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NEGO T I AT I NG  AFRICANNESS IN NATIONAL I DENTITY:
STUDIES IN BRAZILIAN AND CUBAN CINEMA

DISSERTATION

Presented as Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
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University

By

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation addresses representations of Afro-Brazilians and Afro-Cubans in Brazilian and Cuban films. Particularly, it focuses on the intersection of these representations with the construction of national hegemonic discourses and identities, and thus takes into consideration issues of race, gender and social class. The Brazilian films analyzed include “Ganga Zumba” (1962), “Xica da Silva” (1976) and “Quilombo” (1986)—all directed by Carlos Diegues. The selected Cuban productions are “El otro Francisco” (1974), by Sergio Giral, and “Cecilia” (1982), by Humberto Solás. The point of departure of this study is the claim that, traditionally, people of African descent and their culture have been integrated into Brazilian and Cuban national hegemonic discourses in a similar fashion.

This study focuses on Brazilian and Cuban cinema, as part of the broader category of the New Latin American Cinema, because comparison between the two offers unique possibilities. Afro-Brazilians and Afro-Cubans, and their cultural influence, historically
have been treated similarly. Also, the articulation of national cinemas in their respective countries exhibits many parallels, yet their social, political and economic contexts were quite different.

A multidisciplinary theoretical framework is used to analyze these films. This framework draws on Feminist and Semiotic film theory as well as on Cultural and Post-Colonial Studies approaches. It also maintains a dialogue with some of the most fundamental postulates by Latin American filmmakers and scholars.

The conclusions, drawn after careful analysis of each film, include the evidence that all five films indeed allow for fissures within which people of African descent and women speak. However, these texts concurrently provide containment devices that enframe these social groups within a national, historical pedagogy.
Dedicated to my parents

Orlindo V. de Lourenço and Maria Thereza Casale de Lourenço

and to my siblings

Ceile, Celine and Ciléia
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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation addresses representations of Afro-Brazilians and Afro-Cubans in Brazilian and Cuban films. Particularly, I focus on the intersection of these representations with the creation of national discourses and identities. In connection, I examine issues of gender, ethnicity and class. My general premise is that in both Brazil and Cuba people of African ancestry and their culture have been incorporated into hegemonic discourses consistently and similarly. Incorporation in this case, however, connotes subjugation, not active participation.

I focus on Brazilian and Cuban cinema, as part of the broader category of the New Latin American Cinema, because comparison of the two offers unique possibilities. The treatment of Afro-Brazilians and Afro-Cubans historically has been similar, as has the cultural influence of each group. As I mentioned above, people of African descent and their culture have been (re)presented as a major contingent in shaping national hegemonic discourses and national
identities, in both nations. Also, the development of national cinemas in each nation exhibits many parallels, yet the social political and economic contexts were quite different. For instance, both cinemas present a persisting interest in (re)inscribing Blacks in national history. As I will further discuss later in this introduction, this interest is rooted in the New Latin American Cinema’s desire to create national cinemas that would be consistent with the “national realities” of Latin America. But while Brazil sought “development” following a capitalist path, Cuba searched for progress through a Socialist revolution.

My research addresses a lacuna in scholarship. The New Latin American Cinema generally has caught the attention of some scholars, but comparatively little research has been published regarding specific films. The majority of this material either treats the issue from a historical perspective or details problems of production, distribution and exhibition. Apart from a few articles and a very limited number of books concerning representation of women and/or people of color (e.g. D’Lugo; Johnson; López; Pick; Stam) virtually no attention has been given to the intersection of gender, ethnicity, race and class. Yet treatment of social groups marginalized
by these factors appears to have been a major concern for many Latin American filmmakers. A few valuable works address Brazilian or Cuban cinema specifically (e.g. Johnson; Paranaguá; Xavier; Stam; Chanan). Despite Robert Stam’s exhaustive and most valuable study focusing on race representation in Brazilian cinema, this scholar’s *Tropical Culturalism* (1997) does not offer a detailed textual analysis of the films that I examine in this dissertation.¹ None of the literature I have located provides an in depth analysis of gender issues in relation to those of race and class in Brazilian and Cuban films.

THE EMERGENCE OF CINEMA NOVO AND NUEVO CINE CUBANO

CONTEXT:

It is important to mention that the beginning of the period in which both *Cinema Novo* (New Cinema) and Cuban New Cinema emerged (late 1950s and early 60s) was especially significant for filmmaking in both nations due to the development of new stylistic

¹This does not take away the merits of Stam’s monumental study. The intention of his book is to examine a vast body of Brazilian cinematic texts, and compare its different representations of race in contrast to Hollywood’s.
and political approaches to film. This new approach to filmmaking emerged out of complex social political contexts which often promoted unstable alliances between cultural producers and the State. Both Cinema Novo and Cuban New Cinema are part of a larger Latin American movement that sought radical changes in cinematic practices. The similarities expressed in Latin American filmmakers' writings calling for changes include an aesthetics that would be compatible with both the social political realities as well as with the technological underdevelopment of the film industries of each nation. These propositions are reflected not only in films themselves but also in filmmakers' written conceptualizations. The three most fundamental of these "manifests" include, Glauber Rocha's Estética da Fome (Brazil), Julio García Espinosa's Cine Imperfecto (Cuba), and Octavio Getino's and Fernando Solanas' Tercer Cine (Argentina).²

More specifically, in Brazil, the Cinema Novo movement arose out of social political and economic contradictions rooted in the ideology of development of the 1950s. Developmental ideology was based on assumptions that capitalist development, implemented

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²For a more detailed discussion of estética da fome see Chapter I, cine imperfecto Chapter III, and tercer cine Introduction, under "Working Concepts".
through “First World” models, would lead to political and economic stability. It also fueled nationalist sentiments which remained strong even after the economic assumptions began to crumble and social polarization increased. Political militancy for many of the Brazilian filmmakers meant unveiling the marginalized and their cultures. In this process, the marginalized took on qualities of national emblems.

A mutually beneficial though fragile alliance between Cinema Novo and the State began to form in the early 1960s under the liberal economic policies of Kubitshek. It continued to develop under the neo-populist João Goulart, and even after the military coup of 1964. The creation of the government film enterprise Empresa Brasileira de Filmes (EMBRAFILME) in 1969 consolidated State intervention in the film industry (Brazilian Cinema, Johnson 13). The Cinema Novo filmmakers stood to benefit from government subsidies and protection. Their preoccupation with “national realities” coincided with the State agenda of promoting nationalism, appropriately “educating” citizens, and creating a national discourse. And both sides had an interest in cultivating a national public as a market for Brazilian cinema. By the same token, these projects were often in contradiction with each other. Filmmakers’ objectives
included denouncing social and political conditions under the military regime. They were subjected to censorship, and thus forced to develop allegory, satire and other figurative approaches to voice their criticism.

Cuba had just experienced the Revolution. Cuban New Cinema arose in this context of change in which nationalism, independence, and socialist development were primary concerns. The Instituto Cubano de Artes e Industrias Cinematográficos (ICAIC), created in 1959, had as its major functions to carry out the ideals of the Revolution and to create an alternative mode of production for Cuban films. Among the revolutionary ideals was inclusion of marginalized groups in the national identity.

The new mode of production involved State subsidies and the creation of a national market. Unlike Brazilians, all Cuban filmmakers were associated with the ICAIC and worked under this government agency's rules. My preliminary findings from research conducted in Cuba indicate that filmmakers supported the basic principles of the Revolution, and agreed on what an alternative mode of production entailed. Oftentimes, however, their specific projects did not coincide with those of the State.
Brazilian and Cuban filmmakers, influenced by French Nouvelle Vague and Italian Neo-realism and in search of alternative modes of production, at first, rejected Hollywood models technically, aesthetically, and thematically. The "national cinema" that emerged was intended to be socially committed and reflect each nation's "reality". The first phase of these cinemas is characterized by a somber and overtly didactic aesthetic approach. As part of the larger New Latin American Cinema movement, Brazilian and Cuban new cinema's "first phase" adhered to general principles best explained in the following quote:

A cinema which is committed to national reality. A cinema which rejects evasive and deformative formulas, along with indifference, in order to confront the complex of sociological, political, economic, and cultural problems which each country, according to its particular situation and characteristics, is living through. A cinema that exudes realism, whether they be fictional or documentary; simple testimony, profound analysis, agitational tools. A cinema born in impossible conditions of production, brought forth by an act of faith and the infinite patience of its authors.³ (in Martin 158-9)

³This quote is found in Julianne Burton's article entitled "Film Artisans and Film Industry in Latin America". Burton's source is "Editorial," Cine al Día (Caracas), (December 1968), 2. The translation is by Burton.
Filmmakers both in Brazil and Cuba realized that their quasi-ethnographic, “realist”, highly didactic, minimalist approach failed to establish significant contact with the public. Thus, in the 1970s an aesthetic shift took place and filmmakers appropriated “popular” Hollywood techniques. In fact, the films studied in this dissertation, exemplify these two different aesthetics. While the Brazilian and Cuban films of the “first phase” clearly display a departure from commercial cinema, the ones belonging to the “second phase” show a penchant for adaptation of techniques associated with “First World” cinematography. The filmmakers’ intention, however, was not simply to imitate the “First World”. They remained committed to the idea of a politically committed “national cinema” with which the people of their nations could identify.

CORPUS SELECTION

I have selected three Brazilian films “Ganga Zumba (1962), “Xica da Silva” (1976) and “Quilombo” (1986). The two Cuban films studied in this dissertation are “El otro Francisco” (1974) and “Cecilia” (1982). It is important to clarify that there are two main reasons for my selecting these five films. The first one lays in that all of them
attempt to inscribe Blacks as agents in history. This is significant because, in their intention, all of these films seem to contradict the general premise of this dissertation. As the premise states, Blacks have always been incorporated into national hegemonic discourses both in Brazil and Cuba. If indeed these films are successful in (re)inscribing Afro-Brazilians and Afro-Cubans as subjects (endowed with agency) in national history and/or imaginary, they will also be successful in departing from old modes of representation, and therefore contradict the general premise. The second fundamental reason for selecting these films relates to the aesthetic shift that corresponds to each's time of production. For example, while “Ganga Zumba” and “El otro Francisco” belong to the “first” phase in that they seek to depart from Hollywoodian conventions, “Xica da Silva” and “Cecilia” take on certain epic dimensions similar to commercial cinema.4

Specifically, the three Brazilian films I have selected were all directed by Carlos Diegues, the one filmmaker who has displayed a constant interest in Afro-Brazilian culture. I have selected “Ganga

4The differences between the two aesthetics are clarified in the actual analyses of each film.
Zumba” (1963), “Xica da Silva” (1976) and “Quilombo” (1986) for several reasons. First, although I would have preferred to study films made by both Black and White filmmakers, unfortunately the Brazilian film industry has failed to produce feature length films made by black directors. Also, while Afro-Brazilian culture’s presence is felt throughout the history of Brazilian cinema, very few filmmakers actually devoted their attention to black people’s perspective on their own historical experience in Brazil.

In addition, because the quest for freedom is the recurrent theme in all three films, studying the three texts together provides for a unifying method of analysis. Also, the fact that they convey a similar theme, but each was produced at different political contexts allows me to look into the similarities and disparities in each film’s articulation of national projects.

The Cuban films I study are Sergio Giral’s “El otro Francisco” (1974), and Humberto Solás “Cecilia” (1982). I have selected these two films for at least four main reasons. First, each film is based on a different anti-slavery novel whose strong presence in the Cuban national imaginary cannot be ignored. These novels are Anselmo
Suárez y Romero’s *Francisco* (1838-1880), and Cirilo Villaverde’s *Cecilia Valdés* (1839-1882).

Second, since the death of Sara Gómez in 1975, Sergio Giral has been the only black filmmaker to direct feature length films at the Instituto Cubano de Artes e Industria Cinematográficos. I believe my study would be incomplete if I did not bring to focus a film made by the only Cuban black filmmaker who has had the opportunity to greatly contribute to Cuba’s film industry. Although all of his films focus on Afro-Cuban issues, I selected “El otro Francisco” because it reflects an earlier aesthetic approach in contrast to Solás’ “Cecilia”. Also, the fact that each of these two features was made in different political contexts offer important points of contrast in my analysis.

Some of these films, especially *Ganga Zumba* and *El otro Francisco*, exhibit an overt didacticism which reveals their intended ideological function. Time displacement is one of the most evident characteristics shared by all of the films I analyze in this dissertation. Moreover, all of them can be read in terms of “national allegories”. It is evident that the main intent is to depart from old

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5Sergio Giral left Cuba after the production of his last feature, “María Antonia” (1990).
modes of representation where stereotypes of Afro-Brazilian and Afro-Cuban cultures are introduced only to add spice. In their historical reconstruction there is also an apparent intention to show these marginalized groups as active participants in their nations’ history. Finally, too, some of the films seem, at least on the surface, to challenge traditional race and gender portrayals by placing black women in leading roles.

METHODOLOGY

All five films attempt to (re)inscribe marginalized social groups into national history through new modes of cinematic discourse. In this vein, I am exploring the specific correlations/contrasts between the Brazilian and Cuban films’ projects of constructing hegemonic national discourses. In particular, I am focusing on the degree to which construction of hegemonic national discourses involves processes of appropriation, co-optation and resistance regardless of whether “capitalist” or “socialist” development is involved.

The central concern of my analysis is the extent to which these films contribute to or counter hegemonic discourses. Supposing that Blacks have been consistently integrated in the configuration of national discourses/identities in both nations, I ask a series of
interwoven questions. The central questions I raise include whether these films indeed denounce the absence of Afro-Brazilians, Afro-Cubans and Afro-Brazilian/Cuban women as subjects in the national imaginary. Assuming that one of the functions of the films is to reclaim these social groups as historical subjects, I ask whether they are successful in doing so. Supposing there is an attempt to rescue these subjectivities, what types of legitimation devices are used in this process? Do these films demystify Afro-Brazilian and Afro-Cuban cultures? Or are they simply “about blacks” and consistent with dominant ideologies, but with a more subtle paternalism strategy. Are they successful in their attempts to depart from old problems of exoticism and objectification in depictions of Afro-Brazilians, Afro-Cubans and Afro-Brazilian/Cuban women?

Considering the leading roles Afro-Brazilian/Cuban women take on these films, I ask what are the positionings of women of color in the configuration of a Brazilian and a Cuban identity.

I address these questions by focusing on the films’ aesthetic approaches as well as the mediation process stemming from the
cinematographic apparatus itself\textsuperscript{6}. Since each film lends itself to a distinct approach to interpretation, I find inappropriate to use consistently the same analytical tools in my inquiries into all the text. Also, I wanted to avoid practices which limit their theoretical framework for the sake of simplification, and for the benefit of wholeness of the dissertation. In the end, this type of practices only limits the extent of our understanding of our object of study. While I acknowledge the fact that some texts may lend themselves to the use of similar analytical tools, I also consider that not all theoretical approaches are equally useful in the analysis of specific texts. I use different theoretical tools in the analysis of each film.

I utilize a transdisciplinary theoretical framework for my analyses. This framework draws on Feminist and Semiotic film criticism as well as on Post-Colonial and Cultural Studies approaches. Also, a dialogue is maintained between "First "World" approaches and formulations elaborated by "Third World", particularly Latin American, theoreticians and filmmakers. Feminist insights are

\textsuperscript{6}The term "cinematographic apparatus" is used to indicate the different means and techniques of production involved in cinematic representation (e.g. camera, lighting, color, projection, screen, editing, etc).
helpful in my analysis of the articulation of gender and ethnicity. Film Semiotic approaches are useful in understanding the complexities of cinematic sign systems and deciphering masked meanings rooted in the projected images of the subaltern.

However, there is a danger inherent in using them. For example, a significant body of both theoretical and critical work involving feminist approaches to film has been built up in the last twenty years by prominent U.S. and European scholars such as Laura Mulvey, Mary Anne Doane, Teresa de Lauretis and Ann Kaplan. Their works have provided valuable insight into representation of women. But, with the exception of Kaplan's latest book, Looking for the Other (1997), they do not elaborate on questions of race and class. Even more problematic, these theoreticians focus primarily on "First World" productions, and their post-structuralist psychoanalytical approaches often ignore historical and cultural contexts. Thus, in order to avoid a cultural bias, incorporation of Post Colonial and Cultural Studies approaches becomes important in analyzing mechanisms of manipulation and mediation in the construction of national discourses and identities.
However, caution is required in applying theories elaborated by scholars from Europe and the U.S. to cultural productions from contexts peripheral to the “First World”. Therefore, I reorient these approaches in directions suggested by Brazilian and Cuban theoreticians and filmmakers. I maintain a theoretical dialogue between texts produced by Latin American filmmakers and works written by scholars in the fields of Cultural and Post Colonial Studies. Concepts first elaborated by filmmakers such as Glauber Rocha, Julio García Espinosa and Fernando Solanas had a profound impact on subsequent film production and studies in the “Third World”. The importance of this type of dialogue is manifold. First, Latin American works supplement the “First World” approaches to interpretation. Second, the dialogue provides the means to pinpoint the limitations of Latin American film theory. Last, I anticipate this dialogue will lay the groundwork for further pursuits in the development of Latin American film theory.

WORKING CONCEPTS

7Besides these concepts, I also incorporate others in the discussion of the films. Some of them include, Estética da Fome, Cine Imperfecto, Tropicalismo, masquerade and suture.
In the light of formulations elaborated by Benedict Anderson and Homi Bhabha, the nation in this dissertation is understood in terms of an “imagined political community” which is constantly being narrated and its borders reformulated. Following Anderson, the nation is considered “imagined” because of the sense of communion (communality) in the minds of its members. It is a community because it “is conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (7).

In addition to conceptualizing the nation as an imagined, narrated community, I adhere to Homi K. Bhabha’s elaborations concerning the two discursive modes operating its narration: the pedagogical and the performative. In proposing a study of the nation based on how it is narrated, Bhabha reminds us of the ambivalence of its discourse. He considers that the temporal dimension involved in the inscription of political entities such as “the nation” and “the people” constitutes a “double time” (140). This double time is specifically related to the functioning of the pedagogical and the performative. The pedagogical has relates to the past, cumulative, linear time of the nation, while the performative relates to the present, repetitious everyday experiences and social practices. But
the interference of the performative in the temporal process of the pedagogical provokes a split and creates a temporality of "in-between" (148). The nation splits within itself and the homogeneity articulated by the pedagogical is interrupted in favor of heterogeneity. In this process, the nation becomes a liminal space that is internally marked by the discourses of minorities, the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities and tense locations of cultural differences. (148)

HEGEMONY:

My conceptualization of hegemony follows a Gramscian approach which foregrounds instability as the articulating grounds of subject positions. In other words, instability is a key element in the negotiations involved in the constant struggles between hegemonic and subaltern subjects to either maintain or gain hegemony.

Antonio Gramsci has argued that culture and power relations are inseparable. He considered culture as an arena of conflicts and struggles, that continuously either challenges or maintains power. Following a Gramscian perspective, I conceptualize hegemony as an unstable power bargaining process that comprises dissimilar as well as common interests. Hegemony emerges in an elaborate web of
different/opposing strategies where devices such as appropriation, co-optation, transculturation, containment, liberation, imposition and resistance are implicated in an array of power negotiations occurring among different types of subjects occupying either hegemonic or subaltern positions. This mechanism takes place within a complex system of alliances and oppositions configured by notions of domination and consent. The interrelation between domination and consent is articulated through compromises among those who occupy organizational roles in society.

In this vein, I also adhere to Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s postulations that Gramsci’s concept shifts from the “political” arena demarked by previous Marxist thought to the “intellectual moral” plane, which puts hegemony beyond the boundaries of class alliances (66-71). By penetrating the intellectual and moral terrain, hegemony also takes shape through sets of ideas and values that are shared by a variety of sectors within the same society (Laclau 66-71). Providing other dimensions to the Gramscian concept, Laclau and Mouffe propose what they call “the category of subject positions” in order to better describe the non-static characteristic of hegemony. In this sense, hegemony cannot be
conceived as permanent, but rather as a continuous struggle in its own articulatory practices.

THE CINEMATIC APPARATUS SUBJECTIVITY/IDENTIFICATION:

As André Bazin, Jean-Louis Baudry, Christian Metz, and Kaja Silverman, to name a few, have illustrated that the intensity of the perceptual value of the cinematic signifier is far greater than that of any other form of expression. Bazin, for instance, has explained the particular power of the cinematic image in comparison to photography and the theater. Baudry has examined how the dynamics of the “basic cinematographic apparatus” operates psychologically, especially in its attempts to create the impression of reality (in Mast, 690). Following Baudry’s outlines on subjectivity and specularization, Metz opened up a vast field of film investigation by addressing the power of cinema as it relates to the formation of viewer subjectivity. Silverman has theorized on the spectator’s emergence as subject in filmic discourse by focusing on the mediations of the camera, and thus builds on Metz’ findings. From Bazin’s insights on “what is cinema?” to Baudry’s, Metz’ and Silverman’s theories on spectatorship, one thing is clear: cinema is a
powerful medium endowed with a particularly acute conduciveness which is charged with ideological implication.

In an attempt to unmask the operations implicated in the cinematic apparatus and better understand the complexities involved in its signification process, many film theoreticians have often relied on a theoretical subject model that owes much to Lacanian psychoanalysis. For instance, Lacan's model of subject development has been instrumental in Baudry's works concerning cinema and spectatorship as well as in subsequent investigations.

In his attempts to explain cinema's intense effect on the spectator, Baudry draws an analogy between Freud's dream state and the spectator’s experience during film projection. He notices that certain characteristics pertaining to the apparatus serve to induce a dream-like-state in the spectator. According to Baudry, the darkened room, screen, projection light, emphasis on optical functions, "suspension of [bodily] mobility", among other particularities of cinema, steer the spectator toward a subjective regression. Baudry also seeks to account for the creation of cinematic "impression of reality" effect by comparing the actual experience of seeing a movie and dreaming. When making the analogy between dreaming and
film-viewing, Baudry finds that in both instances, “impression of reality” is intensely charged or, in his words, it is “more-than-real”. For Baudry, the reception of films is a simulation of dreams. While seeing a film, the spectator experiences a psychological displacement which takes him/her to a phase analogous to Lacan’s “mirror stage”.

In Lacanian terms, this is the phase in which the “I”, as an imaginary function, begins to be constituted. It is important to recall that Baudry adheres to Lacanian psychoanalysis in that he rejects the idea of a fixed and stable subject. Instead, he proposes a conceptualization of the “self” as a process of construction whose dynamics work according to unconscious as well as culturally specific signifying practices.

Expanding on Baudry’s ideas, Metz has also outlined the crucial instances in the subject formation in order to locate the spectator-as-subject during projection. In relating the film-viewing-experience of the spectator with that of the child’s first recognition of his/her own image in the mirror, Metz is able to trace parallels and establish differences that can assist in grasping the relationship between spectator and cinema. He reiterates Lacan by pointing out that when the child first acknowledges his/her image on the mirror, s/he
perceives her/himself as an other. The child becomes separated from the prior perceived unity s/he held with her/his mother, and the mother, in turn, becomes “another”. The cognition of his/her image and realization of separation from the mother introduce the child to the symbolic realm (acquires language and through it, s/he makes sense of the world).

In establishing the mirror/child and spectator/film relationships, Metz also points out a few differences between the two in their signification processes. He argues that although the film and the mirror project images, they differ in that the spectator’s own body is never seen on the screen” (in Mast 732). Furthermore, while the child is unknown to him/herself prior to the mirror stage, the spectator, on the other hand, has already experienced its own ego formation. If identification with his/her own image is what permits the child to enter the realm of the symbolic, what then enables the “intelligible unfolding of the film despite [the] absence” of the spectator’s own image, asks Metz (in Mast 733). He explains that, the spectator knows that objects exist, that he himself exists as a subject, that he becomes an object of others[...] the practice of the cinema presupposes that the primitive undifferentiation of the ego and the non-ego has been overcome (in Mast 733)
Metz asks if this is indeed the condition in which the film-viewer finds himself, with what then does he identify. Furthermore, where is the spectator's ego located during film-viewing? Metz attempts to answer these questions through the conceptualization of an "all-perceiving subject". He points out that the spectator identifies with him/herself as "a pure act of perception" and is the "instance which constitutes the cinema signifier (it is I who make the film)" (in Mast 734-35).

Like in the viewer-subject of quattrocento paintings, the spectator-subject's transcendental quality relates to its inscription at an all-powerful site provided by a vanishing point. The vanishing point in cinema, however, is determined by the framing provided by the camera. The spectator, Metz explains, upon identifying "...with himself as look, [he] can do no other than identify with the camera, too, which has looked before him at what he is looking..." (in Mast 735).

"PRIMARY IDENTIFICATION PROCESS"\textsuperscript{8}

\textsuperscript{8}This term was coined by Metz to differentiate the process in which the spectator identifies with her/his own look from that of primary identification in early infancy.
Keeping in mind that identification in cinema is a result of an already constituted subject, primary identification in cinema relates to the spectator's identification with the subject of vision, the eye of the camera. This identification is made possible through the dream-like state set up by the apparatus (dark room, moving pictures, illusion of continuity, lighting). What the screen actually offers, 

[...] the viewers is a simulacrum of their perception of the real universe. Primary identification for the cinema is the means by which spectators identify with their own glance and also prove to themselves that they are the locus of representation by being the privileged, central and transcendental subject of vision. (Aumont 214)

SECONDARY IDENTIFICATION PROCESS:

This concept refers to the ways in which the spectator identifies with the characters in the film. Secondary identification depends on the possibilities of primary identification. In this sense, it also involves the mediation of the cinematographic apparatus such as the workings of the camera, lighting, editing, etc.

THE MALE GAZE

While feminist film theory challenges psychanalysis, it also makes use of it in its inquiries. In general, feminist film theoreticians
have argued that the cinematic apparatus, upon constructing subject positions based on fetishism, narcissism, scop drive and identification, creates subject/object relationships that establish “woman as image and man as bearer of the look” (Mulvey 19). Laura Mulvey, in her groundbreaking article titled “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (1975), has argued that:

The cinema satisfies a primordial wish for pleasurable looking, but it also goes further, developing scopophilia in its narcissistic aspect. The conventions of the mainstream film focus attention on the human form. Scale, space, stories are all anthropomorphistic. Here, curiosity and wish to look intermingle. (17)

In the light of the complexity of each films' approaches to representation, I analyze one film per chapter, with the exception of “Ganga Zumba” and “Quilombo”. Because of these two films common theme, I provide a reading of both in one chapter. In addition, I use different analytical tools in the analysis of each film. This accounts for the seemingly fragmented nature of this dissertation.
CHAPTER 1

THE POLITICS OF TRANSGRESSION IN “XICA DA SILVA”

This chapter is a reading of “Xica da Silva”, a Brazilian film directed by Carlos Diegues. “Xica da Silva” was made in 1975-6 under the auspices of the official film enterprise EMBRAFILME. This period was characterized by economic uncertainty nationally, and ideological and artistic contention in the film industry. The models of development/modernization which had given rise to the high expectations for economic growth of the 50s and 60s, had begun to prove unsuitable to the Brazilian context. Politically, the military coup of 1964, and the subsequent repression of the military dictatorship, particularly after 1968, also brought strenuous consequences to the artistic scene.

In the film industry, by the mid-70s, many Cinema Novo filmmakers had realized that there was a great need for change in
the cinematic production of Brazil. Their films, which had been intended to be seen by a large sector of the population, had failed to reach a sizable portion of the national public. During the previous phase of Cinema Novo's evolution it had developed an aesthetics best described in Glauber Rocha's famous manifest entitled "A estética da fome" (1965). Criticizing foreigners' "nostalgia for primitivism," Glauber had argued that this perspective limited Latin America's misery to "an esthetics object" rather than enabling its recognition as a "social symptom" (69). He added that hunger is the "essence" of Latin American societies, and that "there resides the tragic originality of Cinema Novo." Glauber perceives the violence stemming from hunger as this human condition's "most noble cultural manifestation". He adds that an aesthetics of violence is primarily revolutionary in its commitment to bring about social awareness.

By revealing and making misery/hunger understood, Cinema Novo becomes a liberating tool which "frees us from the debilitating delirium of hunger." In other words, by adopting the misery of marginalized social groups as the essence of an aesthetic approach, Cinema Novo transforms hunger into a instrument aimed at social changes. This revolutionary and empowering aesthetic, along with
the filmmaker’s commitment to the “great causes”, is what sets Cinema Novo apart from the commercial industry.

By the end of the 1960s, however, it became clear to many that the lusterless, artisan and openly didactic *estética da fome* films had failed to establish significant contact with Brazilian mass consumers. As a response to the socio-political conjuncture of the time, and as a result of related artistic debates, many filmmakers sought new approaches to cinematic representation. “Tropicalismo”, an artistic movement that originally flourished in the field of music during the 1960s, became a major influence in the filmmakers’ attempts to create a new aesthetic. Allegory, kitsch, and the carnivalesque are some of the predominant tropicalist traits they adopted in their quest for change. In this vein, Cinema Novo shifted away from *estética da fome’s* somber images of marginal realities, and entered a period described by Ella Shohat and Robert Stam as “recarnivalization” of Brazilian cinema. These scholars explain the process of recarnivalization in the 1970s and 1980s,

not only as a key trope orienting the filmmaker’s conception of their own production, but also as a means of renewing contact with the popular audience. (306)
In their quest to identify and bridge the gaps that separated cultural production from mass consumption, filmmakers searched for answers in popular cultural practices and popular cultural consumption. This approach, however, raises questions concerning the adoption of modes in which "the commercial industry" had captured the public. Like the Brazilian Modernists in the 1920s, Brazilian filmmakers now had to confront those contradictions that are rooted in the phenomenon of Modernity as it is experienced in the periphery. On one hand, they were faced with the objective of remaining faithful to Cinema Novo "revolutionary" practice by resisting the dominant, colonizing and modern ways of the trade. On the other, filmmakers were faced with the need to change their very own practices in order to reach the public. In their attempt to reconcile these seemingly antagonistic spheres, filmmakers in the tropicalist phase adopted Brazilian Modernists' *antropofagia* by "cannibalizing" certain aspects of dominant practices.

The underlying dialectic process in the Modernists' conception of cannibalism operates as a mediating resource. As such, cannibalism is used to resolve those conflicts that stem from the struggles of the pre-modern, archaic and original to resist the
imposition of the modern, new, foreign and artificial. This process implicates a "devouring" of the dominant by the dominated. The resulting byproduct stands as a synthesis which bears the seal of (Brazilian) authenticity. As Joaquim Pedro de Andrade put it:

Cannibalism is an exemplary mode of consumerism adopted by underdeveloped peoples. [...] The new heroes, still looking for a collective consciousness, try to devour those who devour us. (83)

Unlike the Modernists' work and the estética da fome films, the tropicalist reconceptualization of antropofagia involved an actual consumptive praxis on the part of the public. Again, it is important to call attention to Joaquim Pedro de Andrade's criticism of Cinema Novo's first phase in which he draws a parallel with the Modernist Movement. Andrade attributes the political failure of the first phase films to their lack of communication with the public. He argues that:

There is always a degree of interpenetration and communication between the intelligentsia of the more developed and less developed countries. This phenomenon is a perennial one. The modernists of 1922, for example, attempted to deal with this problem by rejecting all imported values and techniques not relevant to our reality in favor of authentically Brazilian processes that would be, in principal, communicative and unalienating. The works produced by this movement, according to this rationale, should have had a greater degree of communication than they in fact had. Despite the good
intentions of their program, the movement's complex intellectual processes and intellectual pretension made such communication impossible. (74)

While estética da fome rejected Hollywood’s conventions and techniques, the tropicalist phase of Cinema Novo appropriated the use of technologies and skills that had made Hollywood films "popular" -- that is, successful consumer products. The intention was not simply to imitate Hollywood. Brazilian filmmakers wanted to remain committed to making alternative films with which Brazilians could identify. They also desired to reach the public and secure a national space for their productions by seeking and utilizing resources that had been proven successful in old Brazilian cinema, primarily the chanchada. Cinema Novo also enlisted television’s popularly acclaimed stars whose familiar faces would enhance the possibility of spectatorship identification. Through this antropofágico process, filmmakers hoped to reach the public while attempting to question concepts of "brasilianness" as they (re)inscribed the

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9Chanchada is a type of humorous film, prevalent in the 40s, that mixes musical acts with comedy. It public is drawn largely from the popular classes.
marginalized. But the tropicalists’ new designs were not entirely 
embraced by all.

In a harsh criticism of the Brazilian leftist intellectuals’
“cultural hegemony” of 1964 to 1969, Roberto Schwarz rejects
Tropicalismo’s aesthetic as a conciliatory mediation which brings
together entertainment and social criticism. Adopting an Adornian 
perspective, Schwarz criticizes the tropicalists in their idealism of an 
aesthetics that would both reach the masses and stimulate the
formation of critical consumer-subjectivities. In Schwarz’s reasoning, 
the tropicalists’ fascination with mass mediated production, and their
enthusiasm for first-world technologies/techniques resulted in
cultural commercialization and mass political alienation. He argues 
that, devoid of any radical political content, tropicalist cultural 
production would fall under the category of sheer entertainment. The
carnivalesque, the simultaneous mockery and celebration of national 
backwardness, and the use of “first-world” technology/technique was 
likely to make,

the tuned-in spectator [...] reach for the obvious buzz words: 
Brazil is incredible, he will say, it’s cool, it’s the living end, it’s 
too much. By means of these expressions in which sympathy

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and disgust are indiscernible, he affiliates himself to the group of those who have the "sense" of the national character. (142)

Although Schwarz' critique is most valuable, e.g., in its attempt to confront populist discourses, it does not take into consideration the complex dynamics generated by different mechanisms inherent to the media which compose a particular cultural production. In the case of cinema, it entails a web of psychological and social intricacies that only add complexity to an already complicated aesthetics, such as the tropicalist. These complexities can be better explored in a detailed analysis of films such as "Xica da Silva".

While "Xica da Silva" was well received by the Brazilian public, it still remains a controversial film entangled in debates. Opinions about the film have been either entirely positive or radically negative in regard to its representation of Afro-Brazilians. Randal Johnson's Bakhtinian reading of the film, for instance, portrays it as possessing strong emancipatory and subversive qualities, while it presents the film's politics as "a festive, carnivalesque commemoration of the [Brazilian] people's vitality" (77).

On the other hand, within a larger debate concerning blacks in Brazilian cinema in general, Marco Aurélio Luz described the film
much less favorably. A participant in a seminar on Cinema and Decolonization sponsored by the Sociedade de Estudos da Cultura Negra (Society for the Studies of Black Culture) describes how Marco Aurélio intervened with accusations of racism within Brazilian cinema. Mentioning specific films and pointing at their respective portrayal of black people, he singled out “Xica da Silva” as the most racist film yet in its disrespectful and aggressive portrayal of black women (in Avellar, 3).

The fact that opinions remain so sharply divided suggests that this film deserves additional attention. The purpose intended by the maker(s) of “Xica da Silva” appears to have been to (re)inscribe African Brazilians as historical subjects, and rescue them as real agents in the construction of national identity. In order to (re)define a nation’s identity - what makes a particular nation or community different - the past has often become the site posited with the seal of authenticity. Brazilian cinema shares in a greater tradition of Latin American cultural productions in seeking to locate the specificity of a national identity. It is not gratuitous, therefore, that Carlos Diegues has often searched into Brazilian colonial history for material that
would permit a voyage into conceptualizations of "brasiilianness". This journey into the past seems to characterize Roberto Schwarz's comments on Tropicalismo in general. Referring to Tropicalismo's internal contrasts, Schwarz explains that:

there are many ambiguities and tensions in [its] construction. The vehicle is modern and the content archaic, but the past is noble and the present commercial; on the other hand the past is atrocious and the present authentic. (140)

As will be illustrated in this analysis, "Xica da Silva" certainly manifests qualities expressed in Schwarz' above mentioned words. The film presents itself as a reconstruction of the rise and fall of a slave woman in the 18th century state of Minas Gerais. The story line is based on real life experiences of Francisca da Silva, whose fame and glory were suppressed from official histories. Despite the efforts to keep Francisca's achievements in obscurity, her legendary power remained alive in fragmented form in popular memory. Carlos Diegues' film searches into the debris of a suppressed knowledge in

\footnote{Diegues's role in bring forth the participatory role of African Brazilians in history is commendable. Since his early involvement with cinema, Diegues has systematically focused on African Brazilians' experiences and contributions.}
an attempt to locate and uncover Francisca's experience as a site of Afro-Brazilian resistance.

The central questions of this chapter, however, concern whether "Xica da Silva" breaks the dominant rules in its attempt to claim the female Afro-Brazilian subject. My reading entails an inquiry into contradicting hypotheses about the film, in the hope to uncover those intricacies that make "Xica da Silva" such a rich object of study. I inquire into the hypotheses that "Xica da Silva" is a film which simply reinscribes Afro-Brazilian women as sexual objects in national discourse. On the other hand, I look into assumptions that project the liberating character of this film. The point of departure of my analysis is my hypothesis that Afro-Brazilians' positionings are not outside the boundaries of Brazilian official discourses. Rather, blacks and black culture have been incorporated into Brazilian hegemonic discourses as one of the three major contingents in the configuration of Brazilian national identity, along with Europeans and Indigenous peoples. Incorporation in this case, however, connotes subjugation, not participation. Afro-Brazilians are often represented as objects in the dominant history rather than agents of historical processes.
My analysis of “Xica da Silva” also raises questions concerning the nature of black women’s subject positions in the film. Supposing the film is an attempt to rescue Afro-Brazilian female subjectivity, what types of legitimation devices are used in this process? Is it successful in reclaiming this absent subject or is it just another film made “about” blacks located in the confines of dominant ideologies?

According to the film, Francisca rose up the socioeconomic ladder by bewitching prominent men with her mysterious sexual powers. Through the course of the film the protagonist has several sexual encounters in all of which the men first fight her “secret” power, but then succumb to her sexual charms. The spectator never sees what exactly constitutes this sexual power which makes men desire Xica with such intensity that they comply even with the most unusual of her requests. Xica eventually becomes the mistress of the most powerful white man in the region, João Fernandes de Oliveira. João Fernandes is a contractor sent by the Portuguese crown to explore/oversee the diamond mines of Arraial do Tijuco, and he becomes richer than the crown itself. Due to her connection to João Fernandes and her extravagant actions, Xica’s name soon began to resonate even in the confines of the Portuguese court.
After an initial viewing of the film, it is possible to understand Marco Aurélio Luz’s reaction to it as “disrespectful and aggressive toward Afro-Brazilian women.” The film can be understood as dealing in stereotypes both sexual and racial that promote a degrading identification of the Afro-Brazilian woman with her body. An application of various theoretical approaches in analyzing specific scenes can reinforce such a reading.

But upon further analysis of “Xica”, one thing which immediately stands out is the enigmatic power which she commands, sexually and otherwise. In her first appearance on the screen, she is positioned center frame, with her back to the camera, as she feeds the chickens at her first master’s house. The camera slowly zooms in and the spectator hears José, her master’s adult son, calling her name in a joking tone, as if he were a chicken. The camera moves away from her, and briefly shows José, then suddenly returns to Xica as she gets up and turns toward the camera.

The two engage in an interplay: José tries to fondle her, but Xica refuses the young master’s advances. She pulls away and angrily screams at him to leave her alone. But immediately thereafter she
lures the young man into the basement, and he shouting happily in confident anticipation that she will consent to sex.

The camera focuses on the dark entrance of the hay-barn, and the spectator hears José begging Xica not “to do that.” His voice now sounds fearful, suggesting the possibility that Xica is about to cause him unspeakable harm. He bursts forth with a howl which resembles a mixture of a mating call, a cry of fear, a clamor for mercy and a grunt of pleasure.

In a medium close-up shot, Xica is shown naked, asking José if he is done. The spectator now can relax, because s/he is assured that all is fine. The camera shifts to José exhausted but relaxed, half-dead as if just regaining consciousness after delirium. Although it is clear that José’s howling is a result of sexual exhilaration, the audience is never informed of what exactly caused such excitement.

This mysterious sexual ability of Xica is a recurrent theme in the film. The mystery serves to feed and strengthen her desirability, and at the same time, it appears to connect her black, slave body closely to primitiveness. Explicitly portrayed as the object of desire of several men, she is sexually experienced by her young master José, by José’s father, by the Contractor, by the Afro-Brazilian rebel,
and finally by the Court's inspector, the Count. All of these men share two characteristic in common: they all occupy positions of power and all of them experience the utmost pleasure that pivots on Xica's body.

Appearing to capitalize on various stereotypes often related to women in Western societies, this brief description would seem sufficient to validate a "negative" reading of the film. Xica's mysterious sexual powers could be linked to myths that have traditionally associated femininity and enigma. For example, questioning theories of image and femininity, Mary Ann Doane has argued that there is closeness attributed to hieroglyphic language, enigma and woman. The point of departure of her observation is Freud's lecture on femininity where he alludes to a fragment of one of Heine's poems maintaining that, "Throughout history people have knocked their heads against the riddle of the nature of femininity". In what Doane calls an "intertextual misrepresentation", Freud's invocation permits her to trace a metonymic chain that would lead to the conclusion that, "the hieroglyphic, like the woman, harbours a mystery, an inaccessible though desirable otherness" (759).
The film appears to reaffirm not only the idea that woman's desirability lies in her inherently mysterious ways, but also to reinforce stereotypes related to race. Mystery is also an "essential attribute" historically assigned to the primitive Other. Mystery works to stimulate the pursuit of pleasure to be found in experiencing sexually the non-white Other.

And Xica is not the only one to be identified with the bodily, instinctive and sexual. These attributes are also emphasized in the portrayal of other black characters, and seem to intensify the connection between uniquely instinctive, lascivious actions, and black identity. For example, Xica, deprived of the opportunity to see the ocean, is granted a boat on which she and her "personal court" sail on a make-believe sea (a lake constructed following João Fernandes' orders). While the protagonist herself is shown bored with the "sea", her entourage are displayed engaged in sexual games with one another. The sustained importance of the sexual realm in a space where no whites are permitted, can easily be interpreted as "coisa de preto" as typical black people behavior. The excessive display of sexuality in the film seems to reiterate those perceptions about black people so brilliantly described by Franz Fanon, "[f]or the
majority of white men the Negro represents the sexual instinct. The Negro is the incarnation of a genital potency beyond all moralities and prohibitions" (Black Skin 177).

All this seems to reinforce Xica's triple and inseparable Otherness as a black woman slave. To clarify this Otherness, it is appropriate to recall again Fanon's words. He explains that as a black man he is "overdetermined from without," and he is "the slave not of the ‘idea’ that others have of [him] but of [his] own appearance" (116). Xica's Otherness goes a few degrees further than Fanon's, for she is three times overdetermined by the identification of her whole person with the appearance of her body: as black, as woman and as slave.

Implicit in all these assertions is one of the central questions in cinema concerning female representation—sexual objectification. If sexual objectification is to be understood as a process where the individual is fragmented and her sexual functions and/or genitalia become separated from the person as a whole, there is room for arguments which would locate Xica on the negative side of a binary system paradigm. It would read man/woman, white/black, rational/bodily, civilized/primitive and so on. If sexual objectification
implies the transformation of the individual as a whole into a mere object of desire, branding “Xica da Silva” with the “offensive” insignia can also be justified.

On the other hand, Johnson’s opposite claims can also be supported. In his words:

Diegues’ apparent rationale in the characterization of Xica is that, as a slave she has no possessions except her body, and she controls it. Therefore, in addition to being the object of desire of the most powerful men in the village, she, not her partners, controls and determines the sexual relationship she maintains. Even though she has no economic, military, or political power, she exercises the power of eros, erotic power. (Brazilian Cinema 219)

It is true that Xica is the one who controls the accessibility to her body. But, contrary to Johnson’s claims, in a slave economy the body represents capital and labor that does not belong to the slave. Xica is conscious of the exchange value of the body. Therefore, what is at stake here is not the body per se, but rather the use she is able to assign to her own body. Xica is able to use her body as a token for personal favors. In fact, the use of her own body as an exchange token appears precisely in those negotiations involving transgressions.
Nowhere are these negotiations clearer than in the scene where she introduces herself to the diamond contractor, João Fernandes. Disregarding her master's orders not to appear at the reception in the contractor's honor, Xica barges into an office where the town's most powerful white men are meeting and talking business. As she enters the closed space, Xica's bodily imposition not only disrupts the men's conversation, but also appropriates their space, in which she becomes the sole actor.

She makes a series of false accusations against José, her master's son. In speech, Xica addresses her master as she complains of his son's abuses to her body, but looks at João Fernandes making sure that he is the audience of her performance. She verbally calls attention to her secret, magical, sexual powers that her "master likes so much". And while listing her grievances against José, she turns her gaze to the contractor, directing his gaze, and everyone else's, in turn toward her body. She paradoxically uses a discourse of female slave victimization to empower herself.

But either claim, favorable or unfavorable, hints at analytical paths that harken back to sociological approaches marked by their tendency to assess societal roles as either positive or negative. In
fact, both claims implicitly reflect the same patriarchal logic: they are trapped in proposing conciliation in terms of binary oppositions.

Furthermore, this type of observation proposes an analysis of social constructs where only external guidelines are considered when assessing meaning. However, if attention is placed solely on the manner in which meanings are produced internally, there is a danger that cultural specificities—criteria such as race relations, economics, historical context—could be excluded or lost in a web of psychoanalytical assumptions. What I propose is a close look into the ambivalences of this film so that readings will move beyond simple assessment in terms of positive or negative roles, or in terms of a search for the eminent truth of the human psyche. Drawing on conceptualizations of the "masquerade" in feminist theories as starting point, I will demonstrate the intricacies rooted at the very aesthetic approach of the film. By examining these intricacies, I hope to locate the interstices working as sites of transgressive operations.

Xica's appearance is consistent with the aesthetic/stylistic approach used by Diegues. As explained before, during the tropicalist phase of Cinema Novo, an allegorical language was developed that drew on popular culture (popular cultural practices, and popular
mass consumption), emphasizing “bad taste” and manipulating the
carnivalesque. Abundance, exaggeration, hyperbolization are some of
the standard features that permit inversion, subversion and
decomposition of existing social structures and roles. This language
also provided a means to denounce and criticize socio-economic and
political conditions under the military dictatorship. These traits aid in
generating ambiguity, thus making difficult a clear cut interpretation
of a given tropicalist cultural production. Once again, Roberto
Schwarz’ formulations on *Tropicalismo* might elucidate my point.

ambiguity appears in the combination of violent social criticism
and bare-faced commercialism, whose results can easily turn
out to be conformist, but can also, when they cast an ironic
light on its doubtful side, capture the hardest and most difficult
contradictions of [tropicalist] intellectual production. (141)

Without compromising in any way the validity of Schwarz’s
observations, it is also possible to understand the ambiguity evident
in the film at another level. This level is revealed through an
understanding of masquerade, a notion first conceptualized by Joan
Riviere in 1929 and later elaborated by several scholars, including
Luce Irigaray, Claire Johnston, Judith Butler and Mary Ann Doane.
Because their approaches are more relevant to the objectives of my
analysis, I will draw on Judith Butler's and Mary Ann Doane's formulations.

In her essay entitled "Womanliness as a Masquerade" (1929), Riviere had brought to attention women's use of femininity as a masquerade. Riviere conceptualized masquerade as a tool of compensation manipulated by women in resolving conflicts rooted in rivalries between gendered identities. Beginning with a Lacanian approach, Butler's critical analysis of Riviere's notion reveals additional important aspects of the notion of masquerade. Butler's work first discusses Lacan's theories on the transactions operating between "having the phallus" and "being the phallus." She explains that in Lacanian terms,

"being" the Phallus and "having" the Phallus denote divergent sexual positions, or nonpositions (impossible positions, really) within language. To "be" the Phallus [woman's position] is to be the "signifier" of desire and to appear as this signifier. In other words, it is to be the object, the Other of a (heterosexual) masculine desire, but also to represent or reflect that desire. [...] By claiming that the Other that lacks the Phallus is the one who is the Phallus, Lacan clearly suggests that power is wielded by this feminine position of not-having, that the masculine subject who "has" the Phallus requires this Other to confirm and, hence, be the Phallus in its "extended" sense. (44)
Butler goes on to mention Lacan's explanation that it is through masquerade that "a woman 'appears' to be the Phallus, the lack that embodies and affirms the Phallus" (46).

Commenting on image and sexual specifications, Doane points out the implications of theoretical approaches that relegate women who identify with female characters to the position of passivity or masochism. According to these approaches, females always assume the position of the bearer of the gaze while males perform the role of voyeurs. Therefore, explains Doane, these theories have the tendency "to view female spectator as the site of an oscillation between a feminine position and a masculine position, invoking the metaphor of the transvestite" (765). She maintains that female transvestism (role reversal) as an alternative to the (male)subject/(female)object dichotomy does not explain, "why a woman might flaunt her femininity, produce herself as an excess of femininity, in other words, foreground the masquerade" (765). She goes on to propose Joan Riviere's concept of masquerade as another strategy to be explored in relation to film theory. Doane's interpretation of masquerade reveals that, "[m]asquerade [...] constitutes an
acknowledgement that it is femininity itself which is constructed as mask-as the decorative layer which conceals non-identity" (765).

She adds that masquerade's excessive display of femininity serves to create the necessary gap which distances the self from the image of the self. The masquerade confounds this masculine structure of the look. "It effects [sic] a defamiliarisation of female iconography" (766).

Although Butler simply draws a brief analogy between the Hegelian master/slave relationship and the interdependency found in the positions of "having the Phallus" and "being the Phallus," her work does not take into account cultural specificities. In Doane's case, her elaborations completely exclude racial issues. But despite their exclusive applications to (white?) gender issues, Butler's and Doane's observations can be expanded into a critical analysis encompassing both gender and race. In fact, Butler's observations concerning the being/having phallic interdependency may well respond to Franz Fanon's race-related words on black and white identities. Fanon mentions that, "There is a quest for the Negro, the negro is in demand, one cannot get along without him, he is needed, but only if he is made palatable in a certain way" (White Mask 176).
In this vein, Doane's arguments can also be pertinent to relating "femininity" to "negroness." The same way masquerade involves "an acknowledgement that it is femininity itself which is constructed as mask [...] which conceals non-identity," masquerade can also embody the recognition that racial attributes are also constructed as mask. Similarly to gendered specifications, they hide non-identity—non-position within language. The same way femininity takes hyperbolic dimensions when women transgress into spheres prohibited to them, so do racialized codes when non-whites desire to cross the line.

In the case of Xica, both instances are inseparable, for she embodies "essential traits" assigned to females and to non-whites. In addition to highlighting the enigma and magical sexual power embedded in Xica's body, the film emphasizes the protagonist's constant preoccupation with her appearance. While an analysis of female preoccupation with her bodily being lies beyond the scope of this study, it is appropriate to say that sexual objectification is essential to the "narcissistic" experience; and as Sandra Lee Bartky summarizes it, "the nature of feminine narcissism is infatuation with an inferiorized body." (40).
For Xica, however, her exaggerated “infatuation” is a reaction that compensates for the objectification of a body three times inferiorized (by gender, by race and by class). This response is especially evident when she desires to transgress into spaces socially denied to her. One clear example is in the scene where she heads for the local church believing her recently purchased “freedom letter” would give her the right to enter within that “sacred” space. As she happily strolls through town to the tune of a samba, she appears dressed in a gaudy imitation of European apparels resembling more a carnival costume than the intended classy-sophisticated-white-look. In addition to the dress and the music, a long blond wig atop an excessively made-up face, seem to reinforce both Xica’s carnivalesque appearance and her desire to appear white.

But a later scene seems to invalidate any claims that she desires to be white. After receiving the racial insults of the Count, Court’s envoy, Xica organizes a welcoming dinner reception for him. The guests are exclusively important white people. In a shocking but triumphant entrance she steps into the room wearing an even bigger blond wig, and her face this time completely painted white, as if wearing a mask. While everyone stares at her, she suggests to the
count not to eat the “galinha ao molho pardo,” the brown sauce chicken, because he might not like it.

Xica’s remark is clearly a sarcastic reference to earlier racial comments made by the Count. In the previous scene, Xica had introduced herself to the Count. As she bowed to greet him, the Count ignored her welcoming gestures and commented to João Fernandes that the contractor failed to see that things were not clear at all. On the contrary, the Count comments while referring to Xica, “things are rather dark here.” Xica had replied by sarcastically apologizing for her color not being pleasing to the Count. In a most representative example of hyperbolization, Xica’s thickly white painted face and her comments, in her next encounter with the Count, take on characteristics of the masquerade. Her extravagant ways produce a racial displacement much like the one explained by Doane regarding gender and masquerade: “It effects a defamiliarisation of female [racial] iconography”. By wearing that mask she not only mocks whites, but also, echoing Fanon, she seems to be saying, “look at me, I have black skin. I am a black woman consciously wearing a white mask to conceal what you see as non-identity”.

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Exemplifying a degree of conscientização\textsuperscript{11}, Xica seems to have rescued her lost identity by using the very system recursively implicated in the perpetuation a white patriarchal slave society. She recognizes absurdities of white supremacy, becomes conscious of it, uses it against the stereotypes and racist attitudes. This acknowledgement of her blackness is confirmed later in the film when Xica tries to bribe the Count by offering him an African banquet, and dancing almost completely naked before him.

The ambiguity inherent in the aesthetic of the film gives rise to the ambivalent character of the protagonist. By the same token, Xica appears ambivalent due to the nature of her trick, masquerade. She uses masquerade as a strategic mechanism of transgression, in an attempt to subvert white patriarchal rules. In order to answer the original questions posed by my study, surely Xica “exercises the power of eros, erotic power”.

Nevertheless, it could be added that her source of power is not simply her sexual prowess, but also, and especially, it is her ability to utilize masquerade to empower herself. The hyperbolic dimensions

\textsuperscript{11}In Pedagogia do oprimido, Paulo Freire uses this term in reference to the steps taken by the oppressed to empower themselves through awareness, reflexion and action.
into which she takes femininity and racial essentialities, work as “defamiliarisation of female [and racial] iconography”. It creates that necessary gap that distances her from the image of (her)self. Therefore, to claim that portraying a black female using her sexual agency as an empowering/defamiliarizing tool is offensive to Afro-Brazilian women, demonstrates a narrow understanding of this film. In positing the film with the “negative image” label, Marco Aurélio completely disregards the hallmark of Tropicalist aesthetics. He fails to acknowledge the conflicting mechanisms involving emancipation and contention that are woven together throughout the film.

Still, to view “Xica da Silva” as a liberating film which “celebrates the vitality of the [Brazilian] people”, as Johnson has claimed, also can be seen as a haphazard assumption. Despite the indisputable merits of this scholar’s seminal work on Brazilian cinema - and understandable as his celebratory Bakhtinian orientations might be - this particular assertion is problematic for at least three basic reasons. First, it entails a reductionism which disregards the complexities embedded in the film’s aesthetics, primarily the use of carnivalesque imagery. Second, it suggests a universalization of “black Brazilian culture” in equating it with “the
Brazilian people's culture”. Third it indicates a disregard for the power of the cinematic apparatus, particularly the mediating role exercised by the camera.

As a first step in addressing the aesthetic complexities in relation to the carnivalesque, it is important to foreground the nature and politics of transgression in the film. The key question to ask here is how the politics of transgression functions in relation to the discursive practices in the film. By examining these relationships, it helps to determine not only whether or not the film breaks the norm in terms of (re)presentation of Afro-brazilians. It also reveals the negotiations involved in these transgressions and the role of the carnivalesque concerning mechanisms of emancipation and contention.

The most highlighted element of the film is the relationship between the body and transgressions. Xica’s ascendance(s) and defeat(s) are often determined by the types of transgressions she carries out by using her body. She exerts her body either as negotiation token in her attempts to access power, or as a marker that signals her achievements. Playing such an essential role both in Xica's desire to transgress and in her intent to preserve her
triumphs, the body and its articulation into the narrative take on dimensions of extreme importance in locating and evaluating Xica’s transgressions.

In their book *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, Peter Stallybrass and Allon White warn us of the dangers rooted in Bakhtinian tendencies that “essentialize carnival and politics” (15). They explain that “recent works in the social history of carnival reveals its political dimensions to be more complex than either Bakhtin or his detractors might suspect” (15). These scholars point out the limitations of Bakhtinian formulations which find in the carnivalesque “a sort of modelling, at once utopian and counter-hegemonic” (18).

In their attempt to map the contradictions and (inter)dependence in relationships between “high” and “low” hierarchies, Stallybrass and White focus on four “symbolic domains”- psychic form, human body, geographical space, and social order. They argue that cultural categories of high and low -social and aesthetic, the physical body, geographic space- are inseparable from one another (2). These scholars add that:
[d]ivisions and discriminations in one domain are continually structured, legitimated and dissolved by reference to the vertical symbolic hierarchy which operates in the other three domains. (3)

Although Stallysbrass' and White's study rise from a different context (European conceptions of high/low culture and the carnivalesque), their formulations are applicable to the analysis of the aesthetic approach of "Xica da Silva". It is precisely the simultaneously contradicting and interdependent high/low structures, linking different symbolic domains, that renders the representation of blacks ambivalent in this film.

The top/bottom inversions in this film have a striking (and deliberate) resemblance to those displayed during carnival parades in Rio de Janeiro. According to Roberto da Matta, during carnival, every aspect of everyday life is affected by the festivities. The streets, the buses, people's behavior and so forth, all are simultaneously transformed for the duration of carnival. Since "[c]arnival requires its own place" (Matta 82),and the once busy, nervous-wrecking, all business downtown streets become the center of a spectacle of pleasures. Indisputably characterized by the unserious and pleasurable nature of carnival, the streets take on an
entirely different meaning. The center of the city becomes disguised, thus serving as a stage for the performing bodies of the foliões\textsuperscript{12} parading on its streets. The primary occupants of the disguised center are the poor inhabitants of the surrounding favelas (shanty towns). The displacement of the favelado's body from the surrounding mountains to the center changes the everyday meaning and function of that body. Also disguised in his/her costumes the favelada(o) is transformed from serious worker into foliã(o), from poor to rich, from plebeian to noble, from man into woman, and so on.

Explaining these types of inversions, Matta points out that the moving force working in the transformation of meaning is dislocation. Matta's formulations seem to reinforce Stallybrass and White's ideas concerning the interdependability of signs from different symbolic domains. It is in the movement and interaction of elements from different domains that symbolization occurs.

For example, the mountains, the inexpensive clothing, the dark skin color are all elements that come together from different

\textsuperscript{12}Foliões are the people who dress in costumes and participate in the festivities of carnival.
domains which are structured in terms of high/low relationships. The result of the interaction amongst all these elements, where the “low” is defined as such by the “high” is the favelada(o). The favelada(o) is the totality comprising a variety of components from different domains which are charged with the “low” designation. The transformation that occurs during carnival can also be explained in terms of “dislocation”. This “dislocation” process explained by Matta reiterates and reinforces Stallybrass and White’s arguments. “Dislocation”, thus, can be read as the movement of symbolic elements from different domains which are mediated by the high/low hierarchy.

According to Matta, dislocation is also the fundamental feature in the “process of symbolization”. He argues that the movement of an object [any element] “and its aberrant manifestation in a different unfamiliar domain.”, are the “conditions” under which certain elements are transformed into symbols (70). Each domain, argues Matta, has its fitting social roles, ideologies, values, actions, specific objects [and they] form clear sets that mark and are marked by their domains of origin. Dislocations and shifts from one domain to another are responsible for a variety of processes. If an element-object or social role-circulates between very distant

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and contradictory domains in a given social system, it will be the focus of fairly strong references; and the stronger its evocative power, the greater will be the effort to return it to its sphere of origin. (69-70)

The process of symbolization/ritualization basically entails the displacement of elements from their original domains to other spheres. Ritualization, thus, requires a distance which allows for awareness of social processes (Matta 71). A (national) ritual such as carnival, like other rituals, dramatizes or highlights elements of everyday life bringing about a change of meaning of the ordinary. It is my contention that in "Xica da Silva" the narrative is weaved by a series of discursive practices simulating the same process of ritualization during carnival.

First of all, the discursive practices utilized to inscribe the black female into a historical narrative in the film are analogous to the ritualization processes found in carnivalesque practices as described by Matta. Similar to the favelado during carnival, Xica wears majestic disguises as she occupies specially transformed places for her performance. These places, like the streets of the city are disguised as stages and become the site of the most colorful spectacles.
Second, her black body is continuously framed within a narrative (and discursive practice) that privileges processes of high/low inversions much like those seen in carnival festivities. The inscription of the black body becomes highly dependent on and often determined by vertical (high/low) inversions occurring in other symbolic domains. The very weaving of the black body into the narrative frame is exercised through high/low inversion that are used both as markers signaling transgressions and as discursive devices articulating the black body in(side) the narrative. Xica's slave body progressively becomes more adorned in "majestic" attires as it transgresses geographical spaces associated with the "high" category. In addition to the lavish garments, jewelry, make-up and wigs, other elements aid in marking Xica's socio-economic ascension. The first scene to set the pace for Xica's subsequent quests clearly captures the collective dislocation and interaction of elements from different domains that aid in the ritualization/dramatization of the protagonist.

Her transformation begins in a scene set up in the master's bedroom. João Fernandes observes her as she happily tries the white dress she requested as a present from her master. While this may be
interpreted as a transgression on the part of the protagonist, the importance of the protagonist’s presence in the master’s bedroom lies elsewhere. It stems from Xica’s ability to use the space as a spring board (leverage) for her next move. She uses the master’s bedroom as an intermediate space that will permit her to cross from her “domain of origin” to a higher realm. Using the bedroom as her point of departure, the “classy” white dress on her body, and João Fernandes by her side, Xica is ready to cross another boundary. All of these elements together provide her the necessary symbolic charge in her attempts to cross the threshold of power.

Symbolically empowered through this ritualization, her “ritual of passage” is almost completed as she sits at the master’s dinner table. But as the protagonist demands that João Fernandes’ slave woman serve her with the proper rigueur required for those at the top of the social/racial scale, she encounters obstacles. Jokingly, and perhaps defiantly, the slave woman purposely spills soup on Xica’s new dress. As the servant laughs at her own prowess, her actions suggest that she sees Xica as her equal, and therefore Xica should not be served by her. Xica, on the other hand, does not share this belief and displays obvious anger at the prank. In a show of power and
will, Xica demands that the slave clean up the spoils. While shouting at the slave, Xica’s display of force culminates with a strike on the servant’s face. This action can be seen as the final stroke that distinctly separates her from her once equals and from her domain of origin. Clearly, the protagonist’s behavior is that ultimate symbolic proof of transformation that link together all other symbolic domains—body, space, and social order.

As the film progresses, Xica appears increasingly powerful. The final result is a symbolic inversion of social order. In the same manner that the *favelada(o)* transmutates into a noble during carnival, Xica the slave-servant is transformed into Dona Francisca the empress-being-served. Like many “rituals of passage” Xica’s are also transitory and ephemeral. Their limitations can be illustrated in an analysis of the following scenes. After being denied the right to enter the church on the basis of her color, Xica complains to João Fernandes insisting that she frequent that church. Always eager to accommodate her demands, João Fernandes offers to build her own church. Later he orders her own sea (a lake), boat and palace to be made. It becomes clear that every time Xica tries to conquer a place for herself within the high-white-wealthy-domain, she is barred and
an alternative space is created for her. Her own sea, boat and palace are specifically created places where she performs spectacles playing the carnivalesque role of a noble. Like the audience watching a carnival parade (and the viewer in the cinema), João Fernandes is completely captivated by the spectacle.

Similar to carnival parades' transformed streets, or the sambódromo in Rio, where "the masses" are supposedly free to act out their creativity and release their frustrations, these spaces actually have the potential to work as devices of contention. The spaces created for her work as part of a domestication process, and as Terry Eagleton puts it in relation to carnival, "is a lisenced affair [...] a permissible rupture of hegemony" (148).

Although Xica is able to remove herself from the margin temporarily, she never fully sustains a hegemonic position. While her bargaining position improves as she occupies an intermediate social space, her chances for total insertion into the "high" domain are often curtailed. And her final blow comes when attempting to rescue João Fernandes from the Count.

Acknowledging the dangers posed by the Crown's suspicion of embezzlement, João Fernandes tries to bribe the ambitious Count on
several occasions. First João tries to please (appease) the Crown’s envoy by presenting him with expensive gifts and lavish receptions. When the contractor finally realizes that the Count would not “collaborate”, he decides to try a different approach. João concludes that what the Count really seeks is proof of loyalty to the Crown. As a token of his loyalty João Fernandes informs the Count of Teodoro’s where-abouts, a black rebel and the most wanted man by the Crown. When Xica hears the Count’s torturing Teodoro against João Fernandes’ wishes, and listens to his sarcastic comments concerning the contractor, she sets out to resolve the problem herself. Her mission now becomes to save João Fernandes’ fortune and reputation. In her effort to reinstate João Fernandes’ power, she offers the Count a special treat. The count is invited to her palace for an African courtly banquet, followed by a musical spectacle.

The highlight of the spectacle features Xica, practically naked dancing to the rhythm of atabaques. Her black body, accentuated by her nakedness and provocative motions, appears to have been completely stripped of any vestige associated with the white domain. While she dances, her muscles are highlighted by a glowing oily substance which adds other dimensions to the portrayal of her black
female body. The naked black body performs highly choreographed movements that provoke associations with the grotesque and "primitiveness". Unable to contain his desire for the savage black female body the Count embraces the opportunity to experience sexually his Other. Stripped from the majestic attires and maintaining a clear relationship with other "low" symbolic spheres such as the music and the food, the black body appears to (re)enter the realm of the primitive.

Reverberating Bakhtin’s concept of the “grotesque body”\textsuperscript{13}, Matta calls attention to the highly sexual/sensuous nature of the carnival body. According to Matta, in carnival the naked body reveals its “openings” suggesting its desire to be complemented by its other. He adds that “[t]he norm of reverse and modesty is replaced by the ‘opening’ of the body to the grotesque and to its possibilities as an object of desire and an instrument of pleasure” (106) Although the (re)presentation of the protagonist’s body displays carnivalesque

\textsuperscript{13}Explaining the grotesque image of the body in Rabelais, Bakhtin points out that “the essential role belongs to those parts [of the grotesque body that in which it outgrows its own self [...] in which to conceive a second body: the bowels and the phallus” (317). Bakhtin suggests that also the moth and other orifices also play an important role “in the grotesque image” of the body.
traits systematically throughout the film, it is in this scene, however, that the “grotesque body” takes on characteristics specifically connoted with the “primitive”. The images created by the *mise en scene* and the different uses of the camera trigger powerful associative chains. These chains connect the black female body to a variety of racist preconceptions, that have long permeated Western thought. An example of these associations is the connection made between darkness, nakedness and the “savages”. The idea that blacks are inherently lascivious and natural dancers also come to mind. Also this scene, by use of the conventions discussed, promotes a desire akin to what bell hooks has described as the desire to “experience the Other”.

The importance of the African banquet scene is manifold. While it could be read as Xica’s return to her “domain of origin”, (or as mentioned in the beginning, her regaining her true identity as a black female), it could also be interpreted as another manifestation of masquerade. If Xica acknowledges racial essentialities as a constructed mask to be utilized in negotiating a non-position as a speaking subject, her excessive “negroness” in this scene can be said to serve at least two purposes. On one hand, it creates a distance
between her(self) and her image as an object of desire. On the other hand, by consciously embodying the racial/feminine constructs designed by a white, male culture, Xica is making herself more "palatable" to the Count. Therefore, due to her awareness and exaggerated use of these constructs, Xica attempts to mask her non-identity (non-position) by "appearing" to be the Phallus, and reflecting a more familiar (and palatable) image to/of her spectator.

Moreover, similar to carnival parades, this scene represents the culmination of a ritualization process. As Matta noted, the parade is the "crucial point of the ritual"(112). It is the synthesis of all the other "dramatic axes" (Matta, 112) represented by Xica. She bets all her cards on winning the "contest" and she does, but only temporarily. Moreover, this scene reveals a series of containment mechanisms within the narrative structure which project a still image of the protagonist as representative of Brazilian culture. For instance, Xica's dance, far from being an example of everyday social cultural practice, is contained within a frame of a highly choreographed musical film. The different camera angles, particularly the shots taken from behind the Count focusing on Xica,
are the same type described by Jane Feuer in reference to Hollywood musicals. Feuer explains that,

The shot which includes the spectator in the theatrical audience is never used alone, however, because once our subjectivity is established within the internal audience, we need to see more closely what the audience is seeing. Typically, there will be a cut closer to viewers but eliminating them from the frame. In this second shot [...] the spectator replaces the internal audience. The subjectivity of the spectator stands in for that of the spectral audience, rendering the performance utterly theatrical. (28)

Unlike Xica's previous "performances", where they are more symbolic of role reversals, this scene is meant to be a spectacle in the conventional sense. Xica's dance demonstrates a carefully practiced routine for the purpose of exhibition to an audience, much like those of modern professional dancers. In addition to the stylized choreography being more closely related to modern ballet than to any spontaneous social practice, the conventionality of camera shots is similar to the ones described by Feuer. Instead of demystifying, the musical-like shots actually aid in the mystification of the black female body. The end result of the carnivalesque discursive devices and the camera work is a completely immobile image of Afro-Brazilianness. Together they construct an all encompassing
emblematic image which is framed within a narrative that functions as a showcase preserving Afro-Brazilianness. As an (national) emblem constructed by legitimation devices such as carnivalesque discourse and ritualization, Afro-Brazilianness as defined in this film is no more than dead culture. Confined within that showcase, Afro-Brazilianness becomes a museum piece instead of being a part of everyday social practices.

Still, the apotheosis of Xica’s given identification as a segment of the Nation becomes better defined in the last scene. Xica’s downfall and her ultimate alliance with her revolutionary bourgeois ex-master clearly reveal allegoric dimensions of the film which reinforce the equation woman=nation. The scene following the banquet portrays Xica alone waking up at the same place where she and the Count had appeared previously engaging in sexual interplay. Xica gets up and arrives at the town square only to find out that the Count had been successful in deporting João Fernandes back to Portugal. Completely defeated, she seeks refuge at a monastery for black monks where José, her bourgeois intellectual young master, had been hiding from the law due to his affiliation with liberationists. She tells José about her defeat and her life being over,
for she is a nobody now that Fernandes is gone. José replies by
assuring Xica that:

Xica da Silva não vai se acabar nunca, porque você é p'ra sempre Xiquinha. [...] Porque sem você os diamantes não brilham e o fogo do mundo vai se apagar. Porque você é a festa, o sol do povo e sem você a liberdade deles não serve p'ra nada.

This scene allegorically suggests that the struggle for liberation (from the neocolonizer) continues. The political overtones of his words of encouragement to her, indicate recognition of the importance of Afro-Brazilians in the fight. Unfortunately, this importance is entirely symbolic in the film. The possibility of a truly participatory role in the fight (for liberation) is denied in the film’s (re)presentation of a Brazilian black woman in favor of a subordinate role to a intellectual male petit bourgeois. The Afro-Brazilian segment of the Nation is still defined in carnivalesque terms, in terms of emotions. By omission and contrast, it is clear that the male petit bourgeois are defined as the real thinkers and leaders in the quest for freedom.

Following this logic and taking into consideration the political conjuncture at the time of production (1976), it is not difficult to read “Xica da Silva” as an allegory of the nation. What seems to
define the boundaries, however, is still the effect of contention that permeates the (re)presentation of the black female via carnival(esque) discursive practices. By choosing to narrate Francisca da Silva's (Hi)story in terms of a Brazilian carnival, the film folklorizes Francisca the black woman and Francisca the historical figure. In turn, Xica narrated through carnivalesque discourse is contained within a frame that does not allow for mobility. On the contrary, Xica and Afro-Brazilian cultural elements are frozen as national emblems deserving of a special place at a national museum.

Also, José’s description of Xica as a fragment of Brazil seems to imply that black (women) are emotional fragments that must be complemented by reasoning white (men). In this case, it could be reasoned that the film promotes a “mullatoing” (miscegenation) of Brazil, where black (females) would exist simply as “spice, seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture.” (hooks, 21).

As I tried to explain, a recurrent pattern emerges where the movement of elements of different domains, defined by opposing categories of high and low, play a principal role in the symbolization processes in the film. This movement, also a characteristic of
carnival, is particularly important in that it reveals the intricate mechanisms in the politics of transgressions. Although this movement displays emancipatory qualities, also it forms part of processes of contention. Furthermore, it may reinforce associations of ethnic and gendered identities with the “low-Other”. It is also clear that the depictions of blacks and females through carnival(esque) discursive practices, in allowing for movement of symbolic elements that are charged with stereotypical signification, may carry on registers that “demonize” these social groups and relegate them to the realm of the “low”. Finally, I hope to have demonstrated that essentializing critical practices fail to resolve fundamental problems concerning the politics of transgression.
In 1995, Brazil celebrated the 300th anniversary of Zumbi's death. Zumbi was the last great leader to govern Palmares, a runaway slave community located in the mountains of Northeastern Brazil. The people of Palmares resisted armed attacks from the Portuguese and the Dutch for almost a century, until they were finally defeated in 1694. The history of Palmares and the historical figure of Zumbi, both often neglected by official accounts, have taken on mythic qualities over the years, particularly in Brazilian black communities. Zumbi, whose immortality is well and alive in the collective memory of Brazilians of African ancestry, is held as a symbol of courage and redemption as well as an emblem of resistance and hope by black communities. As for the celebration, it certainly has evoked a sense of pride, amongst black Brazilians especially intellectuals, college students and community leaders.
Perhaps more importantly, a general awareness about Black resistance has ascended in Brazil as a result of the celebration.

Despite these positive out-comings, however, there still remain several nagging issues related to the possibility of an emerging institutionalization of such an important black historical figure. The consequences of an appropriation of Zumbi and black history by the State could lead to a variety of results affecting African Brazilians. Although it is not my purpose in this brief introductory discussion to try to predict the fate of the Afro-Brazilians’ socio-political struggle, I find it necessary to call attention to the problem and reflect upon the situation.

An appropriation of Zumbi by the State could take a multiplicity of paths. For example, the threats of a recurrant dehumanization of a black historical figure via institutionalization could be countered by resistance rooted in the community. Also, attempts to homogenize Zumbi’s representability in ways that would better serve the interests of social groups other than Afro-Brazilians, perhaps would be confronted by new tactics and strategies that would keep resistance alive. On the other hand, since institutionalization would entail the manipulation of a field of
signification which occupies a central position in the Afro-Brazilian imaginary, the community’s very sense of identification might be greatly disturbed. Therefore, conditions for a steadier, more conscientious and concrete unity could be jeopardized by the very deviations presented by the threat of institutionalization.

Furthermore, Zumbi could be transformed into a national symbol devoid of his human characteristics and, therefore, reduced in significance as a strong black leader. Although these issues deserve attention in their own right, what matters for now is that the celebratory mood must be kept alive and renewed, and celebrations must seek vitality in the very practices of popular resistance.

One way to try to maintain collective memory of the Brazilian “black struggle” (a loose translation for what conscious African Brazilians call “a questão negra”), is through critical reflection that would allow for careful examination of the African “tradition” in Brazil. The need to reflect upon the roles taken by and designated to Afro-Brazilians in national history becomes even more imperative as Zumbi becomes celebrated under the existing possibility of being transformed into a “national tradition”. In this context, those roles taken by and designated to African Brazilians in the creation of
national discourses deserve more attention. As a first step, examining how Afro-Brazilians have been narrated in national discourses might provide a better understanding of African Brazilians' past and present social experiences.

Thus, in the spirit of celebrating Zumbi's resistance, and compelled by the need of further critical investigation, I devote this chapter to an inquiry into representations of Afro-Brazilians in two films about Palmares. The films I have chosen are "Ganga Zumba, rei dos Palmares" (1963), and "Quilombo" (1983), both directed by Carlos Diegues. Since the two films are by the same director, and both seek to relate Palmares to a quest for freedom, it seems consistent to consider them in the same chapter. Besides, Diegues' interest in making films concerning Afro-Brazilian historical experiences seems to reflect a desire for continuity and for reevaluation of his work. It is no mere coincidence that the director kept returning to the same basic theme in "Ganga Zumba", subsequently in "Xica da Silva" and later in "Quilombo". All three films recount historical events by attempting to capture the "spirit" of Afro-Brazilian resistance. In "Xica", as discussed previously, the quest for freedom is translated not only into the protagonist's attempt to free herself through her
alliance with powerful white males, but also it is reflected in the figure and actions of a rebellious Teodoro. In the case of “Ganga Zumba” and “Quilombo” it stands on the presentation of Palmares as the place where freedom is to be found. While the purpose here is not an attempt to decipher Diegues’ personal reasons for his insistence on the issue, it is relevant, however, to stress that the director does revisit repeatedly the question of Afro-Brazilians’ resistance and their quest for freedom.

Analyzing both films together also provides me the means to establish similarities and divergences in the construction and portrayal of Palmares as a system of signification which varies according to different national projects its representation proposes. Because “Ganga Zumba” and “Quilombo” were produced in two very different historical contexts, but in both texts Palmares can be read as national allegories, a dialogue between the two films will also provide for inquiries into the ideological underpinnings related to the films’ context of production. As already discussed in the introduction of this dissertation, the period between late the 50s and early 60s was characterized by optimism, particularly during Jucelino
Kubitschek’s administration. According to Randal Johnson and Robert Stam:

The Kubitschek years and early sixties were essentially optimistic; Brazil, it was felt, was on the verge of escaping underdevelopment. The ultra-modern architecture of Brasilia symbolizes the euphoric mentality of the period. The optimism and nationalism of the period continued through the 1960 election of Jânio Quadros, his resignation after less than seven months in office, and the presidency of João Goulart until 1964. (Brazilian Cinema 30)

This optimism and nationalism were often translated into utopian views of a more just future society for Brazilians, which were reflected in films such as Nelson Pereira dos Santos’ “Vida secas” (1962), and Glauber Rocha’s “Barravento” and Diegues “Ganga Zumba” (1963). In “Vidas secas” optimism presents itself in the end of the film in which after much poverty, exploitation and suffering, a peasant family contemplate to leave the harshness of the sertão to seek a better life in a supposedly better modernized South. “Barravento” (1962) casts a positive vision for the future of a fishermen’s village as the members become aware of their exploitation, and the need to modernize. Although still hopeful even immediately before the military coup of 1964, the Brazilian Left was
already beginning to express disillusionment with developmentalist ideologies that were being propagated through the nation. This feeling became exacerbated after the coup and the Brazilian intellectual Left began to look back and reassess some of the earlier assumptions made during that more euphoric earlier period. This reassessment becomes clear in films such as “Quilombo”, in which, as Stam and Xavier have pointed out, there seems to be both a nostalgia for the utopian dream of the late 50s and early 60s and a “disenchantment with occidental political models” ("Recent Brazilian Cinema" 27).

PALMARES AND “THE NATION”

Analyzing the ways in which Palmares is narrated in both films enables me to examine how identities are formed and dismantled, depending on the different projects of/or for the “nation” the texts articulate. Assuming that these films could be read as national allegories, I ask what types of nation they construct. In this case, I adhere first to Ismail Xavier’s and Robert Stam’s observations in that most Brazilian cinema “demonstrate a clear penchant for allegory”. (in Sklar 280). I also follow their conception of allegory as:
any kind of oblique or synecdochic utterance soliciting hermeneutic completion or deciphering. [It] implies the use of metaphoric, synecdochic, microcosmic, or temporarily transposed discourses to encode cultural-political messages about the larger society [...] (in Sklar 280)

In addition, in its allegorical propensity, "the question of the national", as Xavier and Stam describe it, is often present in Brazilian cinema. Appropriately so, these scholars argue that Brazilian intellectuals (a category which includes Cinema Novo filmmakers) have toiled with the concept of national allegory since modernismo, in the 1920s (in Sklar 279). They also point out that this preoccupation is directly related to the question of the national in which filmmakers were involved, and the odd relationship between the left and nationalism. Stam and Xavier go on to add that:

This pervasive allegorical tendency becomes exacerbated [...] in the work of intellectual filmmakers profoundly shaped by nationalist and Third World discourse, who feel obliged, with every film, to speak for and about the nation as a whole. (in Sklar 280)

Before addressing questions of national identities as presented in these films, concepts such as the nation and nation(ness) must be considered in the light of formulations elaborated by Benedict
Anderson and Homi Bhabha. Following Anderson, I adhere to his argument that the nation must be understood in terms of an “imagined political community” (6). Moreover, reflecting Bhabha’s conceptualization, I add that the nation is permanently being narrated, and as such, it is constantly being constructed and reconstructed.  

According to Anderson, the nation “is an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (6). He considers the nation “imagined” because of the sense of communion (communality) in the minds of its members, while one member does not even know all the others. The nation is limited because no matter how many inhabitants it may have, it has “finite, if elastic, boundaries” (Anderson 7). It is sovereign because it emerged during the Enlightenment with the destruction of the divinely ordered dynastic realm and the emergence of the sovereign state. It is community because it “is conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (7).  

14I base my statement primarily on Bhabha’s article entitled “Dissemination Time, narrative and the margins of the modern nation”, and also on his introduction to Nation and Narration.
Homi K. Bhabha, by the same token, in proposing a study of the nation based on how it is narrated, reminds us of the ambivalence of the language in the discourse of the nation. He considers that the “locality of culture” is a more thorough site from which the nation can be written (Location 140). Bhabha explains that:

This locality is more around temporality than about historicity: a form of living that is more complex than ‘community’; more symbolic than ‘society’; more connotative than country; less patriotic than patrie; more rhetorical than the reason of the State; more mythological than ideology; less homogeneous than hegemony; less centered than the citizen; more collective than the ‘subject’; more psychic than civility; more hybrid in the articulation of cultural differences and identifications than can be represented in any hierarchical or binary structuring of social antagonism. (140)

In his article, entitled “Dissemination Time, narrative and the margins of the modern nation”, Bhabha points out that the temporal dimension involved in the inscription of political entities such as “the nation” and “the people” constitutes of a “double time” (The Location 140). This double time is specifically related to two aspects pertaining to the people and the nation as narration. Bhabha calls these two aspects the pedagogical and the performative. The pedagogical has to do with the past, accumulative linear time of the
nation while the performative has to do with present, repetitious everyday experiences.

Bhabha also explains that the interference of the performative in the temporal process of the pedagogical provokes a split and creates a temporality of "in-between" (148). The nation splits within itself and the homogeneity articulated by the pedagogical is interrupted in favor of heterogeneity. In this process, the nation becomes a liminal space that is internally marked by the discourses of minorities, the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities and tense locations of cultural differences. (148)

Taking these broad conceptions of "allegories of the national", and "the nation" into consideration, first I want to provide a summary of the films, and then I will offer a reading of specific scenes of each. These readings will focus on the strategies and negotiations that take place in the articulation of cultural identities and in the mapping of the nations proposed by the film.

"GANGA ZUMBA"

Based on João Felício dos Santos' novel by the same name, "Ganga Zumba" is a black-and-white film that tells of a journey
taken by runaway slaves, from an engenho\textsuperscript{15} to Palmares. The major events that trigger the journey are the death of a slave woman at a whipping post, and the revelation that her son, Antão, is actually the grandson of King Zambi of Palmares. Once Seu Aroroba, the spiritual leader, reveals the news to a group of slaves and advises them that Antão must be safely taken to Palmares, they proceed to accomplish this mission. A group of several males is formed with the exception of Antão's lover, Cipriana, who is invited to join them at the last minute.

Before departing though, Antão and Cipriana trick the overseer and bring him to his death. The trick consisted of Cipriana's sexually provoking the overseer so that he would follow her to a place where Antão awaited to kill him. After killing the overseer, Antão takes the man's heart to the others who are waiting for him in hiding. They meet in a shack to discuss their plan to flee the engenho. While they discuss their escape, a handicapped old black woman is present in the shack, but is clearly not part of the group. She gets up and leaves arousing some suspicion on some participants who want to stop her

\textsuperscript{15}Engenho has two different meanings in Brazilian Portuguese. It can mean sugar mill or sugar plantation.
fearing she will reveal the plan in the *casa grande*. Despite the group's leader's expressed mistrust, Seu Aroroba reassures him that she will do no harm.

During the journey to Palmares, the group overcomes many obstacles. Among the most crucial events occurs after a long day's walk when the group decides to stop in order to build a raft to cross the river. While hiding, Cipriana quietly watches some travelers approaching. They were the slave-catcher- who had been in the *engenho* earlier exhibiting the cut-off ears of runaway slaves- and his party. The other members of his party were his wife, her female slave (Dandara), and two male slaves whose name is never revealed. Cipriana, who at first watches them from behind bushes, exposes herself and the others when she crawls to the road to pick up a fan that Dandara had dropped. She is seen by one of the other party's slaves, who immediately alarms the others, hence setting the stage for fierce fighting between the two groups. As a consequence of the struggle, there is death on both sides. The Palmares-bound group loses a member, and the slave-catcher, his wife and their slaves are killed, except for Dandara whom the group keeps captive. Later, the group becomes even smaller. Because Antão displays a preference
for Dandara, Cipriana quickly finds someone else to love. She leaves immediately - without any words of discouragement from the group - to join her new lover, another fugitive slave who lives in the wilderness.

After the raft is ready, and as the now smaller group sets out to cross the river, they must overcome yet another major obstacle. While trying to cross the river they are followed by slave-catchers armed with pistols and rifles. By the time the fugitives reach the other banks of the river, some of them have already been killed, and Seu Aroroba is fatally injured. Thanks to Palmarino soldiers, Antão and his lover Dandara are saved and brought to the borderlands of Palmares. The film ends when Antão is made Ganga Zumba, the next ruler of Palmares and Dandara stands by him.

In many ways “Ganga Zumba” resembles an epic, and from the outset, it becomes clear that the film’s intention centers on foregrounding Black Brazilians as the heroic people of the text. It presents the slaves’ heroism in several ways. Besides the more explicit scenes depicting blacks resisting oppression, such as the very act of escaping to Palmares, and the killing of the overseer, the film also displays more subtle ways in showing slaves agency.
For example, it starts out with close shots of engravings containing images of slavery as a voice-over tells of runaway slaves and the settlements they formed. As if delivering a History lesson, the voice-over briefly teaches the viewer that the most important of these villages was Palmares, whose King Zambi (1640s) "...had transformed [it] into a symbol of peace and freedom". The next sequences portray an open-air ritual gathering of the slaves, as they mourn the death of a slave woman. The slaves are depicted chanting in Yoruba and dancing to the rhythms of drums. The camera focuses in and out the sad but valiant looking faces of the slaves, moving to in/out focuses of the woman's shackled hands. Immediately after, it jumps to a close-up of a young man's teary face, indicating his special relationship to the slain woman. The viewer is informed by way of a dialogue between Seu Aroroba (spiritual leader) and Antão that the latter is the woman's son. More importantly, after consulting with the orixás¹⁶, Seu Aroroba announces to a small group of men that Antão is the grandchild of King Zambi, and that he (Antão) must be taken to Palmares.

¹⁶Orixás are deities of Afro-Brazilian religions.
Then, in an exceedingly dramatic sequence, the camera exhibits, first, the dead woman's wounds, then it lingers on her shackled hands, and a final shot shows the sorrow in the faces of the slaves. These brief but symbolically charged shots synecdochically remind the viewer of all the centuries of pain black people have endured. But instead of paternalistic depictions of suffering slaves - which tend to capitalize solely on pain and exclude resistance - these sequences also portray a deep sense of resentment embedded in the sorrowful faces of the slaves. Later, this resentment translates itself into concrete acts of rebellion, such as the killing of the overseer by Antão and the escape to Palmares.

The next sequence, after Seu Aroroba approaches Antão and pronounces a few words in Yoruba, the slaves leave the site slowly and return to the *senzala*. Meanwhile, watching the slaves from the

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17Robert Stam has made a similar observation in which he says, "The synecdochic images of shackled hands, shed tears, and sullen resentments, vividly encapsulated the situation" (227, 1997). It is not clear what the scholar means by "the situation", but it is important to mention that he also noted some sort of condensation of meanings in this sequence.

18*Senzala* means slave quarters while *casa grande* is the master's house. *Casa grande e senzala* (1933) is the Portuguese title of the Brazilian anthropologist Gilberto Freyre's monumental work where he develops the concept of racial democracy. Taking the
background, stand the practically invisible masters and their domestic servants. They enter the casa grande after the slaves leave for the senzala. An old black woman is the only person remaining outside. The camera follows her as she walks into the open space toward the slain woman's body. In a gesture of grief and respect, she kneels down and chants in a low tone of voice. Because these scenes capture several notions related to the film's attempt to inscribe Afro-Brazilians into history, they deserve some attention.

First, it is important to comment on the mediating position of the camera in some of these sequences. For example, during the ritual in which the slaves chant and dance around the dead woman, the very distance created by the camera seems to suggest an ethnographic intention in this sequence. By avoiding eye-line matches, the camera functions as an omnipresent narrator as well as the very eyewitness with which the viewer identifies. Operating as the eyes of an outsider, the camera appears to be simply "looking" at engenho as the nucleus of the development of racial democracy, Freyre claimed that African influences allowed in the master's house aided in creating familiarity between the races. It is in this book that Freyre suggests a softer nature of Portuguese slavery in comparison to other slavery systems. In his view, this explains miscegenation in Brazil.
a ritualistic experience. It participates in the event as a mere observer, and not the possessor of an oppressive gaze. In regard to these “looking relations”, it is helpful to recall E. Ann Kaplan’s elaborations in which she distinguishes between “looking” and “the gaze”. Kaplan has argued that:

[1]ooking will connote curiosity about the Other, a wanting to know (which can of course still be oppressive but does not have to be), while the gaze I take to involve extreme anxiety—an attempt not to know, to deny, in fact. (Looking for xvii)

Although still not completely innocent, the camera’s “look” (and therefore the spectator-as-subject’s) in this scene seems to display no other intention than simply “to know the Other”. Aiding in the process of knowing the Other, the emphasis on the easiness of the participants’ gestures and facial expressions promotes a sense of spontaneity in their performance (as opposed to theatrical/cinematic acting) making it difficult for the viewer to think it as a show for the camera. It is through this seemingly impartial look of the camera as well as the “unintentional” performance that the viewer partakes in the lesson as an observer and a learner of the Other. By this affirmation, I am not trying to argue that there is no objectification of the Other in this scene.

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What I am contending instead is that the camera and the mise-en-scene do not promote subject positionings that give rise to an oppressive gaze. Besides, both the camera movements and the performers' encourage a sense of serenity, respect and dignity that can work as another obstacle operating against the construction of an oppressive or "imperial gaze". Like an ethnographer, armed with her/his most "objective" rhetorical weapons, the camera aims at convincing the viewer of the legitimacy of the knowledge it conveys and of its un-biased observation. It is through this dissimulation of intention that the spectator understands that what s/he sees is undeniably people's "real" experience, recorded on film. In this manner, the sequence produces another illusion of reality, different from mainstream cinema's. Nevertheless, this "reality" is equally ideologically charged in its attempt to represent "the real".

Furthermore, since present-day African Brazilians still perform religious activities rooted in their ancestors' experiences, it could be argued that this scene teaches the viewer about past experiences via present practices. This time displacement becomes naturalized by the objective/documentary-like/ethnographic look of the camera, thus reinforcing the impression of "real experience".
Another point of relevance of the sequences described, has to do with the scene in which the older woman pays her last respects to her dead daughter. In a long-shot, a carefully crafted spatial composition foregrounds the center-frame shot of the two women, thus adding other dimensions to the image. Upon watching this tender display of respect and sorrow, the viewer is quickly reminded of the cruel reality of slave economy, in which mothers and daughters were often separated and kinship ties were brutally broken. In a allusion to Mater Dolorosa images, this particular shot implies a subversion of eurocentric depictions of the Mary and Christ figures in several ways. First, the shot suggests an alternative representation to the traditionally blond- haired and blue-eyed Mary and Jesus by depicting a black mother suffering the execution of her child. Second, it implies a gender/sex reversal in that unlike Mary’s white son, this almighty child is a black daughter. Third, the shot undermines gendered iconic significance present in the traditional figures which foreground Jesus’ image standing up high, while dimming Mary’s kneeling on the ground. In the shot, although the daughter’s image stands at a slightly higher angle than the mother’s, by framing both women in a straight front-angle shot, the
composition actually suggests not only similar importance of both mother and daughter, but it also implies a strong sense of solidarity between the two women.

Furthermore, the scenes previously described suggestively privilege the slaves' perspective in other ways. For example, in a reversal of Gilberto Freyre's famous work *Casa grande e senzala*, the sequences symbolically foreground the latter and not the first. The slaves are foregrounded in action, performing their ritual, while the masters are barely visible in the background. In fact, as the masters stand motionless in front of the *casa grande*, they resemble objects blending in with the scenery. Implying a reversed hierarchical order, it provides further indications to the viewer that the film privileges blacks' experiences and not whites'.

Another way these scenes emphasize slaves' action and not passivity, relates to the depiction of the slaves' "look" and their facial gestures. Indicating total rejection for the *status quo*, if not utter

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19The reversal can be inferred from the fact that the *senzala* literally appears before the *casa grande* and is foregrounded in the film. Although Freyre deviates from other's in that he does not claim Brazilian African heritage as inferior to European, his romanticized view of the master's "softness" toward the salves, in the end, is still paternalistic and colonialist.
defiance against the established order, the camera depicts the slaves not only gazing back at the master, but also displaying reproach toward whites. One example of this emerges in a scene in which the master orders the slave to gather in front of the casa grande to teach them a lesson. In a purposeful display of intimidation and violence, the master gathers his slaves to show them the spoils brought by the recently arrived slave-catcher. As he tells the slaves of the punishment for fugitive slaves, the master throws a pair of cut-off ears that, according to him, used to belong to two runaway slaves.

Contrary to the master's expectation, the effect of this ill-intended action bore no reaction other than repudiation on the part of the slaves. As for the viewer, what s/he sees in a reverse shot is the startled faces of the slaves, staring back at the master, recriminating such a barbaric act. Instead of provoking pity for the slaves on the viewer, the apprehensive, pathetic demeanor of the white men is what calls the spectator's attention. Moreover, by highlighting the returned gaze, the camera disassembles any possibility of spectator identification with the white gaze. Although the camera's insistence on the inversion of what Kaplan has called
“the imperial gaze” does not dismantle the black, barbarian/white, civilized paradigms, it at least promotes its destabilization. In fact, it is subverted in that the viewer now is obliged to ask her/himself who indeed is the barbarian in this hierarchical structure.

In order to expand on the concept of “look relations” and its relation to the portrayal of Blacks in “Ganga Zumba”, it is pertinent to recall bell hooks’ assertions concerning the association between the “look and/or gaze” and power relations. hooks has called attention to the different look structures in the master/slave relationship and their implication in regard to the black experience in the United States. She stresses that, “...the politics of slavery, of racialized power relations, were such that slaves were denied their right to gaze” (Black Looks 115). Although her observations are directed specifically toward race relations in the US, hooks’ basic arguments that “[t]here is power in looking” and that looking relations

20 Kaplan elaborates the concept of “imperial gaze” based on Mary Louise Pratt’s work entitled Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Trans-Culturation (1992). In this book Pratt argues that there is a systematization of nature and a “naturalization” of what lettered male Europeans saw and translated into print in travel scientific writing of late eighteenth century. She also claims that in travel writings (mostly scientific), the non-white Other is always the object of the European gaze.
participate in the creation of power hierarchies are also valid for my purpose here.

Power hierarchies are temporarily reversed in the above described scene in that the slaves not only maintain their gaze and never look down, but they also return the "imperial gaze". Also, while the slaves are never portrayed fearful of the master, the camera emphasizes the uneasiness in which the white people display as their gaze is thrown back at them. Therefore, even if temporarily, the balance of power seems to be reversed in favor of the slaves.

Moreover, throughout the film, the slaves are never depicted frightened by the white master and/or slave catcher. Instead, even when complying with orders given by whites, the slaves' physical expressions in the film display common sense rather than obedience due to fear. In fact, it is the white overseer and the master who express fear of the slaves. In a scene where the overseer reprimands some slaves in the sugar-cane field, it becomes obvious that he is the one who fears the slaves and not the other way around. What all these examples indicate, is the intention of a film in which black Brazilians inscribe themselves as agents of history. Also, instead of depicting the slaves as innocent, inapt victims, the film centers on
the different actions and everyday life strategies they take to resist the system.

While it can be said that "Ganga Zumba", first, deviates from depictions of victimization; second, confronts the idea of the more humanitarian Portuguese slavery system²¹, and third, presents blacks as historical agents, there are also some significant flaws in the film that may account for a less laudatory reading. For one, "Ganga Zumba"'s portrayal of its heroines is not all that commendable. As noted by Robert Stam:

The two female characters who join the flight to Palmares are portrayed as frivolous and apolitical, more hindrance than help to the struggle. Dandara sees blacks as inevitably serving whites, and Cipriana's desperate seizure of Dandara's fan puts all their lives at risk.

(Tropical Multiculturalism 229)

Besides Stam's observation concerning Dandara and Cipriana, there is a third character that also suggests the film's questionable perspective on women: the already mentioned handicapped old woman. After leaving the shack and the guide of the group displays suspicion toward her, an accusatory shot of her entering the master's

²¹I refer here to the myth that Portuguese slave owners were more benevolent to their slaves in comparison to the British, and therefore Brazil was more open to miscegenation and tolerance.
house appears on the screen. Later, considering the easiness with which the slave-catchers found the group, the guide’s and viewer’s suspicions are confirmed. This shot is a clear example of male gaze, sutured in the process of identification of the spectator with the guide. This display of mistrust on the part of males toward their female counterpart is also expressed in other ways. Lack of trust in Cipriana was also present when Antão informed the others she was coming along. But, in favor of a utopian project for Palmares, the film presents Seu Aroroba paternalistically welcoming Cipriana to the group, after all, he says, “everyone is welcome at Palmares”. What these depictions indicate is the perpetuation of centuries-long myths that relegate women to the negative realm of binary opposition that includes treachery, unreliability and weakness. The film seems to reproduce this system instead of breaking away from it.

In addition to these examples, the film fails in other ways in representing women. Perhaps the most notable aspect of this (mis)representation has to do with the hierarchy it institutes by symbolically privileging *mulatas* over black women. This hierarchy emerges from a contrast the film draws between Cipriana and Dandara. Before addressing this specific power structure reflected in
the film, it is necessary to discuss briefly general notions present in
two interrelated narrative modes that inform my analysis: the
Romance\textsuperscript{22} and the historical film. The intention at this point is not to
engage in debates concerning genre descriptions and categorization.
Rather, I utilize some general notions of the Romance and the
historical film, in particular their epic dimension, as model of
analysis in order to address more pertaining issues. This issues
include sites in the text where race, gender and nation intersect.

The Romance holds epic dimensions in that it entails the
narration of a quest in which the hero must overcome many
obstacles before reaching his destiny. Its main characteristic is a
romantic relationship between the hero and the heroine that serves
as an axis upon which eroticism and patriotism often intersect. The
hero is usually of noble birth and principles, and carries great
national importance. His values, principles, and ideology tend to
represent those of a specific nation, community or social class. In
addition, the heroine is presented as equally noble, and therefore
deserving of her role as the hero's mate.

\textsuperscript{22}I will use “Romance” to indicate genre, and “romance” to
mean heterosexual love relationship.
Although, in general, this schematic description may suffice, more specific observations concerning the (R)romance in Latin America will certainly aid in elucidating my point. Two seminal works on Latin American historical novels inform my analysis: Doris Sommer's *Foundational Fictions* and Fernando Unzueta's *La imaginación histórica y el romance nacional en hispanoamérica*. Whereas both works address primarily nineteenth century literary production, they also contain valuable suggestions that clearly apply to other types of Romance. In *Foundational Fictions*, Sommer observes that heterosexual romances, instituted in nineteen century “foundational novels”, function as an allegory for nation formation. She argues that Latin American modernizing fictions,

have a common project to build through reconciliations and amalgamation of national constituencies cast as lovers destined to desire each other. [...] Whether the plots end happily or not, the romances are invariably about young chaste heroes for equally young and chaste heroines, the nations' hope for productive unions. (24)

While elaborating on the concept of “national romance” and its historical implications, in nineteenth-century Spanish American novels, Unzueta has observed that some of its characteristics include:
las aventuras de un héroe en su búsqueda de un objeto deseado. [...] el héroe siempre tiene antagonistas; mientras él es bueno y personifica la causa justa, su enemigo es malo y encarna la tiranía [...] representa un poder despótico y establecido. En el romance tradicional el héroe triunfa o se casa, lo que implica que los romances se abren hacia el futuro. (136)

Unzueta also adds that:

se puede ver al héroe como el representante del Pueblo, o de un nuevo movimiento nacional; el objeto deseado normalmente es relacionado con la nación, como la tierra o la Cultura; el enemigo sería el representante del pasado y del poder ilegítimo, y se lo considera como el expoliador de lo nacional. (138)

Unzueta's investigation shows that the Latin American Romance of mid-nineteen century is ideologically charged with conceptions that promote the creation of a liberal “imagined community” (141). He concludes that besides projecting the future of a community,

El género explora los “orígenes” de la identidad nacional en el pasado y, mediante esta búsqueda, contribuye a forjar una identidad patria; los romances inventan o promueven el culto de los “héroes” nacionales, sean estos personajes históricos o imaginados. (228)
As for the historical film, category which both "Ganga Zumba" and "Quilombo" fall under, there are a few notions that deserve attention before exploring the romance in "Ganga Zumba". Leger Grindon has argued that in historical films there is a clear intention to use the past to address contemporary issues. The function of this time displacement may vary. It can be useful to contest, to exemplify, hail, explain or justify events (1). Pierre Sorlin has contended that history in cinema "is a mere framework, serving as a basis or counterpoint for a political thesis. History is no more than a useful device to speak of the present time" (208). Not unlike the Romance, historical films tend to take the private, individual and the personal into dimensions of the public and the collective. According to Grindon, other important features of the historical film are the romance and the spectacle. He adds that:

The spectacle emphasizes the extrapersonal forces (social, economic, geographic, and so forth bearing on the historical drama. In contrast to the romance, which is shaped by the plot and characters, the features of the spectacle are period setting, [...] mass action [...] and the broad visual landscape. Whereas mass conflict animates the clash of forces, the public ceremonies dramatize peaceful social changes.
Further suggesting the interrelations between the Romance and historical film is Grindon’s consideration that:

[...] the [historical] film may fashion characters into quintessential representatives of their class, nation, or culture. Romance may reflect the political conflicts of an era [...]. (6)

Therefore, similarly to the Romance, historical film relies on a storyline based on a romantic relationship between the hero and the heroine which is charged with ideological underpinnings. One must simply recall the well known historical films such as “Birth of a Nation” (1915) or “Gone with the Wind” (1939) to conclude that, as in the Romance, a love storyline bears much ideological importance.

Furthermore, according to Grindon, the motives behind a time displacement in the historical film can be: “an appeal to authority, a veiling of intention, and escape to nostalgia, and a search for origins” (3). He also calls attention to “historical cause” and the ways in which cinema expresses causation. Grindon considers that:

Screen historical fiction, bases its histories upon dramatic and visual signs; it presents a comprehensive field rather than a sequential argument. Yet, explicitly or implicitly, each historical film expresses notions about the causal forces operating in history. It represents those forces through dramatic elements, such as characterization and plot, and spectacle elements, such as the historical setting and handling
of mass action, the dramatic elements integrate personal and social factors in portraying historical cause. (6)

Drawing a parallel between the above premises and the film “Ganga Zumba”, several similarities can be traced. For instance, it could easily be argued that Antão's character bears much resemblance to the noble hero of the epic and/or the Romance. Like the hero of the epic, Antão sets out on a quest seeking to benefit an entire community. This is evident not only because he becomes the leader of Palmares, but also because his quest also relates to the well being of the community. The viewer learns of the disruptions in Palmares from conversations between Seu Aroroba and a messenger from that community. King Zambi's failing health and continuous attacks from the Portuguese have caused some instability and internal conflict in the community. Since Antão is the grandson of the King, he must travel to Palmares to lead and restore the nation's stability after Zambi's death. Analogous to the epic and Romance hero, Antão overcomes several obstacles before reaching his destiny. After facing and overcoming several struggles against the enemy (slave-catchers), Antão arrives in Palmares. Similar to the Romance, love carries a crucial importance, for it is in the fulfillment of the
heterosexual love relationship that the community's stability is materialized. In order for the romance to succeed, however, the hero's beloved must be as noble as he. In this case, Dandara becomes the more appropriate choice to become Ganga Zumba's mate. It is in this choice that I find ideological underpinnings that contradict the general intention of the film.

Antão's "correct" choice seems to be rooted in a contrast the film draws between two highly coded characters, Dandara and Cipriana. In other words, Dandara's worthiness of Ganga Zumba's attention is established by a direct contrast between her and Cipriana. This contrast becomes the basis for a hierarchical relationship between the two female characters that favors Dandara from the start. This contrast is first established when Dandara arrives with her masters (the slave-catcher and his wife) at the engenho where Cipriana and Antão were slaves. Antão first comes in contact with Dandara when he goes to the kitchen to plan with Cipriana the killing of the overseer. He sees Dandara standing by the stove, and his interests are immediately made clear as he stares at the newly arrived slave. Cipriana, feeling threatened, informs him that Dandara will be leaving the engenho shortly. Cipriana's
demeanor confirms the viewer's suspicion that Antão is attracted to Dandara. Later in the film, Antão rejects Cipriana in favor of Dandara. Before Cipriana is denied the possibility of becoming the king's "suitor", the film capitalizes on marking the differences separating the two women.

On the one hand, Dandara comes from the city, and does not like the countryside. She is lighter skinned with straighter hair, and acts more like an adult. On the other, the darker skinned Cipriana projects the image of a "primitive" lascivious creature whose countryside origin and child-like mannerisms accentuate her lower status in the hierarchy constituted in the film. Thus, it is difficult to ignore the underlying manifestations of a desirability for whiteness projected onto Dandara's body. Although the text's intention might not have been a reaffirmation of white supremacy, in this specific context, the fact that Dandara is the chosen one actually compromises the otherwise non-racist representations in the film. Besides the inability to break away from racist views such as the "ideology of whitening", this love story also suggests other problematic areas in its ideological implications. For example, by presenting Cipriana as a lascivious, rural black slave, in opposition to Dandara as a prim,
sophisticated, well mannered, city *mulata* slave, the film actually confirms old paradigms that establishes black as bad, ugly, barbaric, primitive in opposition to white(r) as good, beautiful, civilized. If indeed this romance can be read as an allegory for nation formation, the ideological underpinnings the end of the film projects need consideration. What the end of the film seems to imply allegorically is the rebirth of the nation of Palmares through Ganga Zumba and Dandara's romance. In other words, the romance should (re)produce whiter inhabitants in order for the nation to stabilize and prosper.

The union between the King and Dandara seems to work against the film's overall objective to favor "blackness" rather than "whiteness". Actually, by following a model of identity construction based on the white male gaze, the union between the future "parents" of the nation of Palmares, is made more "palatable" not only to white audiences, but also to blacks who have introjected the "ideology of whitening". It seems to suggest that Palmares will be a nation of mulattoes relegating black women to a no-place zone in the imagined community. Therefore, instead of confronting the power structures that aid in black's introjection of these paradigms, the fact
that the noble Ganga Zumba prefers Dandara only reasserts white domination.

Furthermore, culturally, it is the female *mulato* body that has been constructed, *via* Brazilian white male supremacy, as the site posited with desire and sexual pleasure. Unfortunately, by merely displacing the construct from the *mulato* to the female black body, the film does not break away from such warped images of woman. In addition, in rendering Cipriana's black body with excessive sexuality (in opposition to Dandara's chaste body), it gives rise to yet another sexist association: the binary opposition whore/saint. This opposition reinforces objectification of women, hence validating the *machista* view that some women are "for fun", and others are "for marriage", but neither is "for real".

Considering the type of nation "Ganga Zumba" projects through the comments of the different characters, it seems to be an analogous construction of the desired model the Brazilian left had in mind in the late 1950s and early 1960s.
“QUILOMBO”

The script of this film was based on two major sources, João Felicio dos Santos’ already mentioned novel, and *Palmares: a guerra dos escravos* (1975), an essay by Décio Freitas. “Quilombo” presents itself as a historical reconstruction of the events which led to the stability and finally to the downfall of Palmares. It comprises three major narrative nuclei: a group of slaves rebel against their owner; they flee to Palmares; and live there until the community is virtually defeated by the whites. The story actually compresses almost a century of the history of Palmares. As “Ganga Zumba”, it starts out with intertitles about the enslavement of Africans by the Portuguese. The intertitles add that many slaves rebelled and formed maroon communities, the most important being Palmares which lasted for over a century. Differently than “Ganga Zumba”, the intertitles are superimposed on a long shot (in deep focus) of a mountain which stands before a bright red sky.

Shifting to action, the first few images of the film depict a black man being tortured by the overseer, as his owner’s wife reads over a manual on how to efficiently punish a slave without killing him.
Meanwhile, female slaves watch with sadness as white children amuse themselves playing in the background, indifferent to the pain and final death of the slave.

Upon the slave's death, the white woman becomes furious, but her rage is quickly tamed by the news that some Dutch officials\textsuperscript{23} have arrived at the engenho. The event that sets forth the journey to Palmares involves Ganga Zumba, (whose identity has not yet been revealed to the viewer) in the sugarcane fields taking action against a foreman for beating on Seu Aroroba, an elderly slave. As Ganga Zumba calls on the others to flee, someone announces that there are people coming through the fields. The owner and a capitão do mato (official slave-catcher) talk about the latter's most recent expedition to Palmares whose success is evident in the several captured slaves who walk along with them. Suddenly, the owner's son announces with suspicions that slaves should have been working on that part of the field. In a surprise attack the slaves kill all the white people, and begin to plan their next action. They decide to set out to Palmares,

\textsuperscript{23}During the 1600s, the Dutch invaded the Northeastern State of Pernambuco, from which they were finally expelled by Portuguese. The film captures this conflict indirectly in several occasions.
“the land of the free”, as a character describes it. On the way to Palmares, a Jewish man, his indigenous wife and their children join the group to go to Palmares. Before reaching Palmares Gongoba, one of the fugitive slaves, gives birth to a child who later the viewer finds out is Zumbi, the last leader of Palmares. As a home of the free, Palmares welcome the marginalized who seek freedom. Among the different groups of people that reach Palmares are several indigenous and marginalized white people such as a white prostitute (Ana de Ferro) who later becomes one of Ganga Zumba’s lovers and confidant.

One of the most important episodes in the film involves the kidnapping of young Zumbi from Palmares by an outlaw white man who later sells him to a priest. Fifteen years later, Zumbi escapes and goes back to Palmares. The film ends when a group of Whites wound Zumbi after a split between him and Ganga Zumba and Ganga Zumba's death. In my analysis of “Quilombo”, I first want to focus on how Blacks are inscribed as agents of their own history in this film. Second, I will address the film’s narration of the nation and relate it to Bhabha’s concepts of the performative and the pedagogical.
“Quilombo”, like “Ganga Zumba”, constitutes a historical reconstruction that aims at bringing Afro-Brazilians center stage. This is achieved in several ways. As Stam, Johnson and Zuzana Pick, among others, have observed, the film draws on Afro-Brazilian practices such as *carnaval* to inscribe Blacks in history. For example, Stam has pointed out that:

The film valorizes African culture by associating its characters with the *orixás* of *candomblé*: Ganga Zumba is linked to Xangô; Zumbi to Ogum [...] a venerable figure refuses last rites in Latin and insists on singing in Yoruba. [...] *Quilombo* is part historical reconstruction and part musical comedy, partially drawing its style, like *Xica da Silva*, from Rio’s carnival pageants, whose spectacles also involve the fanciful recreation of historic events. (*Tropical Multiculturalism* 315)

Besides highlighting these important elements of Afro-Brazilian culture, like “Ganga Zumba”, the film centers on Black resistance and not victimizations. Capitalizing on different levels of resistance, the “Quilombo” depicts not only armed struggles, but also more subtle ways to combat impositions from Whites, including uses of the masters’ many weapons of domination. For example, in a scene where a priest is giving a black man his last rites, the man refuses to repeat a prayer in Latin in favor of a sacred chant in Yoruba. Perhaps more important were his words when the priest tells him of how
good a Christian the man had been in life, and how he should continue to be so at time of death. In response, the dying man says, “O seu latim, Padre, serviu para a minha vida, mas não serve para minha morte”24.

These last words not only show more than simple rejection of Catholicism at death, but they also illustrate how Catholicism was used in life. According to Michel de Certau, *metis* or “ways of operating”, are tactics or tricks created by the weak to overcome impositions of the “strong” (*The Practice* XIX). He argues that in the dialectics of production and consumption (of laws, rituals, representations, etc), the weak find “ways of using the products imposed by a dominant order” (xiii).

For instance, the ambiguity that subverted from within the Spanish colonizers’ “success” in imposing their own culture on the indigenous Indians is well known. Submissive, and even consenting to their subjection, the Indians nevertheless often made of the rituals, representations and laws imposed on them something quite different from what their conquerors had in mind. (xiii)

In the example presented in the film, the dying man’s words reveal a practice of religious subversion that permitted him to

24 “Your Latin, Father, was of good use during my life, but it is of no good use to me in death.”
survive the colonizer's impositions during his life time. However, because he is dying and need no longer fear repression, he knows he does not need to mask his African beliefs under Catholic practices. Like most Africans under slavery in Brazil, this man used Catholic rituals as a shield to protect himself from the colonizer's punishments, and to preserve African religious memory. Catholicism here, thus serves as a façade for clandestine practices, and not necessarily as the path to "salvation" as "their conquerors had in mind."

Another scene that displays a similar "tactic of the weak", occurs in the sugarcane field when the slaves rebel against and kill their master and his party. Dandara, a woman slave who was accompanying the master and his guests on the tour of the sugarcane fields, is carrying the master's sword for him. As the slaves attack the group, and the master requests his sword in order to fight Ganga Zumba, Dandara walks calmly toward her master, pulls the sword from her belt, but instead of handing it over, she uses it to kill him. The explicitness of Dandara's action also bears symbolic significance. The use of the colonizer's weapon by the colonized is a tactic that "the weak" practices in a variety of ways. For example, the master's
weapon can be language - both concretely and metaphorically - as Roberto Fernández Retamar reminds us in his essay entitled "Calibán".

Analyzing and relating to Latin America the different meanings attributed to Shakespeare’s character, Fernández Retamar points out that:

Nuestro símbolo no es Ariel, como pensó Rodó, sino Calibán. Esto es algo que vemos con particular nitidez los mestizos que habitamos estas mismas islas donde vivió Calibán: Prospero invadió las islas, mató a nuestros antepasados, esclavizó a Calibán y le enseñó su idioma para poder entenderse con él: ¿qué otra cosa puede hacer Calibán sino utilizar ese mismo idioma [...] para maldecirlo.(32)

While the master (colonizer) imposes his language on the slave (colonized) to better submit him/her, the colonized often turns it against the colonizer. A concrete example of this appears in the film when the slaves are planning their trip to Palmares, and Seu Aroroba (an elderly man) speaks to Ganga Zumba in Yoruba and the

25 Fernández Retamar’s contemplation on the meanings of Calibán also seem to suggest that “language” or “idioma” connotes more than simply the Spanish language. The term also relates to power structures and the ways in which they are established. More specifically, “language” is also understood as a means to implement the colonizer’s rules, laws, religion, etc, while promoting obliteration of the colonized collective memory.
others cannot understand. One of the group's members remind them all that they should speak the white man's language so that "we all can understand each other". This segment points at two often neglected issues in white hegemonic historical accounts. First, it highlights the ethnic diversity amongst Africans brought to Brazil.

Second, and more pertinent to this discussion, it brings to light the slaves' use of the language for purposes opposite to what "the colonizer had in mind". The master's objective in grouping together slaves from different ethnic backgrounds involves creating obstacles for possible organized rebellions. The reasoning is rooted in the fact that if slaves cannot communicate with each other well, and if they maintain ethnic divergences, they cannot organize and rebel. This segment in "Quilombo" not only points at the slaves' appropriation of the master's weapon, it also indicates a collective use of it opposed to the master's original intention. The oppressor's language functions as a vehicle for the integration and unity of distinct ethnic groups which the master sought to segregate.

Also, the film's efforts to present Black-centered history manifests itself in other representations of slaves' life experience. The performative, to use Bhabha's concept, is often presented as a
ritualization of “the practice of everyday life”. The scenes which contrast the peaceful, celebratory, collective spirit of Palmares with the harsh, individualist, and violent disposition of the world outside it, highlight the operations of the performative. For example, in a scene immediately prior to young Zumbi’s kidnapping, the camera focuses on a group of children of Palmares. They appear happily working the land together and singing a chant to Earth. The everyday experience of cultivating the land is put on focus. It is “dramatized”, as Roberto da Matta’s would put it, suggesting a type of ritual the community performs. By presenting a ritualized practice, the scene also functions to remind the viewer of the harsh ways the land is worked outside the boundaries of Palmares.

This type of communal performance is further reinforced by the next series of shots where the community’s grandfather instructs little children on ancient curative traditions and the Yoruba language. Highlighting the importance of non-western type of knowledge and the way that knowledge is transmitted - oral tradition- this sequence puts into focus the contrasting discursive address of the performative and the pedagogical.
Another way the film reflects its intention to valorize the Brazilian Black's historical experience shows in its epic ambitions. This objective manifests itself in several ways. These include the heroes' (Ganga Zumba's and Zumbi's) quest for freedom evident in the flight to Palmares and struggles to keep the community free. In addition, the heroes portray an exemplary role in their society, which is expressed in their strength, integrity and self-sacrifice for the good of the people. Also, the film maintains emphasis on spectacle, and includes a romance between the hero and heroine(s). Although "Quilombo" relates to the foundational Romance and to the historical film in that the love story plays an ideological function, it is the spectacle rather than romance that is stressed.

As already mentioned, in "Ganga Zumba", the King's preference of Dandara over Cipriana, and the resulting union, is charged with ideological signification. First, the implicit stability the union brings reflects a certain optimism toward the future of Palmares, "the land of the free". Allegorically, it could be argued that the quest for freedom and the building of a utopian society links Palmares to the contemporary (1963) Brazilian intellectual Left's dream. But, as I
contended, the configuration of this utopian society leaves out black women.

"Quilombo", on the other hand, presents no happy ending expressed in the union of the hero and the heroine. Instead, Ganga Zumba poisons himself in order to save his people while Zumbi, despite the mystical overtones implying he will live forever, dies leaving no indication of stability via a well established romantic relationship. Although romance is played down and never materializes in the film, it still emanates an ideological slant worth consideration. While Zumbi is never depicted in a romantic situation, Ganga Zumba (on whom the film capitalizes) is romantically involved with three different women in the film. His lovers are consecutively Dandara, Ana de Ferro, and Namba. It is important to note that, Dandara is black, Ana de Ferro (the ex-prostitute) is white and Namba is *mulata*. Because the hero's lovers are "color coded" and play different roles in connection with Ganga Zumba, I want to point out how the women are portrayed in relation both to the hero and to each other. But first, I will call attention to the film's portrayal of women in general. Contrary to the unfavorable depiction of women that I have observed in "Ganga Zumba", "Quilombo" strives to portray
females as strong and politically engaged partners of their male leaders. For example, Acotirene, is the venerated leader of Palmares who departs so that Ganga Zumba can lead the people. Dandara is a strong warrior who accompanies Zumbi on several surprise attacks, and also counsels both leaders on decisions concerning the future of Palmares. Ana de Ferro, who knows how to read and write, follows Ganga Zumba to Recife to meet with the Governor, and plays a fundamental role in interpreting documents and advising Ganga Zumba on procedures. In the meeting with the Governor, not only

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26According to Stam, Acotirene is ‘a symbolic figure associated with African strength and spirituality” (Tropical Multiculturalism 314)

27Ganga Zumba agrees to meet the Governor to discuss a treaty. This treaty is the main cause for the split between Ganga Zumba and Zumbi. The Governor offers land and freedom to the people of Palmares. In exchange, the Governor asks that the Palmarinos move to this land and halt attacks on White’s settlements. Ana de Ferro urges Ganga Zumba not to accept the terms. Ganga Zumba accepts it nevertheless only to realize later that both Zumbi and Ana were correct in not trusting the white man. In order to encourage his followers to go back to Palmares and join Zumbi, Ganga Zumba and Ana concocted a plan. The plan consisted of Ganga Zumba’s poisoning himself and Ana accusing the Governor’s army leader of killing the hero. The people follow Ana’s instructions, and start their journey back to Palmares.
other (white) women were present, but they also voiced their opinion.

Nevertheless, Namba, Ganga Zumba's younger lover, is clearly presented as an object of desire. This is reflected in several circumstances. For example, in a love scene between Namba and Ganga Zumba, he asks her to dance for him. Namba, in a child-like manner runs to an open space and begins to dance. In a shot-reverse shot sequence, the viewer sees Namba's partially naked body center-frame, in a upward tilted camera angle. The following shot shows Ganga Zumba gazing at her expressing desire. This sequence provides for spectator-subject positionings based on mechanisms of voyeurism and scopophilia. In this manner, it bears several processes of identification that transforms Namba into a mere object of the male gaze.

Moreover, the fact that Namba is portrayed as Ganga Zumba's girl-friend (*namorada*), in the end of the film, and yet it is Ana de Ferro whom the hero trusts to discuss serious matters, indicates that Namba's existence is solely to provide the hero sexual pleasure. This,
is coupled with the character’s childish demeanor, provocative gestures, and lack of words and voluntary action. In this vein, it could be argued that the portrayal of Namba’s character actually reinforces sexist and racist notions that relegate *mulatas* to the role of mere providers of sexual pleasure.

As I mentioned before, in contrast with “Ganga Zumba”, romance is minimized while spectacle is emphasized in “Quilombo”. More importantly, the underlying differences that set the two films apart from each other are their distinct aesthetic approaches and the different political circumstances under which they were produced. Belonging to the first phase of the *Cinema Novo* movement, “Ganga Zumba” manifests *estética da fome* characteristics such as, the use of black and white film, handheld camera, long lingering shots, and the use of non-actors. In contrast, “Quilombo” presents an aesthetic more akin to the *Tropicalismo* phase of Brazilian cinema. Setting itself apart from “Ganga Zumba”, “Quilombo” displays a penchant for grandeur in its epic intentions. The film’s colorfulness, extravagant sets, and massive cast are only a few components that point at its exacerbated

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28The constant giggles, for instance, added to the overall childish mannerisms, aid in the construction of a foolish, inapt and nonsensical woman.
spectacular affinity. Therefore, unlike “Ganga Zumba”, “Quilombo” associates itself more with the luxuries of a mainstream super-production than with the old paragons of estética da fome.

As I will address later, in its super-production (epic) design, spectacle takes on other dimensions besides the ones proposed by Grindon in relation to historical film. Although Grindon does not define spectacle specifically in his work, his study of historical film indicates a relationship between the spectacle, exteriority and historical events where grandeur is reflected. According to Grindon, some of the contributing features to the spectacle in this type of film involve location shooting, wide scope of full scale shots, large range (both in depth and laterally), period wardrobe and setting, elaborate sets and a large cast.

While “Quilombo” presents spectacle as central to the film’s memorialization of Palmares, aesthetically “Ganga Zumba” plays it down. 29 For example, “Ganga Zumba’s” cast consists of a few actors,

29 According to Robert Stam, “[p]artially because of lack of funds, Diegues was obliged to emphasize oppression rather than the grandeur of Palmares itself” (Tropical Multiculturalism 227). Although this could well be a reason, I also believe that focus on the grandeur of Palmares would entail a production that would contradict the initial principles of Cinema Novo.
while “Quilombo’s” present a multitude of main actors as well as extras. “Ganga Zumba” was shot entirely on location and/or open space. “Quilombo”, although primarily filmed on open spaces, these spaces were often transformed into elaborate sets.

In “Quilombo”, more so than in “Ganga Zumba”, spectacle bears much more weight than characterization, but in both the interplay between spectacle and characterization is used to underline the embodiment of societal principles in the community’s heroes. They also present a specific situation as representative of collective action. For example, by constructing Palmares as a utopian society of the past, both films take its experience to represent a present (1963 and 1984 respectively) national struggle for liberation. As Stam has pointed out, “[a]s typical of the early Cinema Novo films, Ganga Zumba uses popular revolts as a quasi-allegorical springboard to speak of the need for liberation in contemporary Brazil” (Tropical Multiculturalism 231).

In addition, by presenting Palmares as a utopian society, both not only further reinforce the relationship between the past and the present, but they also create an “in-between” time/space frame similar to what Bhabha has argued. The escaped slaves search for
freedom of the seventeenth century is allegorically connected with the time/space in-between, the intellectual left's imagined society before the military coup of 1964. While Palmares presents the optimism of the left in "Ganga Zumba", it points at the destroyed utopian dream in "Quilombo".

It can be said that what sets this film apart from the classic historical film, lies in the interplay of conventional and unconventional narrative devices. In the director's attempts to capture the "spirit" of black resistance, the films recount historical events utilizing a variety of elements primarily associated with Afro-Brazilian culture. While they narrate a history of Palmares in a linear, cause-and-effect manner, they also incorporate candomblé, carnival, music, and other forms of social strategies stemming from practices of resistance in the black Brazilian community. Because the films aspire to a black-centered approach to representation, a number of scholars and critics have perceived this film favorably. Indeed, both "Ganga Zumba and "Quilombo" do attempt to rehabilitate history from a black perspective as they seek to foreground Afro-Brazilian cultural elements.
However, when looking at the national projects the films postulate, questions concerning the dangers of the centralization of the marginal emerge. It is obvious that one national project proposed in both films has to do with Palmares allegorically representing a microcosmic Brazil dreamed by the intellectual left and destroyed by the military dictatorship and by incompatible models of modernization. The Palmarina nation “Quilombo” masterfully narrates is a *fantasia*, a lost paradise of racial harmony and collective work. One question that comes to mind, however, has to do with possible appropriation of the Afro-Brazilian “practice of everyday life” to narrate a nation that did not include a greater socio-economic and political participatory role for black Brazilians.

Furthermore, by using the past, historical and linear time as a narrative axis that connects the present, utopian and racially harmonious nation to an ancient past, the performative can lose its significance by being transformed into a pedagogical tool that favors (supports) the interests of the dominant majority. This case scenario implies an obliteration of the performative as the articulatory locus pertaining to “the discourses of minorities, the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities and tense
locations of cultural differences" (Bhabha *The Location* 148). In this manner, Diegues’ films could be narrating a national discourse in which,

The ‘top’ attempts to reject and eliminate the ‘bottom for reasons of prestige and status, only to discover, not only that it is in some way frequently dependent upon the low-Other [...] , but also that the top includes that low symbolically, as a primary eroticized constituent of its own fantasy life (Stallysbrass, 5)
CHAPTER 3

PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES AND HISTORICAL REHABILITATION IN “EL OTRO FRANCISCO”

When looking at intellectual/artistic activities in Cuba, in the 1970s, one cannot but notice a prolific cultural production focusing on Afro-Cuban heritage. This renewed interest manifests itself in the Social Sciences and Literature in the works of Moreno Fraginals, Dechamps Chapeaux and Miguel Barnet, among others. During the same period, the release of numerous documentaries and fiction films addressing Afro-Cuban heritage attest to the special attention the issue received in the cinema also. In fact, historical films dominated Cuba’s cinematic production in the 70s, and many of them focused specifically on the presence of African-Cubans in colonial history. Sergio Giral’s trilogy “El otro Francisco” (1973), “Ranchedador” (1975), “Maluala” (1979), and Tomás Gutierrez Allea’s “La última
"Cena" (1976) are only a few examples of films addressing African-Cubans’ experience in national history. These films not only seek to bring Afro-Cubans center-stage, they also aim at presenting history from the slave perspective. This approach seems to present a disjuncture within the Cuban socio-ethnic context which sets Afro-Cubans apart as a distinct social group. My questions thus, have to do with the type of “uniqueness” granted Afro-Cubans in this category of films. More specifically, I ask on what account can we explain the production of such films, considering the historical context in which they were produced. How can they articulate “uniqueness” of a specific social group at a time when the State is seeking consolidation, and an undivided, all encompassing national subject must be negotiated for that reason?

CONTEXT OF PRODUCTION, MID 70S.

It is important to mention that, from late 60s into the 70s, the state's attempts to expand and consolidate often lead to increased institutionalization of the arts and research. As a result, censorship tightened and containment practices increased. Intellectuals whose works the cultural bureaucrats considered ideologically incompatible
with the ideals of the Revolution (read the State) were often bared from publishing or removed from professional positions. This period has been referred to as “cacería de brujas” by some intellectuals, including Humberto Solás, one of Cuba’s most important filmmakers (in a lecture delivered at The Ohio State University, 1994). Within this context, we find that, along with statesmen, organic intellectuals create and disseminate a monad-like national subject that renounces ethnic differences in favor of national unity and integration. For example, while Fidel Castro’s and Che Guevara’s earlier speeches denouncing racism as anti-nation were still resonating, Fernandez Retamar’s Calibán is not only defining “cubanía” by a synechdochical reduction process (Calibán= cimarrón= black= Cuban= Latin American), but it is also delineating the very essence of being Caribbean, and by extension Latin American.

Recognizing the different aesthetic approaches of these films, and the broadness of the topic, however, I direct these questions toward an analysis of one specific film: “El otro Francisco”. This film is based on Anselmo Suárez y Romero’s Francisco, Cuba’s first anti-slavery novel (1838). “El otro Francisco” seeks to “rewrite” Francisco’s (hi)story by questioning the novel while adding other informative as
well as discursive dimensions to the narration. For instance, while the film uses the novel as legitimation device for historical authenticity, it also questions the very discursive motivations implicated in the book's (hi)story. Moreover, through a post-1959 (materialist) perspective, the film not only fills in gaps of information left by Suárez y Romero's novel, it also attempts to produce historical knowledge from the slave perspective. Explaining the making of his film, Giral commented that,

Suárez y Romero points the camera from his angle as master, and focuses on the protagonists of his story, forgetting the extras who in this case would be the rest of his plantation slaves. “The Other Francisco” turns the camera on the extras to look at the same story seen through those who apparently have no identity and yet whose story this really is. (Afrocuba, 264)

What I am interested in addressing, in this chapter, relates directly to Giral’s assertions. I question the ways the film represents Cuban Blacks in its very attempt to depict Afro-Cubans as agents of their own history. For that, I take into consideration the film’s aesthetic approach as I address the following questions: If indeed the film portrays Afro-Cubans as a “unique” sector of Cuban society, does this not contradict the idea of a monad-like-totalizing Cuban national subject? Does the film propose a national subject? If so,
does this subject contradict, oppose, differ or reaffirm a homogenized Cuban identity like the one promoted by the State? How does the text deviate from or reaffirm the paths prescribed in national pedagogy?

"El otro Francisco" is divided into several parts, and it follows a non-linear structure. These parts corresponds roughly to the different sources and narrative perspectives on which the film is based. The film as a whole is constructed in a confluence of three different sources: Suárez y Romero's novel, its pre-text (the moment of the novel's production), and an interpretation of the novel from a post-1959 perspective. Although their discourses seem to function in opposition to each other, these sources also work together in the process of legitimation of the text as a whole. For instance, the materialist interpretation of the events juxtaposes, and partially deconstructs, the novel's romantic approach to the (hi)story. By the same token, the novel and its pre-text operate as legitimation devices which ultimately relegate the post-1959 interpretation to a position of textual authority by functioning as a source of historical legitimacy.
These seemingly antithetic approaches to narration are composed and linked together, either to oppose or complement each other, through an aesthetics that employs a variety of cinematic modes of address. It includes melodrama, (ethnographic) documentary, direct address, newsreel, and imaging techniques of the silent era. More importantly, this eclectic pool of approaches, plus the manipulation of their different cinematic codes, provide for an unconventional formal structure that breaks the continuity of the romantic discourse as it proposes a historical materialist account of the story.

The narrative is often interrupted by a "critic narrator" who adopts a scientific (ethnographic, documentary) discourse. His discourse subsumes, cites and criticizes two other discourses: the romantic, and another one that reflects the bourgeoisie's historiographic and sociological point-of-view. In this manner, the critic narrator aids in establishing legitimacy of one discourse over the other in the film's intention to convey historical truth. The film accomplishes this by creating stratagems which are manifested in its aesthetics. Through the "tricks" it plays on the viewer, by capitalizing on the familiar, the film constructs and deconstructs a variety of
spectator's positionings. It is important to add that the focus on the familiar goes beyond mere reliance on the viewer's horizon of expectations. In fact, these "tricks" are successful in that they set the viewer up through manipulating his/her horizon of expectation and plausibility. By creating alternative possibilities for spectator's positionings, they reinforce certain expectations and generate new ones only to end up dismantling them all. In order to exemplify these observations, I will provide a close reading of specific sequences that make up the first few scenes of the film.

Starting from the film's title, the viewer can easily assume the text seeks to provide an antithesis or, at least, an alternative version of Francisco's (hi)story that contrasts the romantic view offered by the novel. The deduced "promise" of something different the title offers is reinforced by the sudden opening of the film. It starts without the usual cinematic conventions such as credits and theme song, which normally indicate the beginning of a film. Instead, it opens with a long-establishing-shot portraying a poorly dressed black man, sitting by a river. Upon seeing these images, the spectator is led to believe that not only the story will deviate from the Romantic line, but it will also be told through unconventional ways.
In this manner, the title generates certain expectations which are confirmed by the opening of the film.

However, as the sequence progresses, the spectator is brought back on familiar tracks. Ironically, soon after the first shot, the viewer's expectations, which had been previously established by the abrupt opening, is destabilized by the familiar. This becomes evident as the narrative moves forward, and the screen is bombarded with commonplace melodramatic and romantic conventions. Associations between nature and human sentiment, mood music, foreshadowing, prohibited love, over-dramatization, excessive sentimentality, close-ups, and an abundance of indexical clues (e.g. bucolic surroundings offering physical contiguity pointing at romance) are some of the conventions present in the initial sequences. A brief account of these sequences will help to elucidate my point.

Immediately after the first shot, the camera slowly zooms in providing a medium close-up of the man. This shot centers on his face and hand gestures disclosing the character's affliction. A close shot of the tumbling river waters, and a low-angle-pan-shot of the sky and tree tops are immediately followed by another shot of the man. As if anticipating the man's tragic destiny, a loud tolling bell
initiates the sound track as the first few shots appear on the screen. Despite a brief, almost imperceptive interruption by an unintelligible voice-over, accompanied by the insertion of a shot of the same black man carrying a bundle of sugar cane, the sound track resumes immediately and eases itself into a melodramatic mood music. Progressively, the music intensifies as a series of shot-reverse-shots depict the man's point of view and the object of his look, a black woman. The bucolic setting and a predictable embrace are the final touches leading the spectator into believing that s/he is about to embark on a melodramatic journey.

The culmination of events emerges in the next sequence, in a scene in which the black man --who by now the spectator knows is Francisco-- sees his beloved advancing to meet him. The lovers run to each other's arms and kiss passionately. Nevertheless, the woman (Dorotea) informs Francisco of their impossible romance. According to Dorotea, Ricardo (their owner's son) has prohibited her from seeing Francisco because Ricardo wants her for himself. Subsequently, Francisco is shown crying and in great despair while running through the forest. These images, along with the soundtrack, seem to
overcome the brief interruptions, and work together in setting up an unmistakably melodramatic mood.

The sequences described clearly aim simultaneously at generating, fulfilling, and destabilizing the viewer's horizon of expectations through the manipulation of melodramatic and romantic codes/conventions. For instance, by alternating shots of the turbulent waters, close-ups of Francisco and a low-angle pan-shot of the tree tops, this particular sequence seeks to call attention to the protagonist's increasing sense of affliction, distress and loss while it also anticipates his tragic experience to be fully disclosed at the end of the first part of the film. This editing procedure steers the viewer into establishing relationships between nature and human sentiment, thus functioning much like melodramatic/Romantic conventions do.

Furthermore, these sequences direct themselves toward a horizon of expectations that assumes the spectators' literary and cinematic competence. As I will argue in the next chapter, since the nineteenth century, historical novels have played an important role in the construction of national identities in Cuba, as they have in Latin America as a whole. Serving as a means of diffusion of
national(ist) ideologies, the stories, if not the novels themselves, were made familiar to considerable sectors of the population.

In the context of post-1959 Cuban cinematic production, one of the reasons adaptations of historical novels abound is precisely because filmmakers sought to create a "national" cinema with which a large sector of the population could identify. It is very likely that Cuban audiences were familiar with, if not the novel itself, at least with the stories about Francisco, at the time the film was made. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that these first sequences assume and exploit familiarity with the literary text. Therefore, they rely on the plausible, which has been described as "the relationship between a text and commonly held opinions, its relation to other texts, and also the internal functional of the story being told" (in Aumont, 114). In order to stimulate anticipation and/or expectation of already experienced spectator positionings, these sequences depend on plausibility in that they are diegetic units and function to motivate as well as to prompt subsequent units. Plausibility, therefore, involves textual and cultural experiences and associations as well as dissociations which encourage the foreseeable. As Jacques Aumont, Alain Bergala, Michel Marie and Marc Vernet, among others,
have pointed out, plausibility can be seen as "an effect of the corpus" (in Aumont 116). These scholars have argued that:

[...]a film's plausibility owes much to previous, already produced films, since plausibility will be judged as that which has already been seen in previous work. Once the same situation has been recreated in several films, it will appear both realistic and normal. (116)

They go on to explain that the plausible becomes more evident within the relationships among a series of films that are closely related to each other in that they share similar characteristics. In this vein, through the repetition of same scenes, themes and techniques, genre films allow for the plausible "to reinforce itself from film to film" (118). In order to better explain these arguments, I will address the role the melodrama plays in the surfacing of the plausible in the beginning of the film.

In addition to the adaptations of historical novels, filmmakers, after 1959, also saw in the melodrama a means to establish a close relationship between their films and the people. The candid relationship the Nuevo Cine Cubano maintained with melodrama can be explained in a variety of ways. Besides the need to communicate with the people, filmmakers also desired to make films that were compatible with Cuban "realities". As Jesús Martín-Barbero
has argued, melodrama has been a “popular spectacle” since its origin, in eighteenth century Europe. According to Martín-Barbero, it originated as a spectacle whose audience was constituted of members of the popular classes. It grew out of a theater-taken-to-the-streets as a result of laws prohibiting popular theater as a means to prevent riots (112). Martín-Barbero goes on to explain that melodrama became the site where the popular classes could see themselves as well as their drama on the stage (113). In this sense, it becomes difficult to separate melodrama from “the people”. In addition, it is the strong emotional flavour which has definitely marked melodrama, locating it on the side of the popular classes. [...] Melodrama provided a point of arrival for the narrative memory and gestural forms of popular culture and the point of emergence of the dramatization of mass culture [...]. (113)

Another way to understand the close relationship between the Nuevo Cine Cubano and melodrama, may be found in Timothy Barnard’s observations in which he calls attention to the film market in Cuba, prior to the establishment of ICAIC, in 1960. Barnard argues that Cuban audiences had viewing habits that were well established before the birth of the Nuevo Cine Cubano (in King, 1993, 234). These habits not only have played an important role in
the formulation of film theories, but they also influenced Cuban cinematic practices in general, "determining, for instance, an insistence on the popular (the use of genres, recourse to comedy and melodrama [...]" (234).

Michael Chanan has likewise observed that Latin American, particularly Mexican melodrama, despite its inferior quality in comparison to Hollywood's, occupied a privileged place with the Cuban audiences prior to 1959 (54). Considering the large number of post-1959 films containing melodramatic characteristics, and acknowledging that one of the objectives of the *Nuevo Cine Cubano* was to communicate with its audience (the people), it is not difficult to conclude that filmmakers relied on the popularity and the familiarity that melodrama enjoyed among Cuban viewers. Therefore, Chanan's observation not only reinforces Barnard's argument it also helps to validate my own remarks concerning (de)familiarization and plausibility in "El otro Francisco".

It is important to add that the notion of a deliberate "technical problem" seems to be consistent with the sequences' attempt to relate with the audience *via* the melodrama. Commenting on the quality of Mexican melodrama, Carlos Monsiváis and Ana López
suggest that the adaptability of this genre is compatible with the precarious reality of the Mexican film industry. Monsiváis has suggested that, "If competition with North America is impossible artistically or technically, the only defense is excess, the absence of limits of the melodrama (quoted in King, 151)." While commenting on Monsivais' above quote, Ana Lopez adds that:

[...]the melodrama's exaggerated signification and hyperbole-its emphasis on anaphoric events pointing to other implied, absent meanings or origins- become, in the Mexican case, a way of cinematically working through the problematic of an underdeveloped national cinema. (King, 1993; 151)

By adding "technical problem" to the melodrama-code-saturated-sequence, the film creates a temporary allusion to the "inferiority" of Mexican (Latin American) melodrama of the 30s and 40s. In doing so, it seeks to reinforce spectator's complicity involved in the decoding process of the narrative through a connectedness between film and spectator's horizon of expectation. In this case, the apparent "technical disruption" of the narrative flow, present in the first part of "El otro Francisco", seems to point to a variety of motivations involving (de)familiarization. One consists of reassuring the viewer that the black man depicted earlier was indeed Francisco, the
protagonist of Suárez Romero’s novel, in order to confirm the viewer’s expectation. Another has to with the establishment of links between the film and the technological underdevelopment commonly instituted in Mexican films of the 30s and 40s. Therefore, this interruption functions to reinforce the viewer’s expectations by associating “technical difficulties” with the melodrama.

Another motivation linking melodrama, techniques/technology, and the viewer, relates to the aesthetic of “El otro Francisco”. The film’s aesthetic seems congruous with Nuevo Cine Cubano filmmakers’ and theoreticians’ objectives of developing a “truly” national cinema. Filmmakers and theoreticians such as Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, Julio García Espinosa and Humberto Solás all sought to create a cinema and elaborate a poetics that would be meaningful within the revolutionary process while maintaining a dialogue with the Cuban people. According to García Espinosa’s conception of “cine imperfecto”, Cuban filmmakers should aim at obliterating bourgeois conceptions of taste and hierarchy in the arts. In order to achieve these goals, filmmakers should seek to create an aesthetic that would be consistent with the technological underdevelopment of Cuban film industry as well as with filmmakers’ ideological goals because, “un
cine perfecto -técnica y artísticamente logrado- es casi siempre reaccionario” ("Por un cine imperfecto 63).

Also, García Espinosa not only proposes that Cuban cinema be meaningful within the revolutionary process as a whole, he also urges that, at the same time, it translate “el proceso de los problemas” in Cuba. In this same vein, instead of venturing in competition with Hollywood, Cuban filmmakers aimed at turning their technological disadvantage into an aesthetic gain. In an interview with the film scholar Julianne Burton-Carvajal, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea summarizes these inclinations when he argues that,

When it comes to trying to generalize as to the nature of this [Cuban] style, it is clear that our Neorealist foundation has not totally disappeared. Despite all of its ideological and political limitations, despite our own evolution, which has gone in a different direction, one thing is sure and continues to condition us: our film production must of necessity be inexpensive. We do not have the means to undertake superproductions. So the kind of cinema that adapts itself to our interests, fortunately, is a kind of light, agile cinema, one that is very directly founded on our reality. [...] you must have seen this in One Way or Another, for example. The film seems a bit careless, a little awkward, almost as if it had been let loose on its own, but it also succeeds in penetrating our reality to an uncommon degree, producing an impact somehow charged with poetry. (Burton 127)

As for the scenes of “El otro Francisco” already described, the connection they attempt to establish with the spectator extend
beyond the melodramatic characteristics discussed. Melodrama-as-the-familiar also takes on aesthetic dimensions in the film’s intention to connect audience and Cuban “realities”. Therefore, the manipulation of melodramatic codes in “El otro Francisco” also reflects the desirability to create a new aesthetic that would provide for sites of oscillating viewing positionings that in fact would break away from the already familiar and comfortable viewing habits, including those provided by the melodrama itself. For example, by alluding to the technical inconveniences of the classic Latin American melodrama, “El otro Francisco” displays further evidence of manipulation of both generic codes and the viewer’s horizon of expectation.

Coupled with the interruption discussed above, continuity cuts are also spliced together carelessly exposing the transitions from a cut to a shot. Not unlike the old familiar melodramas viewed by Cubans, these sequences reveal technological underdevelopment and lack of technique in that they do not aspire to achieve Hollywood’s seamless depictions of “illusional” reality. More importantly, however, these “technical difficulties” actually provide paradoxical outcomes. On one hand they reinforce the already familiar setting of
the melodramatic. On the other, they function to destabilize, if momentarily, the viewer's complicity with the camera. In this sense, the film seeks to follow certain guidelines that are compatible with the new aesthetic proposed by the New Cuban Cinema. It aims at allowing critical distance through the rupture of cinematic practices, such as continuity, that aid in the creation of "illusion of reality".

This type of cinematic tactics become even more conspicuous as the film progresses. The intention of attaining a greater or lesser level of complicity with the spectator -either to maintain or to increase potentiality for a "preferred reading"- is amplified by the sudden changes of address. In order to clarify this comment, I want to pursue a brief analysis of certain scenes where rupture presents itself as an obstacle to the continuity of a particular discourse as well as means to destabilize specific spectator positionings. At this point, I would like to return to the sequence in which Francisco finds out the impossibility of romance between him and Dorotea.

Immediately after the shot depicting Francisco in despair, two white men appear on the screen staring at a black man's dead body hanging from a tree. The images of Francisco's dead body are reinforced by an interference of a voice-over declaring the end of the
story's “hero”. Thus, the voice-over suddenly disrupts the narrative flow while the screen images abruptly shift to a rather contrasting mise-en-scene. In an elegantly decorated room, the camera depicts a man reading out-loud from a book. As soon as his image appears on the screen, it becomes clear that he was the voice-over. The spectator is immediately prompted to identify the narrator/character as the very Suárez y Romero reading the end of his novel at a tertulia.

In this manner, the viewer is able to ascertain that what unfolded on the screen prior to this point was already the end of the novel. At this point, while depicting images of the tertulia, a different male voice-over is introduced. Using direct address, it informs the viewer of the origins of the novel, its history, purpose, author and his literary/political circle and ideological inclinations. In questioning the veracity implicated in the image of blacks Suárez y Romero's novel provides, the voice-over (critic narrator) directly requests the viewer's attention to the likeness of a different “truth”. It invites the spectator to inquire into the possibility of another Francisco, one hidden behind Suárez y Romero's.

Setting the stage for the opening of the other story about Francisco, the credits appear on the screen for the first time as it
accompanies a freeze-frame of a happy, elegantly dressed black male. The sudden interruption brought by these questions and simultaneous freeze-frame and credits on the screen, disrupts and (re)establish viewer's positionings. It breaks the original relationship between viewer and film as it lures her/him back to the original promise of the title: the development of another (read truer) story about Francisco.

Having set the viewer's positioning, both the voice-over and the credits equip the spectator with expectations for Francisco's "true" story. Nevertheless, the first few sequences of this new beginning, lure the viewer back to the familiar settings of the novel and melodrama. The film introduces the viewer to the overseer and to Ricardo. They are speaking at the trapiche, and the overseer is shown enjoying himself as he informs Ricardo of the severe punishment he gave the slave Francisco. He explains in some detail the gruesome methods of punishment he used on Francisco, and displays an implicit intention to please his boss. The portrayal of two cruel white men provides for a Manichean perspective not unlike the one found in the novel, the melodrama and Romantic literary works in general. Depicted as social archetypes, the two characters
superficially embody the evils of the master in a slavocratic society. But contrary to what the above mentioned sequence seems to propose, the following scene diverges from the romantic discourse by breaking away from traditional portrayals of victimization so common in Suarez y Romero’s novel. Unlike antislavery novels, whose sole objective stands on denouncing slavery as an institution, this sequence depicts and emphasizes the slaves’ own reactions toward a brutal system of exploitation.

Departing from the romantic propensity of shedding “false tears”—to use Richard Jackson’s expression—30—the sequence introduces into the story some aspects of the slaves’ historical experience which paternalistic accounts fail to portray. One such element presented has to do with the depiction of solidarity among slaves. While exposed to hostile working conditions in the sugar-cane fields, in this sequence, slaves are depicted helping each other survive their harsh treatment.

30In Black Image in Latin American Literature, Jackson names a chapter “False Tears for the Black Man”. This scholar argues that many nineteenth-century antislavery novels display antiblack sentiments. Jackson observes that the writers, being unable to escape the antislavery/antiblack paradox, they display “an air of sentimental artificiality, [and] speak apologetically of the black man’s color and features” (22).
As they work the fields, slaves appear singing together chants that serve to provide an accompanying collective work-rhythm while offering some comfort as each slave struggles to survive the unbearably hostile environment. Also, on a more individual basis, one slave is shown helping Francisco with his work in order to conceal the latter's inability to produce in the expected measure. Another way the film differs from the "shed -false tears-novels", is reflected in the portrayal of blacks exercising white-given-power over other blacks. As the one slave tries to help Francisco, a black "overseer" notices this action and proceeds to perform his own duty.

By depicting a black man scolding and whipping both Francisco and his helper, the scene points to a much larger issue of exploitation rooted in the oppressor-oppressed relationship. It goes beyond exposing a "class" hierarchy among the slaves (e.g. city slaves were thought to be more "civilized" than rural ones). Clearly, it also unmasks one of the most abhorrent effects of slavery and/or colonization: the reproduction and maintenance of a system through violence at all levels. The portrayal of this type of power relation brings to mind the many ways the master concocted to maintain the master/slave paradigms intact. It also responds to Frantz Fanon's
reflexions on the different types of violence involved in the colonizer/colonized dialectic relationship. Although the context of Fanon's observations involves European imperialism in Africa, the power relations and the consequences he describes are similar to other situations of power relations between oppressors and the oppressed.

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon explains the colonized's desire to "substitute" (or to take the colonizer's place) in terms of repressed "memory" and aggression. In their desire to flee the settler's aggression and the tensions created by the colonial order, the native "dreams of putting himself in the place of the settler..."(52). Fanon adds that the colonized's anger and desire to escape his condition propels him to manifest his frustrations in the form of violence against his own people (52-54). Contentions such as Fanon's help to explain why so many oppressed yearn to perform the oppressor's role, and how, in turn, the oppressor encourages and takes advantage of the situation. This brief scene in "El otro Francisco" speaks precisely of that. It makes the viewer aware of the different levels of violence embedded in the master-slave relationship.
The irony of these scenes, however, is evident in that although they depart from romantic ways of depicting slaves, they are also framed within the filmic “recreation” of the romantic discourse. In other words, they exist within the boundaries of the film’s use of Suárez y Romero’s novel as a point of origin of the film itself. What is consistent here, however, is the fact that the film continues to destabilize spectator’s positionings by allowing for a “bleeding” of one discourse into another. But in these particular scenes, the interference of one discourse into the other is carefully constructed as to provide continuity to the novel’s story. Any notion of interruption of the romantic discourse is promptly effaced by the following sequence in which the voice-over narrator (Suárez y Romero) informs the viewer of the romance between Dorotea and Francisco.

Simultaneously, on the screen, the audience sees a series of close-up shot-reverse-shots portraying a beautiful Dorotea and an equally handsome Francisco exchanging looks of desire in their “familial” surroundings, the home of their owner. Reinforcing these romantic images, the voice-over/narrator (supposedly Suárez y Romero reading his novel) informs the viewer of the two slaves’ love.
story. This is interrupted by the other voice-over (pedagogical narrator) directly addressing the viewer.

OF SUTURING AND DISPLACEMENT

So far, in my analysis of "El otro Francisco", I have highlighted the construction and deconstruction of discursive conventions, and related them to the instability of subject positionings in the text. Nevertheless, the workings of cinematic texts in the (de)construction of identification processes requires further attention. As in the previously described fragments, and the ones I shall take up later, what is at the core of textual disruptions in the film is the tearing of suture in the viewer's identification process. For the purpose of clarification, first I would like to call attention to the process of suture in cinematic texts in general. Later I will address how it functions in "El otro Francisco". According to Kaja Silverman, suture can be defined as,

[ ] the name given to the procedures by means of which cinematic texts confer subjectivity upon their viewers (195). The concept of suture attempts to account for the means by which subjects emerge within discourse (199-200). [ ] The operation of suture is successful at the moment that the viewing subject says, "Yes, that's me," or "That's what I see." (205)
In order to be better understood, Silverman's description invites an explanation concerning the theoretical development of suture. The concept has been a much studied and very controversial topic in film theory. Because of its complexity, suture seems to lend itself to constant re-elaborations, which in turn, add on to its level of difficulty. Since it is directly linked to issues of subject-formation, first, it will be necessary to provide a simplified discussion of Lacanian approaches to the development of the "self". Later, I will briefly discuss the major ideas within film theory debates on suture itself.

It is important to recall that, in line with Lacanian views, subject development involves three different psychoanalytic registers: the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real. According to Lacan, from the age of six to eighteen months, the child perceives her/himself as a fragmented, uncoordinated being. The first step toward the development of the "self" takes place in the Imaginary realm at the moment the child experiences the Mirror Phase. But during the Mirror Phase, upon looking at a mirror (or another person) the child identifies her/himself with the reflection of a complete, whole image in perfect unity with the mother. However,
this recognition is imaginary, for the child imagines to be a perfect "other" until s/he enters the Symbolic register, through language acquisition. In the process of reaching the Symbolic, the child loses this sense of completeness or plenitude, and unity with the mother—which Lacan calls "ideal ego"—due to threat of castration.

This "loss" happens at the moment the bond between child and mother is broken by the interference of the image of the father. At this point, the male child will identify himself with and rival the father while desiring the mother. As for the female child, she will "recognize" herself in the mother's loss and lack, and desire the father. It is at this moment that sexual identity/difference develops. However, because of the threat of castration, the boy's desire for the mother will be placed in the unconscious. As for the female child, realizing that she has been already castrated in her identification with the mother, her desire for the father is displaced to the unconscious. No longer perceiving her/himself as a complete subject in perfect unity with the mother (as it did in the Pre-Oedipal situation), the subject will forever long for unity.

The importance of the Lacanian analytical model in film theory, and particularly concerning suture, lies primarily in issues of
identification. Suture, as a concept associated with subject formation, first surfaced in Jacques Alain Miller's article entitled “Suture (elements of logic of the Signifier)”. Following a strictly Lacanian understanding of subject formation, Miller focused on the Oedipal moment of subjectivity and concluded that suture is that which occurs when the subject enters the symbolic realm as a signifier standing for the absent subject. In film theory, the relevance of Miller's elaborations springs from two major elements attributed to the subject's passage into the symbolic register: loss and desire. According to film theoreticians such as, Daniel Dayan, William Rothman and Kaja Silverman, suture has to do with the very nature of filmic structure and its conduciveness to creating subject positions. Films are articulated through the transitions from shot to shot implicated in the “motion of pictures”. In Silverman's words, “the viewing subject is spoken by means of interlocking shots” (201).

These premises directly implicate Miller's equating suture with the subject's primordial access to language. As already discussed, Lacanian understanding of subjectivity bases itself on both loss and

31 Miller's article was first published in Screen, Vol. XVIII, no.4 (1977-78).
desire. Since film is articulated from shot to shot, and the camera usually follows the 180° rule, it has been argued that the absence of whatever might compose the other 180° provokes in the viewer the desire and the drive “to see” more. Therefore, in their attempts to explain the different ways in which suture is (de)constructed, film theoreticians have focused on the imbrication of point-of-view and spectator’s identification. For instance, Daniel Dayan, for whom suture is a filmic enunciation system, has argued that the shot-reverse shot formation and suture operations function in considerably similar ways (in Mast 119). Dayan claims that upon seeing the first shot in the shot-reverse shot experience, the viewer’s pleasurable relationship with film is disrupted by her/his awareness of the frame. This realization leads the spectator into recognizing that there is a missing field of vision that s/he is not permitted to see. Dayan goes on to explain that:

In the first [shot], the missing field imposes itself upon our consciousness under the form of the absent-one who is looking at what we see. In the second shot, the reverse shot of the first, the missing field is abolished by the presence of somebody or something occupying the absent-one’s field. The reverse shot represents the fictional owner of the glance corresponding to shot one (in Mast 188).
The point Dayan attempts establish relates to the viewer's becoming unaware of the ideological effects of the film, for her/his "... imaginary is sealed into the film; the spectator thus absorbs an ideological effect..." (in Mast 188). Since the camera remains concealed as the source of enunciation, and the viewer relegates the look to a fictional character, the illusion of reality is maintained. Furthermore, as Silverman explains, the viewer is compelled into allowing for the character to "stand in" for her/him as a viewing subject (205). It is at this point that the primordial, pleasurable relationship between the film and viewer is restored. In other words, the viewer is displaced back into the imaginary.

Besides the close relationship attributed to shot-reverse shot formations and suture, editing (inclusion and exclusion) and cuts also play an important role in the process. The viewer's constant desire for textual disclosure is driven by the seamless cuts that connect shot to shot. The cut then "... guarantees that both the preceding and subsequent shots will function as structuring absences for the present shot" (Silverman 205). The importance of the cut, especially in classic cinematic texts, stands on the intention of creating a convincingly "realistic" film. In order to achieve cinematic realism,
the transition from shot to shot must be completely concealed at all costs. In this sense, "absence" has to be covered up while it is also maintained so that the viewing subject is "sutured" in the film's creation of positionings of plenitude. Having discussed suture and its importance in subject positioning, I will return to my textual analysis of the series of shot-reverse-shots of the lovers, and the subsequent interruption of the pedagogical voice-over/narrator.

Upon interrupting Suárez y Romero's voice-over's narration, the pedagogical voice-over/narrator not only questions the veracity of the author's story, but it also sets the stage for its "truer" version. This rupture of the romantic discourse introduces subsequent scenes that deconstruct the novel's conception of the love story. More importantly, they do that while also attempting to dismantle the conventions of the historical fiction film romance. This is achieved in variety of ways. First, the shot-reverse-shot formation of the lovers' close-ups and Suárez y Romero's voice-over provide the necessary conditions to create and strengthen suture, only to have it torn by another interference. The abrupt interruption by the "other" voice-over functions as a wake-up call to the subject-viewer who now is forced to leave the blissful experience provided by suture. Having
prompted the viewer for a “true” version of what would have happened, the following sequence sets out to demonstrate the improbability of a love story between the two slaves by addressing the sexual economy involved in slavery. The voice-over/pedagogical narrator first asserts that Suarez y Romero’s story “corresponds to a romantic frame”, and that reality could not possibly have been the way the author portrays it.

In addition to an authorial, objective and almost scientific tone, the voice-over also incorporates a few statistical details in its historical account concerning the reality of romance in slavery. Sounding much like a documentary narrator, the voice-over informs the viewer of the harshness involved in the sexual practices imposed by slavery. It calls attention to the white peones’ use of slave women for sexual pleasure, and to the forced matching of blacks for reproduction purposes only. Because slaves were deprived of any human sentiment, and fearing the same type of oppression toward their offsprings, adds the narrator, slave women often opted for means to avoid pregnancy.

Its “historical” discourse stands in clear opposition to Suarez y Romero’s fiction (as presented in the film), and it is legitimized by
the images on the screen. While the narration progresses, images of what the spectator infers to be a rape of a slave woman by a white male is powerfully presented on the screen. This scene is followed by an equally powerful portrayal of a slave woman drinking a substance. In the following shots, she appears contorting her body on the ground expressing much pain. Although no words are spoken, only sounds imitating forest animals are heard, it is made clear to the viewer that the woman has performed an abortion onto herself. The importance of these sequences are multiple.

Besides conveying awareness of rape perpetrated by white males on slave females, more importantly, they confront victimization head on. By focusing on abortion, the scene depicts a powerful practice of female resistance in relation to the reproductive role assigned to her in society. This act of resistance presents the slave woman as the sole agent in her refusal to fully participate in a sexual economy where violation and profit go hand-in-hand. In this self-empowering instance of "practice of everyday life," she alone is able to reclaim her body from the master's ownership. But the question to be asked here has more to do with spectatorship than
representation alone. For instance, how is it done and what is the impact of this shift in discursive modes of address?

It is important to recall that these scenes appear on the screen in opposition to a previous romantic/melodramatic representation of the novel’s love story. Moreover, they are presented in a docu-drama style, where hand held cameras, newsreel real style shots, and voice-over narration partake in the dramatization of the events. Techniques such as these are believed to create a distance between spectator and text ensuring the viewer’s critical participation in the unraveling of the narrative. They function to tear down the possibilities of cinematic self-effacement, and thus avoiding spectator alienation involved in the creation of “illusional reality”. In other words, the “imperfection” of the sequences operates against the formation of an idealized reality. Furthermore, in psychoanalytic terms, it avoids spectator identification by impeding his/her reentry into what Claire Johnston has called “plenitude” or unity (Lacanian imaginary) via suture. Precisely because this scenes allow for “separateness” as opposed to unity/identification, it could be argued that it leaves very little space for illusion (unity in plenitude signifies illusion). But what I am arguing is that it strives to portray (or
produce) a distinct reality, one more representative of the reality of everyday life. Although I do not believe that it succeeds in its liberating intentions, for the scenes do not completely free the spectator from authoritarian subjection, it certainly offers “recognition” in an alternative and empowering representation of slave women. As Julianne Burton-Carvajal has succinctly observed, “what is striking about this brief depiction is its refusal to symbolize the female” (in King, 237). As such, I would argue that in these scenes the form is as important as the content in that together they function in accomplishing the intention of the text: to provide a synthesis between form and content in which women slaves are depicted as subjects of their own history.

The intended degree of complicity relates to the type of discourse that intersects the narrative in order to introduce a different discourse. Through sudden interruptions, and constant discursive shifts, the film prompts a constant change of spectator’s positionings. This is often achieved through the tearing of suture, and the creation of a critical distance between text and the viewer. Instead of striving for seamless editing, the film seems to call
attention to itself by allowing the viewer to see cinema's own "imperfection."

The film’s self-reflexivity constantly calls into question not only the romantic discourse, but also cinema itself. Thus, often it elicits the spectator’s critical participation in the unraveling of the narrative. In this sense, it could be argued that “El otro Francisco”, through its preoccupation with form, responds to several aspects of Garcia Espinosa’s proposition for “un cine imperfecto”. By providing a critical position to the spectator, the text eliminates the possibility of alienating viewing habits. Also, by questioning the validity of representation itself, through formal self-reflexivity, the film seems to aim at resolving classic contradictions between form and content. In this sense, this poetics aspiresto a synthesis between form and content where one would disappear into the other.

Returning to my original questions in the beginning of this chapter, I would like to comment on another act of resistance in which the film portrays slaves’ defiance against the dominant order. In order to complete the discussion, I will address some of the other questions on subjectivity in relation to another rape scene in “El otro Francisco”. It takes place toward the end of the film as Ricardo forces himself on Dorotea. She attempts to refrain him, only to be saved.
Julianne-Burton Carvajal has observed, this scene is "a metaphor for materialist socio-economic analysis". This time it is interrupted by an act of sabotage in the *trapiche*, performed by male slaves.

The rape of Dorotea by Ricardo is represented by a sequence intercalated with shots of the "rape" of the new sugar-processing machine by male slaves. (This structure creates the impression of simultaneity while it clarifies the allusion.) The scene is clearly dominated by the phallus, whose presence is metaphorically embedded first in the machine piston and in Ricardo's oppressive body. Soon its representation culminates in the blade, the instrument of destruction of a symbol of exploitation (the machine). Since the slaves' rebellion eventually leads to the destruction of the *hacienda*, and the escape of several male slaves, this scene could be read as liberating, for both men and women slaves. But even if it were to be read as a symbolic representation of the destruction of a patriarchal-slavocratic system, consummated by slaves's resistance, the major actor in it still remains the phallus.

Following this argument, only the male portion of the slave population is represented as subject of the most significant act of resistance. This leads me to believe that men alone configure this
representation of Afro-Cubans as agents of their own history. Although the film does portray blacks as subjects, it is my contention that it is not able to escape State pedagogy. I find no fissures from which “performance” emerges as a “present time” practice of everyday life. Instead, unlike most historical films, “El otro Francisco” does not use the past to address the present conflicts rooted in racist and sexist attitudes. In this sense, and similarly to what Michael Chanan has observed in another Cuban film, “El otro Francisco” brings the past into the present (248), but only to interpret the past from an ideological position that denies racism and sexism in contemporary (time of production) Cuba.

In the end, instead of promoting the “uniqueness” of Afro-Cubans, rather it seems to echo Fidel Castro’s 1959 speech calling for reconciliation of difference in the making of a homogeneous Cuban subject. The invocation of Martí and Maceo, the original mediators “that brought blacks and whites together in their struggle for liberation and independence of the island, in their struggle to create our nation”, is the final touch of legitimation necessary to bring about an undivided, whole, totalizing national subject. In this manner, State
sponsored pedagogy is confirmed in that, in the film, "contradictions of the past are banished from the present" (Barnard in King 237).
Si bien Mi tío el empleado es la novela más aventajada del período, Cecilia Valdés es la que ha penetrado más ondamente en nuestra memoria cultural.

(Humberto Solás)

La novela de Villaverde es muy conocida de nuestro pueblo, goza de un gran prestigio literario en el continente y es respetada [...] como la mejor novela escrita en Cuba y posiblemente en Latino América sobre el tema de la sociedad colonial esclavista... Cecilia Valdés es también un monumento histórico literario de suma importancia...

(Mario Rodríguez Alemán)

Cecilia Valdés ha pasado a formar parte de la leyenda popular en Cuba...

(Nancy Morejón)

In this chapter I provide a reading of “Cecilia” (1982), a film by Humberto Solás, in which I inquire into the discursive ambivalence
that emerges in the film's attempt to reinscribe Afro-Cubans into national discourse. This ambivalence is related to time processes rooted in the film's aspiration to produce a versión libre of Cirilo Villaverde's foundational novel, Cecilia Valdés (1839, 1882), while it also seeks to reinterpret a nineteenth century Cuban society from the point of view of Socialist Cuba. This contextualization is consistent with two intertwined issues. One concerns Humberto Solás' choice to recreate cinematically a literary text which has traditionally been considered an emblematic source of Cuban cultural ancestry; the other consists of the re-articulation of Cirilo Villaverde's novel as a founding text of cubanía, which stands as a cornerstone in the construction of a socialist national identity.

In this context, modernization stands as an important underlying master narrative present in the national projects articulated by the novel and by film. Both national projects reflect ideals of progress for the nation where modernization is the common

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32 In general, I adhere to the meaning of this term as elaborated by Doris Sommer in her work entitled Foundational Fictions.
denominator. While the novel projects a liberal modern(ized) nation, the film promotes a socialist development.

What called my attention to this film was the negative response it received by Cuban (official) critics at the time of its release. One example of such harsh criticism is reflected in Mario Rodríguez Alemán's newspaper articles. This critic actually dedicated an entire week of his column to reasons for disapproving of "Cecilia". In his column, he displays a variety of complaints, both his and others', reflecting the general discontent with the film. The arguments for disapproval range from the film's supposed lack of a Marxist interpretation of the novel, poor acting on the part of Daisy Granados (Cecilia) and Imol Arias (Leonardo), failure to follow a "critical realist" approach\(^{33}\) in the adaptation, to the failure to "insert this version within the concept of popular culture".

But underlaying the apparent reasons for disgruntlement, lays the perception that the film completely fails in its adaptation of the novel. Most of the reasons provided are articulated in reference to the film's supposed disregard for Villaverde's text. In fact, the

\(^{33}\)Although it is not clear what this critic means by "critical realism", it is possible that he is referring to the earlier aesthetic of Nuevo Cine Cubano more akin to Neo-realism.
versión libre clarification the film carries does not seem to alter this reaction in any availing manner. On the contrary, Rodríguez Alemán, for instance, sees this disclaimer as an added problem. In his opinion, the film bears no resemblance to the novel.

When compared to Villaverde’s text, it certainly becomes evident that the film retracts itself from the novel in many instances. In order to illustrate these differences, I will provide a brief reading of some fragments of the film in which there is a marked departure from the novel. Later, I will provide a more detailed analysis of these sequences. The purpose of this second reading is to explore the different types of national projects articulated in the complex relationship between the film and the novel as a canonized literary text.

From the beginning it becomes clear that the film strives to depart from romantic depictions of Blacks while attempting to foreground Afro-Cuban cultural elements. A discussion of the beginning of “Cecilia” will serve as example of the film’s intention to privilege Afro-Cuban heritage. After a historical explanation provided by the intertitles (setting the story in nineteenth century Cuba), images of a group of masked and naked-body black people
appear walking toward a tunnel-like passage. The fluidity with which the camera depicts the persons’ movements toward the narrow passage, the *mise-en-scene* emphasis on the misty surroundings, coupled with the sounds recalling fast breathing rhythms, clearly evoke a powerful allusion to birth. This “primordial” scene takes the viewer back into immemorial, mythical times as it symbolically suggests a migration originating from “Mother Africa’s” very womb. In doing so, it attempts to establishes a mythical African origin/birth for the nation.

Still in the beginning of the film, yet another foundational myth is presented. Based on Afro-Cuban religious beliefs this myth, which is told through the voice of a black woman (Cecilia’s grandmother), tells of the *orichá* 34 Ochún’s reasons for first coming to live in the Island. Clearly, in this scene, the film not only privileges Afro-Cuban cultural elements, but it also provides an important annunciationary position to an elderly black woman, as I will discuss later.

Besides this type of clear departure from the novel, “Cecilia” also presents a much more complex scenario of social relations than Villaverde’s text. Solás’ film not only insists on depicting the marked

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34This term refers to deities in Afro-Cuban religions.
social stratification of colonial Cuba, it does so in relation to class, race and gender issues. For instance, unlike the novel, the film depicts slaves, *libertos* and mulattoes as participants in the antislavery movement, and not simply as mere victims. And although Cecilia, the protagonist, plays a marginal and mediating role in the abolitionist movement and lacks real political consciousness, she is presented as a much stronger character than Villaverde’s protagonist. For instance, the novel’s tendency to depict Cecilia as a mere object of desire is evident in passages such as these:

la *Virgencita de Bronce* [...] no era otra que Cecilia Valdés [...] Hallábase en plena flor de su juventud y de su belleza, y empezaba a recoger el idolatrado tributo que a esas dos deidades rinde siempre con largueza el pueblo sensual y desmoralizado. (24)

In the following passage, while Leonardo visits Cecilia, this is what he sees:

Gradualmente sus miradas fueron elevándose del suelo hasta la altura de la puerta del cuarto del fondo donde vio algo que pareció una mujer o visión, de pie, escasamente vestida con un ropaje blanco, y el cabello hecho mil anillos y revueltas ondas, desparramadas por el seno y los hombros sin alcanzar a ocultarlos...(131)
On the other hand, in the film, despite the racialized, gendered and socially marginal space created for her in a colonial-slavery-driven-society, Cecilia is portrayed not so much as the young, exotic, primitive and childlike mulata; nor is she presented as a *mulata* endowed with reproductive capacity to engender a sickly society, as the novel may suggest\(^\text{35}\). Rather, in the film, Cecilia appears as a self-assured and mature woman whose major source of self-empowerment rests in elements of Afro-Cuban culture, such as *Santería*. This important cultural element of *cubanía* is absent from the novel. For example, while in the novel the characters pray for the *Virgen Dolorosa*, in the film they pray to the orichás\(^\text{36}\).

\(^{35}\)If the successful romance can be read as an allegory for nation formation, a marriage between Cecilia and Leonardo would imply the continuity of the corroded, atavistic society that Villaverde denounces. Cecilia, as a product of this society, carries in her “the genes” to reproduce it. Therefore, she is not suitable to be the mother of the modern(ized) nation. For more information on the intersection between romance and the nation in Latin American literature, see Doris Sommer’s *Foundational Fictions*, and Fernando Unzueta’s *La imaginación histórica y el romance nacional*.

\(^{36}\)In the novel there are several references to Catholic saints (e.g. page 135). In the film, for example, Cecilia appears bathing herself in honey, which is associated with the orichá Ochún, her protector.
Also, Solás' film seems to divert issues of exotic *mulatez* and incestuous relationships to other directions. By choosing Daisy Granados, an older actress, to portray Cecilia, Solás seems to deconstruct one of the most persistent myths of the novel. The exotic, lustful, young *mulata* becomes a charming and yet mature woman who indeed falls in love with Leonardo.

In the film, hints at an incestuous relationship between Leonardo and his mother, in the core of the nuclear family, shift the text message from corrosion of a society under a colonial system that permits incestuous relationships among whites, blacks and mulattoes, to a perpetuation of a repressive system which facilitates incestuous social relations among the different sectors of the bourgeoisie itself. This association between nuclear family and social class seems to be reinforced by the relationship between Leonardo and Isabel. Isabel's opportunism in her relationship with Leonardo is greatly magnified in the film. In the novel she is presented as a helpless saintly white child, who is pressured to marry a Gamboa in order to save her family's small fortune. In the film, what permeates the

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37Isabel is Leonardo's white fiancee. Both in the film and the novel a *mulato*, who is in love with Cecilia, kills Leonardo during his and Isabel's wedding ceremony.
relationship is Isabel's sole motivation to keep the riches within the
greater bourgeois family.

In addition, a sharp criticism on paternalistic attitudes is
demonstrated by foregrounding Isabel's liberalism envisioning
blacks as being capable of fulfilling their destiny only through
notions of betterment and help rooted in the power of whites.
Further, the film denounces the betrayal of blacks and mulattoes,
who sought abolition of slavery, by the white male liberal
bourgeoisie. By exposing the paternalistic aspect of the antislavery
sentiments of the white liberal bourgeoisie, and providing agency to
Afro-Cubans in historical processes, the film seems to unmask
contradictions and limitations within the white antislavery social
milieu. While it is important to point out these general differences, it
is more central to explore their underlying ideological motives.

The point of departure of this exploration stands on the fact
that both texts (and their many subtexts) articulate different
national projects. On the one hand, the novel aims at alerting the
Cuban bourgeoisie of the hindrance slavery presents toward
progress, in terms of both the creation of a modern(ized) nation and
in regard to the development of humanity. On the other hand, the
film calls attention to a different type of development for the modern nation, but rooted in socialist ideals. Since national projects require some sort of inclusion of "the people", it is important to briefly inquire into the diverse meanings the term has taken since last century.

First, it is possible to draw a parallel between the concept of "the people" held by the Cuban nineteenth century bourgeoisie which the film tries to uncover, and that imagined by European Romantics. Jesús Martín- Barbero has maintained that the Romantics' notion of "the people" constituted a double edged sword. On one hand, the concept of volk invoked an image of roots and tradition (11). On the other, peuple semanticized "people" as the side of the masses which divested fear and represented a threat to the bourgeoisie (11). This double-sided perception brings about a "confused cultural imagery of people-tradition and people-race" (11).

In the Cuban colonial context, the local flavor in Cecilia Valdés relates rather to the search of a national identity. Martín-Barbero's observation reflects two archetypical models of "the people". One has to do with the pedagogical purpose of foundational discourses, and the other relates to a justification for denying agency to "the people"
(read nonwhites, females, minorities, the poor, etc). The latter archetype, based on a demonized construct of “the people” accounts for what Martín-Barbero has called “nationalist racism” (11).

While emphasizing the elements of Afro-Cuban culture and turning Afro-Cubans into actors of a historical process, “Cecilia” also exposes the innermost fears of the nineteenth century bourgeoisie. The carnivalesque street scenes prior to the ritualistic killing of Leonardo by Pimienta, and Isabel’s nightmare featuring a mass of crazed black people rebelling against whites exemplify this fear. Solás depicts both sides of “the people”: volk, which in the film is associated with Afro-Cuban traditions, “people-tradition”, and peuple also in connection with Afro-Cubans, “people-race” but as perceived by nineteenth century bourgeoisie.

From the above reading, it appears that Solás’ interpretation of Villaverde’s text is very much in line with post-1959 Cuban national discourse. It provides some forms of agency to Afro-Cubans, the major cultural contingent in the cubanía package. It denounces the acts of several sectors of the nineteenth century bourgeoisie. Solás’ text appears to incorporate the appropriate amount of all the correct ingredients that are supposed to take part in the revolutionary
hegemonic discourse, including not completely dismantling the national literary monument, Villaverde's novel. And yet, one question still persists: why was the film received so negatively by critics (cultural bureaucrats) and spectators alike? When reading or listening to comments on "Cecilia", one gets the impression that Solás committed an unrepairable act of sacrilege toward one of the most popular national sanctuaries. One can only speculate on this complex issue by beginning to address the bearing Villaverde's novel has had on Cuban national identities. The reactions toward the film and the comments made relating it to the novel certainly attest to the novel's strong presence in the Cuban national imaginary. For this reason, we need to conduct a brief inquiry into Cecilia Valdés' possible participatory role in the creation of post-1959 national hegemonic discourses, as well as its instability as a national emblem.

Considering the importance of novels in the creation of "imagined communities", it is difficult to reject the idea that Cecilia Valdés provides common referents through which the nation is defined. Aside from this particular work's resourcefulness, novels in general functioned as an important device in the representation of cubanía. As Benedict Anderson has argued, the structure of the novel
and its intrinsic characteristic of simultaneity "provided the technical means for 're-presenting' the kind of imagined community that is the nation" (25). According to Anderson, the plot structures of the modern novel are able to reveal events that are occurring simultaneously. The 'meanwhile' quality of the modern novel allows for characters unknown to each other to belong to the same space (society) without sacrificing coherence. Furthermore, the omniscient reader is aware of the existence of all the characters and their actions, which are presented as "at the same", in a world elaborated by the author. Anderson see the relevance of his exemplification in that

The idea of a sociological organism moving callendrically through homogeneous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which is also conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history. (26)

Although Anderson's work has been criticized by scholars such as William Rowe and Vivian Schelling for his "... insistence upon literacy as basis for nationalism...", as well as for his disregard for popular culture (24-25), it is difficult to deny the role novels played and still play in the formation of national discourses. In Latin America, historical/foundational novels are generally held to have
been instrumental in the creation of national unity, and in setting examples of nationhood, as scholars such as, Doris Sommer and Fernando Unzueta have argued. In the nineteenth century, as the desire for political independence grew stronger, the quest for what makes “us” (the colonized) different from “them” (the colonizers) found its obsessive expression in novels such as Villaverde’s. Like other Latin American intellectuals, recognizing susceptibility due to “lack of an authentic History”, the Cuban intelligentsia also set off on crusades searching for cultural pillars upon which an imagined community could be built. The novel became one of the instruments that helped to diffuse common referents that aid in mapping and shaping the nation as a unique, unified and autonomous entity. In this same vein, the institutionalization of historical novels also helped in the propagation of liberal bourgeois notions of nationhood.

Nevertheless, Schelling’s and Rowe’s warnings must not be set aside, for popular cultures and their primary agent, “the people”, take on a special role in creating the nation. This inclusion of “the people” and a dash of popular culture, become pivotal in the attempts to consolidate national projects. The inclusion of “the popular” is indeed inevitable in any national project’s attempt to
establish itself as a hegemonic project. Inclusiveness of this nature, therefore, never occurs in an ideological vacuum. This incorporation presents two related mechanisms. One operates as a process of folklorization of cultural elements/practices, and the other functions as a mechanism of resemantization. By folklorization, I mean that cultural practices become “frozen”, both in time and space. They are set apart from their context of practice and signification, and separated from the people who practice them. In other words, they become museum pieces framed by structures of a signification system that has little to do with their performance.38

By the same token, both the people and the popular go through a resemantization process in which their meaning changes according to specific historical processes and ideological inclinations. In fact, the very folklorization/institutionalization of the popular is one way in which resemantization occurs. For example, when a traveler sees in a travel brochure the picture of a black baina, dressed in her “typical” garments selling vatapá, she is taken away from her own context of

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38I make this analogy based on Néstor García Canclini’s elaborations concerning the production and consumption of indigenous Mexican crafts. I refer here to his *Transforming Modernity: Popular Culture in Mexico.*
signification. The tourist sees her as an emblem of the exoticism that tropical Brazil, an entire nation, has to offer. Her white dress, necklaces and tray of food, lose their performative significance. The observer of the picture, is barred from seeing her dress as part of her religious practices, and/or as part of her performance to sell her vatapá to survive. The tourist might see only exoticism and a palatable invitation to Brazil “to eat the other”, to use bell hooks’ terms, but not the use she makes of her attire, body, food, etc.

In (re)presenting the people, national cultural products (i.e. novels, films, oral tradition, songs, political speeches) may also serve an important role in both the resemantization and folklorization of the people and the popular. As Jesús Martín-Barbero has pointed out in his account of different theories of the masses, the people has been conceptualized and represented in a variety of ways. Illustrating the diversity of meanings the concept has taken, this scholar points out that both Enlightenment and Romantic conceptions present a mythic view of “the people”(6-13). He adds that although the romantics changed the notion of “people” into one which supported the possibility of an alternative culture, “the people” is
denied participatory positions in historical political processes (12-13).

Following these premises, it is possible to see in *Cecilia Valdés* what Martín-Barbero describes. In this novel, there are hints of recognition of certain popular cultural elements. But the people, particularly slaves, are not represented as political and historical agents. The tendency to capitalize on the horrors and social problems produced by the institution of slavery aims at destabilization of the colonial system as a whole. Villaverde's project clearly did not include Afro-Cubans as agents of their own history, much less of a national history. Nevertheless, the institutionalization and didactic purpose of this novel, which divulges a national "historical content", promote a further resemantization of the people in accordance with specific historical/ideological contexts in which it is utilized.

The integration of the people and of popular culture as represented in national cultural texts, such as *Cecilia Valdés*, the novel, and "Cecilia" the film, may serve a variety of functions. It may become a means by which the conception of a national identity (i.e. constructed in opposition to that of the colonizer's) is propagated and vitalized. It may also assist in reinforcing the boundaries of the nation by appealing to notions of inherent uniqueness of the nation's
people. In either case, the people appears as the bearer of another's national identity. The people, therefore, may also stand as a fundamental tool in demarcating and separating that which originates inside from that which belongs outside nation's boundaries.

Moreover, the people, in its different conceptions, is frequently granted some sort of representation, as it may also consent to be represented, in the process of ascension to power of a particular social class or group. In this case, the liberal bourgeoisie in mid-nineteenth century Cuba serves as an example of a social class seeking "to represent" Cubans in their independence efforts against Spain. The people can also provide a sense of popular participation in the course of consolidation of a national project, as it was the case of post-1959 socialist undertaking. In both cases, the controlled incorporation of "the people", and the different shapes and forms it takes are consistent with ideological changes. The different ways in which the people and/or "the popular" are conceived often maintain a close relationship with specific historical processes. They also bears a direct connection with projects of legitimation carried out by a
social group, institutions, or individuals that seek to exercise power and establish hegemony.

The impact of Cecilia Valdés on Cuban collective memory, certainly attests to the workings of such dynamics. This impact expresses itself in a variety of ways, and it bears witness to the important role the novel still plays in the reconfiguration of national identity. The quotes by Humberto Solás, Rodríguez Alemán and Nancy Morejón cited in the beginning of this chapter are only a few examples which reflect the different meanings attributed to Villaverde’s novel.

As a foundational novel in post-1959 Cuba, it has not only become a national “popular legend”, as Nancy Morejón puts it, but it has also lent itself to mediating processes which seek legitimacy of one form or another. In the attempts to de-stabilize Spanish domination and claim political independence for Cuba, Cecilia Valdés served as part of a complex apparatus that helped shape a “national identity”. Known as Cuba’s first anti-slavery novel39, Cecilia Valdés is perceived as a major source of cubanía. While Villaverde’s novel has

39The first part of this novel was published in 1839 and the second in 1882. Francisco, on the other hand, although written in 1838 was not published in Spanish until 1880.
been presented as an anti-slavery manifesto, with importance in the creation of nineteenth-century liberal national bourgeois discourse, new ideological meanings have been ascribed to this text, thus attesting to its powerful emblematic value in the Cuban imaginary.

In post-1959 Cuba, Cecilia Valdés, as any other emblem, acquired other signification and new ideological functions. The conflictive nature of the newly assigned significations this novel carries finds expression even in the briefest description addressed to it. For instance, when Solás refers to the novel as “parte activa, y por lo tanto viva, del folclore nacional” (in Chichona, 113), Cecilia Valdés is presented as a paradox.

On the one hand, Solás’ assertion invokes the image of a museum piece belonging to the past, whose cultural elements became trapped and petrified within the confines of a national “monumento histórico literario.” On the other hand, the description also brings to mind the resurrection of cultural elements which become the “parte activa, ... viva” of what has been dynamically constructed as cubanía. If folklore is to be understood as dead, institutionalized culture, associated with some remote original past, in the present, the novel takes on relevance more as an “invented tradition” than lived
culture. Defined in these terms, Cecilia Valdés seems to embody characteristics that are consistent with Eric Hobsbawm's description of an "invented tradition" that:

establish[es] or symboliz[es] social cohesion or the membership of groups, real or artificial communities [...] being regarded as implicit or flowing from a sense of identification with a 'community' and/or the institutions representing, expressing or symbolizing it such as a 'nation'. (9)

On the other hand, as "parte activa ... viva", Villaverde's text is presented as a persistent source of live enunciations that are congruously configured in the present, meaning that their voices are still heard in contemporary time.

Furthermore, the national historical time/space designated to this novel has also been characterized as one of the most relevant moments in the configuration of Cuban nationality. This attribution can be better exemplified in Solás' own words claiming that Cecilia Valdés' historical moments are a point of "crystallization of racial and cultural syncretism" (in Chichona, 15). This type of paradoxical understandings of the national point to a path often traversed in hegemonic struggles. It is precisely through this crystallization and syncretism that the nation's people becomes (re)presented in terms
of the many in one, and where questions of difference are erased in favor of national unity. Therefore, these words may bear more significance in light of the creation of a hegemonic discourse in post-1959 Cuba rather than in the nineteenth century Spanish colony. This conciliatory position is evident in Solás’ film, especially in the beginning sequences, to which I will return later in this chapter.

Perhaps, the root of discontent in regards to the film lays precisely on its attempt to resemantize a national emblem and the ambivalence resulting from this shift in signification. Even if resemantization is in line with the “proffered” contemporary discourse when read facing the novel, Solás’ film comes across as transgressive in various instances.

Nevertheless, the fact that transgressions can be pointed out in the film in relation to the novel, does not mean that “Cecilia” provides for such clear cut interpretations. In fact, the film itself generates much ambivalence rooted in its conflicting representation strategies. Therefore, a redemptive or an accusatory reading of “Cecilia” may prove itself limited precisely because of the ambivalence the film weaves together.
The most likely loci of textual ambivalence emerge in the intersection of the film's aspiration to allegorize the nation and its attempt to inscribe Afro-Cubans in their own history. This ambivalence point to a time displacement directly related to what Homi Bhabha has described as a process of double-time concerning the nation as narration (The Location 140-145). As I have already mentioned in the previous chapter, Bhabha argues that "the essential question of the representation of the nation must be posed in terms of a temporal process involving two different narrative procedures, "the pedagogical" and "the performative" (142-43).40

Proposing a departure from historicist approaches of "linear equivalence of event and ideas", Bhabha argues that the nation must be looked at as ambivalent, splitting, and as conflictive narrative strategies (140). He also calls attention to the "metaphoricity" of the peoples of the nation arguing that, "... the space of the modern nation-people is never simply horizontal. Their metaphoric movement requires a 'doubleness' in writing; a temporality of

40Please refer to the introduction and/or Chapter II for a more detailed discussion of Bhabha's conceptualization of the "performative" and the "pedagogical".
representation" (141). In this temporal process, in which the
"contemporaneity of the present" interrupts the continuity of the
past, there stands the people. The people

[...] represent the cutting edge between the totalizing powers of
the social as homogeneous, consensual community, and the
forces that signify the more specific address to contentious,
unequal interests and identities within the population. (146)

In the tension between the pedagogical (past, continuous,
traditional) and the performative (contemporaneity, present,
repetition, disruption, heterogeneous histories) the nation may
present the people as a pedagogical object. It is precisely the
ambivalence brought forth by the conflictive relationship between
the pedagogical and the performative that interests me in this
analysis. Examining the "writing of the nation" from these two often
antagonic narrative strategies, might answer questions concerning
the articulation of the marginalized into national discourses.

Bearing in mind Bhabha’s arguments, an analysis of Solás’ film
must be consistent with a reading of it as both deconstruction as well
as reinterpretation of the nineteenth century liberal bourgeois
discourse as presented in Villaverde’s novel. The questions to be
raised about Solás’ film must be in compliance with the temporalities
it proposes. It must refer back to the paradox of preserving tradition/people as folklore, both as the institutionalization (pedagogical) as well as the revitalization of popular memory (performative), but in the light of post-1959 Cuba. Furthermore, the proposed reading must relate these issues to key ingredients in any hegemonic struggle such as power negotiation, instability, complicity, appropriation of meaning, resistance, seduction and consent. One way to approach this is through the analysis of specific scenes. My intention does not comprise a thorough analysis of the film, nor does it hold an answer justifying the negative reaction the film received. Instead, it is my contention that it is useful to point out some of the oscillations/uncertainties found in the text. The purpose for such an approach lies in the possibilities it opens to better understand how the film articulates black Cubans' (hi)stories and the text's ideological implications.

While the first few scenes do privilege the African contingent of the nation, a closer exploration reveals several loci of tension where this representation becomes unstable and ambivalent. The establishing-shot sequence, which portrays naked black people walking toward the passage, appears to grant the nation an African
birth. Besides this important shot, African heritage is hierarchically promoted by techniques of foregrounding, screen time, and the music. But these sequences fumble in that they do not consistently secure a privileged positioning for Blacks in their representation. For example, it could be argued that while attempting to empower black Cubans, the birth scene also objectifies Africans.

Traditionally, in Western conceptualizations of the Other, non-whites epitomize primitiveness and savagery by associations made between skin color, nakedness of the body and non-Western uses of cosmetics. The ways in which black people are depicted walking naked may suggest association between color and primitiveness. In this vein, the scenes project an image of Africans that fits well the noble (but) savage model so prevalent in Western thought since the 1800s. The people march with their heads up and silent as if obediently responding to a higher call. Their nobility is also highlighted by the peaceful facial expression and the emphasis on the “beauty” of the body. The low-angle shots highlighting the shining, strong and naked bodies parading through the mist imply a type of objectification that not only reinforces the idea of the noble savage, but it also takes on other dehumanizing dimensions. In this
manner, the depiction fails to convey the idea of the persons as rational beings. Instead, they appear to blend in with nature and thus become an extension of the landscape. Furthermore, it produces a mythologizing effect which is also suggested by the misty scenery and the religious tone of the music. This mythical representation of the origin of the nation is problematic in that it completely undermines the historical experiences of black Cubans, both as people and as slaves.

If these scenes are debatable, no less so are the succeeding ones. Their insistence on the "blending" of African and European cultural elements can lead to disputable conclusions, for the procession scene which follows the above discussed sequences also provides other loci of tension. It portrays precisely that "racial synthesis and syncretism" that Solás mentioned in regard to the nineteenth century. After the last shot of the "African" people, there appear shots of dressed blacks intercalated by others of whites in a religious procession. These shots depict blacks singing and dancing Santería chants, while whites flagellate themselves, carry crosses and suffer to the tune of Catholic hymns. The successive shots present
images of Virgencita de Bronze in juxtaposition to images of the Virgin Mary.

The two seemingly separate processions actually blend into each other with shots of both blacks and whites in the Catholic ritual. The importance of these sequences stands on their introducing conflicting narrative modes in the narration of the birth of a nation. While Africans are presented as the original forefathers/mothers of the nation, and Africa their womb, the procession ritual actually suggests the nation's syncretic origin.

These conflicting messages also surface in other ways. For instance, despite a deviation from notions of a cultural process involving equal participation of two distinct cultures, these sequences fail to portray syncretism as a form of resistance. Rather, syncretism as depicted here, implies assimilation of black people into the religious practices of the dominant culture. Difference among the various ethnic groups that made up the slave population is overlooked. Africans are portrayed as a homogeneous mass of people. According to this depiction, diversity never existed among slaves and conflicts stemming from the dialectic masters/slaves perish in favor of homogenization. Once again, Blacks' histories are
partially suppressed under the guise of unity. Therefore, in the film’s attempt to capture “transculturation”, it creates a mythical time which separates human beings from their historical experiences. It is in this mythical, past time that the pedagogy of the nation as narration emerges. In this context, “the people” is semanticized as tradition, origin, and takes on a foundational meaning far removed from actual human experience.

Another point to be made has to do with the depiction of Santería in these scenes. It has little to do with Afro-Cuban religious experiences. It seems as though people were dressed in their “costumes” with the sole purpose of parading before the camera. In this sense, it is a classic example of popular culture becoming spectacle. Although the intention might have been to depict a past-time in which Santería was performed, the “use” Afro-Cubans made and still make of it is never addressed. Actually, the Santería scenes are bounded to a past-time set up by the previous scenes, and do not have a time of their own. In this vein, it could be argued that Santería is depicted much like the baiana in the travel brochure. It cannot be regarded as a performance because its temporal location is neither its own past time or its contemporary time, meaning 1982.
Instead, *Santería* is frozen in a no-time region, suggesting an outside-history positioning that serves pedagogical purposes rather than represents in its actual practicing. It becomes a postcard picture framed in a timeless narrative that informs nothing of the people’s past or present practices of daily life. When addressed in this way, the stories of people’s lived experience (history) are reduced to a spectacle. Since the scenes are tied to a previously established past-time (the origin), they function pedagogically in that the viewer is led to believe that what s/he sees is part of the nation’s past. Between the persistence on syncretism and the totalizing depiction of slaves what seems to creep up from the narrative fissures is the desire for the unity of the nation.

As for the transgressive nature of the film in regard to the protagonist, my first assumptions can still be held. Cecilia is a strong female figure as opposed to the novel’s protagonist. However, this does not mean, first, that Cecilia does not play a secondary role to her male counterparts. Second, Cecilia’s involvement in the antislavery movement does not stem from a self-initiative rooted in political and class consciousness. Rather, she is “made involved” in it by her freedmen friends, Pimienta and Uribe. Cecilia first finds herself
implicated in anti-slavery activities during the same ball when she meets Leonardo. Primarily organized for white males' erotic pleasures with *mulatas*, this gathering also serves as a place to pass on information amongst the participants of anti-slavery activities. At the ball, Cecilia is approached by a man who whispers a message to her, and asks her to pass the information to Pimienta and she does.

In a later scene, she is also asked to intervene on behalf of a runaway slave who needs medical attention and a safe place to hide. She seeks Leonardo's help and offers herself in exchange. There seem to be two seemingly contradictory issues in this action. While choosing to use her body in exchange for a favor shows the protagonist's knowledge of her bargaining power—her body was not only a highly desired and well-priced token, but it was also the only capital she owned— it also evokes notions of self-sacrifice. Even though she desired to be with Leonardo, she did not want to be simply his *querida*. She wanted to marry so that their romance would be legitimate and as a consequence her social status higher. She agrees to give herself to him as his *querida*, and not as a wife, for the sole purpose that he help her friends.
In this sense, it could be argued that her action reinforces the idea that women should be self-sacrificing. It also brings to mind the age-old idea, from the Virgin Mary to modern women, that women’s roles in important matters should be no other than that of an intercepter or mediator. Although Pimienta and Uribe are granted historical agency, Cecilia serves simply as a messenger first, and a failed intercepter/mediator later.

Unfortunately, Cecilia’s good intentions turn sour, for Leonardo not only betrays her politically, but also romantically. He informs on the activists, and as a consequence, many black males die. He also agrees to marry Isabel, leaving Cecilia heart-broken and hopeless. In the end, Pimienta kills Leonardo as the latter stands in church to marry Isabel. Following the centuries-long narrative conventions, a tragedy gets rid of the mulata - she commits suicide by jumping out of the tower of a church. As I pointed out in the previous chapter, following Doris Sommer’s and Fernando Unzueta’s reasoning, eroticism and patriotism come hand-in-hand in nineteenth century Latin American romances. There were lessons to be learned from this combination in novels. It promoted concepts of both the ideal and the unsuitable nation through the allegory of successful or failed
romances. Solás' film does not deviate from this model for its insistence on the various romances serves didactic functions in that it speaks to us as allegories of the nation. Once again, the everyday life experience of women of color during slavery, not to mention of post-1959, becomes far removed and hardly recognizable, because priority is granted to conceptualizations of the national essence.

If I have presented conflicting readings of the film, so far, it is precisely because the text's ambivalent representation of Afro-Cubans is itself a source of tension. The text’s very intention to create a “pedagogy of the nation” while giving voice to Black Cubans provides the basis for conflict. Conflicts surface in the different processes at work in the film’s narration of the nation (to use Bhabha’s terms, once again). One has to do with the interruption of the pedagogical by the performative, and the other with the transformation of the performative into the pedagogical. A related place of conflict lies on the film’s intent to provide a participatory role in the origin of the nation to women of color. While it does give a black woman voice, the film is not exempted from racialized representation of Cuban women in general, nor does it completely eliminate a rationalized framing of her narrative. The scene of Cecilia
as a child and her grandmother sitting at their door-steps, oblivious to the procession passing by, can attest to the possibility of the performative interruption of the pedagogical.

As I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the grandmother tells Cecilia of Ochún’s fate and how the oricha ended up in the Island. The story starts when the grandmother and her grandchild are sitting at their front steps disinterestedly watching the procession go by. The grandmother tells that one day while Ochún was bathing in a spring the white men, “dressed in iron”, imprisoned her and brought her to the Island to be sold in the market. One day Changó, disguised as a woman, came to set her free. He also smeared honey on Ochún’s body so that she would become a desirable mulata.41

It is in the grandmother’s narration that the viewer is informed of how Europeans abducted Africans and forcefully brought people to Cuba to serve as slaves. As in most mythologized accounts, the

41 The film establishes a clear parallel between Ochún (who as a result of syncretism is the Virgencita de Bronce), and Cecilia. This is revealed in several ways. For example, the two are very desirable mulatas normally associated with sexuality. Both learned to “disguise” themselves as white, and Cecilia prays to Ochún and to the Virgencita. Also, Cecilia smears honey on her own body as she prays to Ochún.
grandmother's story is hybrid, for it contains "historical facts", but
the narrative main thrust springs from Afro-Cuban myths and
religion. The grandmother's importance relates not only to her
narrating a foundational story, but also in her role as a storyteller
engaged in the practice of oral tradition. She articulates the narrative
(historical account) while performing the role of a single speaker
bearing the authority to pass on her ancestors' knowledge to the
younger generation. Not unlike the storyteller's in oral tradition, her
voice works as a validation device which brings fiction closer to
verisimilitude. Therefore, she is further endowed with power by
being the source of both knowledge and vocal persuasion. Therefore,
pedagogy of the previous scenes, indicating a harmonious coming
together of Whites and Blacks to form the nation, is momentarily
interrupted by the grandmother's performance.

Despite the prevalence of a mythical discursive mode, that
informs the viewer of an Afro-Cuban foundational myth, the
grandmother's performance remains problematic. There are two
basic sources of tension in the scene. One relates to discrepancy in
the relationship between sound-track and image-track, and the other
has to do with point-of-view and the workings of the camera. First of
all, as John Belton has pointed out, sound in cinema is secondary to image (in Mast 323) and

The perception of sound is necessarily bound up with the perception of the image; the two are apprehended together, though sound is often perceived through or in terms of the image [...] Sounds lack "objectivity" (thus authenticity) not only because it is invisible but because it is an attribute and its submission to tests imposed upon it by other senses—primarily by sight. (in Mast 325)

The discrepancies found in the relationship between sound and image points to a source of tension that destabilizes the grandmother's performance. In addition to the inherent cinematic submission of sound to image, there is an added factor that undermines the grandmother's authority. Because her voice is off-screen for the larger portion of her narration, the viewer has no assurance that the sound is "authentic". In other words, the scene lacks one of the most important conventions in sound editing: the establishing of synchronization between sound and image through lip-sync.

The other related destabilizing source present in this scene is the shifting point-of-view. Although the grandmother's image does appear on the screen as she sets up the stage to tell Ochún's story,
the perspective changes through a medium close-up shot of the child. Therefore, the story is visually narrated through Cecilia's point-of-view, and aurally by the grandmother's voice-over. What surfaces in this "mis-match" is a tension between two different narrative modes (visual and aural) coming together in the telling of the same story.

In fact, the authority once granted to the storyteller is now three times challenged. Besides the submission of sound to image, there is also submission of Cecilia's point-of-view to that of the camera. When closely studying the point-of-view, what surfaces is a process of objectification operated by the construction of the male gaze. As the camera shifts from a medium close-up of the grandmother to a medium close-up of Cecilia, and subsequently to a medium close-up of a naked Ochún and so forth, the point-of-view becomes unstable. This instability promotes possible identification processes involving scopophilia, and narcissism in which "woman [is] the image [and] man [is] the bearer of the look" (Mulvey 19).

What the images on the screen narrate is not necessarily Cecilia's point-of-view. In fact, it is an objectifying male gaze disguised in Cecilia's look. In this manner, the image-track becomes three times removed from the grandmother's narration. Although the
story narrated by the grandmother's voice bears importance in the Cuban national imaginary, its “authenticity” is tempered by the relationship between image-track and sound-track.

Reiterating the question postulated earlier, what are the ideological implications of Solás' version of the novel in relation to Socialist Cuba's national discourses? Regardless of ideological differences and the many shapes ascribed to “the people” or “the masses” since the birth of nation states, popular culture, or better yet, collective memory, has served as an important mediation device in the creation and preservation of national discourses. In its explicit search for cultural identity, the rhetoric of nationalism displays a variety of negotiation mechanisms in the process of legitimation of its project. Mediating devices utilized in the construction and continuance of hegemonic projects include the creation, crystallization, institutionalization, and ironically, constant re-elaboration of myths.

*Cecilia Valdés*, the novel, and its counterpart “Cecilia” the film, display these characteristics. They also show the paradox national emblems present in the creation of hegemony. On one hand these emblems represent the crystallization, the people-tradition encrusted
in the walls of a national “monumento histórico”, and on the other
they permutate according to different models of nation, subject
positions, and hegemonic discourses. The narration of “Cecilia
(Valdés)’s national project ” exhibits ambivalence in its
(re)presentation of “the people”. This is rooted in the text’s intention
to inscribe Afro-Cubans both as actors in their history and as the
representatives of “the people” as tradition.

While Solás’ film does display fissures where the performative emerges, it ultimately contains the present within the frame of a pedagogical discourse. What this discourse implicates is the construction of a nation in which socialist progress permits racial harmony. Since harmony exists, there is no need for resistance, which in turn explains the transformation of the performative into the pedagogical. In other words, racial conflicts become something of the past, of the nation prior to socialism. While the voices of the socially marginalized do momentarily interrupt the historicist account of the nation, they are also muffled by a rationalist pedagogy. Because the film speaks of the past as if conflicts (e.g. acts of resistance against racism) no longer exist in the present its primordial function becomes pedagogical. What this suggests is a
socialist (modern) development of the nation that appears as a show case for the progress of humanity.
CONCLUSION

The general point of departure of my study has been the claim that, traditionally, people of African descent and their culture have been integrated into national hegemonic discourses, both in Brazil and in Cuba. I have added that, in both nations, Blacks have been (re)presented as one of the three major contingents in the configurations of national identities/imaginaries. Specifically, I have claimed that all five films I study in this dissertation share a fundamental characteristic. This underlying aspect is the texts’ common intention to (re)inscribe people of African descent in national histories via alternative modes of representation. In these reinscriptions, the films attempt to depart from representations of Blacks as passive objects in history. Instead, they aim toward portraying Afro-Brazilians and Afro-Cubans as historical agents.

Having stated my original premises, I want to return to the initial questions I posed in the introduction of this dissertation. The most fundamental of my questions asks to what extent do these films
contribute to or counter official discourses. Assuming that the principal function of these texts is to reclaim Afro-Brazilians and Afro-Cubans as historical subjects (agents), I ask whether they are successful in doing so. Do these films demystify Afro-Brazilian and Afro-Cuban culture? Do they depart from traditional modes of objectification and exoticism of Blacks? Considering the leading roles Afro-Brazilian and Afro-Cuban women take on these films, I ask what are the positionings of women of color in the configuration of a Brazilian and a Cuban national identity.

In my effort to address these questions, I looked into each film's aesthetics while also examining cinematic mediating devices (e.g. the workings of the camera) in specific scenes. After some detailed analyses of specific segments, in each chapter, I drew a set of conclusions. In Chapter 1, I have observed that in its tropicalist design, "Xica da Silva" highlights Afro-Brazilians and Afro-Brazilian culture based on the carnival(esque). The carnivalesque presents itself in two distinct, but interrelated ways. One can be interpreted from a Bakhtinian perspective, and the other can be examined via an anthropological approach to the festivities of carnival themselves. I observed that in its carnival(esque) representation of
Afro-Brazilian culture, this film provides for ambiguities that give rise, at times, to conflicting readings.

For example, while Xica's exaggerated sexuality and demeanor may be read as insulting to Brazilian black women, a closer inquiry into the film may counter these very findings. If "exaggeration" can be read as masquerade, the aesthetic approach of the film actually functions as a displacement device in that it allows for spectator critical distance. In this sense, instead of objectifying Afro-Brazilians, exaggeration actually promotes de-familiarization of stereotypes by creating a critical viewer-subject positioning.

Also, when analyzing the film's aesthetic from an anthropological perspective of carnival as a social practice, I have noticed that subject positions are created. These positions give rise to different types of transgressive strategies that lead to empowerment of the protagonist, and the acknowledgement of Afro-Brazilian culture. Therefore, what I have maintained is that, in its use of the carnivalesque, the film does allow for a symbolic empowerment of Afro-Brazilians. However, by the same token these transgressions become enframed by a pedagogical narrative strategy that contains
them within a national project where Afro-Brazilians and their
culture are emblematic components of the nation.

In addition, emerging from an era of repression, "Xica's"
Tropicalist aesthetic seem more inclined to direct its veiled criticisms
toward the military dictatorship and its developmentt ideology.
Racist social attitudes and unfavorable economic policies which aid in
maintaining Afro-Brazilians at the bottom of social ladder are hardly
addressed in the film. Instead, what surfaces from time displacement
and the carnivalesque relates more to the intellectual left's political
desires than to the issues of race. Through its carnivalesque aesthetic
and time displacement the film veils its criticism of the military
dictatorship, camouflages its projection of the end of the regime, and
obsures its proposition for an alternative national project.
Respectively, these quasi-hidden objectives are allegorically reflected
in José's verbal attacks on the Portuguese Crown, Xica's down fall,
and in the final (re)union between the protagonist and José, the
"popular classes" and the intellectual left reflected in the union
between Xica and José in the end of the film.

As for "Ganga Zumba", aesthetically it follows a
documentary/ethnographic, "objective"/scientific penchant related to
Estética da Fome and to the overall ambitions of the first phase of the New Latin American Cinema. On the other hand, "Quilombo" aligns itself with "Xica da Silva's" aesthetic in its departure from the first phase's heightened didacticism and minimalism as well as its rejection of commercial cinema's techniques. "Quilombo's "epic" aesthetic is reflected in its super-production intention, which utilizes color film and advanced technology, operates techniques akin to those of the commercial cinema, and presents a numerous cast in luxurious settings and wardrobe.

My inquiries into these two films entailed two main approaches. I took into consideration their allegorical national dimensions as historical films, and carefully examined specific segments focusing on the mediation of the camera. My findings reveal that despite their different aesthetic approaches, both "Ganga Zumba" and "Quilombo" are charged with political interests. Similar to "Xica da Silva", these texts' political engagement are reinforced by their attempts to use the past as the setting for existing conflicts of the present (time of their production). In the films' celebration of Afro-Brazilian resistance, they seek to link the specificity of Palmares past experience to a more general present quest for
freedom. For example, "Ganga Zumba" points toward an optimist national project paralleling the modernizing ideals of the intellectual left (late 1950s and early 60s). Palmares, therefore, allegorically represents the new, "developed", modern(ized), mulato nation that would stand in place of the old, backward, black and white one. One of the most significant ways in which the film conveys this optimism is in the romantic union between the hero and heroine.

"Quilombo" celebrates Afro-Brazilian culture in many ways. Its aesthetic draws mostly on carnival as a social practice, and on Afro-Brazilian religions. In this film, Palmares can be read as a national allegory that reflects the failure of the intellectual left's utopian dreams alluded in "Ganga Zumba". Following historical accounts of Palmares (e.g. Décio Freitas' research), the film conceives it as a "multicultural" nation which embraces different social/ethnic groups such as marginalized whites, indigenous peoples and jews. In this sense, it would appear that "Quilombo" proposes a model nation where differences are respected and the long-lived ideology of racial harmony would be erased. Instead, the film not only fails to capture difference, it also reinforces the idea of racial harmony and homogenization. For example, by capitalizing on the Yoruba language
and culture, "Quilombo" ignores the fact that the majority of the Palmarinos were actually of Bantu origin. Therefore, as Robert Stam has observed:

Diegues is thus guilty of what Antônio Risério calls "Nagôcentrism", the collapsing of a variety of African religions [and cultures] into a single Yoruba practice. (*Tropical Multiculturalism* 315)

Besides, the film depicts the gathering of Blacks, Indigenous, and Whites at Palmares based on "sameness". Instead of acknowledging difference and promoting mutual respect for it, "Quilombo" displays old assumptions of a racially harmonious nation.

In relation to portrayal of women, there appears to be no intent to break away from patriarchal representations of women in "Ganga Zumba". On the contrary, it actually reproduces old paradigms that relegate woman to the negative side of a system of binary oppositions. "Quilombo" does attempt to portray women as strong characters. The difference between the two films stems from "Quilombo's" two leading females sharing power with the two heroes. Nevertheless it fails in that it portrays the *mulata* simply as an object of desire.
In the case of “El otro Francisco”, I have discussed its close affinities with *Cine Imperfecto*. This aesthetic displays a “scientific”, ethnographic, documentary-like inclination rather than a glamorizing, spectacular approach to filmmaking. In the film’s attempts to deconstruct the romantic, bourgeois discourse, a rather explicit didacticism emerges. While its “objective” intentions do provide for critical viewing and often allows Black agency to surface, “El otro Francisco’s” didacticism points toward a pedagogy that eliminates possibilities of racial conflicts from the nation’s present (time of the film’s production). Furthermore, although this film highlights some aspects of black women’s resistance against slavery, in the end, it provides them no important subject position in its national project.

These observations are particularly evident in the end of the film. As rebellious slaves destroy the *hacienda*, and the intertitles announce “the birth” of a free nation for which Blacks and Whites fought to liberate from the atrocities of the past, the end announces the emergence of a “future” (socialist) nation. Significantly, in this portrayal of the birth of the nation, not only women are excluded as foundational agents, but also racial harmony is implied. In the end,
instead of promoting the "uniqueness" of Afro-Cubans, rather "El otro
Francisco" seems to echo Fidel Castro's 1959 speech calling for
reconciliation of differences in the making of a homogeneous Cuban
subject.

In Chapter 4, I have discussed "Cecilia's" epic intention to
(re)memorialize Villaverde's novel. I have suggested that while "El
otro Francisco's" aesthetic relates to a documentary/ethonographic
"look" at Afro-Cubans, "Cecilia's" communicates an association with
super-productions. In both cases, however, my analyses reveal
fissures in the texts which gives rise to momentary subject
positionings to be occupied by Afro-Cubans. Nevertheless, when
examining Solás' film by drawing comparisons with the Romance, my
findings indicate that the film does not deviate from this narrative
model in that its insistence on the various romances serve
pedagogical functions. The film speaks to us as allegory of the nation,
and the unsuccessful romance as well as the final death of the
protagonists, project the end of a racist, social and economically unfit
nation. The implication is that the future nation, which will emerge
after the destruction of the old, archaic, backwards one, will be free
of the evils of the past. In this manner, "Cecilia" also falls into a
pedagogy that eliminates racial conflicts from the modern nation.

Having drawn the conclusions of each chapter, I will now proceed in establishing connections between the three Brazilian and the two Cuban productions.

In the overall analysis of all five texts, I have observed some parallels as well as some divergences between the Brazilian and the Cuban films. For the sake of clarity, I will organize these similarities and difference in three distinct but interrelated levels: aesthetic, political and ideological. First, there are aesthetic similarities to be found between the Brazilian and the Cuban texts, including the evidence of a marked change from the “first phase’s” documentary/ethnographic inclination (“Ganga Zumba” and “El otro Francisco”) toward a super-production intent (“Xica”, “Quilombo” and “Cecilia”). Also, both sets of films display more specific similarities in a variety of ways. For example, both “Ganga Zumba” and “El otro Francisco” manifest the main principles delineated by filmmakers involved in the first phase of the New Latin American Cinema.

Both films take a documentary/ethnographic approach to representation, and deviate from conventions, techniques and technologies of the “First Cinema”. Clearly, these two texts attempt to
create an aesthetic that is consistent with the “realities” (social economic as well as technological) of Brazil and Cuba. One of the solutions these films share in their desire to depart from commercial cinema’s “conspiracy to maintain passivity of the spectator”42 is their adaption of Brechtian theatrical techniques. Both films are able to create momentary distances between spectator and text and thus providing for a critical reading of the film.

However, a shift in discursive strategies occur in the “second phase”, or what I have been calling super-production films. “Xica”, “Quilombo” and “Cecilia” all exhibit this tendency. Because the previous aesthetic failed to establish close ties with the (national) public, both Brazilian and Cuban filmmakers opted for changes. As already mentioned, Tropicalism offered the opportunity to reach the public as well as to veil criticisms toward the military dictatorship. This aesthetic is evident in both “Xica” and “Quilombo”. Although “Cecilia” does not fall under any specific movement tendencies, it does display similar epic-like super-production intention. Despite the

42 These are Michael Chanan’s words to explain Pineda Barnet’s interest in achieving the opposite. (195)
change, these three films still remain socially and ideologically/politically committed.

At the political level, I found an underlying similarity stemming from tensions surfacing from two fundamental sources. This conflict is a result of the films' desire to portray Blacks as agents while the texts also attempt to maintain a "revolutionary" position. As already pointed out, in the case of the Brazilian films the revolutionary political stance is consistent with the different stages experienced by the intellectual left (from early 60s to mid-80s). As for the Cuban films, their political standing relates to different stages of the Cuban Revolution itself.

In this vein, the Brazilian texts display, first, an optimism consistent with the intellectual left's ideals of a future modern(ized) and socially just nation. This is evident in the optimism projected in "Ganga Zumba", via an idealization of Palmares. In "Xica", criticisms directed toward the military dictatorship, is accompanied by a proposition to end the regime and to build a freer nation. As for "Quilombo", while a nostalgia for the 1960s and early 70s utopian

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43By "revolutionary" I mean both aesthetically and politically.
dreams of the left emerges in the portrayal of Palmares, there is also a recognition of the failure of the Left's politics.

In the political sphere, the Cuban differ from the Brazilian films. While the Brazilian films of the second phase exhibit a veiled criticism of the State, no disapproval of the State or regime surfaces in the two Cuban texts.

In the ideological sphere, the original conflict mentioned above can be conceived as a tension between the performative and the pedagogical. It is my contention that all of the films do allow for the transgressive force of the performative to interrupt the pedagogical linearity of historical narrative. Nevertheless, these transgressions become enframed by a pedagogical discourse that reflects a desire for homogenization, and promote the ideology of racial harmony. In their intention to rehabilitate the history of black people in each of the two nations, what emerges as central are actually national projects that obscure the films' attempt to depict Blacks as agents in history.

What I am claiming is that the films do privilege the African heritage of Brazil and Cuba. But while each film allows for fissures from which "the nation's people" (people of African descent) speak,
they also provide for containment devices that enclose Blacks within a national pedagogy. In the end, all of the texts fail to deal with the present social, political and economic position of Blacks in "the nation's" present time. Instead, they capitalize on the overall political projects pertaining to the intellectual elite of each country. It is my contention, therefore, that in the negotiations of africanness in national identity, the specificity of africanness and the heterogeneity of the nation it implies take on a secondary role. In this sense, these films reiterate long-lived aspects of hegemonic discourses that favor racial harmony and promote the ideology of whitening (in the case of Brazil) instead of embracing heterogeneity in terms of acknowledgement and respect for difference. Furthermore, the pedagogy reflected in all these films, offer women no central position in the national imaginaries the films articulate.
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