...
- In Canaviá!
To make rapadura ...

⁴⁴ O ESTADO DA BAHIA. “Sem título”, Salvador, 20 de maio 1936, p. 5.

⁴⁵ Idem.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

- In Canaviá!
The mill caught fire...
- In Canaviá!
Burned the molasses ...
- In Canaviá!⁴⁷

And, Édison Carneiro continues his analysis of this samba: we still have here material life giving shape to intellectual forms, — Marx’s superstructure, — corroborating the thesis of historical materialism⁴⁸.

Édison Carneiro’s intention is to connect the elements of resistance, perceived by him in Afro-Brazilian culture, to the Marxist model of explanation. The possibility of successfully carrying out this intent would have transformed the samba into a question of the most interesting and, therefore, worthy of record.

In this aspect, Édison Carneiro approaches the character of Pedro Arcanjo. He “entered into the secret of fortune-telling.” That is, he was an intellectual who dialogued with the two cultural universes: the popular and that of bourgeois culture and science. Therewith, he committed himself to a cause: the socialism, an ideology with an European origin.

For this reason, his ethnologist gaze was concerned with the preservation of the values of tradition, not with the role of Afro-Brazilians in the construction of a new process and dynamic and active cultural elements in the society in which they lived in. It was necessary to record this universe in order to highlight the disobedience of the slave to the plantation owner, from capoeira and candomblé to police repression.

In short, Édison Carneiro was an Afro-Brazilian intellectual who described a path used to be suitable for an European pattern of thought-form than to the Afro-Brazilian, but who nevertheless became, like Pedro Arcanjo, an intellectual for the poor ones, a scholar who gets involved, made a scholar by virtue of his involvement.

Manoel Querino (1851–1923)

When analysing the work of Manoel Querino, we noticed the existence of two recurring ideas. The first is the idea of the cultural and material contribution of Africans to the formation of Brazil. The second is

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

the statement that there is no incompatibility between the ex-captives and the ideal of civilization aspired by Brazilian society. Before that, they had contributed significantly to the formation of the Brazilian culture.

In the case of the article *O colono preto como fator da civilização brasileira* [The black settler as a factor of Brazilian civilization]⁴⁹, published for the first time in 1918, Manoel Querino analysed colonization which places the African contribution to Brazilian civilization on an equal footing relating to other contributions. In doing so, he also positioned himself in the sense of deconstructing the romanticized image of the Portuguese navigator and colonizer. In the exercise, Manoel Querino produces a lucid and still current critique of what would have been the motivating impulses of the Lusitanian awakening for his colony in America. This criticism of the form of colonization also works as an answer to those who claim to defend Brazilian Latinity, forgetting to look at the flagrant African demographic and cultural presence in the formation of Brazilian society.

The historical moment in which Querino writes is very delicate for matters related to issues of recognition of racial contributions. The national and regional ruling classes did not want to see themselves at the head of a country that was considered by Europe as “typically mixed”. It is in this context that Manoel Querino’s article presents a new historical picture, in which the Afro-Brazilian presents themselves no longer as a foreigner, but as an active and constant contributor in the formation of Brazilian society and history.

Using excerpts such as Latino Coelho, Manoel Querino leads the reader to perceive the failure of the Portuguese colonial enterprise as the result of an administrative incompetence⁵⁰:

We legislate, as if Portuguese overseas were the pariahs of the metropolis. We govern, as if Brazil were just an estate, where we brought agages and oppressed day laborers [...]⁵¹.
We declared by attempt that only one press would timidly shed its light in those darkened regions. We condemn literary

⁴⁹ QUERINO, Manoel. “O colono preto como fator da civilização brasileira” In *Afro-Ásia*, n. 13, 1980.

⁵⁰ In a footnote, Manoel Querino indicates that he extracted the quotation from LATINO COELHO, José Maria. *Elogio Histórico de José do Bonifácio*. Lisboa: Typographia da Academia, 1877. Entretanto, ele não informa as páginas de onde retirou o texto.

⁵¹ An expression derived from the French “à gage,” meaning “contracted”. Thus, the phrase was interpreted as: “where we would bring in contracted and oppressed day laborers”.

societies as subversive. We fear that the slightest illustration of thought would rob us of the emancipated colony.

And the same writer added:

What we have left in glory as daring and fortunate navigators, we dwindle in the reputation of energetic and farsighted colonizers.

We conquered India so that strangers could get it⁵².

Manoel Querino goes on to quote the Portuguese writer on half a page, introducing the idea that Portuguese were not able to maintain their conquests. They were the first to arrive in Africa and Asia, making the Lusitanian name known as far as Japan, losing, however, their possessions to other less inert and remissive people who disputed them, took them and enjoyed the benefits that the Portuguese were not able to enjoy.

After situating his reader in the reasons that led the Lusitanians to turn their hopeful eyes to Portuguese America, Manoel Querino once again reinforces the initial idea of Portuguese carelessness with illustration for the benefit of adventure and the sword. To this end, he uses another long quote, this time from General Abreu e Lima⁵³.

The Portuguese were good soldiers and good enterprisers, brave and brave sailors, but they were never known except as conquerors [...]

Of the more distant regions we knew only the riches which served as a stimulus to the covetousness of the new Argonauts; we knew nothing that might be of interest to the sciences and arts, until other peoples also partook of their spoils: it was then that we were able to know the productions of nature in those varied climates⁵⁴.

Querino uses three authors, two of them with a Portuguese origin, to corroborate his perception of the Portuguese colonizer. In the excerpts extracted above, it is noticeable the criticism of Portuguese inability to manage its colonies, the little predisposition to contribute to the construction of knowledge and circulation of information and the inability to maintain the conquests in Asia and Africa. The Portuguese were left with Brazil,

⁵² QUERINO, op. cit., p. 143.

⁵³ Manoel Querino's second critique of Portuguese colonisation was based on a passage from the book *Esboço Histórico, Político e Literário do Brasil*, authored by General Abreu e Lima. However, Querino does not provide details on the page number, location, or year of publication of this book.

⁵⁴ QUERINO, op. cit., p. 144.

Querino observes, through which Portugal had decided to ensure for itself “a prosperous future”.

The words of the authors quoted were used by Querino, within this context, with two interspersed intentions. The first is to support his criticism, to demonstrate that his thought was not isolated. Praxe in the academic environment. With this, he exempted himself from being accused as the author of “nonsense”. The second is to demonstrate his erudition.

His analysis of colonization begins with the relationship established between the settlers and the indigenous people. According to Querino:

Once colonization began with the worst elements of the metropolis, the unsubmitive Indian rebelled against the tyranny and injustice of which he had been a victim, with the exploitation of his activity in the work of the fields⁵⁵.

In the second chapter of his article, Querino dedicates himself to the technical skills that Africans brought to Brazil. According to the author, these skills were acquisitions that came from Arab influence. Brought to Brazil to “replace” the indigenous slaves, considered to be “very fickle and less secure, as it was a very controversial property between the colonists and the authorities”, the Africans were employed to replace Portuguese who came here and, because of their inability to resist the rigour of the tropics or because of their pretensions as nobility, they avoided work of any kind⁵⁶.

In Querino’s argument, it can be seen the maintenance of his criticism from the form and motivation of Portuguese colonization in Brazil. On the other hand, there is also the use of principles of climate determinism to explain the use of the “powerful arm of the African to boost and intensify the production of cereals and sugar cane and to dig up diamonds and precious metals from the heart of the earth”⁵⁷. This line of argument was used both by Europeans to justify slavery, and to later defend racist ideas that justified the backwardness and degeneration of the populations of the tropics.

Querino was unable to resist this deterministic explanation of the conditioning factors for the use of Africans as slaves, in vogue in his time. And he adds:

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 144-145.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 146.

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 145-146.

Without this [African slavery], it was difficult if not impossible to catch colonization in the country with the European element, all the more so when it began, apart from the servants of the high administration, the first waves were of exiles, vicious individuals and prison soldiers⁵⁸.

With this statement, Querino suggested that not only was the colonization enterprise feasible with the use of Africans, but also that their coming to Portuguese America was an element of neutralization of the vices brought by the Europeans.

In the excerpt that follows the above quote, Querino tried to demonstrate the influence of the slave on the economic progress of the colony, associating this fact with his personal qualities.

the first gold leaflet found on the bank of the Funil River, in Ouro Preto [Black Gold], by a black gold digger; as well as the discovery of the diamond 'Estrela do Sul' [Star of the South]. Industrious as he was, even with his body addicted by the whips of the overseer, the black slave was always obedient to his determinations⁵⁹.

Stoic, industrious and fulfilling their obligations. It is this image that Manoel Querino built of the slaves. In principle, it can confuse this picture set up by him as a certain passivity of the slave in relation to his oppressors. After all, why would a slave tyrannized by his master be so diligent in fulfilling his tasks?

It would be better to perceive this construction of Querino's speech as a rhetorical resource. He showed a picture of contrasts, an interesting picture to highlight the imperfections of the white settlers and highlight the virtues of the "black settlers", even with little altered colour and the insubmissions and rebellions were softened, but not disregarded.

In analysing forms of collective resistance, Querino continued to seek to highlight the qualities of the "black settlers". He made the choice for the quilombola people, especially Palmares. Once again, he established a somewhat anachronistic comparison between Africans and Europeans.

Greek slaves were instructed both in public games and in literature, advantages that the African enslaved in America was

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 147. I added the expression African slavery in brackets to situate the context to which the author was referring.

⁵⁹ QUERINO, Ibid., p. 148.

unable to possess, since the rigor of captivity, which did not allow the slightest mental preparation, dulled his intelligence. However, he showed himself superior to the anguish of suffering, and had memorable gestures of revolt seeking to organize himself into independent governments. He knew the warrior organizations and was prepared for the defense of his citadel of Palmares [...]

The Greek or Roman slave, abandoning his mastership, did not think of organizing himself into a regular society of territory that he might seize; he lived wandering or in bands given over to plunder⁶⁰.

In table 1, assembled from the argument of Manoel Querino, it can be seen the main oppositions between Africans and Europeans, identified by him in his article. From this identification, it is possible to note the author's intention to deconstruct two ideas, that the "white European" was superior to other races, as was boasted at the time, and, as a result of this premise, that the presence of the black race was an element of degeneration and social and economic backwardness in the country. Establishing a comparison, Manoel Querino highlighted the contribution of Afro-Brazilians in a different way from what Nina Rodrigues did years earlier.

Table 1: Comparing Africans and Europeans experiences according to Manoel Querino

Europeans and Portuguese	X	Africans and Mestizos
Conquerors and adventurers	X	Settlers
Unprepared as colonial administrators	X	Prepared for Work in America
Unprepared for the climate of the tropics	X	Prepared for the climate of the Tropics
Addicted and not very fond of work	X	Stoic and industrious
Tyrannical	X	Obedient
Slaves Instructed in Public Games	X	Slaves with blunted intelligence
European slaves: when free, wandering marauders	X	Black slave: founder of organized and regular societies

Source: Prepared by the author.

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 151-152.

If for Nina Rodrigues the black presence in the Brazilian social composition was an obstacle to the country's development, to Querino, the conclusion is the opposite and more radical. Listing the names of several Afro-Brazilians who somehow shone on the national scene, either for their achievements or for their intellectual competence, Manoel Querino aimed to deconstruct the idea of an intellectual incapacity and the incompatibility of Afro-Brazilians with civilization. That is, stating, unlike Nina Rodrigues, that it is from the black and mestizo presence that the country has become so great.

Querino concluded his article by cheering for freedom of the soil and the mestizo's talent. And, with a very significant verse, especially for the period in which the article was written, it defines the engine of the History of Brazil.

Whoever rereads history
You will see how it was formed
The nation, which has only glory
The African who imported⁶¹.

Final remarks

In the confrontation with racist ideas, the Afro-Brazilian intellectuals addressed in this article did not have, unlike their contenders, the purpose to state the thesis of superiority or inferiority. On the contrary, they preferred to affirm that their contributions to the formation of society were as important as those of the other human groups that made up the Brazilian demographic picture. In the construction of their speeches, they made it clear that the contributions could have been of a different order, but that with equal importance. It was from this understanding that Manoel Querino and Édison Carneiro set up their works. Leading even Querino to make his intention explicit when he said:

Our investigations included the Africans themselves and extended to their most direct descendants, individuals who knew the religious practices of their ancestors. Undoubtedly, African fetishism has exerted a notorious influence on our customs; and we will consider ourselves well paid if the reduced material we have gathered can contribute to the study of national psychosis in the individual and in society⁶².

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² QUERINO, Manoel. *Costumes Africanos no Brasil* (volume 15). Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1938, p. 22.

In this excerpt, Manoel Querino reveals not only his purposes, but also his understanding of the Afro-Brazilian culture role in the formation of the Brazilian society. However, this perception was also involved in a political nature, despite a certain apparent acquiescence to the racial theses of the period, by stating that the features credited to Afro-Brazilians are not exclusive to them:

And, we take the opportunity, we leave here our protest against the contemptuous and unfair way in which they try to depress the African, constantly accusing them of being stupid and rude, with congenital qualities and not a simple circumstantial condition in common, moreover, to all unevolved races. No. Originally, all people were susceptible to this stupidity and were subjugated to the tyranny of slavery, created by the oppression of the strong against the weak⁶³.

Thus, I tried to demonstrate the three main constitutive elements of the Afro-Brazilians speeches related to racial ideologies. The appropriation of the standard of bourgeois culture and science, the deconstruction of the discourse of white superiority and the equalization of the experience of Afro-Brazilians and whites.

The first is the principle of seeking instruments and arguments in the universe of bourgeois culture and science. This stratagem is recurrent and perceptible in both the production of popular and erudite Afro-Brazilian speeches. It worked, on the one hand, to denounce the fragility of prejudiced discourse and, on the other, to demonstrate knowledge of the signs of bourgeois culture and science and scientific concepts.

At this point, the first constitutive element of the Afro-Brazilians speech is associated with the second, that is, the deconstruction of the discourse of white superiority, to affirm theses favourable to Afro-Brazilians. In contact with this bourgeois culture and science, Afro-Brazilians selected the elements who best suited the construction of their own arguments. In fact, with the chosen elements, he reaffirmed his mastery of bourgeois culture and science and the relevance of his arguments. Played as central counterpoints to racist ideology. Most of the time, the categories of analysis, interpretations and arguments were extracted from the theses of scientific racism themselves.

However, the speeches were always nuanced as elements that made up the Afro-Brazilian repertoire and conferred additional rhetorical force.

⁶³ Idem.

Such as, joining in the same discourse evolutionist arguments that suggest the existence of superior and inferior races with a demonstration that “African fetishism exerted a notorious influence” on the customs of a Brazilian society, to conclude that this society found only its glory – its evolution – through the action of the supposed inferior races.

From this point on, the third element, that of equivalence, takes shape. In their speeches, Afro-Brazilian intellectuals defend the thesis that there was an equivalence of the contribution of the three races in the formation of Brazil, that their cultural and religious experiences, their way of life, have the same value as the European experience.

Finally, whether among intellectuals, religious leaders or carnival artists, the statement of Afro-Brazilians has always been the same: “We are as good as we are as good”!

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Article received for publication on 18/07/2024

Approved on 16/09/2024.