

TENT OF MODERNITY: MISCEGENATION AS EPISTEMOLOGY AND
 TECHNOLOGY OF NATION IN JORGE AMADO'S *TENDA DOS MILAGRES*
 AND CONTEMPORARY BRAZILIAN VISUAL MEDIA

Daniel F. Silva

Middlebury College

Abstract: Jorge Amado, through his literary works and their subsequent cinematic and television adaptations, can be considered a fundamental voice in the canonization of miscegenation and multiraciality as both narratives and mechanisms of Brazilian national identity and formation. This essay will examine his 1969 novel *Tenda dos Milagres*, namely the voicing of miscegenation as a field of knowledge by various characters with different racial politics. More specifically, this field of knowledge, I argue, functions in the novel as a national transhuman mechanism of engineering a modern body politic and articulating a politics of corporality – one following existing discourses and nationalist claims of a racially hybrid national modernity, and to which Amado's protagonist, Pedro Archanjo, subscribes. In approaching miscegenation as a technology of racialized and gendered biopower, we can more neatly contextualize it within a genealogy of misrecognized discourses and cultural mechanisms of national progress/whitening including hygienism and incentivized European influx, as well as contemporary forms of corporal transformation such as cosmetic surgery and fitness culture that operate nationally via assorted and reformulated images of mixed-race bodies, specifically Amado's canonized *mulata*.

Keywords: Jorge Amado; Miscegenation; Modernity; Racial Democracy; Multiraciality

Resumo: Jorge Amado, através da sua obra literária e as subsequentes adaptações cinematográficas, pode ser considerado uma voz fundamental na canonização de estéticas de mestiçagem e multirraciedade como narrativas e mecanismos de formação e identidade nacionais brasileiras. Este ensaio examinará o seu romance, *Tenda dos Milagres* (1969), particularmente a sua encenação da mestiçagem como campo de conhecimento por via de várias personagens em diferentes polos do espectro político. Mais especificamente, este campo de conhecimento, o ensaio propõe, funciona no romance como um mecanismo nacionalista trans-humano de produzir o corpo nacional [*body politic*] e uma política corporal que segue discursos e narrativas nacionais de uma modernidade brasileira racialmente híbrida, a qual é celebrada pelo protagonista, Pedro Archanjo. Ao abordar a mestiçagem como tecnologia de biopoder racial e de gênero, podemos, assim, contextualizar os discursos amadianos da mestiçagem dentro de uma genealogia de mecanismos culturais de “progresso” nacional e de embranquecimento que inclui o higienismo, imigração europeia promovida pelo Estado, e formas contemporâneas de transformação corporal incluindo cirurgia plástica e fitness que operam nacionalmente através de diferentes imagens de corpos racializados, tomando, como exemplo fundamental, a figura da “mulata” – central na obra amadiana.

Palavras-chave: Jorge Amado; Mestiçagem; Modernidade; Democracia Racial; Multirraciedade

1 Brazilian literary and intellectual thought on miscegenation: a brief overview

Throughout Brazilian cultural production and intellectual thought of the nineteenth century, from post-independence to the fin de siècle, numerous authors, thinkers, and artists reflected on national history and what set the young nation apart from the former metropolis, neighboring post-colonies, and the broader hemisphere and Atlantic world. Part of this reflection, and indeed articulation of a Brazilian past, present, and future, implied and required the signification of a race-based social order that had already been misrecognized as such via colonial hegemony. In the very structures of race-based power, many writers and thinkers found a source of national singularity based on multiraciality and interracial fusion. An emblematic example of this in the Brazilian literary canon would be the work of nineteenth century Romanticist writer José de Alencar, namely his celebrated novels of national foundation – *O Guarani* (1857), *Iracema* (1865), and *O Sertanejo* (1875). The common thread connecting these novels concerns the elaboration of a mythology of Brazilian history based on symbiosis of ethnicities rather than tension and violence. Within the framework of symbiosis,

however, relations of contact are mediated and signified through a white patriarchal lens that signifies non-whiteness, particularly blackness, as an impediment to social and cultural progress if not manipulated by and for whiteness. Alencar most notably fleshes this out in his theater piece, *O Demônio Familiar* (1857) in which a young male slave, Pedro (the titular character), interferes with the romantic desires of his young master Eduardo.

While the parameters of Alencar's tropes of interracial symbiosis are guided by the reproduction of racial colonial hegemony, other writers posited multiraciality as a social and cultural problem from which the nation was to collectively progress. What for some was a demographic deficit of whiteness in general, and an excess of blackness (often articulated through discourses of pathology and contagion) in particular, became a normalized rallying cry for a brand of national consciousness and nationalism guided by a belief in racial and cultural progress toward whiteness and Europeanness. Also published in the mid-1800s, Joaquim Manuel de Macedo's *As Vítimas-Algozes* (1869), considered an abolitionist work, is comprised of three tales of white slaveholding families that were victims of what the narrator signifies as sexually depraved and culturally backward slaves. Through this collection of stories, Macedo, also regarded as a central literary figure of Brazilian Romanticism, calls for the end of slavery in order to safeguard white social structures and privilege, as well as to preserve whiteness itself as the central force of national production.

Similar sentiments and racial articulation of nation-building could be found in intellectual thought toward the end of the nineteenth century. Sílvio Romero's two volumes of *História da Literatura Brasileira* (1888) go further by arguing that Brazil's multiraciality and history of miscegenation have represented impediments toward the construction of a modern nation and national literature. A few years earlier, in his 1883 treatise on the Brazilian antislavery struggle, *O Abolicionismo*, Joaquim Nabuco most explicitly and succinctly inscribes a narrative of harmonious largely nonviolent interracial contact and symbiosis as a foundational mechanism of Brazilian nationhood, defining

Brazilian slavery as non-discriminatory. As Lamonte Aidoo points out, racial differences in Brazil, according to Nabuco, were overcome through interracial sex, which was harmonious and consensual, unlike in the United States, creating a mostly mixed-race population (25) stemming from Portuguese colonialism. Romero's thought responds, in many ways, to Nabuco's theorization of Brazilian history and the formation of a mixed-race body politic by denouncing what for him is a subsequent and perilous deficit of whiteness that has led to an "unscientific" and unmodern nation. Romero notably traces this deficit back to the Portuguese as less culturally developed than their Central European neighbors, and its exacerbation through interracial sex and intermarriage between the Portuguese and indigenous Americans and African slaves; the latter two he posits as the least intellectually developed groups within a global racial hierarchy of civilization.

These aforementioned writers and thinkers thus represent an important foundation for the emergence and embracing of eugenic thought on race and Brazilian society, with Macedo and Romero arguably utilizing a more explicit lexicon of racialized social pathology targeting miscegenation. Eugenic thinkers and policy makers such as Raimundo Nina Rodrigues, Renato Kehl, and Edgard Rouquette-Pinto, targeted miscegenation along similar lines and developed policy to curb its subsequent social degeneration. While these figures defined miscegenation and non-whiteness as sites of national degeneration, celebrations of national multiraciality were recovered in the 1920s and 1930s, most notably by sociologist and anthropologist Gilberto Freyre. Building off earlier elaborations of nonviolent racial relations and multiracial symbiosis as the core of Brazilian nationhood, Freyre's *oeuvre*, spanning five decades (from the 1930s to 80s), offered the most fleshed-out projects of national historicization through the lens of miscegenation as a favorable mechanism of multiracial modernity; arguing for a Brazilian hyper-modernity not compromised by multiraciality, but potentiated by it. From here, Freyre would go on to solidify the myth of racial democracy and an exceptionalist racial history as the foundation of Brazilian nationhood. For Freyre and subsequent thinkers and cultural producers, exceptional race relations and multiraciality came to be a marker

of a hyper-modernity – the hybridizing solution to a “problem of racial tensions” (the common trivialization of systemic racial oppression) that North America and Europe could not solve, as well a universalizing force akin to what Mexican intellectual José Vasconcelos coined “the cosmic race.”

As Freyrean thought emerged and was attributed national prominence in 1930s and 40s, writers of the time, largely those of regionalist movements of the Northeast, made miscegenation a central trope and diegetic mechanism in their literary works. For instance, José Lins do Rego (1901-1957), whose “Sugar Cane Phase” [“Ciclo da cana-de-açúcar”] of six novels set on post-abolition sugar cane plantations (five of which were published between 1932 and 1936) coincided with the publication of Freyre’s most celebrated works on Brazilian societal history – *Casa Grande e Senzala* (1933) and *Sobrados e Mucambos* (1936). The series of novels, particularly the first five, follows the life of Carlos de Melo from infancy to ownership and eventual fall of his family’s sugar plantation. Throughout the series, interracial sexual encounters are prevalent in the everyday life of the plantation’s division of labor – a critical remnant of rural slave society. Nonetheless, interracial sex is a crucial element in the trajectory of both Carlos and the other main character of the series, Ricardo, a black rural laborer whose ancestors had been slaves of Carlos’s grandfather. Bringing to fictional life one of Freyre’s arguments for exceptional race relations in *Casa Grande e Senzala*, Carlos’s initiation into cisgender masculine heterosexuality is through a domestic black female plantation worker who was also a mammy figure to Carlos. For Freyre, this type of interaction serves as an example of an exceptionalist interracial intimacy predicated more so on mutual affect between whites and Afro-descendants rather than on racialized power imbalances.

Freyrean thought and historicization would become official propaganda during the fifteen-year reign of President Getúlio Vargas from 1930-1945, heightened by his right-wing Estado Novo regime. Narratives of national multiracial hybridity at the level of the body politic became a mode of situating all Brazilians into national consciousness and away from consciousness of categories pertaining to oppression and modes of

production. Vargas's appropriation of a hybrid national narrative served, in other words, to misrecognize the deep roots and continuities of a racialized and gendered order of power. In order to foment and reproduce this misrecognition at the level of an inclusive national collective (by erasing its violent past) the Estado Novo propaganda machine developed an array of methods including the instituting of Carnival as a national tradition to celebrate, albeit in a marginal and folkloric way, Afro-Brazilian history, as well as large number of films that presented Brazilian society and its formation as one spawned and driven by miscegenation and multiracial symbiosis. The most prevalent example of this would Humberto Mauro's *O Descobrimento do Brasil* (1937); one of many of his films funded by the state's Instituto Nacional de Cinema Educativo – chaired at the time by the aforementioned eugenicist Edgard Rouquette-Pinto. Staging the film's plot by drawing on Pero Vaz de Caminha's letter of encounter, Mauro creates, as Richard Gordon summarizes, "peaceful and united national foundation [that] clearly coincides with the government's own project to persuade the public" (41).

The widespread embracing of miscegenation as national narrative and romanticized mechanism of national production has not been limited, however, to Vargas supporters and right-wing apologists. For well-known and public Marxists of the mid-twentieth century, including regionalist writers often categorized as neo-realists like José Lins do Rego and Jorge Amado, hope for class struggle was redeemed by the supposed justice of Brazilian race relations assuaged by miscegenation. Later intellectuals identifying on the spectrum of Marxism, such as anthropologist and politician Darcy Ribeiro (1922-1997), a member of the Partido Democrático Trabalhista, was critical of Brazil's deep and historically-rooted imbalances in wealth concentration and thus called for land reform throughout his work. In his magnum opus and genealogy of Brazilian history, *O povo brasileiro*, despite being more critical and attentive to systemic forms of violence in Brazil's past and present, he argues in his epilogue that multiraciality and racial mixture, alongside the sheer size of Brazil, has spawned a new universalist civilization:

Estamos nos construindo na luta para florescer amanhã como uma nova civilização, mestiça e tropical, orgulhosa de si mesma. Mais alegre, porque mais sofrida. Melhor, porque incorpora em si mais humanidades. Mais generosa, porque aberta à convivência com todas as raças e todas as culturas e porque assentada na mais bela e luminosa província da Terra. (411)

The embracing of miscegenation as a national ethos has been, furthermore, an integral part of mainstream Marxist privileging of class structure over racial oppression as the strict grounds of understanding Brazilian power relations and concentration of wealth, as opposed to pinpointing the development of a racialized division of labor and its legacies. In this regard, and perhaps ironically, Marxist thinkers such as Ribeiro, Carlos Nelson Coutinho, and Astrojildo Pereira have played an important and tragic role in propagating hegemony in Brazil. In other words, even prevalent critical discourses such as those related to Marxism have reproduced the misrecognition of race-based power and modes of production.

Though celebrations of miscegenation continue to pervade and indeed structure an array of mainstream cultural production and rhetoric on exceptionalist Brazilian race relations, there have been important voices of resistance in relation to this public embrace of miscegenation and its role in a supposed racial democracy. A significant portion of the work of Afro-Brazilian dramaturg, poet, social theorist, and activist Abdias do Nascimento (1914-2011) was dedicated to demystifying the obfuscating function of narratives of miscegenation and racial democracy in Brazilian and global hegemonies. His most notable work on the topic, the book *O Genocídio do Negro Brasileiro* (1978), later expanded and translated as *Brazil, Mixture or Massacre? Essays in the Genocide of a Black People* (1989), posited miscegenation as a normalized and celebrated, and therefore, hegemonic, mode of culturally and systemically erasing blackness; a long-held goal of many cultural, intellectual, and political elites following abolition.

2 Jorge Amado's Deployment of Miscegenation

The singularity of national multiraciality and mixture (miscegenation) as well as its pathologization are often considered dichotomous schools of national intellectual

thought and cultural production (and of course social policy). This essay looks to move away from that duality by examining Jorge Amado's *Tenda dos Milagres* (1969) in light of twentieth century cultural and social debates regarding multiraciality and its role in canonizing miscegenation via the novel's diegetic staging of such debates as well as the centralization of a celebrated mixed-race corporality embodied and celebrated via Amado's mixed-race protagonists or pacified central figures, most often hyper-sexualized women. As Nelson H. Vieira points out with regards to the novel, its diegesis illustrates how "Amado's technical dexterity dramatizes the dynamics of multiple and contradictory perspectives within a given culture" (10). Furthermore, through this mixed-race corporality and body politic, Amado situates the national readership within the novel as a site of modernization. This audience would be further expanded through subsequent film and television adaptations of the novel. Meanwhile, a similar diegetic inclusion can be found at heart of his most consumed and celebrated works in the national public sphere – *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela* (1958) and *Dona Flor e Seus Dois Maridos* (1966), which crystallized miscegenation as national historicization in the figure of the *mulata* – a hyper-sexualized, gendered, and racialized entity that, despite staging racial harmony, was deeply constructed and consumed via white patriarchal gazes.

Although these last two novels represent Amado's most circulated and emblematic works, adapted into films and television series and playing a central role in the development of a national *mulata* iconography that has permeated visual culture and advertising, *Tenda dos Milagres* represents Amado's most fleshed-out fictional interrogation into miscegenation and Brazilian history. Through the novel's characters, miscegenation and national identity is debated and signified in national and international perspectives and different schools of national thought on racial difference and national identity. In *Tenda dos Milagres*, Amado situates miscegenation, via his intellectual characters Pedro Archanjo, James D. Levenson, and Nilo Argolo, as a field of knowledge for forming a body politic through sexual relations, but also through ideology – understanding the nation, its signified origins, and development as racially-mixed. Amado's literary treatments of miscegenation and national multiraciality as a form of

modernity rather than a deficit of it can be located within the aforementioned long genealogy of cultural and intellectual production of the twentieth century that itself built off of the nineteenth.

The novel is propelled by two interwoven temporalities and narrated by Fausto Pena, a poet and bachelor of social sciences, who is contracted by American sociologist/anthropologist James D. Levenson to undertake research on a little-known Bahian author and academic Pedro Archanjo. Pena begins his narration with the story of how he became personally acquainted with Levenson; namely the visit of the latter to Brazil to deliver a series of lectures and to learn about the life and work of Archanjo, and whose books he had already read. This temporality is then interspersed (by chapter division) with that which consists of Pena's findings pertaining to Archanjo's life and work, that latter's job as messenger/administrative academic assistant (*bedel*) at the local university in Salvador, and his professional and sexual relationships and tribulations. Through these, Archanjo is brought back to life and his story is told.

Levenson's character and academic work, as scholars have pointed out, is based on that of German-American anthropologist Franz Boas. Like Boas, Levenson teaches at Columbia University and, most importantly, espouses cultural relativism, as opposed to the widely embraced biological determinist definitions of race of the time. Boas was, of course, Gilberto Freyre's (with whom Amado's oeuvre consistently dialogues) professor at Columbia University. In Archanjo's work, arguing for a mixed-race epistemology while constructing an encyclopedia of sorts of Bahian cultural practices (from religion to gastronomy), Levenson looks to substantiate his theories of cultural relativism regarding race as social and cultural constructions. Additionally, and most importantly for Amado, Levenson looks to Archanjo's model of miscegenation as undoing categories of hate, as a method of challenging white supremacy and curtailing its excesses, namely those embodied by Nazism, while not pointing to slavery as another such excess.

Due to Levenson's interest in Archanjo, and the former's celebrity status as a North American Nobel Peace Prize winner interested in a Brazilian academic, a larger national public interest in Archanjo unfolds and a centenary commemoration of his birth is organized by an array of scholars from around Brazil. The main component of the celebration is a symposium themed – “A democracia racial brasileira e o apartheid – afirmação e negação do humanismo” (105). In diegetic academic circles, Archanjo becomes the standard-bearer of a burgeoning school of humanistic thought. Archanjo's work and its impact is framed in the novel by a professor based in Rio de Janeiro who proposed said thematic symposium:

Pedro Archanjo é mestre e exemplo da grandeza da solução brasileira do problema das raças: a fusão, a mistura, o caldeamento, miscigenação – e para honrar sua memória, por tantos anos relegada ao esquecimento, nada mais indicado do que um conclave de sábios no qual se afirme mais uma vez a tese brasileira e se denuncie os crimes do apartheid, do racismo, do ódio entre os homens. (105)

The novel's diegetic terrain thus places Amado's and Archanjo's understanding of Brazilian race relations (through miscegenation as epistemology) as a site of knowing rather than as an object of global northern knowledge. These exceptionalist relations of racial and cultural symbiosis imply, for Levenson and his contemporary Brazilian intellectual counterparts, a new form of modernity based on syncretic multiraciality that will usher in a humanistic universality in opposition to apartheid and white supremacy. Vieira summarizes this stance as “advocat[ing] for the ‘browning’ of Brazil” (15) – “Archanjo's defense of racial mixture, as a vehicle for achieving more social justice” (15).

This Freyrean model of modernity, grounded in a celebration of racial mixture, is directly opposed in the novel to that proposed by Nilo Argolo, whose ideology and name directly refer to that of Nina Rodrigues. Argolo is even the author of a title Rodrigues published – *Mestiçagem, Degenerescência e Crime*. Related to the book in question, the narrator quotes part of a conference lecture given by Argolo titled “A degenerescência psíquica e mental dos povos mestiços – o exemplo da Bahia” (94) where Argolo argues: “Maior fator do nosso atraso, de nossa inferioridade, constituem os mestiços sub-raça

incapaz” (94). Within his conception of racial mixing, Argolo places the pathologies of miscegenation on blackness as the primary cite of backwardness and inferiority: “em que parte do mundo puderam os negros constituir Estado com um mínimo de civilização?” (94). For Argolo, Rodrigues, and other eugenicists, racial superiority and inferiority came down to genetics. Argolo is, moreover, in favor of immigration control, supporting Aryan immigration into Brazil, and is a Nazi sympathizer.

Archanjo’s, and Amado’s by extension, conception of Brazilian miscegenation as the solution to global “race problems” does not easily fit into the Boasian theory of race espoused and staged by Levenson. As Jerry Hoeg points out, although “Archanjo, and Amado through him, appear to argue in favor of a Boasian cultural relativism, this relativism is always undermined by Archanjo’s emphasis on racial mixing, with race defined in genetic terms [...] Amado’s great difficulty is that of reconciling biology with social constructivism” (292). In the novel, sexual relations and produced offspring are deeply intertwined with cultural constructions of collective subjectivity. Racial identity is constructed in the novel via an intertwining of sexual and cultural practices (one becoming the other); with miscegenation concerning both mixed-race individuals and a culturally mixed-raced body politic that traverses and includes all pigments. While Vieira associates this “cultural mixture” with class relations, Vargas’s propaganda of a multiracial national ethos served as mechanism of subject-formation that elided consciousness of class and gender divisions, in addition to, or via, those of race. Vieira’s later essay on *Tenda dos Milagres* and its discourses of hybridity locates Amado and Archanjo’s stance regarding *mestiçagem* as geared toward cultural pluralism (2001: 237-38). The Estado Novo’s propagandistic articulation of multiraciality and racial democracy as historical and present societal narrative effectively hijacks and shapes pluralism into a single and totalized view of Brazilianness as plurally-shaped (i.e. the fusionary myth of the three races), but existing as single entity that has melted plurality and erased divisions and discourses of difference. Within such a conception, racial categories are supposedly destabilized and one may become trans-racial or de-racialized through participation in syncretistic cultural practices such as candomblé. In the novel, candomblé and its spaces

of practice, most notably the titular *tenda dos milagres*, are central components in the negotiation of an idealized multiracial nation, with Salvador as example of such a community.

Processes of trans-raciality, de-racialization, or cultural hybridization in the novel seem to be experienced most centrally by white characters in order to dismantle white supremacy. This is especially the case with Archanjo's Swedish girlfriend, Kirsi, who becomes pregnant before returning to Sweden. While in Salvador, Kirsi becomes a student disciple of the *tenda dos milagres*, led by Lídio Corró. Upon leaving Salvador, she proclaims "Não há no mundo gente melhor do que vocês, povo mais civilizado do que o povo mulato da Bahia" (93). The narrator further extrapolates: "Chegara de longe, vivera com eles, dizia por saber, um saber sem restrições ou dúvidas, de real conhecimento" (93). Amado's narrator, Fausto Pena, thus centers a mixed-race/*mulato* epistemology as a universal postcolonial ideal through which to signify and interact with time, space, and bodies. Through Kirsi's own supposed centering and embracing of this epistemology, her supposed trans-racial movement, a cultural and ontological one, is carried out. Both her and her mixed-race offspring will supposedly go on to alter race relations and racial ideologies in Sweden, with the narrator proclaiming the unborn child the future "Rei da Escandinávia" (98).

Amado's novel, and indeed, his larger body of work, fits into mainstream post-Vargas public rhetoric on Brazilian exceptionalist multiraciality by idealizing a collective terrain in which racial categories are subverted into one collective consciousness, which in turn plays into the hands of an old propaganda system of misrecognized racial oppression and division of power and privilege. In the novel, this subversion into one harmonious consciousness is negotiated by Afro-Brazilian cultural practices and historically Afro-Brazilian locales such as Salvador where "brancos, negros, e mulatos dançavam indiferentes às teorias dos catedráticos" (98) such as Nilo Argolo. As I shall explore ahead, this negotiation of miscegenation as national ethos has been most signified through and in accord with the mechanisms and reproduction of white supremacy. The

tale of Archanjo's life and work, situated in the early decades of the twentieth century, serves as a story of the shift in national understanding concerning race relations, what in the novel is a collective awakening of sorts. It is fundamentally a moment of recovering a field of knowledge centering miscegenation as mechanism of nation-production, one that recovers a history and, indeed historicization, of racial mixture and interracial contact. In this vein, Kirsi's return to Sweden and eventual birth of her and Archanjo's child is framed in a way reminiscent of Moacir's birth of the Tupi Iracema and Portuguese Martim in Alencar's *Iracema*, signaling the dawn of a new civilization, in this case Brazil, spawned by racial (biological and cultural) fusion. The reproduction of such narratives of national racial exceptionalism and multiraciality hinges on its placement as a global model of multiracial harmony into one national consciousness and subsequent effacement of racial categories in everyday socio-cultural life.

3 Producing the *mulata* body, producing the body politic

Amado's arguably most salient contribution to narratives of national multiracial modernity, on the heels of Freyre's work in the 1930s and 40s, is the succinct representation of this exceptionalist multiracial civilization into a particular corporal image – the *mulata*, around which a body politic can identify its exceptional history and origin via cultural consumption. His works, namely *Dona Flor e Seus Dois Maridos* and, especially, *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela*, played a central role in the increased prevalence and consumption of the *mulata* image, and real bodies of Afro-Brazilian women in the Brazilian public sphere and in international tourism markets during the 1970s and 80s. The 1983 film adaptation of *Gabriela* became an international success after the national and international popularity of the 1970s soap opera of the same name. During this period, advertisements of national locales and products geared to both national and international audiences and markets were adorned by the *mulata* body.

In *Tenda dos Milagres*, Jorge Amado, as in other novels, traces the contours of this body in the process of national canonization and how it is to be consumed. Fausto

Pena, the narrator, introduces the reader to his girlfriend, Ana Mercedes, a journalist present at the conference to interview Levenson. She occupies the prevalent diegetic role of *mulata* who, as is typical in Amado's works, is the object of competing heterosexual cisgender masculinities – Pena and Levenson. Throughout the novel, Pena expresses his compromised masculinity in relation to Levenson who garners Ana Mercedes's attention, strolling through Salvador together, having dinner with her, and eventually having sex. Pena's physical description of her, upon her first appearance in the novel, is emblematic of how this corporality has been signified and situated in a national public sphere – itself elaborated by a deeply entrenched white patriarchal power structure – as a symbol of the exceptional nation and the object of white global Northern sexual desire.

[...] Ana Mercedes, dando um passo à frente, a destacar-se, palmeira tropical, da massa de jornalistas, professores, estudantes, grã-finas, literatos, vadios, ali reunidos, no amplo salão do grande hotel, à espera de James D. Levenson para a entrevista coletiva.

Microfones das estações de rádio, câmeras de televisão, refletores, fotógrafos, cinematografistas, um cipoal de fios elétricos, e por entre eles a jovem repórter atravessou, risonha e rebolosa, como se encarregada pela cidade de receber e saudar o grande homem.

Rebolosa é termo chulo e feio, adjetivo vil para aquela navegação de ancas e seios, em compasso de samba, em ritmo de porta-estandarte de rancho. Muito sexy, a minissaia a exhibir-lhe as colunas morenas das coxas, o olhar noturno, o sorriso de lábios semiabertos, um tanto grossos, os dentes ávidos e o umbigo à mostra, toda ela de oiro. Não, não ia a rebolar-se, pois era a própria dança, convite e oferta. (11)

Moving through the body in parts, Amado's narrator focuses especially on the hips, thighs, and mid-section – and their composite movements as mesmerizing the implied white(ned) heteronormative male gaze for which she is an accessible “offering.” Amado also constructs, in a relatively subtle fashion, the racial profile of this body – brown skin as a pigmentational signifier of national multiraciality, and the (only) slightly-fleshy lips [*lábios um tanto grossos*] pointing to the presence of whiteness that negotiates the implied excesses of blackness, thus forming the celebrated composite of Brazil's racial history – a cultural object that the larger population, across race and class, can enjoy through different forms of consumption; an enjoyment that simultaneously produces a national identification through the image. The racial and gender violence at the core of Brazilian history can be pushed to the margins and through the celebrated product of that history, all can identify with a romanticized version of the past.

The popularity and canonization of Amado's novels and their filmic adaptations, as well as the heightened visual consumption of *mulata* corporalities, coincided, of course, with the twenty-one year right-wing military dictatorship, which utilized the state tourism board, Embratur, to position Brazil abroad as a paradisiac destination for the upper and middle-classes of the Global North, especially cisgender men. This would both attract foreign capital as well as shift international attention away from the dictatorship's human rights violations. For example, in the late 1970s and 80s, Embratur created and circulated travel brochures featuring racially ambiguous women in bikinis, as in the brochure below, looking into the camera with the suggestive caption "see you there."



Figure 1. Embratur brochure, 1970s-80s

In 1983, Embratur also produced a five-minute travel infomercial advertising Carnival in Rio de Janeiro, featuring Arnold Schwarzenegger exploring the city's nightlife and the place of Carnival in "Brazilian culture." The tone and discursive inclinations of the film are made clear with the very first words of Schwarzenegger's voiced-over monologue: "Rio, one of the most beautiful cities in the world. It's hard to find more gorgeous mountains, beaches, and women anywhere." His first stop is the famed nightclub, Oba Oba, where he learns, via one of his white Brazilian female guides, about the "Carnival triple threat: the bunda, the *mulata*, and the Samba" – a framework elaborated over the previous decades of white patriarchal historicization of nation, voiced here by white women and Schwarzenegger. While at the nightclub, as Schwarzenegger speaks, the camera focuses on a dancer codified as *mulata* dancing Samba, then panning to close-ups of the dancer's pelvis and buttocks in motion. The fragmenting device deployed at the level of *mise en scène* is in synchronized with Schwarzenegger's further

comments: “To Brazilians, especially men, the *mulata* is the symbol of everything sexy and erotic. During Carnival, gorgeous *mulata* bodies begin to move in ways that not even a fitness expert like myself can believe.” Soon after, Schwarzenegger can be seen on stage with the female dancers, attempting to follow the choreography while groping them.

Different multinational corporations in an array of industries have also centralized the romanticized and hypersexualized black and *mulata* corporal images in their respective advertising campaigns. For instance, in the late 1970s and 80s, Pan American World Airways used the following advertisement in different print media:



Figure 2. Pan American World Airways. Circa 1980.

More recently, in 2014, German sports apparel manufacturer, Adidas, released the t-shirts below (Figure 3) in the United States ahead of that year’s FIFA World Cup hosted in Brazil.



Figure 3. Adidas World Cup 2014 T-shirts. 2014.

The shirts were quickly pulled from retailers and permanently recalled by Adidas after protests from activists, most notably Fenem Brasil, then President Dilma Rousseff,

and ironically, Embratur itself, arguing that the t-shirts promoted Brazil as a destination for sexual tourism. As the cases above illustrate, the utilization of the *mulata* as historical trope of national racial exceptionalism and ethos has had a myriad of effects on how the Brazilian body politic is signified and consumed by and for foreign audiences, with real cisgender and trans women of African descent facing the most pernicious of impacts. This points to what Elisa Lucinda--in perhaps the most widely-circulated critical rebuttal to the canonized *mulata* via an artistic medium -- says in the poem, "Mulata exportação." The poem, which she has famously performed on stage, pinpoints many of the nuances and contradictions behind the colonial and national creation and dissemination of the *mulata* image as well as how real bodies are placed into this image by white masculinity at an everyday level for national and global consumption.

Amado, himself, in *Tenda dos Milagres* places his *mulata* character, Ana Mercedes as object of, and ventriloquized willing participant in, North American sexual desire while also sexually enunciating her racialized and gendered body as a part of an exceptionalist body politic. Ana Mercedes serves for Levenson, as both cultural and sexual cicerone of the nation, showing him around the monuments and locales of Afro-Brazilian cultural life in Salvador during the day, while acting as sexual broker of the hypersexualized and sexually accessible mixed-race nation by night; the hypersexualization being placed, of course, on the bodies of women of African-descent:

As horas da noite, das três curtas noites baianas, foram para a cama e o amor, as longas pernas da moça, as ancas, os seios morenos, o perfume do trópico, o riso insolente, destemida:
-- Vamos ver, seu Gringo, se você presta para alguma coisa ou é só fachada -- dissera ela na primeira noite, arrancando a pouca roupa. -- Vou lhe ensinar o que vale uma mulata brasileira.

For the narrator, and within Amado's larger sexual and racial positioning of Brazilian history and body politic, the sexual encounter is also a pedagogical one in which the Global Northern subject is to learn of Brazilian ethnic universalism and exceptionalism through the sexual consumption of a corporal-historical image (the *mulata*) that is, for Amado, the (post)- racial product *par excellence* of the Brazilian national formation.

Despite some, though limited, public critique of the *mulata* trope has emerged, celebrations of miscegenation continue to constitute a prevalent mode of publically consuming and inscribing the Brazilian body politic. In 2009, then President Lula da Silva delivered a speech at the International Olympic Committee as part of Rio de Janeiro's campaign to host the 2016 Olympic Games, situating a mixed-race Brazilian nation as an example *par excellence* of the global universality and integration, in line with the spirit of the Olympic Games:

Olhando para os cinco aros do símbolo olímpico, vejo neles o meu país. Um Brasil de homens e mulheres de todos os continentes [...] todos orgulhosos de suas origens e mais orgulhosos de se sentirem brasileiros. Não só somos um povo misturado, mas um povo que gosta muito de ser misturado. É o que faz a nossa identidade. (“Lula da Silva”)

This brand of racial and post-racial rhetoric continues to be ubiquitous in the public sphere, especially in mainstream media despite a surge in public expressions of white supremacy emboldened by the presidential campaign of current President Jair Bolsonaro. Jorge Amado, himself, proclaimed, in an interview with the United States Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), that racial mixing spawned a nation that solved “the problem of racism,” unsurprisingly citing the *mulata* as a central example. Eliana Guerreiro Ramos Bennett thus summarizes his interview, “he explains that the mulata is a ‘product’ which can show the world how Brazil has addressed the problem of racism by, he says, intermarriage between blacks and whites. Out of this union, Amado continues, has come this ‘beautiful product.’ (232).

5 Miscegenation as Transhumanism

Tenda dos Milagres offers important insights into how Amado framed this body as a part of a larger miscegenational epistemology through which to learn and reproduce the body politic, circuiting sexual desire, racial reproductive politics, hegemonic historicity, a continually colonial public sphere, and everyday cultural life. We can pinpoint the evolution of this epistemology of the body and body politic in contemporary

forms of transhuman body transformation such as plastic surgery and fitness, thus further building upon the confusing positionality of miscegenation as both biological and cultural, as argued by Pedro Archanjo and embraced in mainstream discourse in the public sphere. In the last decades, transhumanism has emerged as a broad movement advocating for the use of technology to “enhance” human intellect and physiology. These technologies are often associated with what are considered medical advances from prosthetic corporal fragments to stem-cell research, often guided by defined notions of intellectual and physiological normativity.

Amado’s and other mainstream articulations of miscegenation as a part of an ethos of national exceptionalism require us to broaden the conception of transhumanism and its technologies to think of practices of corporal construction and sexual intimacy that are rendered as parts of everyday practice of nationality. In this case, transhumanism functions to not necessarily produce corporal normativity, but a form of corporality (the *mulata* trope) that centers markers of non-white hypersexualized femininity within a centrally prominent yet folkloric visual schema of an exceptionalized national past. More than simply exerting itself in the form of a consumable corporality, miscegenation as a historicizing technology through which time, space, and bodies, are made knowable, elaborates a broader national subject that is desired for the reproduction of an existing system of privilege and subalternity. At the same time, miscegenation’s inscription on a *mulata* corporality, visualizes a schema of otherness and normativity in its circulation within a visual economy of corporalities in Brazilian mainstream media. Although *mulata* bodies are signified and made prevalent in different visual cultural production as a central symbol of national racial exceptionalism and a multiracial collective ethos, such bodies operate in contrast to sexually normative white cisgendered bourgeois bodies and spaces such as those found at the core of most Brazilian soap operas, mainstream films, sitcoms, television news studios, and political programming. As in the case of Amado’s *mulata* characters, the *mulata* body is seldom a protagonist, but rather an object of different forms of consumption within the diegesis/program as well as for the audience.

The corporal contours of the *mulata* body, as traced by Amado's narrator in *Tenda dos Milagres*, inform sought-after corporal images by consumers of industries such as fitness, plastic surgery, and cosmetics. The products offered by these industries are not ends in themselves, but are products understood and packaged as modes of attaining an image of valid feminine corporality as dictated by the overlap of the hypersexualization of women of African descent, the normativity of white femininity, and the historicization of an exceptional body politic encapsulated by the patriarchal construction of the *mulata* as national symbol.

The repeated historicization of the nation informs and is carried out through the production of bodies through transhuman instruments such as fitness and plastic surgery as well as their visual production and consumption in media from television to celebrity magazines and websites. These function as vehicles through which an exceptionalized past and ethos is consistently reproduced and made constitutive of a maintained racial, gendered, and economic social order that is misrecognized while promising interpellated national subject-consumers a place in the nation. One such prevalent example concerns the annual beauty contest, *Miss Bumbum*, in which 27 female-identifying contestants, each representing one state, compete for the title of "best buttocks" in the country. Within a two to three-month span, the contestants make numerous television appearances in bikinis leading up to a round of online voting by which the number of contestants is cut to 15. The winner is typically chosen two to four weeks later following a pageant-style event where a group of judges select that year's victor. The winner collects a financial prize of R\$50,000 in endorsement contracts, becoming a body over which further corporate profits are attained, in addition to becoming a socialite and celebrity in the national public sphere. Each contestant, moreover, embodies Amado's corporal description of *mulata* bodies such as that of Ana Mercedes, and reproduced throughout the ensuing decades in visual media and other commodities such as those discussed above.

The historical sexualization of the bodies of non-white women, especially those of

African descent, has led to the increased fragmentation of the body over historical periods encompassing colonialism, slavery, and contemporary commoditization. The buttocks has been a particularly central fragment in this process that has also been at the heart of sexual and racial significations of national racial exceptionalism. Of particular note is Gilberto Freyre's essay reflecting on the emergence of the buttocks as a national "preference," titled "Uma paixão nacional" published in the December 1984 issue of *Playboy Brasil*. Freyre ties the heterosexist masculine preference for women's buttocks as the most central fragment of the fetishized feminine body to Portuguese colonization and the specifically Portuguese sexual predilection, he argues, for non-white women. Like many a colonial text pertaining to non-white bodies, Freyre's patriarchal racial categorization of women's bodies operates under a system of corporal differences positing an image of European women's bodies and their distribution of body mass as normative and from which non-white women's bodies deviate, resulting in European cultural and sexual fascination and abjection. For Freyre, therefore, the non-normative buttocks is a racial signifier he attributes to African, and to a lesser extent, indigenous American women. Freyre goes on to situate the ubiquity of this commoditized and prevalent fragment as a celebrated legacy of the Portuguese colonialist proclivity toward miscegenation (as part of the historical agency of Portuguese whiteness) that he argues engendered modern Brazilianness and the national body politic. The cultural formulation of the buttocks elaborates it as part of a national corporal text and symbol of national history and society that has eclipsed race as a category of sociological classification and tool of oppression.

The premise of the contest, as well as the bodies of the contestants, are nationally-inscribed, with the cisgender female buttocks framed as the "paixão" or "preferência nacional." When introducing a 2013 *Miss Bumbum* soccer game played by contestants in bikinis, the journalist of web content giant Universo Online (UOL) charged with covering the event proclaims, "Duas paixões nacionais: futebol e bumbum." Similarly, during one of the first appearances of the 2012 candidates on the primetime variety show *Superpop* on the RedeTv network, one of the program's correspondents, reporting from

São Paulo, relates to the host, Luciana Gimenez, that “Passei a tarde nas ruas de São Paulo, perguntando para todo o mundo sobre a preferência nacional, e a preferência, óh...” before turning her back to the camera and pulling it down to capture her own buttocks and concluding: “realmente, é o bumbum.” Gimenez then further frames the nationalist implications of the contest by proffering comments regarding the title of Miss Bumbum such as: “é um posto que tem bastante responsabilidade porque, se o Brasil é conhecido pelo bumbum...” In this same episode, the contestants are placed into an informal Samba dance-off. When one contestant tells the host that she does not know how to dance samba, the host replies: “que adianta ter o bumbum bonito sem saber sambar.” The expectation for the national body, and the scale on which its nationality is measured, is that it will incorporate the fundamental signifiers of Brazilian hybridity established via narratives of miscegenation and liminal and folkloric inclusions of historically Afro-Brazilian cultural practices.

Through this persistent recycling and reproduction of narratives of national miscegenation and exceptionalism, bodies and the larger body politic are consistently made knowable and consumable to the national public sphere, which is in turn reproduced through the mechanisms that serve to misrecognize its imbalances and inequities. Relatedly, as an epistemological frame through which to know bodies, this canonized version of national miscegenation also exists as a way and end of corporal transformation toward notions of consumable national bodies, especially for subjects interpellated into cisgendered Brazilian womanhood. For instance, fitness magazines, video programs, and other commodities have been increasingly packaged through corporalities reminiscent of those consumed through the *Miss Bumbum* contest. Often referred to as *musas fitness*, many, such as Carol Saraiva, Sue Lasmar, and Fernanda D’avila, have become celebrities and sites of knowledge pertaining to the transformation of the cisgender female body into national hybrid models of it, using resistance training, dieting, and cardiovascular exercise.

As Alexander Edmonds's *Pretty Modern: Beauty, Sex, and Plastic Surgery in Brazil* highlights, this historicized model of feminine corporality undergirds the ideal imagery of corporal value driving the plastic surgery industry in Brazil. The economic accessibility of these modes of corporal transformation are, moreover, largely limited to predominantly white middle and upper-middle classes. While access to plastic surgery has been somewhat democratized by state health insurance coverage of procedures, most facets of fitness culture, including the prices of gym memberships, remain inaccessible to working-class Brazilians. At the same time, fitness culture itself has become increasingly tied to neoliberal cultures of the white middle-class high-skilled labor. As a result, and coupled with the deeply ingrained cultural legacies of white supremacy, the bodies placed ubiquitously in the public sphere that evoke exceptionalist corporality, have been increasingly white, including *Miss Bumbum* contestants and *musas fitness*.

In the prevailing whiteness of such prevalent figures, we see an important result of the intermeshing of miscegenation and white supremacy, or, perhaps more accurately, the life of white supremacy undergirding the propagation of miscegenation as a framework of knowing and reproducing the national body politic. Through the growing consumption of a racialized feminine corporality symbolizing exceptionalist narratives of nationhood and multiraciality via white women, it is increasingly apparent that whiteness continues to permeate, structure, and shift the visual contours of miscegenation in the national imaginary. In other words, the sexualized feminine symbol of exceptionalist history and the epistemology of miscegenation is itself whitened. The increasing elision of blackness from a national symbol (as exploitative as the symbol has always been, especially for women of African descent) goes hand-in-hand with the increased disenfranchisement of Afro-Brazilians. The decreased visibility of blackness in the national public sphere indexes a project of modernity based on reproducing whiteness and articulating the nation in local and global public spheres as a grounded in, and reproduced through, whiteness.

WORKS CITED

- AIDOO, Lamonte. *Slavery Unseen: Sex, Power, and Violence in Brazilian History*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018. Print.
- ALENCAR, José de. *O Guarani*. São Paulo: Ciranda Cultural, 2017. Print.
- _____. *Iracema*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Obliq, 2014. Print.
- _____. *O Sertanejo*. São Paulo: Editora Martin Claret, 2005. Print.
- AMADO, Jorge. *Gabriela, cravo e canela*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2008. Print.
- _____. *Dona Flor e seus dois maridos*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Record, 1987. Print.
- _____. *Tenda dos milagres*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Record, 1987. Print.
- _____. "Interview." *PBS Newshour*, Episode 1.91. 1975.
- EDMONDS, Alexander. *Pretty Modern: Beauty, Sex, and Plastic Surgery in Brazil*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010. Print.
- FREYRE, Gilberto. *Casa-grande & Senzala*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Record, 2002. Print
- _____. *Sobrados e Mocambos*. São Paulo: Global Editora, 2003. Print.
- HOEG, Jerry. "Nature and Nurture in Jorge Amado's *Tent of Miracles*." *Romance Notes*. 53 (3): pp. 291-297. 2013. Print.
- "Lula da Silva apresentando candidatura de Ríó al COI." *YouTube*, uploaded by Nicoducote. 12 October 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uPfHYdFPd6Q>
- NABUCO, Joaquim. *O Abolicionismo*. São Paulo: Publifolha, 2000. Print.
- NASCIMENTO, Abdias. *O Genocídio do Negro Brasileiro: Processo de um Racismo Mascarado*. São Paulo: Perspectivas, 2016. Print.
- O Descobrimento do Brasil*. Directed by Humberto Mauro. Instituto de Cacau. 1936. Film.
- RIBEIRO, Darcy. *O povo brasileiro: a formação e o sentido do Brasil*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1996. Print.
- RODRIGUES, Raimundo Nina. *As raças humanas e a responsabilidade penal no Brasil*. Salvador: Livraria Progresso, 1957. Print
- _____. "Mestiçagem, Degenerescência, e Crime." In *História, Ciências, Saúde – Manguinhos*. 15(4): pp. 1151-1181. 2008. Print.
- ROMERO, Silvio. *Historia da literatura brasileira: Formação e desenvolvimento autonômico*. Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1943. Print.
- VASCONCELOS, José. *The Cosmic Race/ La Raza Cósmica*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979. Print.

VIEIRA, Nelson H. "Testimonial Fiction and Historical Allegory: Racial and Political Repression in Jorge Amado's Brazil." *Latin American Literary Review*. 17 (34): pp. 6-23. 1989. Print.

_____. "Hybridity vs. Pluralism: Culture, Race and Aesthetics in Jorge Amado." *Jorge Amado: New Critical Essays*. New York: Routledge, 2001: pp. 231-251. Print.

Daniel F. Silva is Associate Professor of Luso-Hispanic Studies at Middlebury College where he is also Director of the Center for the Comparative Study of Race and Ethnicity. He is the author of *Anti-Empire: Decolonial Interventions in Lusophone Literatures* (Liverpool University Press, 2018) and *Subjectivity and the Reproduction of Imperial Power: Empire's Individuals* (Routledge, 2015). He is also the co-editor of *Emerging Dialogues on Machado de Assis* (Palgrave, 2016); and *Lima Barreto: New Critical Perspectives* (Lexington Books, 2013). He is co-editor of the book series, *Anthem Studies in Race, Power, and Society* with Anthem Press; and has published scholarship in *Hispania*, *Chasqui*, and *Transmodernity*.

Artigo convidado.