

WHEN BRAZILIANS BRAVE BRITAIN  
THE SUPPRESSED 19<sup>TH</sup>-CENTURY STRUGGLE FOR BRAZILIAN NATIONALISM

A Thesis  
submitted to the Faculty of the  
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences  
of Georgetown University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree of  
Master of Arts  
in English

By

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Washington, D.C.  
April 24, 2009

Dedicated to  
Virgínia and Luis Carlos Marques,  
Ketlen da Silva, Fábio Pascoal,  
Rosane and Lisiane Soares,  
Salimen Grigolo, Cintia de Almeida,  
Mara and João Leitzke dos Santos,  
and Raquel Godinho,  
for your faith in a better future.

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## *Introduction*

Aspects of the most distinctive characteristics of modern Brazil are modern legacies of the political and cultural relationship this South American nation had with Great Britain in the nineteenth century. Though many Brazilian historians and cultural critics have long ignored or dismissed the tense and untoward alliance nineteenth-century Brazil shared with the British Empire, much of the literature of that era tells a different story. The relations with Britain caused a wrinkle in the Brazilian psyche, a convoluted and unanswered question centered around the idea of 'us vs. them,' not so much because of the Britons themselves, but because of the questions and nationalistic problems that arose from the long and sordid relationship they endured. The literature of nineteenth-century Anglo-Brazilian relations explores and attempts to solve the dilemmas that Britain exposed and created in the Brazilian national consciousness.

To look at Brazil today, one might not easily notice the British influence in Brazilian national consciousness, despite their nineteenth-century relationship shaping some of the most distinctive characteristics of the South American nation as we know it today. And the modern nation of Brazil is most certainly unique, even among New World nations. Its language, Brazil's most obviously distinctive feature, is perhaps the reason British influence is so quickly forgotten, because it comes from its Portuguese heritage, not a later British influence. In this way, Brazil is the exception in Latin America, nearly the only nation that does not speak Spanish. It is along linguistic lines that the New World is carved between the Anglo-Americans and the

Latin Americans. But perhaps it is truer to say that the New World truly is divided along the line that separates the north from the ‘third world.’ To simply lump Brazil with its neighbors, however, does it a disservice because its differences are more varied than linguistic aberration; neither should these differences be dismissed as minor or inconsequential. Besides being an obvious and enormous linguistic aberration in a sea of Spanish dialects, Brazil is radically different from its neighbors in still more profound ways, influenced in part by the Anglo-Brazilian element of its history.

For one, Brazil is enormous, ranking as the fifth largest country in the world, a sign that some historical force held together what Celso Lafer describes as “a continental country,”<sup>1</sup> or, as former U.S. ambassador George F. Kennan more graphically puts it, a “monster countr[y],”<sup>2</sup> while others fragmented. Uniting a people over such a vast range of landscapes requires a collective vision not easily created. Resultantly, such immensity united under a single banner has lasting repercussions. Partly due modern Brazil’s size, bank holding company Goldman Sachs predicts that Brazil, along with other continental countries such as Russia, India and China, collectively known by the acronymous name BRIC, is poised to become a major economic power in coming decades, rivaling traditional European powers such as the United Kingdom, Italy, France and Germany.<sup>3</sup> But surprisingly, Brazil’s present boundaries remain largely the same as they were the day it became independent of

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<sup>1</sup> Celso Lafer, “Brazilian International Identity and Foreign Policy: Past Present, and Future,” *Daedalus* 129.2 (Spring 2000): 208.

<sup>2</sup> George F. Kennan, *Around the Cragged Hill: A Personal and Political Philosophy* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993) 143.

<sup>3</sup> Dominic Wilson and Roopa Purushothaman, “Dreaming with BRICs: The Path to 2050” (October 2003) 1-24.

Portugal, meaning it has neither grown nor contracted much since the eighteenth century. This border maintenance is unlike both Spanish America, which fragmented as Spain rapidly lost control over its vast New World empire in the early nineteenth century, and the United States, which expanded to its current size as Manifest Destiny became a national obsession. A question we might ask is how Brazil developed a national consciousness strong enough to outweigh the separating effect of sheer size.

Secondly, Brazil's cultural heritage historically includes Amerindian, multi-ethnic European *and* African influences, the latter category certainly an effect of the contest with Britain. Economically, Britain supported the continuation and escalation of slavery in Brazil, "whose productivity depended on the one hand on slave labor and on the other on a foreign market,"<sup>4</sup> by demanding goods that required much manual labor. At the same time, in globally enforcing their abolitionist stance, Britain affronted Brazilian national autonomy and sovereignty, perhaps leading to a temporary increase in the African slave trade and certainly a cessation in diplomatic relations when the contest came to violence and incited anti-British and pro-slavery sentiment. Today, while Brazil shares with most Central and South American countries a strong Amerindian contribution to their national identity, no other Latin American country can rival Brazil in terms of its African presence, not even such places as Cuba and other Caribbean islands. Roughly half of all Brazilians claim to have African origins and Brazil has the distinction, indicative of its slavocratic past, of being home to more of the African diaspora than any other nation in the world. For almost two centuries

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<sup>4</sup> Roberto Schwarz, *Misplaced Ideas: Essays on Brazilian Culture*, trans. John Gledson (New York: Verso, 1992) 20.

many theorists, both Brazilian and foreign, have claimed that racial and cultural mixing alone constitutes the element which makes Brazilian nationalism unique, but fail to delineate Britain's involvement in bringing its people together.

### ***Chapter 1: One Empire Beholden to Another***

Only with British assistance did Brazil gain its independence in a series of bloodless developments that had more to do with European, especially English, than South American politics. In 1808, Brazil became the new seat of the Portuguese Empire when, under the protection of a flotilla of British warships, Prince João VI and his entire court abandoned Lisbon to Napoléon's forces and crossed the Atlantic. Britain's motive in aiding the Portuguese court to flee is clear:

The Portuguese foreign minister asserted that a great and powerful empire, protected *in its infancy* by the naval power of England, was to be established in America. [British envoy to Portugal] Strangford, at this point in his report of the interview, gleefully interjected that, in such a case, nothing could prevent the granting to England of an exclusive trade to the ports of Brazil.<sup>5</sup>

The prince-regent felt forced to sign his name to these trade agreements, "not because [Brazilians] loved the English, but because they feared what England could do to their colonial empire."<sup>6</sup> When Brazil gained independence from Portugal in 1822 the British again interceded, offering protection and recognition of their nationhood in exchange for continued preferential trade relations. Unfortunately, in its effort to preserve its newfound autonomy, Brazil made deals with Britain that weakened its economic independence and struck a blow to Brazilian autonomy and national pride.

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<sup>5</sup> Alan K. Manchester, *British Preeminence in Brazil: Its Rise and Decline* (New York: Octagon Books, 1972) 61

<sup>6</sup> Manchester 92.

The prince's choice was obvious—either make a deal with the indomitable British Empire thereby safeguarding the nation from foreign takeover, or risk seeing Portugal or some other European empire lay claim on the wayward colony. In exchange for recognizing and protecting the new nation, the agreements granted Great Britain a virtual monopoly on Brazilian trade, a status of preeminence Britain would hold well into the twentieth century. Britain also forced Brazil to agree to abolish its slave trade, a clause that the two nations would dispute over for decades to come. British historian Alan Manchester explains how “Brazilian historians are quite unanimous in condemning the treaties, maintaining that England had cornered the unheroic prince regent in such a way that he could do nothing but sign when the [British envoy] presented his terms.”<sup>7</sup> This alliance, begun and continued on unequal footing, created an era in Brazilian history so dominated by a British presence that “many historians dub the nineteenth century there ‘the English century.’ [...]Although Brazil was not an English-speaking country, a British colony, or even a designated ‘sphere of influence,’ [it became] one of the areas in which Britain pursued its desire to extend its authority around the globe.”<sup>8</sup> In light of this heavy involvement, the fact that until recently the British influence on the formation of Brazilian nationalism and identity is so often ignored is, to say the least, surprising.

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<sup>7</sup> Manchester 92.

<sup>8</sup> Ross G. Forman, “When Britons Brave Brazil: British Imperialism and the Adventure Tale in Latin America, 1850-1918,” *Victorian Studies*, 42.3 (April 1999): 456.

*Emptying Brazil: 19<sup>th</sup>-century Brazil from the British Literary Viewpoint*

To understand the relationship between Brazil and Britain and how it contributed to Brazilian nationalism it is necessary to be aware of the British opinion about their own role in Brazil. By reading nineteenth-century British literature on the subject of their own imperialism one can safely conclude that most English writers felt absolutely justified in expanding their empire and its influence over the entire globe. As novelist George Alfred Henty writes in a work of adolescent fiction,

Wherever [the British] powers extend, the natives are far better off than they were under the rule of their own princes. Were the British masters, there would be no more wars, no more jealousies, and no more intrigues; the peasants would till their fields in peace, and the men who now take to soldiering would find more peaceful modes of earning a living.<sup>9</sup>

This is what critic Laurence Kitzan calls the “rose-colored vision” of empire, an imagined set of stereotypes—fueled by English-authored travelogues, gazetteers and adventure fiction—about the various lands directly and indirectly under, and supposedly benefiting from British influence. Brazil was no exemption to English speculation, either materially or imaginarily. Kitzan explains that in nineteenth-century British literature “South America was a realm of adventurers where, had history unfolded as it should, the adventurers would have been performing their feats of daring under a British flag, to their benefit and the benefit of all concerned.”<sup>10</sup> As a

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<sup>9</sup> George Alfred Henty, *At the Point of the Bayonet: A Tale of the Mahratta War* (London: Blackie & Son, 1902) 103.

<sup>10</sup> Laurence Kitzan, *Victorian Writers and the Image of Empire: The Rose-Colored Vision* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001) 2.

result, much of the nineteenth-century British literature about Brazil, though immensely popular at the time, is flat, repetitive and mired in stereotype and misinformation while doggedly avoiding questions about ownership and the validity of British claims, and solely contributing to the rose-colored propaganda of the British Empire.

Where English authors write about Brazil they intentionally avoid certain settings, characters and themes in an attempt to shore up British claims. Though travelogues perfunctorily describe the large coastal cities of Brazil where foreign travelers had to make berth, the British public demanded the exotic and foreign and favored description of the Brazilian countryside and forests and to these demands the writers complied. Kitzan explains that “to describe an urban area was too often to describe dirt and squalor” and consequently an image that was already familiar, and therefore uninteresting to citizens of industrialized England. Brazilian settings quickly became stereotypical so that just “anacondas, shrieking parrots, and vast, piranha-haunted rivers served as the necessary codes for so many of the South American settings.”<sup>11</sup> And though the setting was fascinatingly alien, the interpretation of these codes was easily accessible in travelogues, thereby endowing the landscape with a sense of British ownership and entitlement. English writers also assiduously avoid describing white Brazilians to such a degree that the uninitiated might wonder if the nation is composed entirely of Indians, black slaves, and the occasional oppressive Catholic priest. In an account of a brief visit to Rio de Janeiro in 1870, writer Arthur

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<sup>11</sup> Kitzan 3-4.

Drummond Carlisle describes the citizens of Brazil's largest city "as a predominance of dark skins, especially of those of the ebon descendants of Ham."<sup>12</sup> White Brazilians simply do not appear in his description of the city, except in a muted censure of the institution of slavery in Brazil. The adventure stories are seldom different. In *Martin Rattler*, writer Robert Michael Ballantyne introduces a plethora of characters during the protagonists' jaunt through nearly the whole of the Brazilian countryside, but, besides one disillusioned ex-priest, no white Brazilians appear in the text. This device created a space for British writers to insert their heroes and forgo the need to discuss ownership. The English characters might guiltlessly lay claim to Brazil because in these fictional accounts the land was, in fact, devoid of any civilized inhabitant. By avoiding mention of urban cityscapes and civilized characters British writers needed never expose their claims on Brazil to attack, allowing the characters to freely congratulate each other on their entitled ownership of the land, as does Martin Rattler's compatriot in Ballantyne's text: "Help yersilf to what ye please,' Barney said with a polite bow, waving his hand round him, as if the forest were his private property and Martin Rattler his honoured guest."<sup>13</sup>

When British writers do describe the Brazilian people it is in a general and detached way, usually in the form of critique against their superstition and idleness, which Britons claimed to have contributed to a lack of progress and the failure of good land stewardship in nineteenth-century Brazil. In *Martin Rattler*, Ballantyne

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<sup>12</sup> Arthur Drummond Carlisle, *Round the World in 1870: An account of a brief tour through India, China, Japan, California, and South America* (London: Henry S. King & Co., 1872) 386.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Michael Ballantyne, *Martin Rattler, or a Boy's Adventure in the Forests of Brazil* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1954) 55.

introduces a Brazilian character who he reveals to be an ex-priest and direct descendant of the founder of Bahia. Having become disillusioned with the clerical cloth, the character, Carlos Caramuru, explains that his “people are lazy, many of them, and have not much enterprise. Much is done, no doubt; but very much more *might* be done.”<sup>14</sup> The origin of this stereotype about Brazilians probably has its origin in eugenics. It was commonly believed amongst Europeans in the nineteenth century and earlier that peoples from tropical or subtropical regions are more apt to fiery passions and idleness. The stereotype even included Britons born and raised in the Caribbean, Africa, or South America who were often ridiculed for their creolized status and ascribed unflattering characteristics. This principle explains the English belief that all Portuguese and Brazilians were pirates, slave-owners or invested in other idle and illicit trades. Indeed, Brazilian laziness is often blamed for the tenacity of the country’s slavocratic institution as a whole: “Brazilians shrink with something allied to horror from manual employments,” reads one travelogue.

Ask a respectable native youth of a family in low circumstances why he does not learn a trade and earn an independent living; ten to one but he will tremble with indignation, and inquire if you mean to insult him! ‘Work! work!’ screamed one; ‘we have blacks to do that.’ Yes, hundreds and hundreds of families have one or two slaves, on whose earnings alone they live.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ballantyne 86.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Ewbank, *Life in Brazil or, a journal of a visit to the land of the Cocoa and the Palm*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1856) 184.

The phenomenon outlined above may have some truth to it, but, as Brazilian critic Gilberto Freyre explains, the motive is more likely societal convention than an inherent national indolence. Rather, “with its whole structure based on slave work, [there] developed in many Brazilians a peculiarly aristocratic attitude towards manual labor and also towards trade, business, and commercial or industrial activity.”<sup>16</sup> Freyre ascribes the British industry as the reason for British success in Brazil but Brazilian critic Sérgio Buarque de Holanda disbelieves the notion that Englishmen are inherently more industrious than their Brazilian counterparts: “They tend, on the contrary, toward indolence and lavishness, and esteem, above all, the ‘good life.’ This was the contemporaneous opinion, almost unanimous, of foreigners who visited Great Britain before the Victorian Era.”<sup>17</sup> The belief that the English are inherently industrious while the Brazilians are generally lazy is merely part of the constructed vision that validates the imperial projects of the British Empire.

British writers also criticize Roman Catholicism, the predominant religion in Brazil, citing it as one of the most salient reasons why Brazilians need British aid in spite of themselves. Despite Brazil being remarkably progressive amongst Latin American nations—the only one to grant religious freedom to its subjects—Britons saw Catholicism as restrictive. In Robert Ballantyne’s novel, when the self-titular Martin Rattler posits that the climate is “too hot, and the people want energy of character,” Padre Caramuru responds, “Brazil does not want energy; it has only one

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<sup>16</sup> Gilberto Freyre, *Brazil: An Interpretation* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1945) 62.

<sup>17</sup> Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, *Raízes do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympico, 1971) 14.

want,—it wants the Bible!”<sup>18</sup> The same idea is reiterated multiple times in this and other adolescent tales, and serves to promote British society via religion at the expense of Brazilian cultural identity. Additionally, Caramuru has forsaken Catholicism and now performs a service highly British in character—he is a trader. Critic Ross Forman argues that “progress, according to Ballantyne, inheres in a process of increasing Christianization, spurred on by British influence and culminating in the renunciation of Catholicism in favor of Protestant capitalism.”<sup>19</sup> In nineteenth-century English fiction then, British traders also serve as missionaries by demonstrating “a formula for economic success by appropriating Brazilian nationality and identity while transforming Brazil into an economic empire run according to a British (and Protestant) model.”<sup>20</sup> With this assumed religious superiority nineteenth-century British writers defined themselves as the city set on a hill, the model for the world to join or emulate.

Surprisingly, English heroes in nineteenth-century adolescent adventure fiction seem unconcerned with land acquisition. Indeed, one British writer under the Portuguese pseudonym Jacaré Assu (literally meaning “alligator”), openly criticized the Brazilian government’s attempt to attract British immigration, arguing, “Let [Brazil] take our gold and what we can give of energy instead. Though loath to supply her with labour, we have never stinted her in money, nor would we, seeing how punctually she pays. [...] Is she not our foster-child?”<sup>21</sup> In another example, at the conclusion of

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<sup>18</sup> Ballantyne 91.

<sup>19</sup> Forman 465-6.

<sup>20</sup> Forman 457.

<sup>21</sup> Jacaré Assu (pseud.), *Brazilian Colonization from an European Point of View* (London: Edward Stanford, 1873) 124.

*Martin Rattler* the protagonist and his comrade simply leave Brazil and return to England, no Union Jack planted in Brazilian soil. Kitzan speculates that

perhaps [land acquisition] was unimportant to nineteenth-century writers who saw their adventurers operating not within the finite boundaries of British empire, not in the parts of the world already painted red; they were expounding a broader, more universal doctrine that the whole world was really Britain's empire, that their adventurers everywhere served to strengthen this "informal empire," and that the young Britishers could operate anywhere with impunity in the security of the Pax Britannica, but even more surely in the security of their own native intelligence and resourcefulness.<sup>22</sup>

Kitzan's theory certainly has merit and explains how Brazil was caught up in 'Greater Britain' without ever swearing allegiance to the larger empire. Perhaps land acquisition was simply unnecessary, for just as Ballantyne's hero cast off from Brazilian shores much wealthier than when he came, Britain generally benefited from toil on slave-worked Brazilian lands without needing to draft any specific territorial claim.

To most nineteenth-century Britons, Brazil may as well be an economic colony, secure as they were in their sense of moral superiority, their firm grasp on Brazil by way of economic stranglehold, and their model behavior for uncivilized Brazilians to imitate. This was all part of the vision of the Pax Britannica that saw the world laid at the feet of the British Empire. No matter then, as travelogue-writer James W. Wells

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<sup>22</sup> Kitzan 158.

puts it, that to most Britons, Brazil is simply a nation “somewhere in South America, liable to revolutions, earthquakes, and yellow Jack, and all that sort of thing, yer-know, and somehow or other, there is an emperor who rises at unearthly hours in the morning, and the Brazilians are Spanish.”<sup>23</sup> Through unfamiliarity or delusion, most nineteenth-century British writers craft a fictional Brazil, one which might be easily dominated, though the delusion ultimately surprised politicians and traders when Brazilians “pretended that any interference of the English government [...] was an invasion of their national rights and dignity.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> James W. Wells, *Exploring and Traveling Three Thousand Miles through Brazil from Rio de Janeiro to Maranhão*, (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searly & Rivington, 1886) 2:357.

<sup>24</sup> William Dougal Christie, *Notes on Brazilian Questions* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1865) 81.

## ***Chapter 2: Belated Brazilian Nationalism***

It is no small wonder that the British interference in Brazilian sovereignty united the Brazilians against their economic ally. In his book *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson identifies the New World as the birthplace of modern nationalism for similar reasons.<sup>25</sup> Anderson explains how in the bygone days of the Middle Ages, feudal European kingdoms swore homage to a revered figurehead endowed with sacred language—whether it be church Latin, Arabic, or Chinese—which unified disparate people with little more than sacred texts in common. A common medieval Englishman, for example, though he knew next to nothing of the people across the Channel, could rest assured that the French were fellow Christians, revered the same sacred text, and attended similar religious services spoken in the same holy language. After the invention of the printing press, local vernaculars displaced the paramount place of religious language, weakening the fraternal feeling a shared sacred language fostered.<sup>26</sup> The seeds of nationalism were sown, but only fully bore fruit in the creole colonies of the New World.

Anderson argues that nationalism sprang from the colonists' desire to recreate the mother country in the New World. The creole bourgeoisie from Boston to Rio found they could play aristocrat in the colonies but were barred from the courts and

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<sup>25</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (New York: Verso, 2002) 50.

<sup>26</sup> Anderson 70-1.

politics of London or Lisbon. This inequality fostered indignation amongst the creole nobility and sparked revolutionary ideas: “None of the creole revolutionaries dreamed of keeping the empire intact but rearranging its internal distribution of power, *reversing* the previous relationship of subjection by transferring the metropole from a European to an American site.”<sup>27</sup> Napoléon made this New World dream easy for Brazil by forcing João VI from Portugal to refashion himself as King João I, Emperor of Brazil. Almost overnight Portugal’s large, exotic colony became the center of its empire with the Portuguese monarch on the throne in Rio. In Brazil, at least initially, there was no need “to safeguard [a] continuing parallelism,”<sup>28</sup> which Anderson claims the rest of the New World wanted, for Brazilians suddenly found themselves with the very king and court they had coveted.

Anderson’s description of New World nationalism, therefore, essentially breaks down when it comes to Brazil. If chance simply handed Brazilians everything they needed to feel on par with Old World powers, why develop their own nationalism, or imagine themselves as anything other than Portuguese loyalists? After all, the king’s court among them made them authentic aristocrats. In order to form a New World nationalism, the modern form which Anderson claims was born in American nations, some endangerment to those privileges had to occur.

Even independence from Portugal provided little in terms of nationalistic feeling in Brazil. After João I returned to Portugal in 1820, his creolized son, Pedro I, stayed on as vassal king. A family feud broke out which resulted in an almost

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<sup>27</sup> Anderson 191.

<sup>28</sup> Anderson 191.

bloodless and short-lived campaign as forces of father and son skirmished over the right to rule Brazil. In a matter of months, Pedro—with help from the British—won sovereignty and Brazil declared itself an independent monarchic empire in 1822. Consequently, Brazil was denied the opportunity shared by other newly-independent American nations: imagining themselves as a unified and unique people as a result of a common struggle and affliction. British historian E. Bradford Burns argues that

because of the rapidity with which independence was declared and established, the nation came into existence without any need to define itself. There was, in effect, no belligerent mother country to oppose. Hence, there was scant impetus to create a ‘Brazilianist’ rationale to explain the existence of the state.

[...] Thus, for some time Brazilian nationalism failed to focus sharply.<sup>29</sup>

It seems a strange and surprising notion that the largest nineteenth-century nation in the Western Hemisphere had little sense of nationhood, but it appears true. Most historians point to events of the 1850s and 60s as the first concerted efforts to define Brazil in nationalist terms, but by that time Portugal had ceased to be even a remote threat to the Brazilian monarchy. In fact, in Brazilian literature then and now the Portuguese are usually depicted as completely benign or drop out of the national picture almost entirely. Today literary critics Doris Sommer and Roberto Schwarz point out the other, more significant foreign threat to Brazilian nationalism, one which required Brazil to imagine itself in opposition to a cultural, political, and even ideological rival—the British.

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<sup>29</sup> E. Bradford Burns, *Nationalism in Brazil: A Historical Survey* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968) 30-31.

Nationalism theorists such as Ernest Renan, E.J. Hobsbawm, and Benedict Anderson cite Brazil and other American nations as evidence that religion, ethnicity, language, culture, and geography contribute little or nothing to citizens' nationalistic feeling. Indeed, in our American examples, these characteristics alone cannot explain why former European colonies in the New World separated themselves from their mother countries and then often fractured. Renan claims that "to have common glories in the past and to have a common will in the present; to have performed great deeds together, to wish to perform still more—these are the essential conditions for being a people." Not just glories, he continues, rather, "suffering in common unifies more than joy does. Where national memories are concerned, griefs are of more value than triumphs, for they impose duties, and require a common effort."<sup>30</sup> While Portugal failed to have any strong political or economic influence after Napoleonic forces crippled it in the first decade of the nineteenth century, another European power, one unaffected by the Napoleonic threat eagerly took up Portugal's relationship with Brazil. Manchester explains that "in 1808 the [Brazilian] colony was emancipated, economically, from the decadent mother country; in 1810 it acquired a rich step-mother, [England]."<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, José Honório Rodrigues deftly points out that "the clash between national needs and the British demands was the very essence of our history in the first fifty years [or more] of the nineteenth century."<sup>32</sup> Just as the pamphleteers and novelists who decried British injustices during the North American

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<sup>30</sup> Ernest Renan, "What Is A Nation?" *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (New York: Routledge, 1990) 19.

<sup>31</sup> Manchester 95.

<sup>32</sup> José Honório Rodrigues, *Brazil and Africa* (Berkeley, U of California P, 1965) 115.

Revolution were instrumental in defining the people of the United States, so too were the novelists, playwrights, poets, and short-story writers of the Brazilian nineteenth-century who cast the British as villains and dunces. Much of Brazilian nationalism formed as a counterweight to the British influence and interference on their New World nation.

### ***United Against the British: The Plays of Martins Pena***

In 1845, Brazilian playwright Luís Carlos Martins Pena presented his own interpretation of Brazilian identity set opposite a comedic exhibition of British characters on stage in a comedy entitled “As Casadas Solteiras” or “The Single Wives.” In most ways, the British characters in the play live up to stereotypes of the time: honest, punctual, practical, technologically-advanced, and good businessmen, but also sexually impotent, worldly, and fascinated with books and machines.<sup>33</sup> More importantly, the play delineates Brazilianness by setting Brazilian identity, incarnate in the young Brazilian rascal Jeremias and two sisters who become the titular ‘single wives,’ in contrast to oppressive and arrogant Britons. Set alternately in Bahia and Rio de Janeiro, the play pits the indomitable will of two English suitors against two incredibly resourceful Brazilian women, not to mention their compatriot friends. The Englishmen, Bolingbroke and John, wish to wed Brazilian sisters Virgínia and Clarisse das Neves. Their father, Narciso, is opposed to the match, so, in order for the Englishmen to secure their suit they enlist the aid of an old school acquaintance,

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<sup>33</sup> see Louise H. Guenther, *British Merchants in Nineteenth-Century Brazil: Business, Culture, and Identity in Bahia, 1808-50* (Oxford: U of Oxford P, 2004) 128-30.

Jeremias, an educated but poor Brazilian who regrets his own conjugal connection and spends his time making himself merry and evading his wife, Henriqueta. The play depicts the strained relationship between the Brazilian sisters and their respective Britons through the stages of courtship, elopement, newlywed woes and, finally, the humiliation and reformation of the British husbands. “The Single Wives” is an important piece because, through comedic interaction between English and Brazilian characters, the play portrays the ideological battle waging between Britain and Brazil in the nineteenth century with what is at stake for Brazil.

John and Bolingbroke, reputedly like most of their British countrymen, desire Brazil materially, represented in this play by a sexual attraction to two Brazilian women. Despite this visceral attraction, as the character Jeremias readily explains to the audience early in the play, “[the English] do not like Brazil—‘Brazil is worthless!’ [they say.] Still, they keep coming to get money.”<sup>34</sup> Clarisse and Virgínia explain to their suitors that their father, probably representing Portugal, hates the English because they accuse the Brazilians of piracy. Instead of denying it, the bumbling Bolingbroke (in very poor Portuguese) admits the same:

BOLINGBROKE: Pirates, yes, pirates. The Brazilians is pirates... Hang them.

CLARISSE, moving away: Ah, we are pirates?

VIRGÍNIA: Thanks a lot.

BOLINGBROKE: No, no, Miss... I speak only of Brazilian males.

CLARISSE: They are my compatriots.

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<sup>34</sup> Luís Carlos Martins Pena, “As Casadas Solteiras,” *Comédias* (Rio de Janeiro: Ministério d’Educação e Cultura, 1956) I.iii.

BOLINGBROK: The males...me not like them. The Brazilians, women, yes...  
She is beautiful... is sweet like sugar....<sup>35</sup>

Keeping in mind that Brazil's main export crops at the time were sugar and coffee, Bolingbrok's comparison of his fiancé to sugar commodifies her, imagining her as synonymous with the many objects of British desire. Additionally, Bolingbrok conveniently separates his attraction to Brazil from his prejudices about Brazil along gender lines, which suggests a value hierarchy between the Brazilian riches he covets and can claim and its citizens whom he despises and with whom he must contend for the right of ownership.

Martins Pena's setting the play both in Bahia in the north and Rio in the south effectively unites Brazil, which politicians often divided along agricultural lines: "[...] in 1888, [politician] Joaquim Nabuco [spoke] about the two Brazils, the formerly prosperous North with an economy based on sugar and the newly prosperous South with an economy based on coffee."<sup>36</sup> If Clarisse is sugar, then Virgínia conceivably represents coffee and between them they are the entire country. By displaying *two* sisters pursued in Bahia *and* Rio by Englishmen, Martins Pena effectively unites a bifurcating country on the grounds that a common aggressor covets and threatens both sides.

Martins Pena alludes to the duplicity of all European iterations in the opening scene of the play wherein John borrows the costume of a French magician in order to

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<sup>35</sup> Martins Pena I.v

<sup>36</sup> Peter Burke and Maria Lúcia G. Pallares-Burke, *Gilberto Freyre: Social Theory in the Tropics* (Hong Kong: Peter Lang, 2008) 44.

have a clandestine interview with his intended wife. Though he speaks in God's name, this French magician John imitates has more mercenary designs: "In this hut there is a Frenchman," explains Jeremias "that, to [...] get money, will dress himself as a magician. [...] Go to him, give him money—that sort will do anything for money."<sup>37</sup> Jeremias is instinctively aware of the disingenuousness of European words to Brazilian audiences, just as the Brazilian public at large in the 1840s was beginning to distrust the purported moral ideologies of European powers. John masks his identity, posing as the Frenchman in order, not only to persuade his fiancé to leave her home, but also to insult, Narciso, his future in-law: "No good quality do I discover in you; I see only faults.... You are miserly, vulgar, pigheaded, egotistical...."<sup>38</sup> The insults John hurls at Narciso are characteristic of the English opinion of Brazilians in the nineteenth century. English politicians often felt the Brazilians had too much false pride in their national dignity and disparaged their culture, technology, and lack of progress, conveniently allowing them to take control of situations in which they felt the Brazilians were incapable. Martins Pena undercuts these stereotypes about Brazilians. In this scene the audience is to understand that John's enmity toward Narciso is not for any character flaw, but for withholding his daughter, who represents the economic wealth of Brazil. Subsequently and without revealing his true identity, the disguised Englishman convinces Virgínia she will die an old maid if she does not marry her foreign suitor, a line of reasoning reminiscent of the English offers of protection and alliance with the Brazilian nation. Both in play and reality, hiding behind a French

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<sup>37</sup> Martins Pena I.vii

<sup>38</sup> Martins Pena I.xii

ideology, the Englishmen dupe the Brazilians into a hasty alliance with something short of equality in mind.

Once the bait is set and the elopement occurs, Virginia and Clarisse discover the truth of their husbands' nature and regret their marriage, something akin to the regrets Brazil had in their economic alliance with Britain. "They seemed so submissive and respectful in Rio de Janeiro!" exclaims Clarisse. "What a change!"<sup>39</sup> The sisters' complaints are mostly based on cultural differences between themselves and their husbands, and the inequalities in their conjugal relationships. The sisters comically criticize the diets and drinking habits of their husbands, from raw steak to plum-pudding to surprisingly large amounts of alcohol, but the most infuriating thing is that the women have lost their freedom and are now effectively under house arrest while the men are free to carouse and attend the theater. Martins Pena pokes fun at those in the play's audience who might have just barred their own wives from theater attendance, but, more importantly, he underscores the cultural differences between Englishmen and Brazilians in an effort to illustrate how unnatural is their union and to display the inequality that has resulted from this political matrimony. England, promising freedom from a stern father, has instead assumed the patriarchal character and now proposes to lord over Brazil.

The play, though a comedy, is laced with barely-repressed violence, the same kind of threat that may have kept Brazil from altogether ignoring British demands.

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<sup>39</sup> Martins Pena II.i

Under the influence of alcohol, John and Bolingbrot unmask their aggressive and domineering attitudes:

JOHN: To marital authority!

BOLINGBROK: Yes, marital authority! (They drink.)

JOHN: Two things become one, Bolingbrot: either the woman or the husband governs.

BOLINGBROK: Yes, when woman governs, everything goes devil!

JOHN: Bravo! You are right and you understand.... To our health! (They drink.)

BOLINGBROK: Husband governs wife, or [...] kill her. (Hits the table.)

JOHN, speaking with difficulty: Obedience kills...saves all...Bolingbrot, to the health of obedience!

BOLINGBROK: Yes! (Speaking with difficulty.) I want obedience. (They drink.)

JOHN: Virginia is my woman.... She has to do what I want.

BOLINGBROK: Brazil is good for making money and having woman...The lucre...cent by cent...It's beautiful!

In this drunken scene, Bolingbrot essentially threatens to kill his wife if she refuses to be governed by him. Naturally, the Brazilian women are comparable to their nation as a whole, who felt real duress to ally themselves with England to escape Portuguese rule. This scene is not a simple marital dispute or mere example of male chauvinism, but the Brazilian perspective of an unequal international relationship with England, one fraught and complicated with the implied threat of violence beneath the suitor's façade.

Martins Pena offers the sisters and Brazil a remedy to their unfortunate alliance with Britain in the form of a legal loophole, one that grants Clarisse and Virgínia freedom from their spouses' demands. "You are not legally married," Henriqueta informs them, thereby opening a space to maneuver into a more suitable conjugal arrangement.<sup>40</sup> It is a strange historical fact that Brazilians and Britons could not legally marry under Brazilian law, though there was no such restriction under British law. These sisters' state of unwedded matrimony was possible due to stringent religious laws which obliged English Protestants to hold their own religious meetings and perform their own marriages. Indeed, Brazilians designed these laws to protect themselves against any taint of infection or contamination with heresy.<sup>41</sup> Henriqueta is perfectly right when she informs the surprised sisters that "Protestant nuptial ceremonies only join the Protestants; and Catholic only Catholics."<sup>42</sup> The sisters' religious difference allows them to get a foothold on the path to power over their husbands, just as the differences between Brazilians and the British served as a vehicle for identifying England as a foreign interloper rather than a familial ally.

Interestingly, the play ultimately negotiates a space for Brazil that does not force it to return to Portuguese control, nor does it require dissolution of the alliance with Britain, though at first the play moves in a direction that threatens to bar any reconciliation. With the aid of Jeremias and Henriqueta, the unwed wives plan to steal away and return to the house of their father, Narciso, in Bahia rather than stay with

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<sup>40</sup> Martins Pena II.viii

<sup>41</sup> Gilberto Freyre, *Masters and Slaves: A Study in the Development of Brazilian Culture*, trans. Samuel Putnam (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946) 193.

<sup>42</sup> Martins Pena II.vii

their English husbands in Rio de Janeiro. In a moment of indecision they overhear sentiments of aggression and inequality from their sleeping husbands that cast a pall over English benevolence and abolitionism:

VIRGÍNIA: Clarisse, let's stay!

JOHN, dreaming: Virgínia is my slave.

VIRGÍNIA: His slave?...

BOLINGBROK, dreaming and striking the table: I kills Clarisse...

CLARISSE: Kill me?...

VIRGÍNIA and CLARISSE: Let's go!

Underpinning this humorous scene is a form of anti-British criticism popular in mid-nineteenth-century Brazil, that of openly calling into question English philanthropy by claiming that slavery still exists in the British Empire in many less observable forms. This enslaving propensity on the part of the Britons here threatens the women's freedom and lives, and they make good their escape to Bahia.

Martins Pena knew that just as the Brazilian characters Virgínia and Clarisse could not return to dwell indefinitely with their father, neither could Brazil return to the protection of Portugal which had lost much of its empire and political power. In the play, Narciso prepares not only divorce papers for his daughters but also Portuguese husbands even more odious than the Englishmen were, much to the women's disdain. Instead of consigning themselves to another unfavorable alliance, the sisters design a plan to reform and win back their English husbands, alluding to a prospect for a future with England upon more equal terms. Henriqueta claims that "this is how men are [—]

either mild as lambs when they need you, or fierce as lions when they govern you,”<sup>43</sup> indicating that the Brazilians can claim a position of power in this marital struggle by withholding what the Englishmen need. “Ah, if only we did not need them,” she concludes, bemoaning the interdependence of men and women, but also, meta-narratively, how dependent Brazil was on England at the time. The play outlines Brazil’s power to seduce Britain as a site of political power. This conclusion is not surprising when one notes the many favors Britain formerly performed for the fledgling nation when it sought to cull favor in the early nineteenth century. Martins Pena may be suggesting that Brazil need withhold its charms for a time in order to make England hunger for its ally’s favor once more.

The play also depicts the signing of legal documents, an important site of early Anglo-Brazilian relations, and the source of much contention between English and Brazilian politicians. The sisters sign the bill of divorcement as their father instructs but Jeremias instinctively knows to confer with the sisters before taking them to the courthouse, because “this could be the workings of that old Narciso das Neves.”<sup>44</sup> Henriqueta suggests that they hold onto this bit of leverage and see if with it they cannot make the Britons repent and reform their ways, for “our love is more constant and endures longer [...], but in compensation, we are vengeful. Our dear ex-husbands will have to first pay with interest what we have suffered if they want to be pardoned. They will have to abase themselves as we have been abased.”<sup>45</sup> In drafting their own

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<sup>43</sup> Martins Pena III.v

<sup>44</sup> Martins Pena III.vi

<sup>45</sup> Martins Pena III.vi

document, a sort of declaration of independence, the Brazilians retake the power they were originally denied.

In the play's concluding scene, the Englishmen have become completely subservient to their wives, dyed in Union Jack colors, and even fight off the disagreeable Portuguese suitors, metaphorically giving Brazil all that it desired. Clarisse and Virgínia, using their newfound power of persuasion, convince their husbands to hide in barrels of dye (for slaves' clothing, no less) where they witness their wives being courted by other men. In a rage, John and Bolingbroke, now dyed in blue and red respectively, ascend from the paint barrels and attack the Portuguese. In essence, Brazil has not only discovered a way to humiliate the British, but have enlisted their continued aid in fighting off foreign powers.

Martins Pena's play is a bit of wishful thinking, granting Brazil a strong but humble partner, power to persuade, and legal documents for leverage, but it works on the basis of Brazilian authenticity. Even if the imaginations of the audience could not stretch enough to believe Brazil might subvert the unequal relationship it then had with Britain, they might delight and take pride in the fact that Brazilian attributes might constantly befuddle and ridicule British conceit. Clarisse, Virgínia, Jeremias, and Henriqueta display a cunning the British simply cannot hope to match and that is a defining Brazilian characteristic in which to take pride.

A few years later, Martins Pena presented another spectacle of British courtship to Brazilian audiences, continuing a discussion on Anglo-Brazilian relations, but this time offering a slave-trader as another option. In the one-act play "Os Dois, ou O

Inglês Maquinista,” meaning “The Two, or The English Inventor,” the house of a wealthy Brazilian widow living in Rio de Janeiro in 1842 is beset by two men who the widow, Clemência, believes are courting her. The date is important, the play being set just a year before England’s Broughton Act makes it illegal for British subjects to buy slaves in foreign countries. Englishman Gainer and Brazilian slave-trader Negreiro are contesting for admittance and favor in Clemência’s house and are always at each others’ throats. This hostile competition is indicative of the long history of antagonism between Brazilian slavers and the English in an era when it was common practice for British ships to harass and board Brazilian vessels suspected of slaving. The play’s title refers to these two unsuitable suitors, Gainer and Negreiro, who ultimately negate each other in the contest for a conjugal connection to the Brazilian family. Felício, the young Brazilian man who ultimately marries Clemência’s daughter, describes them as “two rivals: a two-faced businessman and a speculator.”<sup>46</sup> Unlike “As Casadas Solteiras,” in this play Martins Pena ultimately snubs both suitors, instead resurrecting the deceased husband to assist the aging widow and procuring an honest but poor Brazilian suitor for the daughter, thus ensuring a future for the family and options outside of an alliance with Britain or the institution of slavery.

Gainer embodies many of the stereotypes Brazilians reserved for the English, including a love for money and machines. The British character claims he has invented a singular device that turns an entire cow simultaneously into roast beef, leather shoes, and sugar. All he asks for is a little money: “I wanted to make a loan,”

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<sup>46</sup> Luís Carlos Martins Pena, “Os Dois, ou O Inglês Maquinista,” *Comédias* (Rio de Janeiro: Ministério d’Educação e Cultura, 1956) I.iii

he says in characteristically poor Portuguese. “If you want to make your capital increase fifty percent, give it to me to finish the machine.”<sup>47</sup> As ludicrous as such an invention appears, it is typical of labor-saving machines, which convert raw goods Brazil provides into finished products the British then sell back to Brazilians. Slave-owning Brazilians generally disliked such devices, as they interrupted the valuable practice of loaning slave labor. Through the two suitors, Martins Pena is contrasting the Brazilian slave system, a throwback from the colonial era to the contemporaneous era of British influence. Indeed, historian Robert Edgar Conrad argues, “the source of Brazilian reluctance to abandon the slave system was not solely a consequence of the institution’s great social and economic importance. [It] was so intimately related to the survival of traditional attitudes which sheltered and protected most of the customs and institutions that Brazil inherited from the colonial past.”<sup>48</sup> In writing this play, Martins Pena rejects the British system which threatened to forcibly make slavery, and with it the Brazilian colonial heritage, obsolete.

Oddly, the slave-trader Negreiro also loses his suit for the rich widow’s daughter because his illicit trade would bring disrepute upon the household, the very reason the whole of the Brazilian slave trade might only warily be tolerated and never fully embraced by the people. Schwarz suggests that slavery placed “a skeleton in the cupboards of our intellectuals, whose mental universe, to a greater or lesser extent, was defined by the French Revolution[’s notion of equality].”<sup>49</sup> Clemência, though she

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<sup>47</sup> Martins Pena I.vii

<sup>48</sup> Robert Edgar Conrad, *The Destruction of Brazilian Slavery, 1850-1888* (Los Angeles: U of California P, 1972) 15.

<sup>49</sup> Schwarz 37.

owns slaves and receives them as gifts from Negreiro, cannot ultimately align herself or her house with his career of illegal trade, nor does her daughter wish it. In a moment of doubt early in the play, when Felício bitterly mentions that Mariquinha, Clemência's daughter and the woman he loves, may have to marry the slaver, he further comments,

Nevertheless it is an advantageous marriage. He is immensely rich...breaking the laws, it's true; but what does that matter? [...] Ah, no, he will have to compete with me yet! If he supposes that the fortune he has acquired with the contraband of Africans will win all, he deceives himself. Intelligence and cunning at times have more power than riches.<sup>50</sup>

Through the character of the favored Brazilian suitor, Martins Pena presents attributes worthy of Brazilian endorsement. The double-dealing nature of Negreiro's employment poorly blends with the ideology Brazil has adopted and modified, but intelligence and cunning, the same tools which effected a turn-around of power in "As Casadas Solteiras," serve as identifying traits for Brazilian identity instead.

Like nineteenth-century Brazil, Clemência finds all her suitors interested only in her wealth (which includes her beautiful daughter Mariquinha), but finds that she needs a husband's protection in order to keep other unscrupulous men from taking advantage of her situation. The widow believes her husband Alberto has died two years ago in the Farrapo War in Rio Grande (1835-1845), one of many regional rebellions of the nineteenth-century which threatened Brazil's solidarity. Alberto

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<sup>50</sup> Martins Pena I.ii

represents the imagined Brazilian past of warrior-noblemen and explorers, which seems to have disappeared in the wake of British commercial enterprise. For the purposes of the play, Martins Pena resurrects Brazilian masculinity and power, bringing Alberto back from the dead to find, à la Odysseus, his home overrun with suitors competing to appropriate his family and household.

Martins Pena deliberately makes Clemência's situation tantamount to Brazil's early history, complete with the fears which precipitated the enlistment of Britain as ally and protectorate. After Alberto nearly strangles the slave-trader whom he finds hidden in a curtain in the house, the two eavesdrop on a humorous tête-à-tête between Clemência and Gainer wherein the self-declared widow illustrates her need to remarry: "Shortly after I was certain of [Alberto's death] I continued the business of my late husband; but you, sir, must know how in a house without a man everything goes backward. The deliverymen ruin, the runners rob; in short, if this lasts much longer, I'll go broke."<sup>51</sup> Unaware that her husband is alive and overhearing her, Clemência informs "Mr. Gainer, I have chosen you as my husband," to which he enthusiastically responds, "I accept, I accept!"<sup>52</sup> Not surprisingly, Gainer, representing Britain and as his name suggests, finds any alliance with wealth enough to fuel his projects an agreeable one. But Alberto finds offence at Gainer's usurpation of his patriarchal position and leaps from his hiding place to confront the Englishman. Insightfully, when Gainer calls this attack an assassination, Alberto replies, "It is you who murder

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<sup>51</sup> Martins Pena I.xxv

<sup>52</sup> Martins Pena I.xxv

me!”<sup>53</sup> Indeed, the Brazilians felt the oppressive demands of the British and the strict obedience to hastily-signed treaties they exacted as affronts to Brazilian national dignity and an attack on their sovereignty. In this penultimate scene, an alliance of Alberto and Negreiro fight and repel the British interloper, demonstrating that foreign infamy is a greater threat to Brazilian interests than any internal corruption. As opposed to the outcome in “As Casadas Solteiras,” Martins Pena uses militaristic means to oust the English suitor, rather than trickery to manipulate the existent alliance.

But furious over a marital infidelity comparable to the nineteenth-century Anglo-Brazilian alliance, Alberto nearly abandons his family to their fate but is softened by the pleas of his daughters and the message of surprise Christmas visitors. The tone of the play changes suddenly, closing on a sentimental and familial scene sprung from the resolution of disjointed and mismatched relationships. In nearly leaving his family, Alberto expresses the outrage that many Brazilians felt about the unfair treaties their politicians had signed with a foreign power. Now defeated, Gainer forsakes the Brazilian house, but not before violently sprawling Negreiro on the floor with a well-placed punch, evoking the wrath British fleets poured on Brazilian slavers. But Negreiro naturally survives the attack and, with the Briton gone, joins the Brazilian family in hearing a Christmas carol of *os Reis* [The Three Wise Men], performed by a group of young carolers. The biblical story inserted here at the close of the play interposes a renewed emphasis on familial, or national, unity with the promise of a hopeful future born therefrom.

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<sup>53</sup> Martins Pena I.xxvi

The plays of Martins Pena depict Brazil as a familial project. In *As Casadas Solteiras* the Brazilian family is inclusive enough to adopt Britons John and Bolingbroke, provided they reform their errant and arrogant ways. Later, in *Os Dois*, Martins Pena rejects the British suit outright for a more familial and insular Brazilian identity, which pairs the new generation of Brazilians in the union of cousins Felício and Mariquinha and the past in the reunion of Alberto and Clemência. In either scenario, the British influences finally give way to and often spur burgeoning Brazilianness.

### *Chapter 3: Importing Brazilian Nationalism*

Rather than celebrating a story of resistance to British authority and citing it as a vehicle to Brazilian national consciousness, Brazilian critics have, until recently, largely ignored this aspect in their history. Indeed, today many find it surprising that Brazil and the United States share a history of second-rate treatment at the hands of the British. Each nation faced this English threat at the time of the respective country's origin, a fact that certainly proved advantageous to the North American nation in establishing an identity opposite its mother country while in Brazil the contest had more convoluted results. But, rather than posit the British trial as an important site of Brazilian nationalism, academic discussion has historically elided and evaded the subject of the English presence, one that perhaps threatened and shaped Brazil's nationalism and certainly beleaguered its national dignity for most of the nineteenth century.

It is not difficult, however, to see why Brazil may have wanted the English to step out of the limelight of their history, becoming an almost invisible irritation to a people trying to identify themselves as a new nation. Firstly, Britons had no direct influence on Brazilian culture because where they settled they often cloistered themselves, maintaining a firm demarcation between themselves and Brazilians. In fact, many Brazilian maritime cities had a British sector, complete with "privately administered British institutions[—]a local consulate, private hospital, and Anglican place of worship" Historian Louise Guenther argues that this separation became a

calculated effort in order to shore up an appearance of English superiority: “The British began to erect deliberate representations of themselves as a unified, respectable, civilized group of foreigners, externally erasing the class distinctions that they continued to take great pains to maintain internally.”<sup>54</sup> Secondly, since the British sought to impose a moral ideology by pressuring an abolition of the slave trade, Brazil standing against the British hegemony might have also imply a sort of complicity in the increasingly unpopular institution of slavery. At first, Brazilian nationalists fiercely defended their slavocratic system, but shortly before and after slavery was finally abolished in Brazil in 1888 continuing the old rhetoric became impractical, not to mention social taboo. “It was impossible,” writes Brazilian critic Roberto Schwarz, “in the second half of the nineteenth century, to give a brilliant and enthusiastic defense of slavery, which was, however, an institution fundamental to our economy.”<sup>55</sup> As a result, Schwarz argues, “many felt [...] national shame.”<sup>56</sup> Due to the cultural divide and infamy of a slavocratic past, the contest with Britain receded from Brazilian nationalist projects, only to be replaced with a more nostalgic and rosy model, albeit one taken from a foreign source.

In the same year “As Casadas Solteiras” debuted on stage, an opposing proposal on the origin Brazilian nationalism appeared. The writer was a famous German scientist Karl Friedrich Philipp von Martius who submitted an essay entitled “How the History of Brazil Should Be Written” to the Instituto Histórico e Geográfico

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<sup>54</sup> Guenther 11, 127.

<sup>55</sup> Schwarz 37.

<sup>56</sup> Schwarz 29.

Brasileiro. Martius' treatise was in response to a call for papers on the subject of the composition of Brazilian history. His submission is an early and lasting example of foreign interference in the arena of Brazilian nationalism. Some salient facts call his qualifications to write this treatise into question: Firstly, Martius had lived in Brazil for the short span of only three years (1817-1820) and had not been there since Brazil declared independence from Portugal. Additionally, Martius, neither Brazilian nor a historian, spent those years studying natural sciences rather than Brazilian history, culture or politics. It led one newspaper to complain thusly: "Europe, which sends us back our cotton spun and woven [...] is even telling us the best way to write our history."<sup>57</sup> As a young man in Brazil, Martius wandered the wildernesses of the coastlines and the Amazon Basin, becoming *the* expert on palm trees and Brazilian flora, but garnering no formal training in the humanities or political sciences. Nevertheless, in his European conceit Martius openly wonders in his essay if he is not the best man for the Instituto's nationalism project, rhetorically asking "how many Brazilian men of letters are qualified to accomplish the project of the Instituto."<sup>58</sup>

Surprisingly, despite Martius lack of qualifications, the Instituto awarded his essay, most likely because of its optimistic perception of Brazil's composition and future. In the essay, Martius argues that Brazil's identity is most unique in its racial makeup, with contributions from Iberian, Amerindian, and African sources. Martius' hope is that "the powerful river of Portuguese blood [will] absorb the small tributaries

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<sup>57</sup> *Ostentator Brasileiro*, 1846, qtd. in Schwarz 35.

<sup>58</sup> Karl Friedrich Philipp von Martius, "How the History of Brazil Should Be Written," *Perspectives on Brazilian History*, ed. E. Bradford Burns (New York: Columbia UP, 1967) 22.

of the Indian and Ethiopian races,” not to eliminate the latter two but to infuse the former with new vitality.<sup>59</sup> Literary critic Doris Sommer explains that underpinning Martius’ paper is the belief “that the dynamic element of change and progress is racial (a shorthand here for cultural, linguistic, and political differences), so that history is a record of racial development and improvement through new infusions and of racial decay through stagnation.”<sup>60</sup> Despite the violence of forced expulsion, importation and slavery that brought the three races together in Brazil, Martius hopes that by “allow[ing] the Negro and the Indian to influence the development of the Brazilian nationality, [they will] be a benefit for the destiny of the country.”<sup>61</sup> Martius’ essay holds tremendous sway on the topic of Brazilian nationalism even today, long after he presented his paper to the Instituto and, one might say, therefore accomplished his admitted goal, to “stimulate the love of the country.”<sup>62</sup>

The appeal of Martius’ argument, and possibly the reason the Instituto selected his essay, is that it takes a potential problem and re-imagines it as a strength, one in which Brazilians could pride themselves on. “The vast extent of Brazil’s territory presents the historian with a difficult problem,” Martius claims, “for he is surrounded by an immensely varied natural setting and by a population composed of very different elements with different customs and practices.”<sup>63</sup> Martius undoubtedly knew that similar circumstances broke apart the Spanish American empire into several disparate

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<sup>59</sup> Martius 24.

<sup>60</sup> Doris Sommer, “*O Guarani* and *Iracema*: Brazil’s Two-Faced Indigenism” in *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (Los Angeles: U of California P, 1991) 152.

<sup>61</sup> Martius 25.

<sup>62</sup> Martius 40.

<sup>63</sup> Martius 38.

nationalities and therefore could safely identify the sheer size of Brazil as a potential problem. But, in his essay, this threat becomes a scintillating opportunity, a project of fusing two races into the prevalent strain of ethnic Portuguese Brazilians. This idea had appeal to Brazilians because it would create a unique and, more importantly, indigenous identity, not based or reliant on any other nation. This “three-race syncretism,” as the theory is known today, eventually became a nationalistic project that guided thought on the subject of Brazilian nationalism into the twentieth century with some lingering elements still present today.

Nevertheless, Martius’ model falls apart when one takes stock that three-race syncretism is fundamentally based on social Darwinism and scientific racism, along with the inherent biases and prejudiced tendencies such a theory involves. In his paper, Martius preemptively rejects the idea that anything other than a European-born civilization will absorb what he considered the—albeit noble and powerful—ultimately inferior African and Indian cultural influences. Indeed, he envisions African and Indian blood as little more than timely mechanisms to uplift the weary and stagnating Iberian race. This might-makes-right theory which grants Europeans the might *and* the right to dominate others is shaky ground for an ethical nationalism because it embraces racial bias.

### ***Miscegenation Over Transatlanticism: The Works of Gilberto Freyre***

Cultural critic Gilberto Freyre reanimated and popularized the antiquated theory of three-race syncretism in 1933, lending the foreign idea Brazilian legitimacy but

ultimately promulgating a flawed premise. To his credit, Freyre revived the theory in an effort to subvert a movement that sought to ‘whiten’ Brazil by discouraging miscegenation, encouraging European immigration to the exclusion of all others, and re-imaging Brazil as a son of Europe. In his most widely-read book, *Casa Grande e Senzala (Masters and Slaves)*, Freyre incorporates the indigenous and, most especially, African influences into Brazilian identity. Rather than largely ignore the Africanist presence as Martius did, Freyre shocked his contemporary Brazilian readers, claiming that “every Brazilian, even the light-skinned fair one, carries about with him on his soul, when not on soul and body alike [...] the shadow, or at least the birthmark, of the native or the Black.”<sup>64</sup> In so doing, Freyre also shored up a crumbling national identity and forged a renewed nationalist project. Before Freyre’s era, even some Brazilians were arguing that Brazil had no unique cultural identity, having borrowed heavily from French intellectualism as well as European literature and art, and still had yet to find itself as a nation. Biographers Peter Burke and Maria Lúcia Pallares-Burke explain how “*Casa Grande e Senzala* was [...] a major contribution to the debate about Brazilian identity—or lack of identity, as some Brazilians had seen it—a way of re-imagining the community.”<sup>65</sup> Imagining a multi-ethnic Brazil formed through sexual union offered a nationalistic project both unique and literally home-grown, something seemingly authentic and wholly Brazilian.

Unfortunately, the premise of *Casa Grande e Senzala* is just as much on the same unethical grounds as Martius’ essay. In his youth Gilberto Freyre had studied

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<sup>64</sup> Freyre 278.

<sup>65</sup> Burke 97.

and believed in eugenics and, after studying in the United States and returning to Brazil, even pitied the ‘mongrelization’ of his countrymen. Indeed, this position was not uncommon in the 1930s when most educated intellectuals believed in a hierarchy of races and “it is evident that for a while at least, like so many respectable people of that time, Freyre had been thinking and observing according to the prevalent racist paradigm and that he was convinced that the superiority of one race and the inferiority of another were unchangeable facts proved by science.”<sup>66</sup> Becoming somewhat disillusioned with eugenics, in many ways Freyre was able to turn scientific racism on its head, refashioning it into a more benign theory, but *Casa Grande e Senzala* never wholly moves past the “concepts and language of eugenics.”<sup>67</sup> Instead of discouraging miscegenation, however, for its allegedly debilitating effects, the book praises the Brazilian legacy of racial mixture and implicitly encourages its continuation through an “associat[ion of] mixture with the improvement of the species.”<sup>68</sup> But Freyre’s *Casa Grande e Senzala*, despite its charms and progressive-thinking, never wholly escapes the scientific racism upon which it is predicated.

*Casa Grande e Senzala* glorifies the sexual union of the three Brazilian races, re-imagining their respective couplings as mutually consensual despite all evidence to the contrary. Sommer deftly elucidates this major flaw in Freyre’s vision:

To read a classic like Freyre’s, Brazil is founded on a history of mutual seduction between white masters and dark women, the one motivated by a lust

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<sup>66</sup> Burke 59.

<sup>67</sup> Burke 59.

<sup>68</sup> Burke 60.

for self-aggrandizement through self-reproduction, the other allegedly favoring the domestic stability of plantation life over trailing behind nomadic, or semicivilized, men. This is at least the story some Brazilians have been congratulating themselves for, a story that transmutes an abusive past into the fortunate fall that made possible the cultural and racial redemption of a white elite through miscegenation.<sup>69</sup>

Indeed, as Sommer suggests, it would be naïve to assume that mixed-race relations in Brazil always were nonviolent and non-exploitive. Brazilian historians and cultural critics have long argued that slavery in Brazil was a gentle, patriarchal institution but, despite the myth, much violence against Indian and black female bodies almost certainly occurred in the colonial and imperial eras of Brazilian history. The picture Freyre promulgates, wherein the whites and blacks copulate in harmony, is a myth that many have criticized.<sup>70</sup>

Over a decade later, in 1948, Freyre published a book of four essays on the English influence in Brazilian culture, but failed to captivate the national imagination the way *Casa Grande e Senzala* had. As Burke explains, the book, *Ingleses no Brasil*, “combat[s] the idea that the English influence on Brazilian culture was confined to economic aspects [...]”<sup>71</sup> The popularity of three-race syncretism and taboo of acknowledging British influence on Brazilian culture both revolve around the same factor—indigenoussness. The nationalistic belief in the mid-twentieth century was that

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<sup>69</sup> Sommer 154.

<sup>70</sup> Burke 93.

<sup>71</sup> Burke 136.

Brazilianness is entirely homespun, with any influence from abroad suspect, disingenuous, or an impurity awaiting refining. Schwarz explains that “the two nationalist tendencies were alike in hoping to find their goal by eliminating anything that was not indigenous. The residue would be the essence of Brazil. The same illusion was popular in the [nineteenth] century [...]”<sup>72</sup> Brazil fixated on three-race syncretism, originally a foreign theory now made famous by *Casa Grande e Senzala*, while readily ignoring Gilberto Freyre’s other work which explored Brazilian nationalism internationally.

The cultural ellipsis in Brazilian nationalism that omits British influence is unfortunate because the omission is artificially constructed and misleading. Burke writes that

although [*Inglezes no Brasil*] is not one of Freyre’s best known books (even in Brazil), it makes an essential contribution to his project of reconstructing the development of the country in its most intimate aspects. If the impact of Britain on their culture was omitted, Freyre argued, an important link would be missing in the ‘intimate history’ of the Brazilians, and it would be impossible to understand their ethos.<sup>73</sup>

Yet, even in their biography on Gilberto Freyre, the Burkes discuss *Inglezes no Brasil* in only two paragraphs while they dedicate an entire chapter to *Casa Grande e Senzala*. In *Inglezes no Brasil*, Freyre highlights several important influences the English had on Brazil, from a national obsession with soccer to five o’clock tea, not to mention the

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<sup>72</sup> Schwarz 4.

<sup>73</sup> Burke 136.

many Anglicisms that occur in Brazilian Portuguese today. Surely these cultural novelties, once borrowed from the English and absorbed into the culture, become just as Brazilian as Portuguese, Amerindian, or African contributions. Yet, in the rush to promote and defend indigenism, the English role has fallen by the wayside in discussion of Brazilian national identity-formation.

### *Syncretism Under Fire: The Work of Antônio Cândido*

In the 1960s, literary theorist Antônio Cândido was the first to call into question three-race syncretism, which by then had been widely accepted as the primary, if not singular, source of Brazilian identity. In his essay “Literature and the Rise of Brazilian National Self-Identity,” Cândido critiques any model which ignores foreign influence. “Brazilian nationality,” he writes, “and its varied spiritual manifestations only took form as the result of processes of cultural transfer and cultural pressure from abroad.”<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, he argues that three-race syncretism as it had been traditionally defined is more a product of societal imagination than social reality. Cândido calls three-race syncretism theory what it is—a European fabrication.

Cândido posits that examples of miscegenation in nineteenth-century Brazilian literature are actually “expression[s] of the culture of the colonizer and, later, of the Europeanized colonist, heir to his values; [miscegenation] actively served in the effort to impose those values, to counteract the initially powerful influences of the primitive

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<sup>74</sup> Antônio Cândido, “Literature and the Rise of Brazilian National Self-Identity,” *Luso-Brazilian Review*, 5.1 (Summer 1968): 40.

cultures which surrounded the colonists on all sides.”<sup>75</sup> That is, in its initial stages, miscegenation Europeanized the indigenous elements more than it unified and creolized the colonizers and Indians. By time Brazilian writers such as José de Alencar begin to write about racial mixing “the Indian was definitively neutralized in the more civilized areas, pushed aside, destroyed, and partially eliminated through miscegenation.”<sup>76</sup> In his essay, Cândido calls miscegenation the colonizer’s tool, one designed to eliminate the more uncontrollable forces found in primitive indigenous cultures through whitening, thereby *partially* eliminating the race. Indeed, the literature supports Cândido’s argument. In his novels, José de Alencar’s noble Indian characters are exceptional specimens far removed from and acting against the majority of their savage race. Most Indian cultures in Alencar’s novels are more like a primeval and cannibalistic force which literally threatens to swallow pockets of white culture. The mixed-race unions are usually fated to end when the Indian half dies and any resultant children are carted off to Portugal to receive a European education. Contrary to the tenets of three-race syncretism, in Brazilian literature most elements of Indian culture are missing in their creole offspring.

Cândido points out that African miscegenation is rare in nineteenth-century Brazilian literature and where it does occur, it merely ‘whitens’ through successive generations of master-slave relations. While the noble Indian was literally and figuratively embraced in three-race syncretism, “this eventually contributed to yet another deceit, more commonly practiced, of attributing to indigenous blood (as a new

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<sup>75</sup> Cândido 29.

<sup>76</sup> Cândido 36.

status symbol) the effects of miscegenation with the African who, for several reasons—above all the fact of his being a slave—was rigorously denied or concealed and in the end forgotten.”<sup>77</sup> In claiming Indian ancestry, Brazilians also claim along with it its noble past. Claiming the African influence is problematic for Brazilians, however, because the slaves could not be divorced from the *idea* of slavery. No matter that the Portuguese also attempted to enslave the Indians (and failed), they felt there was nothing noble about claiming a people successfully enslaved and therefore theoretically weak. As a result, and as Cândido suggests, Afro-Brazilians are often shortchanged in discussions of Brazilian identity despite all the evidence of African influence widespread in modern Brazilian society.

### ***Old Enemies in New Costumes: Englishmen in Alencar’s Indianist Novels***

Novelist José de Alencar (1829-1877), hailed as the father of Brazilian literature, is also an early literary promulgator of three-race syncretism, but British elements also appear in his work and should not be glossed over. Alencar’s success is largely due to his Indianist novels, among which include *O Guarani* (1857) and *Iracema* (1865). These books, which appropriate Indigenism and claim it as something authentically Brazilian, do for the literary world what Karl Friedrich Philipp von Martius’ essay sought to do for the composition of Brazilian history. “Alencar apparently did what other national romancers did when they found no positive events to develop á la Walter Scott. Like Manzoni, and Gogol, as well as Mitre, Mármol, Isaacs, Mera, Matto de

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<sup>77</sup> Schwarz 38.

Turner, and others, he constructed a romance to fill in the void.”<sup>78</sup> In re-imagining sites of cultural hybridization between whites and Indians, Alencar attempts to create a positive image of Brazilianness from the ashes of a violent past of Indian removal and cultural genocide. Alencar’s novels explore the cross-cultural relationships between whites and Indians in scenes of ethnic encounter and often submit racial syncretism as the birthplace of the Brazilian nationality. Indigenism becomes a proud, if not defining part of the national inheritance. Benedict Anderson calls this device “reverse racism,” a phenomenon common in post-colonial nations (including the United States with such novels as James Fennimore Cooper’s *Leatherstocking* tales) wherein collective national consciousness begins to exalt the indigenous past and vilify the conquerors who subjugated them.<sup>79</sup> It is Alencar’s literary project that some identify as the beginning of Brazilian nationality.<sup>80</sup>

But amidst this project of nationalism, Alencar weaves contemporaneous dilemmas within his origin tales, including the nineteenth-century English challenge. Alencar had several ties to English culture and it shows in his work. His maternal grandfather was an Englishman and as a young man Alencar almost certainly read English literature, especially the works of Sir Walter Scott, which influenced his own writing. Alencar was probably familiar with the culture of England and certainly knew its language, for, though many literary critics hail him for his abundant use of the Amerindian language Tupi-Guarani in his Indianist novels, also frequently used are

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<sup>78</sup> Sommer 166-7.

<sup>79</sup> Anderson 153-4.

<sup>80</sup> Silviano Santiago, “Liderança e Hierarquia em Alencar,” *Vale Quanto Pesa* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1982): 89-116.

English words such as *doguezinho*, *paquête*, and *away*.<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless, Alencar's mission was to create something authentically Brazilian and raise it to the level of or surpass the European standard, but in so doing he creates a narrator that seems unable to resist vilifying Europeans.

In *O Guarani*, earliest and most famous of his Indianist novels, Alencar fashions a seventeenth-century frontier household that is comparable to nineteenth-century Brazil, along with a similar foreign threat. Decidedly a royalist, Alencar fashions the patriarch of the house, Dom Antônio de Mariz, with the nobility and bearing of an emperor. Accordingly, this 'frontier kingdom' has its citizens, the *aventureiros* [adventurers, frontiersmen], who fight for their patron but almost mutiny before the novel is through. And just as Dom Pedro II had to protect the Empire of Brazil from the relentless greed of British commerce, Dom Antônio has to contend with his own villainous, materialistic, anti-religious foreigner.

The common trope in Brazilian literature of casting European nationals as the irredeemable villain reflects a growing distrust nineteenth-century Brazilians had about the influence, ideology, and interference of the British. The *Guarani* narrator introduces the character Loredano as an Italian priest but critic Doris Sommer sees his role as representative of a different nationality: "Loredano is another flat character who gains a dimension from the historical context. On rereading, it is now obvious that the foreign villain is a villain precisely because he is a foreigner, lustful and opportunistic

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<sup>81</sup> Gilberto Freyre, *José de Alencar* (Rio de Janeiro: Ministério d'Educação e Saúde, 1951) 18.

almost by definition. He is England.”<sup>82</sup> This astute correlation is not surprising considering that the Brazilians’ “general xenophobia was most intense when it came to meddling and bossy England, especially after [the Christie Affair when] the British fired on Brazilian ports in 1850.”<sup>83</sup> The character Loredano is motivated by greed, betrays his detractors with the signing of legal documents, and commits acts of religious sacrilege, all in keeping with the popular negative stereotypes Brazilians reserved for the British. Other Brazilian Romance writers such as Joaquim de Macedo and Bernardo Guimarães also cast European foreigners in the antagonist’s role. But Alencar is especially nationalistic in his work, for he goes to the origins of the nation in order to shed light on the meaning of Brazilian identity in his own day; along the way he cannot tell the origin tale without casting Brazil’s ancient villains who are startlingly similar to its contemporaneous ones.

Loredano, poses as a priest in order to deceive and plunder, all so he can ship a great treasures back to Europe and there live in luxury, a plot startlingly similar eighteenth-century British adventure stories, which, explains Forman, “offer a vision of Brazil as a land rich in moral and physical dangers, but ripe for the plucking by English ingenuity.”<sup>84</sup> As with similar classics such as *Treasure Island*, in English literature the heroes travel to Brazil, discover a lost or buried treasure, and carry it home to England all the “while cementing the ties that bind the Latin American nation to Britain [...]”<sup>85</sup> But Alencar subverts the popular English plot, making his Anglicized Italian greedy, a

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<sup>82</sup> Sommer 168.

<sup>83</sup> Sommer 166.

<sup>84</sup> Forman 456.

<sup>85</sup> Forman 456.

liar and murderer, not merely Protestant, but vile blasphemer. Not unlike the British adventure-hero which the character models, Loredano intends “to go to Europe to sell the secret [of the mine] to Philip II or *any other* sovereign of a powerful nation.”<sup>86</sup>

Also in British fashion, Loredano guards closely the document that reveals the secret location of a gold mine, just as the British venerated the treaties that bound Brazil’s economic treasures to Great Britain. Furthermore, Loredano steals away the loyalty of Dom Antônio’s men with another threatening document, “a weapon that could harm them; he made them remember this testament [but] would lie up until the ultimate hour about what the paper [actually] says.”<sup>87</sup> The *Guarani* narrator displays a general distrust and even contempt of these binding contracts, just as the nineteenth-century Brazilians “regard[ed] the Treaties with England [...], as the dictations [...] from which it [was] lawful to escape, rather than as compacts which they [were] bound to enforce.”<sup>88</sup> Just as the Brazilians in the 1850s and 60s began to more seriously doubt the intentions of Britain, leading up to a cessation in diplomatic relations between the two nations, so the narrator reveals Loredano to be what another character suspects all along, “a vile spy!”<sup>89</sup>

Loredano disingenuously employs the language of the French and American Revolutions to induce a mutiny against Dom Antônio, thus illustrating Brazilian distrust of British use of nineteenth-century European ideologies. Before a large group of men under the employ of Dom Antônio, Loredano attempts to upset the hierarchy of

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<sup>86</sup> José de Alencar, *O Guarani* (Rio de Janeiro: Edições de Ouro, 1967) 79. Italics added.

<sup>87</sup> Alencar 80.

<sup>88</sup> Manchester 222.

<sup>89</sup> Alencar 12.

Brazilian society with rhetoric of equality: “You are all worse than animals; you are slaves,” he protests, convincing the *aventureiros* to bring their grievances to Dom Antônio, the nobleman to whom they have sworn allegiance, “and if he refuses, we are released from our oath and will do justice by our own hands.”<sup>90</sup> In the subsequent confrontation with their lord, the disgruntled men essentially demand democracy: “We want you to respect our lives! We are not slaves! We obey, but are not captives! [...] We have risked our lives to defend you!”<sup>91</sup> But democracy is dangerous in this novel, as cannibalistic Aimorés siege Dom Antônio’s fortress home. The outlandish demands of ordinary citizens in this troubled time make them dangerous mutineers rather than ideological revolutionaries or freedom-fighters. In addition, Loredano incites this mutiny for his own nefarious reasons, and, in truth, looks down on the *aventureiros* as “mercenary men who sell their liberty, conscience and life for a salary [for] they do not have true dedication to any but one object, money; their lord, their leader is he who pays the most.”<sup>92</sup> It has already been demonstrated that Brazilians disbelieved the altruism of the British abolitionist cause. Brazilians were among those who “insist[ed] on their hypocrisy,” explains Schwarz. “Of course, free labor, equality before the law and, more generally, universalism were also an ideology in Europe; but there they corresponded to appearances and hid the essential—the exploitation of labor.”<sup>93</sup> Alencar personally believed in the hypocrisy of European ideology; elsewhere he writes, “The misery of the poorer classes in Europe is such that in comparison with

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<sup>90</sup> Alencar 161-2.

<sup>91</sup> Alencar 163.

<sup>92</sup> Alencar 79.

<sup>93</sup> Schwarz 20.

them the slave of Brazil should consider himself satisfied.”<sup>94</sup> In essence, Alencar creates a space in *O Guarani* wherein equality is not a viable solution or fortunate organization and the voice of democracy is always in the mouth of the villain, thereby questioning the motives of Britain abolitionism and its right to wage ideological war with nineteenth-century Brazil.

Loredano further aligns himself with the Brazilian concept of Englishness as he blasphemes, and even destroys sacred relics in an attempt to discover Dom Antônio’s treasury. Loredano is a former priest, divested of his religious office because of murder and theft, but maintaining the façade that he might exploit the faithful. In much the same way, nineteenth-century Brazilians perceived that the English had the trappings of religious devotion, evidenced by their Anglican churches, but felt Protestantism to be alien and threatening. Speaking of the British merchants in Bahia, Guenther posits, “they probably faced the reality that their faith was at best misunderstood, and at worst despised, by the local [Brazilians].”<sup>95</sup> Indeed, explains Freyre on the problem of religious difference in Anglo-Brazilian relations in *Casa Grande e Senzala*:

Once the colonization of Brazil had been begun through the efforts of the Portuguese, the blood of many European peoples [including] Englishmen [...] was freely mingled with that of the official colonizer. I have given the English first mention for the reason that they stand out in greater relief as representative of that Protestant heresy which was so odious in the eyes of sixteenth-century

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<sup>94</sup> Freyre 30.

<sup>95</sup> Guenther 126.

Portuguese [...]. The presence of Englishmen among the first colonists at São Vicente shows that, when free of the suspicion of heresy, they were fraternally received.<sup>96</sup>

The original anti-British sentiment in Brazil is not so much xenophobic as Catholic and dedicated to its preservation. Wherever Englishmen converted, tension dissipated. But the Britons purposely segregated themselves from Brazilian society, practicing their religion behind closed doors, as Brazil required by law, which inevitably aroused suspicion. Freyre continues, “Our hostility to the English, French, and Dutch always had the same character of a religious prophylactic: Catholics against heretics. [...] Religion has been in the past almost as powerful a dissevering force as has racial antagonism.”<sup>97</sup> Loredano is as menacing as English Protestants, his heresies culminating in a scene wherein he desires to topple a wall of “saints, sacred images, [...] things not to be thrown on the ground” in order to obtain the treasures buried behind.<sup>98</sup> The protests of his Catholic accomplices, elicits an odd censure from the priest: “A mere sliver of wood a little of clay is enough to make you cower! And you say you are men! Animals without intelligence, that don’t even have the instinct of self-conservation.”<sup>99</sup> Loredano’s critique has the sound of anti-Catholicism in its disdain for religious imagery, and corresponds nicely to nineteenth-century English sentiment.

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<sup>96</sup> Freyre, *The Masters and the Slaves* 198.

<sup>97</sup> Freyre 189.

<sup>98</sup> Alencar 198.

<sup>99</sup> Alencar 198.

For all this, Loredano never receives authorial censure more severe than when he attempts to thwart the union of Indian and white blood, the genesis of Brazilian cultural identity in Alencar's novels. For a time three men of differing nationalities, each for their own motive, court Cecília (Ceci), daughter of Dom Antônio. Peri the Indian, Álvaro the Brazilian, and Loredano the European all assemble beneath the balcony outside Ceci's bedroom in such a way that the three "formed a true triangle, which had at its center the window richly illuminated. [...] Thus was love transformed so completely in [their] organisms that they presented three very distinct sentiments: one was a madness, the other a passion, the last a religion. Loredano desired; Álvaro loved; Peri worshipped."<sup>100</sup> In these three juxtaposing characters, Alencar presents a spectrum of feeling and motive, with Loredano's as the basest and most depraved. It is not passion but greed that spurs his obsession with the young woman, just as it does the Englishmen in Martins Pena's plays. When the faux friar attempts to kidnap Ceci he fixates exclusively on "her blonde little head [...] upon which unraveled the beautiful gold rings of her hair," and forgets "the world and its treasures," in light of the glinting one before him.<sup>101</sup> Sexual conquest mirrors the economic exploitation of Brazil and the secret strip mine Loredano plans to sell to the highest bidder. Peri thwarts the abduction by shooting an arrow through Loredano's hands, thus literally disabling his ability to seize. In his past, Loredano has murdered for money and subsequently threatens to murder again to eternally possess the treasure of Dom Antônio's daughter,

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<sup>100</sup> Alencar 35-6.

<sup>101</sup> Alencar 149-50.

“killing her, so that the same grave receives our two corpses.”<sup>102</sup> The narrator inculcates Loredano not only in the theft of Brazilian minerals, but also in the murder of the mother of Brazilian identity, the promised vessel of a mixed-blood progeny.

The optimistic national project Alencar constructs here is not only the birth of a multiethnic Brazil, but also the detection of foreign depravity, renewed solidarity against the threat, and castigation and expulsion of European detractors. In the previous decade, “As Casadas Solteiras” imagines an Anglo-Brazilian alliance based on equality, which admittedly necessitates a reformation of the English, but just as Martins Pena adopts a less accepting attitude toward the British, so does Alencar. If Loredano does indeed represent the British as Doris Sommer and evidence in the text suggest, then their depravity disqualifies them as allies and, indeed threatens Brazilian identity, an idea emphasized by the foreign threat which seeks to prevent the mixed-blood union between Ceci and Peri for his own ill-gotten purposes.

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<sup>102</sup> Alencar 147.

#### *Chapter 4: Remembering England*

The English influence on Brazilian national identity is not limited to adopted cultural practices and the occasional borrowed word; tense international relations between Brazil and Britain had enormous impact on the developing Brazilian consciousness. In the nineteenth-century, at the height of what Alan Manchester calls British preeminence in Brazil, Brazilians, aware that their slavocratic institution clashed with the moral ideology of their ally and most of Europe, used the opportunity to deflate the imported moral maxims of arrogant foreign powers. “Better have good Negroes from the African coast,” reads one newspaper,

for our happiness and theirs, notwithstanding the Briton, with his morbid philanthropy, which makes him forget his own home and allows his poor white brother to die from hunger, a slave without a master to pity him; the hypocritical and stupid Briton, who weeps over the destiny of our happy slave and thus exposes himself to the ridicule of true philanthropy.”<sup>103</sup>

Instead of succumbing to national shame, Brazilians saw beyond British propaganda to its caustic core: Britain’s motive behind curbing the slave trade was to weaken competition in the global sugar market and behind safeguarding Brazil’s independence was to exact its browbeaten allegiance to England. Additionally, there is the sense underlying and juxtaposing British abolitionism that Britain is responsible for Brazil’s slavocratic and agrarian system: “It was the lasting result of the creation of a nation-

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<sup>103</sup> Schwarz 19.

state on the basis of slave labor—which, if the reader will forgive the shorthand, arose in turn out of the English industrial revolution and the consequent crisis of the old colonial system.”<sup>104</sup> Britain wanted Brazil for itself, perhaps not in name, but in effect, and the Brazilians were beginning to realize it: “The nexus between economic exploitation (i.e. the export of raw materials and import of manufactures) and ideological subordination was beginning to dawn in our consciousness,” writes Schwarz.<sup>105</sup> Perhaps Brazil’s motive to deconstruct British philanthropy was not wholly benign but, as they argue, at least had less of the blatant hypocrisy Britain seemed to embrace.

Even more troubling is the prospect that Brazil held on to slavery for so long if only to spite the Britons. Manchester quotes political rhetoric of the time that posits that the Brazilian government’s indisposition to stop the slave trade had more to do with ignoring the heavy-handed treaties than an actual need for slave labor:

‘If there was not a nation,’ [Brazilian politician Junqueira] said, ‘pretending to impose the laws on us, [our] Christian feelings, [our] patriotism would have made us reflect upon the matter, and it [is] not possible that so many sessions would have passed away without some steps having been taken to put an end to the traffic in some manner or other, but treated as [we have] been, [we have] tried to uphold the traffic if it were only to show [our] resistance.’<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Schwarz 14.

<sup>105</sup> Schwarz 35.

<sup>106</sup> Manchester 248.

Certainly economic and cultural factors influenced Brazilian reluctance to abolish the slave trade, but some of the delay and double-dealing certainly occurred as backlash to the offensive superiority inherent in Britain's international abolitionist efforts.

Caught between their own nationalistic pride and the an imposed moral ideology, Brazils had the difficult take of navigating the waters between, on the one hand, a their own national dignity and, on the other, a foreign ideology uneasily running counter their national structure; this disparity led to a crisis in Brazilian consciousness. "On the one hand," Schwarz explains, "there [was] the slave trade, [...] on the other hand, [...] there was the Law before which everyone was equal [...]. For some, the colonial heritage was a relic to be superseded in the march of progress; for others, it was the real Brazil, to be preserved against absurd imitations."<sup>107</sup> Attempting to incorporate European ideologies, which touted individual rights and freedoms, because they were popular and characteristic of progressive countries while simultaneously distrusting as disingenuous and opposing as foreign oppression led to a fracture in the Brazilian psyche which finally found literary release.

Fortunately, some members of the current generation of literary critics and theorists such as Roberto Schwarz and Doris Sommer continue to critique three-race syncretism and, in its dearth, reclaim neglected elements of Brazilian consciousness. In their discussion of literary projects contributing to nineteenth-century Brazilian nationalism, they reintroduce a component historically ignored: the English.

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<sup>107</sup> Schwarz 13.

Sommer admits the difficulty inherent in reintroducing the Anglo-Brazilian alliance and dispute as a site of Brazilian identity-formation, positing that an “analogy with English political history [...] might have been humiliating for Brazilians. Their general xenophobia was most intense when it came to meddling and bossy England [...].”<sup>108</sup> Better, the thinking goes, to forget the conflict than dredge up sundry political fiascos endured in an obligatory alignment with this conceited and alien European power. With their history lacking a successful coup against British preeminence, Sommer argues, the Brazilians imagined a fictitious past “to fill in the void, making it pregnant with future projects and [...] color[ed] those projects with the subtle half-tones of racial alliances.”<sup>109</sup> Fictions of racial alliance simultaneously absorbed the unhappy elements of Brazilian history into a nationalistic project of racial harmony, smoothing over injustices with the promise of a coequal future, and removing from their history Britain, thenceforth almost entirely forgotten. Surely, modern criticism must belie the façade of racial alliance and reclaim all sites of Brazilian identity-formation, no matter how ignominious.

***Brazilian Skepticism: The Works of Machado de Assis***

Roberto Schwarz sees the literature of nineteenth-century Brazil progressing toward parody, stark realism, and skepticism as a direct result of the gap in the continuity of the Brazilian national consciousness. “Parody is one of the most combative of literary forms, so long as that is its intention.” Schwarz argues, and then continues ironically,

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<sup>108</sup> Sommer 166.

<sup>109</sup> Sommer 166.

“in countries where culture is imported, parody is almost a natural form of criticism.”<sup>110</sup> Indeed, it is a startling fact that in only a few decades in the mid- to late-nineteenth century, Brazilian literature radically leaps from European-style Romanticism to something akin to Russian realism,

sustained by its historical backwardness [and] forc[ing] the bourgeois novel to face a more complex reality. The comic figure of the Westernizer, Francophile or Germanophile (frequently under an allegorical or ridiculous name), the ideologies of progress, of liberalism, of reason, all these were ways of bringing into the foreground the modernization that came with Capital. These enlightened men proved themselves to be lunatics, thieves, opportunists, cruel, vain and parasitical. [...] it gave [Brazilians] the standard by which to measure the madness of the individualism and progressomania that the West imposed and imposes on the world.”<sup>111</sup>

It is important to bear in mind that in Brazilian literature, as writers reach for what it means to be Brazilian, their work is backlit and pervaded by the constant and threatening influence and presence of the Britons and their unforgiving and apparently hypocritical moral standards. Some of these Brazilian writers have braved Britain by farce, some by disguise, some by satire, and almost all by belying the European moral ideologies that seemed to threaten Brazilian identity.

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<sup>110</sup> Schwarz 40.

<sup>111</sup> Schwarz 29.

The crowning literary figure of nineteenth-century Brazilian literature is Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis; his later works are characteristic of the ever-questioning and ideology-abusing tenor of Brazilian skepticism. While his earlier works bear the stamp of Romanticism that his literary forbears pioneered, beginning around the time of the publication of *The Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas* in 1880, Machado de Assis began to use a “tone is one of deliberate abusiveness” wherein nothing is too sacred to withstand the Brazilian critique and “one provocation follows hard on the heels of another, on a scale ranging from harmless little jokes to profanation.”<sup>112</sup> The works of Machado de Assis are the culmination of the contest between ideologies Brazil waged with Britain and other European nations and mark an evolution of Brazilian thought turned critical and disbelieving, making for Brazilian thought of highly-developed skepticism.

Even in *Yayá Garcia* (1878), an earlier Romantic novel of Machado de Assis’ authorship, the author sows the seeds of Brazilian skepticism, especially in terms of nationalism. In the novel, a young Brazilian man named Jorge leaves to fight in the Paraguayan War in 1866, but only at the urging of his mother and for anything but patriotism: “National honour was undoubtedly the noble, high-flown camouflage for some hidden private motivation,” muses the character Luis Garcia about his neighbor sending her son to the battlefield.<sup>113</sup> Indeed, this war, one of the most defining for Brazil in terms of national identity, border demarcation, and patriotic spirit, dissolves

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<sup>112</sup> Roberto Schwarz, *A Master on the Periphery of Capitalism: Machado de Assis*, trans. John Gledsoe (Durham: Duke UP, 2001) 7.

<sup>113</sup> Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis, *Yayá Garcia*, trans. R.L. Scott-Buccluch (London: Peter Owen, 1976) 25.

under Machado de Assis' pen into a more personal battle. "Our country, our country must come first," quips Jorge's mother, Valeria, "with an enthusiasm which [...] seemed more feigned than sincere."<sup>114</sup> Her real motive is to end a love affair between her son and a woman she feels inferior to his social class. The narrator reveals the motives are more base and less than nationalistic, merely "a family quarrel [which] gave rise to patriotic endeavour."<sup>115</sup> In reality, Valeria has offered her son a choice: an extended holiday in Europe or military service in the war. Jorge chooses to serve in the war, not for any national, but instead, amorous passion and might have just easily placated his mother by vacationing in France and England. He tells his intended, who interestingly does not reciprocate his feelings, "I leave tomorrow for the south. Not because of love for my country but because of the love I feel for you."<sup>116</sup> When he returns she has married another and Jorge finds that the love that inspired him to heroic feats during the war is all but gone. Indeed, it is true of all the characters in the novel that passionate feeling is dulled over the course of time. This fact deemphasizes the importance of nationalism and dedication to any cause at all. Returning from the war a decorated veteran, Jorge still seems lost personally and locks himself in his personal library, seemingly unable to choose any cause, theology, or ideology: "As if the fault lay in the book, [Jorge] changed it for another, going from philosophy to history, from criticism to poetry and jumping from one language to another and from one century to the next with no other criterion than that of mere chance."<sup>117</sup> As Jorge illustrates in

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<sup>114</sup> Machado de Assis 21.

<sup>115</sup> Machado de Assis 49.

<sup>116</sup> Machado de Assis 52.

<sup>117</sup> Machado de Assis 96.

*Yayá Garcia*, the gestation of foreign thought in the Brazilian mind leads only to ideological indigestion and any nationalistic pursuits are simply the result of convoluted personal motives.

In one of the best works of Brazilian fiction, *The Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas*, Machado de Assis reveals that the lack of ideological purity and unbiased morality is not a Brazilian problem alone but extends to all human endeavors. Brás Cubas tells his life's story from the grave, allowing the narrator to remain oddly detached and unbiased, "with the apathy of a man now freed of the brevity of the century,"<sup>118</sup> but also "deliberately impertinent and lacking in credibility."<sup>119</sup> Indeed, Brás dedicates the novel "to the worm who gnawed the cold flesh of my corpse,"<sup>120</sup> immediately destabilizing the reading experience by introducing outlandish ideas, but also leaving the reader open to new possibilities and outside-the-box thinking. Brás explains that his death is the effect of fixating too strongly on an ingenious invention, a poultice he claims was "destined to alleviate our melancholy humanity."<sup>121</sup> In the same breath he declares that he cares nothing for humanity, but merely craved the fame his invention would bring. Auto-responding to any possible criticism from the reader, he cautions,

Let's leave history with its whims of an elegant lady. Neither of us fought the battle of Salamina or wrote the Augsburg Confession. For my part, if I can remember Cromwell it's only because of the idea that His Highness, with the

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<sup>118</sup> Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis, *Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas* (São Paulo: Ática, 2002) 11.

<sup>119</sup> Schwarz 9.

<sup>120</sup> Machado de Assis 2.

<sup>121</sup> Machado de Assis 9.

same hand that locked up Parliament might have imposed the Brás Cubas poultice on the English. Don't laugh at that joint victory of pharmaceuticals and puritanism. Who isn't aware that beneath every great, public, showy flag quite often there are several other modestly private banners that are unfurled and waving in the shadow of the first, and ever so many times outlive it?<sup>122</sup>

Here Brás presents his idea that history is a succession of events all motivated by personal pursuits masquerading as ostentatious goals or moral codes. Recently experiencing a huge shift in Brazilian economic and political identity as the institutions of slavery and monarchy crumbled, Brazilian thought had come to this point, declaring that empires come and go but personal human ambition will outlive them all.

Brás Cubas, middling and sycophantic in life, becomes a philosopher on his deathbed and in the delirium of his death, stumbles upon the truth of human history. In presenting that truth, he claims, "science will thank me for it, [but] if the reader isn't given to the contemplation of these mental phenomena, he may skip this chapter and go straight to the narrative."<sup>123</sup> In his delirium, Brás imagines he rides a talking hippopotamus who expounds on the meaning of life and shows him the whole of history:

[...] what I was seeing there was the living condensation of all ages. [...] The centuries were filing by in a maelstrom and yet, because the eyes of delirium are different, I saw everything that was passing before me. [...] Then I said to myself: 'Fine, the centuries keep passing, mine will arrive and it will pass, too,

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<sup>122</sup> Machado de Assis 11-2.

<sup>123</sup> Machado de Assis 15.

right down to the last one, which will decipher eternity for me.' [...] Each century brought its portion of light and shadow, apathy and combat, truth and error, and its cortège of systems, new ideas, new illusions. [...] My gaze, bored and distracted, finally saw the present century arrive, and behind it the future ones. It came along agile, dexterous, vibrant, self-confident, a little diffuse, bold, knowledgeable, but in the end as miserable as the ones before, and so it passed, and that was how the others passed, with the same rapidity and the same monotony.<sup>124</sup>

In displaying the whole of human history in a heartbeat, Machado de Assis openly questions all creeds everywhere. Gone is the wishful thinking of this century and ages past in which all believe humankind finally will take a united stand against misery and despair, but, as Brás discovers, his own nineteenth century will resemble all that came before it. Interpreting that claim the Brazilian reader discovers that British abolitionism and the Anglo-Brazilian alliance, just like every other moral code and treaty before them, serve only the interests of the status quo. This illustration of Brazilian skeptical thought ridicules, problematizes, and questions all ideology, theory, and morality. In the light of late nineteenth-century Brazilian criticism, such as Machado de Assis demonstrates here, British ideologies cannot endure unscathed, and, indeed, that all ideologies one contemplates embracing should be held up to just as piercing a light.

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<sup>124</sup> Machado de Assis 19-20.

## *Conclusion*

This paper has sought to place Brazilian national identity back on the table of academic discussion. The need is there, for, as Robert Schwarz explains, “[Brazilian] nationalism has recently been almost absent from serious intellectual debate [though] it has a growing presence in the administration of culture, where, for better or worse, it is impossible to escape from the national dimension.”<sup>125</sup> The nationalism that resulted from Anglo-Brazilian anxiety is just one of many aspects of the formation and development of Brazilian cultural identity. Hopefully, many other critics will express renewed interest in developing analyses of Brazilian imagination and identity-formation as the twenty-first century unfolds and as Brazil prepares to enter a new phase of its national history in what may be a globalizing world when an open and honest look at the Brazilian past is necessary in order to clarify who Brazilians are as a people and how they will want to go about shaping their nation’s future.

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<sup>125</sup> Schwarz, *Misplaced Ideas* 7.

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